CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Within the pages of Mate’s milestone work ‘Maratha Architecture’ (1959, p. 92) we come across an illustration of the ‘Maratha Pillars’ in ‘wood and stone’. Shorn of their context the pillars raise more questions than they answer. The illustration is perhaps symptomatic of the kind of history that Mate was operating in. The field of history of Indian Architecture in 1960’s was dominated by the concerns of style and such illustrations of columns or domes were a common feature; especially of the work of Percy Brown (1956). More recent research by scholars like Ebba Koch (1991) and Catherine Asher (1992) has managed to move the study more towards an understanding of the various processes such as that of patronage. The same, however, cannot be said of the research on the history of Architecture of Maharashtra especially during the Peshwa rule (1720 – 1818 CE).

The study of architecture in Maharashtra has steadily built up from its beginnings in the writings of Cousens (1946; 1985) and Herman Goetz (1946; 1985). Most of this research has focused on the studies of form. The concern has been, as Bourdieu puts it, on the ‘opus operatum’, the product; rather than the ‘modus operatum’, the process (Webster, 2011, p. 91). As for the early studies (Mate, 1959; Kanhere, 1988), this concern with the product has been largely due to the field of Architectural History as it existed then. It was a field dominated by an obsession with style as evidenced from the various studies of Indian Architecture (Fergusson, 1876; Brown, 1956; Grover, 1980; Nath, 1982).

The decades after the 1980’s have opened up a number of methodological positions which have enriched the discourse of architectural history (Arnold, 2006). However, various studies from recent decades seem to have continued the engagement with the form rather than the process (A. Sohoni, 1998; Gupta, 2013). In a field where the ‘form’ dominates, it is perhaps inevitable that the ‘product’ has retained its importance. However, the processual aspects have greatly enriched the field by promoting multidisciplinary inquiries into historic architecture. These choices have given researchers new insights into the field by incorporating methods from disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology and sociology (Arnold, 2006; Leach, 2010) other than that of art History. The shift has also brought into focus the producer and the process along with the product.

1 See for example study of Mansing’s patronage by Asher (2001). Various other examples can be found referred in the introduction to ‘Architecture in medieval India’ by Monica Juneja (2001). The introduction is also a comprehensive survey of the historiography of Indian Architecture.
This research is an inquiry into the Architecture in the Peśvā period. The research is structured around an understanding of the **Commissioning** and **Construction** of buildings in eighteenth century Maharashtra; specifically in the areas under direct Peśvā rule. I have also looked at **Management** of the built environment as a logical extension of the activity of construction. The research questions therefore are -

- How were the buildings commissioned?
- What was the process by which Buildings were constructed? (Understood as the process of creation and the process of communication)
- How was the Built Environment managed?

Together these questions can be seen as an inquiry into the practice of architecture in eighteenth-century Maharashtra. The word ‘practice’ used here is to be understood as a way of doing something. The idea of practice can be further articulated based on Bourdieu’s use of the word ‘practice’. The Bourdieusian framework of ‘Practice Theory’ forms the conceptual framework of this research. Chapter three discusses this framework and its relevance to the research in detail.

The inquiry is situated in the temporal context of eighteenth century India. The disciplinary context, on the other hand, is conditioned by the historiography of architecture. The following is a discussion of both these contexts which help in locating the study

### 1.1 The spatio – temporal context of the study

This research examines the practice of architecture in a defined region in Maharashtra. The specific inquiry is centred in the eighteenth-century Indian subcontinent. A lot of the components of the traditional environment that are recognised today as ‘traditional’ belong to the eighteenth century, particularly in the case of Maharashtra. The comparative abundance of source data from this century as compared to the preceding Śivaśāhī period (seventeenth century) makes it a particularly attractive topic for research. This data is available not only as standing buildings but also in the form of documents and objects of all kinds. However, this alone is not the reason for selection of this particular century. The breakup of the Mughal imperial rule in the early eighteenth century was the singular most important event that changed the course of the history of the subcontinent. The eighteenth century in Indian history, therefore, has been and still is a subject of much research.

#### 1.1.1 Eighteenth century in India

The most important event that marked the early years of the eighteenth century was the death of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 CE.
The emperor died at the age of eighty-nine having fought continuous wars in the Deccan for more than two decades. For a long time, the eighteenth century was seen by historians as a century of chaos and anarchy. Recent scholarship, however, has questioned this (Alavi, 2002) and stressed on the continuities and assertion of regional identities in the eighteenth century. Aurangzeb’s death and the subsequent wars of succession did result in the collapse of the imperial system but its impact on the trade and growth of towns was not cataclysmic.

Mughal rule had always operated very unevenly in India in terms of the authority and the presence of the centre in the various provinces. It has been compared to a ‘patchwork quilt’ rather than a ‘wall to wall carpet’ (P. J. Marshall, 2003, p. 4). The weakening of the central power after the death of Aurangzeb and the ensuing war of succession meant that various Mughal governors and local chiefs started asserting autonomy. The Mughal governors of Awadh, Hyderabad and Bengal claimed their territories as personal dominions. The chiefs of Rajasthan gradually subverted Mughal authority and established their own domains. Marathas rose as an important power in the Deccan. The political changes were accompanied by changes in the economy as well. The armies increasingly became paid employees who needed cash payments. The rulers, therefore, required ready availability of credit to mount a campaign. This resulted in the rise of Bankers who became politically powerful. Throughout these political and social changes, the system of revenue farming remained unchanged. The Peśvā ruled in the name of the Mughal emperor. Mughal practices in the conduct of governance remained unchanged. Persian remained the language of official correspondence. As has been remarked by Marshall (2003, p. 6) ‘alternative sources of legitimacy to the endorsement of the emperor, however nominal, were very slow to emerge’. The rulers of these new states tried to legitimise their rule by patronising religious projects. It was seen as a way of identifying with the local cultural traditions. Such a change in understanding the eighteenth century prompts a change in the way we look at the history of Architecture of this century as well.

The Early historians of Indian architecture looked upon the eighteenth century as the end of classical architecture and a century of chaos till the establishment of colonial architecture. Safdarjung’s tomb in Delhi (1740’s) was called as the “melancholy proof of the decadent conditions” (Brown, 1956, p. 112) after the fall of the Mughal Empire. Late twentieth-century scholarship has, however, taken a more accommodating view of eighteenth-century Mughal architecture (Koch, 1991; C. Asher, 1992). The eighteenth century was witness to a spate of architectural projects across the subcontinent. New capitals or extensions to existing seats of governance were planned all across India. For example, Murshidabad (1716, Murshid quli Khan), Jaipur (1727, Jaisingh II), Lucknow (1760’s, Shuja ud daulah)
became capital cities and the rulers commissioned a number of construction projects in them. Some of the major architectural projects of the eighteenth century include the Katra Masjid (Murshidabad) 1723, Lake Palace (Udaipur) in 1743, Chowmahalla Palace (Hyderabad) in 1750 and the Hoṅkar Rajvādā (Indore) in 1766.

It does not come as a surprise therefore that more and more researchers are focusing on the eighteenth-century architecture of the subcontinent. The works of Pramar on Gujarat (1989), Shikha jain on Rajasthan (2004) and Sohoni (1998) and Raje Gupta (2013) on Maharashtra indicate such a shift in research priorities. This change in the scholarship on eighteenth-century India forms the intellectual context for an inquiry into the Architecture of Maharashtra from this period.

1.1.2 Eighteenth century in Maharashtra. The most important outcome of the Mughal succession war (which started in 1707 CE immediately after the death of Aurangzeb), for Maharashtra, was the release of Śāhū, grandson of Śivājī from Mughal captivity. His release immediately started a civil war in Maharashtra which lasted for almost a decade and ended with the establishment of Śāhū as the head of Maratha polity. Although Śāhū was a captive he had been brought up like a prince by the Mughal emperor. He had spent his formative years in Aurangzeb’s camp. As a result, Śāhū was steeped in the Mughal courtly culture. With his release, Śāhū brought this Mughal culture with him to Maharashtra. His release, therefore, initiated not only a political revolution but a cultural revolution as well which resulted in transforming the lifestyle of his inner circle of aides. He enjoyed dance performances, hunting, liked exotic objects, enjoyed fishing, dog breeding etc. Introduction to this lifestyle and similarly the first-hand exposure to north Indian cities coupled with improved economic means changed the way of life of the Peśvā and the Maratha nobles. This change affected all spheres of their lives including the built environment.

Śāhū’s inner circle consisted of some older families such as Niṅbāṅkar, Paṅtsachiv of Bhor and Ḡiṅṅṅkar Bhosale along with the new elites such as Dābhāde, Pratinidhī and Bāḷājī Viśvanāth Bhaṭ (Gordon, 1998). Bāḷājī Viśvanāth managed to get an order from the Mughal emperor which granted Śāhū the rights of revenue collection in the Maratha heartlands. This naturally resulted in his becoming the most trusted aide of Śāhū who also made him his Peśvā (prime minister). Bāḷājī Viśvanāth patronised his own caste (citpāvan Brahmins) who rapidly penetrated into administration and banking. They consolidated their social positions by intermarriage and soon established citpāvan hegemony in the Maratha heartland. After Bāḷājī Viśvanāth’s death in 1720 CE, Śāhū appointed his son Bājīrāv as the Peśvā. Bājīrāv shifted his base of operations from Sātārā to Pune. From then on Peśvā Family and Pune dominated
the politics of the subcontinent for almost a hundred years finally giving way to British rule in 1818 CE.

The second most important political event was the defeat of Peśvā armies in the battle of Panipat in 1761 CE. This defeat curtailed the Peśvā ambitions in the North. As a result, the fourth Peśvā, Mādhavrāv focused his attention on the areas in Karnataka. The North was left to the erstwhile sardars like Mahādaį Śiṅde (capital – Gwalior), Malhārrāv Hoḷkar (capital – Indore and then Maheśvar), Dāmāį Gāikvād (capital – Vadodara) and Udāį Pavār (capital – Dhar). They established quasi - independent kingdoms although in theory retained their allegiance to the Peśvā. They patronised new cities mentioned above and erected palaces and buildings that were a mix of their homeland architecture and the local traditions. Since the Peśvā’s attention was focused in Karnataka, from 1760’s we find cultural influences from the south entering the Maratha lands. Chariot festival, for example, was a tradition from south India which became prevalent in a number of shrines within the Peśvā territories (Našik, Tryambakeśvar, Vāi, and Māhūlī).

Other than these cultural influences from the north and south of the subcontinent, the Peśvā patrons and craftsmen were also influenced by the architecture in their immediate surrounds, the religious architecture of the Yadava temples and the more proximate architecture of the Deccan Sultanates.

During the eighteenth century, Peśvā and the other social elites commissioned large number architectural projects. While the proposed research does not focus on the survey and description of these structures, it would be useful to have an overview of the architectural product to situate the examination of the architectural processes which form the core of this research. The next section briefly summarises the political rule of the Peśvā rulers along with the significant architectural patrons and projects of the time. The buildings have been listed as per the ruling years of the Peśvā. The political sketches are briefest of the summaries. An excellent book that studies the social and political history of the eighteenth century Maharashtra is ‘The Marathas’ by Stewart Gordon (1998). For an understanding of the visual character of the architecture, Mate’s book ‘Maratha architecture’ (1959) retains its importance. The architectural projects mentioned here do not follow any criteria of selection. Their only purpose is to bring forward a visual character of the time which forms a background to the study of the practice of eighteenth-century architecture that I have undertaken in the succeeding chapters.
1.2 A timeline of the eighteenth-century architectural history

The following is a brief description of the architecture of the eighteenth-century Peśvā region. It is organised as per the rule of Śähū and the seven Peśvā. The Buildings mentioned are some of the better-known structures built under the rule of the respective ruler.

1.2.1 Śähū Chatrapati (1708 – 1749 CE). Śähū came to Maharashtra after his release from Mughal Imprisonment in 1708 CE. He was immediately announced as the Chatrapati (literally ‘owner of the umbrella’ or the king) of the Maratha empire. In his long reign, Śähū appointed three Peśvās. He died in 1749 CE but before his death, he had made the office of Peśvā as a hereditary office.

Śähū significantly extended Satara² by settling new neighbourhoods and constructing buildings. The two most important buildings that he commissioned are his vādā (A Marathi word for a large residence) known as ‘Adālatvādā’ which still exists though renovated from time to time. The other is the temple dedicated to his religious teacher and adviser Brāhmendraśvāmī at Dhāvadā (begun 1745 CE) that he commissioned just before his death. The most important building from the early decades of Śähū’s rule is perhaps the well at Limb near Sātārā which was constructed by one of his queens in 1725 CE (Figure 1.1).

1.2.2 Ballāḷ tathā Bāḷājī Viśvanāth Peśvā (1713 - 1720 CE). The first Peśvā spent a hectic life moving from place to place. He was instrumental in Śähū’s release and also managed to get the rights to collection of taxes from the Mughal emperor in Śähū’s name. His years as the prime minister did not see any significant construction activity.

1.2.3 Bājīrāv Ballāḷ tathā Thorale Bājīrāv Peśvā (1720 – 1740 CE). The northern expansion of Maratha Empire occurred under the leadership of this second Peśvā. He was a Military commander who spent most of his life on military campaigns. During his rule, Pune became the seat of Peśvā family. He commissioned a large fortified residence for himself in Pune that came to be known as Śanivārvādā. It was apparently modelled on the Puraṅdāre vādā at Sāsvad. Part of the reason could have been that the first Peśvā served with the Puraṅdāre and the families remained on good terms with each other throughout the eighteenth century. The Puraṅdāre were a powerful family in Śähū’s close circle of commanders. The family also patronised architecture. The temples that they built in Sāsvad are indicative of the fact. Bājīrāv himself did not commission many buildings, however, his family members did

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² Sātārā is a small town near Pune. It was and still is the place of residence of the Chatrapati. During Śähū’s rule it became the capital of the Maratha Empire.
Virubāī, Stepped Well at Liṃb, Sātārā, 1725 C

Śāhu, Bhārgavrām Mandir, Dhāvadśī, Sātārā, 1750 CE

Śāhu, Adālatvādā, Sātārā, 1730’s CE

*Figure 1.1.* Śāhū Chatrapatī (reigned 1708 – 1749 CE)
sponsor a number of buildings. His wife Kāśibāī built ghāṭ (a flight of steps and terraces along side of the river bank which provided utilitarian and ritualistic access to the river) and a temple at the village of Cās, her paternal home. These ghāṭ are an early example of such construction in the eighteenth century. Bājīrāv’s sister Bhiubāī built a temple in Pune while the second sister Anubāī was responsible for suggesting a designer-builder for Śanivārvādā. Bājīrāv’s brother Chimājī commissioned the temple of Omkāreśvar in Pune and a couple of temples in Kokaṇ region (Figure 1.2).

Along with Bājīrāv his friends such as Śiṅde, Holkar and Gāikvād also rose rapidly in Maratha society. These three became the most important Maratha families outside Maharashtra. They patronised new capital cities of Gwalior, Indore and Vadodara respectively.

1.2.4 Bāḷājī Bājīrāv tathā Nānāsāheb Peśvā (1740 – 1761 CE). Unlike his father, Nānāsāheb did not have an overtly military inclination. However, he was an excellent administrator. He is credited with establishing a workable administrative system for the growing Maratha lands and their revenue collection. Many scholars have rightly talked about Pune as his memorial. He made conscious efforts in expanding Pune by promoting new neighbourhoods, constructing a water system and a number of temples in and around Pune. Nānāsāheb died in Pune after hearing of the defeat of Maratha army in the war of Panipat in 1761 CE.

Baneśvar near Pune and Kauṇteśvar near Vaduth (Sātārā) are two temples that show Nānāsāheb’s skill in selecting sites for religious projects. The water channel surrounding the Baneśvar temple is reminiscent of his architectural experiences in northern parts of the subcontinent. The temples at Parvati and Hirabāg in Pune are two major complexes that Nānāsāheb commissioned. He also enabled the extension of Pune city by diverting Aṃbil odhā (stream) which used to flow through the city. He built a water supply system for the city which was based on examples of such systems that he had seen in places such as Aurangabad.

The temple of Triāṃbakeśvar near Nāśik is perhaps his most ambitious building project (begun 1755 CE). It was thirty-two years in the making and was finally completed by Savāī Mādhavrāv Peśvā in 1787 CE (Figure 1.3).

1.2.5 Mādhavrāv Ballāḷ tathā Thorale Mādhavrāv Peśvā (1761 – 1772 CE). Mādhavrāv was the son of Nānāsāheb Peśvā. He became a Peśvā at the very young age of sixteen. Mādhavrāv’s uncle Raghunāthrāv built a number of buildings in and around Nāśik. Raghunāthrāv built a vāḍā at Kopargāv, Nāśik and also built a whole new settlement named
Thorale Bājirāv Peśvā, Śanivārvādā, Pune, 1732 CE

Chimājīappā Peśvā, Oṃkāreśvar, Pune, 1730’s CE

Bhiubāī, Amruteśvar, Pune, 1730’s CE

*Figure 1.2.* Bājirāv Ballāḷ *tathā c* (rule 1720 – 1740 CE)
Nānāsāheb Peśvā, Baneśvar, Pune, 1749 CE

Nānāsāheb Peśvā, Triṃbakesvar, Nāsik, 1755 CE

Hajārī Kāraṇje, Śanivārvādā, Pune, 1754 CE

*Figure 1.3.* Bāḷājī Bājirāv *tathā* Nānāsāheb Peśvā (rule 1740 – 1761 CE)
‘Anandvallī’ after his wife Ānandibāī near Nashik. In his later years, Raghunāthrāv is also credited with having built a residence for himself in Mumbai, the only Peśvā building in the area (Sathe, 2013). This building was demolished in the early twentieth century.

Mādhavrāv’s mother, Gopikābāī (1724 – 1788), spent her last years in Nashik. She commissioned a number of buildings in Nashik. The temples of goddess Godāvari and lord Kṛṣṇa and some of the ghāṭ (Rāmghāṭ and Rāmkunīḍa) on Godāvari were built by her. The most important of her architectural contributions is the Temple of Kalārām at Nashik. It took eight years for construction and was completed in 1790 CE. Stylistically, it was based on the thirteenth-century temple of Goṇideśvar at Sinnar, a small town near Nashik. Gopikābāī introduced the Chariot festival at Kalārām temple by donating chariots to the temple. Many members of her parental family, Rāste, were great patrons and commissioned a large number of projects.

During the same time, the Rāste family built very extensively in Vāī, a small place near Sātārā. The Raste family shared a social trajectory with many other citpāvan families of the eighteenth century. They were moneylenders originally from Kokaṇ who migrated to Deś in the eighteenth century. To protect their investments and also to increase profits they became military commanders with the Peśvā. A further consolidation of power happened by getting related in marriage with the Peśvā family. As a result, they wielded considerable social as well as political and economic capital which they used for their numerous building projects. Their residences in Pune and Vāī and the numerous temples and ghāṭ that they built make them one the most prolific family of the eighteenth century in terms of the number of building projects that they commissioned. Their residence in Pune, Rāstevāḍā, Temple of Gaṇapatī and Mahālakṣmī temple in Vāī are among the finest buildings of eighteenth century Maharashtra (Figure 1.4).

1.2.6 Nārāyaṇ Ballāḷ thus Nārāyaṇrāv Peśvā (1772 – 1773 CE). Nārāyaṇrāv was the younger brother of Mādhavrāv Peśvā. He came to power at the age of eighteen. This unfortunate Peśvā had a very brief rule before being brutally murdered by his uncle, Raghunāthrāv Peśvā in 1773 CE. After a year of hectic political activity, Nānā Phadnavis, a trusted aide of the Peshwa family and an able administrator managed to install the newborn son of Nārāyaṇrāv Peśvā, Mādhav Nārāyaṇ as the Peśvā.

1.2.7 Mādhav Nārāyaṇ thus Savāī Mādhavrāv Peśvā (1774-1795 CE). The rule of Savāī Mādhavrāv was prosperous. However the Peśvā himself, perhaps due to his young
Gopikābāī, Kāḷārām Mandir, Nāśik, 1782 CE

Ananda Rāste, Dholīya Gaṇpatī, Vāī, 1762 CE


Figure 1.4. Mādhavrāv Ballāḷ Thālor Mādhavrāv Peśvā (rule 1761 – 1772 CE)
age, did not commission any major architectural projects. The most important patron of these twenty-odd years was Nānā Phadnavis, who was the administrator who looked after the Peśvā territories on behalf of the young Peśvā. After Nānāsāheb Peśvā, Nānā Phadnavis was the person who took a lot of interest in the growth of Pune city. He made a number of repairs to Śanivārvādā and also constructed more buildings inside for the young Peśvā. He built the Belbāg temple and also constructed another water supply line for the city. Nānā commissioned a number of temples in places such as Velas in Kokaṇ and Khopoli near Mumbai. He constructed a residence for himself at Kashi as well. He lavished his attention on his vādā at Meṇavāli, a village near Vāī that he enlarged. The ghāṭ and the temples that he built in Meṇavāli along with his vādā are known for their workmanship and more importantly for the wall paintings which by all accounts are the best examples of the art that have survived till date (Figure 1.5).

1.2.8 Bājirāv Raghunāth tathā Dusare Bājirāv Peśvā (1796 – 1818 CE). The rule of Dusare Bājirāv (Bājirāv II) is many times seen as that of corrupt behaviour and lavishness. His lavishness stretched the treasury to its limits. His lack of leadership qualities finally resulted in the establishment of British rule in the Maratha lands in 1818 CE. With the fall of the Maratha power, the path to complete domination of the subcontinent was swift for the British. The rule of Bājirāv II was, in short, the beginning of an end. However, Bājirāv II was a prolific builder and built three residences for himself in Pune. No trace remains of these buildings except for Viśrāmbāgvādā. He settled a small resort town for himself and his friends at Phulgaon near Pune. The ghāṭ that he constructed there is perhaps the last of such constructions in the Peśvā era (Figure 1.6).

The total period of Peśvā rule is hardly around a hundred years. Constant political upheavals meant that the Architecture never got the kind of time that would be required for realising its full potential. However, as we will see further, the Architecture of the Peśvā period did acquire an identity of its own which was different than Deccani, Rajput or Mughal Architecture to which it owed a lot of its architectural vocabulary. In the final analysis, it was, as Goetz (1946, p. 444) puts it ‘the last national art of pre-industrial India’.

An inquiry into the various processes that went into the making of this built environment is the topic of the proposed research. The other context to the research is provided by the discipline of architectural history which has changed radically in the last couple of decades. From a discipline which leaned towards an art – historical analysis, history of architecture has become a part of the broader field of cultural studies. This has had a far-reaching impact on what is studied by architectural historians. These shifts in the discipline
Rāste, Umāmeśvar Mandir, Vāī, 1770’s CE

Nānā Phadnavis, Vādā, Meṇavalî 1770’s CE

Rāste, Rāstevādā, Pune, 1778 CE

*Figure 1.5.*  Mādhav Nārāyaṇ tathā Savāī Mādhavrāv Peśvā (rule 1774-1795 CE)

Angal, Saṅgameśvar Ghāṭ, Mahuli, Satar

*Figure 1.6.* Bājirāv Raghunāth *tathā* Dusare Bājirāv Peśvā (rule 1796 – 1818 CE)
have been well documented by Leach (2010). It is an introductory text on the discipline of architectural history. The book presents a structured outline covering the questions of utility, organisation of the past and various types of evidence. The next section discusses the evolution of the discipline of Architectural history and its relevance for this research.

1.3 Disciplinary Context of the research

The proposed research is basically located in the discipline of Architectural History. It owes its beginnings to the discipline of art history. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that the subject came to have an independent disciplinary standing. Leach (2010) has identified a number of approaches to architectural past that can be observed in the discipline.

The first and the foremost of these approaches is the chronological organisation of architecture based on the visual characteristics or the ‘style’. The stylistic organisation of the past as a basis for understanding architecture has been questioned recently by many researchers (Leach, 2010, p. 48). However, style as an organising device it still remains a useful approach for organising the past. Biography of an architect has been an approach explored especially with modern architects. Studies of vernacular architecture tend to use geography and culture as an organising device. Typological studies focus on a building type such as school or prison or temple for that matter. Some histories of architecture also focus on technique; say that of construction. Finally, there are a number of approaches that are grouped as thematic or analogous approaches. These approaches generally are interdisciplinary in nature.

Although style is just one of the approaches for architectural history, the scholarship on the architecture of medieval India is dominated by questions of forms and their sources (Juneja, 2001). A broader view of the history of architecture needs to look at processes, practices and representations. Juneja, for example, maintains that looking at architecture as divided into stylistic compartments; Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim etc. denies the complex and rich histories of the buildings and ends up making the buildings into sites of conflict.

From its nineteenth-century beginnings as a sub-discipline of art history, history of architecture, in the recent decades, has leaned more and more towards a cultural history of the built environment. The focus is more on the processes than structures. Andrew Ballantyne has argued for the importance of understanding the cultural context in understanding a building. In the essay ‘Architecture as evidence’ Ballantyne (Arnold, 2006) says that ‘(a building) without a culture to locate it in, remains meaningless’. Echoing Bourdieu’s notion of capital, the essay also talks about buildings being used as ‘cultural capital’. Any research undertaking
in the field of architectural history will have to take cognizance of the disciplinary changes that have taken place to be of relevance to the field in general.

Taking into consideration these two factors namely the change in the understanding of the historical context and changes in the discipline of Architectural History, this thesis poses an inquiry into the architecture of eighteenth century Maharashtra.

1.4 Statement of the research problem.

The existing scholarship on the architecture of the eighteenth century Maharashtra has focused on the analysis of the form of the building and its sources. They offer a taxonomic analysis oriented towards building up of a typology. Mate (1959) for example presents types of śikhar and columns on the lines of the work by Percy Brown (1956). In the case of Sohoni (1998), it is what he calls as the ‘Revivalist Temple’ and ‘Maratha Temple’ while in the case of Gupta (2013) it is a typological analysis based on architectural components of vādā, the traditional residence type of Maharashtra.

The academic canvas of historiography of the architecture of eighteenth-century Maharashtra has also been occupied by a number of anthologies of buildings. Sadashiv Shivde’s two volumes on vādā of Maharashtra (Shivde, 2013) is an example of such an anthology. Such anthologies are not always written by a historian. Many are by amateurs interested in the history of the built environment. As a result, the architectural descriptions presented by them are mostly inadequate. The works are seldom accompanied with architectural drawings or comprehensive photographs which would aid in understanding the building in its entirety; however, they occupy an area which has been largely neglected by architectural historians.

It would be possible to take up the further research work on the topic in a number of directions. It could be a detailed typological analysis based on the primary data made available by various studies. A researcher could also choose to remain in the art historical tradition and undertake a Panofskian iconological analysis of the origin of forms, which already has an established tradition in Indian context through work of Ebba Koch (1991). It would also be possible to do a semiotic reading of eighteenth-century Maharashtra architecture. However, this work proposes to explore the questions of the process rather than those of form. The study poses an inquiry into the practice of architecture in ‘eighteenth century Maharashtra’.

I make this choice over more form-based approaches because of two reasons. Firstly considering the data available from the various publications of both primary and secondary
nature (reviewed in Chapter two), time is perhaps right to undertake such an exercise and secondly as a researcher the opportunity to cross disciplinary boundaries is something that is personally fulfilling.

1.5 Response to research question

The first implication of the decision to focus on processes is that of the kind of evidence to be used. The buildings standing today belong to a sociocultural context that belongs to the past. The way the buildings were commissioned, built and used cannot be accessed because of the temporal gap. It should be clear therefore, that the evidence of buildings is not enough to understand the various processes that go into the making of the built environment. The evidence has to come from textual sources that date back to the period of study which is the eighteenth century. I use documents selected from eighteenth-century records that have been transliterated from ‘modi’ script to ‘devanagari’ script. These transliterations are a result of the effort of numerous researchers who published the documents in the early decades of the twentieth century. Chapter three introduces the numerous works that have been used as primary data for the research. The documentary data has been supplemented by field observations. The buildings have been studied and used as evidence for analysing vernacular design processes, which cannot be otherwise accomplished based on evidence of documents.

The documents selected were analysed using qualitative content analysis. It is a very useful method for historical study as it allows thematic coding of data. Due to thematic coding, similar concepts with diverse verbal expressions can be brought together and examined for their meaning (Smith, 2000, p. 321). For the study of patronage, I have used the method of analytic induction which analyses data and goes through cycles of hypotheses formulation and reformulation till coming to a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon (Preissle, 2008, p. 15). For examining the vernacular design process I have used graphical data in the form of photographs and drawings to test a selected theory of vernacular design.

Through this research, I show that the Bourdieusian framework could be useful for studies on eighteenth century Maharashtra. Within architectural history, the research would be helpful in giving an approach of examining the eighteenth-century architecture of the subcontinent. For the research area, the specific contributions come in the area of understanding patterns of patronage, the processes of urban management and unravelling the thinking process used by a vernacular designer. All of these findings are grounded in a contextual understanding of the past and use frameworks of inquiry established by various
researchers who have worked on similar themes (a matrix outlining the framework of inquiry is given in table 3.2).

### 1.6 A roadmap of the proposed research

The focus on understanding process rather than the form makes the choice of Bourdieu’s theory of practice as an epistemological framework all the more relevant. The Plan of Inquiry (Chapter three) lays out the epistemological framework and defines various methods used in the analysis. It also has a discussion on the sources of data that have been used in the research.

In the next part, I define the study region as the ‘Peshwa region’ of the eighteenth century based on geography, culture regions and political boundaries. Within the field of built environment, I examine the practice of architecture. I use term ‘practice’ in the Bourdieusian sense, meaning ‘practice to be understood as relationships and interactions between various agents of the ‘field’ which are influenced by their habitus. These interactions, in turn, produce the ‘field’. Bourdieu himself summarised his understanding of practice as ‘[(Habitus) + Field = Practice]’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101). The practice of architecture can, therefore, be primarily seen as that of commissioning buildings, of designing buildings and communicating the design and lastly the practice of management in the built environment. As I argue in Chapter eight, the practice of management, in reality, is an overlap of physical, symbolic or religious and economic processes. However, for the sake of clarity the discussion of management practice has been subdivided as symbolic, physical and economic.

In no way do the processes selected for the study represent the entirety of the built environment. The study is focused on the production of buildings. The practice of embellishment of buildings is another aspect which is not part of the present study. Both of these aspects require different theoretical frameworks and sources of data. Ornament in architecture, for example, is an independent subject area with a rich scholarly tradition. In the production of buildings, I do not look at construction materials, their sourcing and the actual craft processes involved in construction activity. The data on these aspects is very scant as of now. A detailed study has to await the availability of primary data from the archives and from the field.

The write-up of the research is divided into ten chapters including the introduction and the summary of conclusions. Chapter two examines the relevant literature to identify a research gap and also with a view to understanding the context of the eighteenth-century in the sub-continent. The fourth chapter defines the study region and the subsequent chapters
deal with individual research objectives. Each chapter begins with an explanation of the relevant conceptual framework that has been used. The second part of the chapter situates the particular concern in the temporal context followed by the discussion of the main subject matter.

1.7 Significance of the study

The proposed inquiry explores the possibility of using Bourdieusian framework for analysing the built environment of the eighteenth century in Maharashtra. I have made an attempt to show that the framework provided by the theory of practice can be profitably applied to understanding eighteenth century Maharashtra.

The question of patronage though important in understanding historic architecture has not received much attention in Indian architectural history. The research offers insights into patterns of patronage including that by marginal classes and matronage in the context of architectural development. Both would be relevant for the discourse of empowerment which is very much a topic of current interest. Understanding, for example, the motivations of Peshwa ladies behind sponsoring construction projects could help to explain patterns of matronage in contemporary society.

Understanding the processes that went into the making of the Historic and Traditional built environment places us in a better position to understand their significance and enable informed decision making regarding protection and management. Defining design schemata or decoding design communication used in the architecture of the eighteenth century would be important for professionals associated with the traditional buildings.

Managing built environment has become a very complex practice. The study highlights the interconnectedness of physical, economic and symbolic practices of management. Understanding traditional responses to various issues such as that of identity, individual rights and communal responsibilities and freedom can offer insights into managing historic urban environments.

Finally the proposed inquiry will open up ways of questioning the built environment of eighteenth century Maharashtra which can potentially be further expanded into research projects that focus on making available primary data and enable detailed investigations of a particular patron or a practice such as that of role of rituals in place making, traditional building codes, Urban taxation and financing to name a few.