CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL PRAXIS AND RITUAL REALM
CHHATRAPATIS AND CHITPAVANS

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POLITICAL PRAXIS AND RITUAL REALM:
CHHATRAPATIS AND CHITPAVANS

The major constituents of political sovereignty in Maharashtra generally resided with the two important ruling houses of the land. Although Shivaji's death in 1680 proved to be a turning point in bringing about three major ruling centres in the Western Deccan, namely Chhatrapatis of Satara, Kolhapur and the Konkanasth brahmin subcast - the Chitpavans. The Kolhapur regime remained relatively marginal compared to Satara and Pune in the 18th century. The absence of an enduring and capable man like Shivaji was quickly felt when factionalisation in the reigning political centre at Satara found its overt manifestation in the struggle for power. Each group found entangled in overt and covert attempt to secure an independent authority. Although the emergence of Chitpavans as a major force in the Maratha politics was the creation of Satara ruling house itself, and was not expected to contest the cosmic authority of the Satara Chhatrapatis, but it gradually became too pressing for the Chitpavan Peshwas of Pune to completely feel subservient to the Satara house. The Satara Chhatrapati Sahu seems to be quite instrumental in raising the Peshwas to the position of power and authority. The Peshwas equally showed enough urge to seek continuous legitimation from the Satara Chhatrapatis. They gradually emerged out to be a big
political force in the 18th century to cross check any reigning authority in the Indian subcontinent with tremendous confidence and solid political footing. Right from the coronation ceremony of Shivaji, the Marathas of Maharashtra faced substantial social and political base for their advantage to go ahead with their plan in bringing up Maratha samrajya. They were able to create so much awe of their power that they took Maratha banner in almost all the major parts of India. The Chitpavan's drive to reorient the brahmanic modes in a different form from the prescribed callings of their image, seem to be a highly sophisticated form of emerging 18th century political milieu. Their gradually acquired literacy in management and accounting eased them considerably to get into the act of secular politico-military state building. The emergence of Kolhapur as yet another political centre in Maharashtra is a very significant context as well to study the thoroughly decentralised power pattern of the century. Kolhapur's legitimacy as a political centre remained so contested that it kept struggling between Satara and Pune. Nevertheless, it equally managed to have considerable power prerogatives to steer itself along independent form of authority, but not as smoothly and legitimately as Satara and Pune. Its power struggle later seemed to be pitted against the growing dominance of the Peshwas of Pune. Along the creation of a new power syndroms, the shift from the politically reigning Satara to the politically emerging Poona, as well as the
creation of a new sovereign centre at Kolhapur, becomes quite significant in understanding the changing context of the Maratha politics. The shift simultaneously paved the way for Satara becoming yet another moral centre, closely resembling the role of Delhi. The Maratha hegemony now sought to establish itself in a way similar to what was the case with Mughal hegemony. This shift apart from leading to the initiation of Chitpavan’s brahmanic dispensation, brought about a typically brahmanised culture. Presumably, this dispensation showed an overt manifestation of brahmanical forms of rituals and practices resulting considerably in the Hindu resurgence represented by the Marathas, who are described by Barnett as the ‘fiercest Hindus’.

The articulation of a new political and cultural ethos seems to be far stronger than in the earlier period and provided in this sense a durable political and cultural identity to the Marathas. The construction of identity in this phase became quite flexible and complex and the representation of tradition much more diffused and wide. Simultaneously the components of sovereignty underwent some significant changes and modifications.

All along the creation of a complex socio-political system, the political and ritual relationship developed between these three power centres vis-a-vis the great Mughals reflect certain continuities as well as the new constituents of the 18th century kingship. Apart from invoking some elements of classical Indian texts, the power pattern now seems to be strongly construing upon the elements of conflict, reconciliation, gift-giving processes, conscious ritualization, lavish extravaganza, relentless invocation of tradition, etc. It is in this context that we can have a look of forms and fulcrums upon which Satara and Pune identified themselves, and how they represented the Marathas in the broader form of 'region' and 'community'. Important further in this regard is how tradition relates itself to the new political and ritual realm of the Marathas? Tradition certainly seems to be caught up between its earlier moorings and the new one. But, does it mean that tradition needs to modernise itself to dispense the new context?

The death of Shivaji in 1680 witnessed the development of a very strong factional politics to grab the throne of the Chhatrapati at Satara. The conflict proved to be so intense that the Bhonsle branch of Chhatrapati eventually got split into two parts of political authority: one at Satara and another at Kolhapur. The Kolhapur branch of Chhatrapati remained influenced by a dominating lady, named
Tarabai, the widow of Rajaram. She proved to be so strong and shrewd that she managed to dominate the Maratha politics until 1761. However, the period from 1680 to 1708, until Shahu became the Maratha Chhatrapati, is a phase of constant conflict, faction and continuously shifting alliances. It is only with the arrival of Shahu, the son of Sambhaji, imprisoned in the Mughal court, that we find Maratha politics taking systematic and regularised pattern despite Kolhapur forming itself as another independent political centre. It is also within this phase of constant conflict that the Konkan brahmin subcaste Chitpavan gradually managed their way up and eventually emerged as the Peshwas (the prime minister) under Chhatrapati Shahu. The emergence of Chitpavans as Peshwas resulted in further decentralisation of Maratha political authority, as the brahmanic political dispensation centred itself at Pune remained dominant until the extinction of the Maratha power in 1818.

What seems to be quite significant is the form and fulcrum upon which the Maratha sovereignty constituted itself. The post-Shivaji phase equally adhered to certain traditional constituents of kingship. Right from the time of Shivaji until Pratap Singh, the whole paraphernalia and rituals carried strong religious underpinning, and remained into continuous operation. The process mainly involved thread ceremony, coronation custom, gift-giving act, etc
which invoked tradition considerably in the changing context to provide legitimation to the political authority. Brahmanic presence always remained a much sought out element in the Maratha politics. Both the political centres of Maharashtra, namely Satara and Kolhapur, and the new political centre at Pune, remained representatives of the Hindu Dharma in many a manifestation than one.

**Satara And Kolhapur**

Just after Shivaji’s death, it was Sambhaji who managed to put down all the oppositions in his claim to Satara Chhatrapati. Although it was his brother Rajaram who had been quickly installed as Chhatrapati with the death of Shivaji. But Sambhaji, with the help of some leading and powerful Maratha families, was able to oust Rajaram, and coronate himself as the new Maratha king\(^2\). Sambhaji got along with his duty to expand the Maratha kingdom but not with much success. He however, secured the Pratapgad fort and others along the Ghat. Sambhaji continued the same Shivaji’s pattern of administration and there hardly seems to be any significant changes brought in the course of his short span of Maratha Chhatrapati. However, the inevitable confrontation with the Mughals was not much away now. It all

\(^2\) The coronation ceremony once again was performed with great extravaganza, see J.N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. IV, p. 243.
started with Sambhaji's generosity to give shelter to the Prince Akbar, the son of Aurangzeb. The prince had revolted against Aurangzeb for his loss of faith in him during the war against Rajputs in 1678. He not only revolted, but declared himself as the emperor in 1681. This infuriated Aurangzeb so much that he decided to deal the situation himself and landed up in the Konkan with a huge army to destroy the Maratha power. After a long tussle and a bid of defiance by Sambhaji, he was captured and imprisoned along with his son Shahu in the Mughal court. Eventually, Aurangzeb executed Sambhaji in 1689. The execution of Sambhaji gave enough opportunity to the Mughals to go all out in finishing the Maratha power. But the various powerful families of Central Konkan and Southern Ghats managed to take over Khandesh, north Konkan, and various forts on the way, but was not capable enough to destroy Maratha power completely.

In this thoroughly uncertain and flux situation, Sambhaji's death had created the problem of yet another legitimate successor to the Maratha throne. Now the main heir of Maratha throne will be either Rajaram or Tarabai. With the help of two young leaders, Santaji, Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadav, Rajaram ascended the throne at Raigarh.

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However, the fort was quickly besieged by the Mughal general, Dhulfiqar Khan. Rajaram had to flee and made his way to the far south, at Jingee. While on his way to Jingee, Rajaram conferred on Ramchandra Nilkanth, the amaty, a dictatorial power for the administration of the home territory and for carrying on warfare with the Mughals on the western front, while Rajaram started the new Maratha court of Jingee. He assumed the ensigns of royalty and appointed the council of ministers, the astha Pradhan, with an additional member added to its original strength. The new post, the ninth one, that of Pratinidhi, was created for Prahlad Niraj who continued to be the principal councillor of Rajaram. Rajaram obliged a lot many people, lavishly granted saranjams and watans, in his bid to create a large number of followers. It certainly led to the creation of a large army to fight the Mughals on their own account without putting too much financial strain on the Maratha state.

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4 See an interesting account of Rajaram's journey to Jingee, in V.S. Bendre (ed), Rajaram Charitam (Poona, 1931), pp. 6-18.


6 It was necessary for Rajaram to assume the insignia of royalty in the political sense for the protection of kingdom, see V.K. Rajwade, M.I. Sadhnen, Vol. XV, pp. 286, 347.

7 See The Ajnapatra, Vol. VIII, part I, April, JIH, (Madras, 1929), pp. 89-94; also see Brij Kishor, Tarabai and her Times (Bombay, 1963).

8 Ibid., pp. 41.
Although the Maratha government was well into the operation from Satara at the hand of Rajaram's trusted Amatyā⁹, but the other court located at jingee under Rajaram, was equally effective in dispensing all the administrative transactions, and kept the crown of Satara Chhatrapati well intact. It is quite significant to note that Rajaram assumed the ensigns of royalty in the interest of the state only when he found himself pressed up considerably by the Shambaji's wife, Yesu Bai.¹⁰ Infact he remained so sincere about the rights of Shahu that he never allowed himself to be crowned and equally refused to sit on the throne, and used only a village cot.¹¹ This act certainly speaks about the well inbuilt tradition which was preserved to keep the legitimacy of the crown intact. Rajaram managed to come back to Maharashtra only when jingee fell at last¹². All along it is also seen that the Mughals and Marathas continuously strove to win over the larger deshmukh families. It was, however, extremely difficult for the Mughals to win over the long term loyalty of various powerful families, who were in possession of many important forts and towns.

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¹⁰ Kishan, p. 105.

¹¹ Kinciad and Parsanis, p. 159.

Rajaram died at Singhad in 1699. His death once again created the problem of legitimate heir, as most of the claimants were too minor to succeed and be placed on the throne. It was the shrewdness of Tarabai which worked so well that she managed to champion the cause of her son, Shivaji II. However, the Amatya, Nilkant, was totally against this act as he knew that the real heir to the Maratha throne, Shahu is in the Mughal camp. He was trying all possible efforts to get Shahu back from the Mughals. But Tarabai became quite suspicious about Nilkant’s attitude. She felt that he is conspiring against her along with Shahu. So she decided to marginalise Amatya. She went on to perform the sacred thread ceremony and the coronation of her son, Shivaji II, at Visalgarh. Khafi Khan says, Tarabai as a mother of her son, became regent. She was a clever intelligent woman, and had obtained a reputation during her husband’s lifetime for her knowledge of civil and military matters. The king being minor, Tarabai arrogated all power in her own hands and personally looked all the important affairs of the state. From now onwards Tarabai equally became a very important figure in the Maratha politics. However, the tussle with shahu, the legitimate heir to the throne, equally seemed to be inevitable. Aurangzeb did contemplate upon the issue of releasing Shahu from the Mughal captivity but it could not be effected. While Shahu’s

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13 See Brij Kishore, opp.cit., pp. 64-65.
14 This passage of Khafi Khan is quoted in: Elliot and Dowson, p. 367.

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entry into the Mughal court and later having the protection of Yesu Bai and Balajee Punt remains quite curious.\textsuperscript{15} In fact, it is interesting to note that the emperor had himself become fond of Shahu. Shahu started attending the darbar daily. Once the emperor desired from Raja Jadhav of Deulgaon, to give his daughter in marriage to Shahu.\textsuperscript{16} But the Jhadav refused on the ground that Shahu compared to his status, has got nothing to claim for. After this remark, the emperor quickly conferred upon Shahu the sardeshukhi, 10\% of revenue, and raised him to the status of a deshmukh of deshmukhs, and made him a faujdar.\textsuperscript{17} This finally materialised into Shahu’s marriage with the Jhadav’s daughter. It is said that Shahu’s wedding was done with great pomp and splendour, with emperor himself lavishly spending on it. The sanad of the watan was granted to Shahu. Shahu was eventually released by Azam Shah \textsuperscript{18} on the condition that he remains loyal to the Mughals, and he in turn will get back the old samarajya of Shivaji along with the newly conferred rights over six subas in the Deccan by the emperor. Although the right over the Deccan took quite sometime for Shahu to regain.

\textsuperscript{15} An interesting account of Shahu’s entry into the Mughal camp can be found in, \textit{Sanpuri Bakhar}, published by Daftar-e-Diwani (Hyderabad, 150), p. 2.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{18} See Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII, P. 395.
Shahu's release greatly alarmed the reigning regent, Tarabai, as she anticipated her own authority, acquired under the guise of her son Shivaji II, threatened. Shahu gradually made his way to Maharashtra and managed to win over some strong supporters of Tarabai. Tarabai, on the other hand, made her all attempts to prove the legitimacy of her claim on behalf of Shivaji II. Tarabai strongly advanced the plea that her son had a better claim as Shivaji desired the succession of Rajaram. She further said that Sambhaji had lost Shivaji's kingdom and it was Rajaram who created an altogether new kingdom by his own efforts. However, the fact remains that Rajaram had publicly declared that he has assumed the Maratha kingship only on behalf of his nephew, Shahu.

Tarabai's vocal claim to deny the legitimacy to share for the Satara throne eventually led to the division of loyalty. Many well established families and generals switched over their loyalties from Tarabai to Shahu, and strongly supported Shahu's claim. A war with Tarabai seemed to be inevitable. The contest between these two rival claimants took place at Khed, and Tarabai was badly

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19 Elliot and Dowson, History of India, Vol. 7, P. 395.
defeated. Shahu quickly got all the important forts and the whole country north of Nira came under his possession. Shahu also decided to take hold of Satara, the seat of Tarabai’s government. After initial resistance from Shaikh Mira, a Muslim officer, Satara was captured. Although being very kind Shahu didn’t drag the matter too much. Shahu now assumed the royal title of Ksatriya Kulavamsa Sri Raja Shahu Chhatrapati. Shahu performed his coronation ceremony on the auspicious day of Jan, 1708. The coronation ceremony was performed with great pomp and grandeur, and the fresh ministerial appointments were made.

Badly beaten at Khed and Satara, Shahu still decided to offer Tarabai some liberal terms consistent with his own position as the Maratha Chhatrapati. Shahu was willing to cede the whole country to the South of Warna to Tarabai’s son. But Tarabai rejected Shahu’s offer and wanted to renew the contest with Shahu. So yet another campaign was launched, and Tarabai once again was defeated. Shahu also thought to leave the whole country south of Warna by the end of 1708. Tarabai equally decided to establish her territory south of Warna without further interfering Shahu’s

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21 Brij Kishore, opp. cit., p. 112; also see the shift of loyalty to Shahu in power, Tarabai kalin Kagad Paper, pp. 187-88.
22 Ibid., p. 112.
24 Marathi Riyasat, Vol. I, p. 20
interest. The capital of this new founded kingdom was fixed at Karveer, known as Kolhapur. Thus, a new kingdom under the rulership of Tarabai, regent of her son, Shivaji II, was established with independent authority.

All along this ongoing tussle between Tarabai and Shahu, it was Balaji Vishwanath, the Chitpavan brahmin of Konkan, who seemed to be greatly instrumental in strengthening Shahu’s position on the Satara throne. Balaji belonged to the Bhat family of Chitpavan brahmins. The family was hereditary Deshmukh of Darda Rajpuri on the Konkan coast. Balaji had earlier worked as a clerk in the salt works of the Siddis of Jangira, and later became subhedar of Pune and Daulatabad district. Balaji’s help to Shahu becomes significant in the context of Bahadur Shah’s march into the Deccan against Kambaksh who had assumed the signs of some reign. Shahu greatly helped him in defeating Kambaksh. Shahu utilising it as an opportune moment equally demanded the chouth of the six subas of the Deccan.

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25 A long section of Ajnapatra deals with the issue of statecraft, including the qualification of the king’s ministers. See S.V. Puntambekar, “The Ajnapatra or royal edict”, JIH, 8, 2 (August, 1929), pp. 207-14.


28 Elliot and Dowson Vol. VII, p. 408.
emperor although willing to grant had to delay due to Tarabai’s claim for those rights as well. The emperor eventually asked these two contenders to fight out for their rights, the victorious one will be granted the sanad.\(^2^9\) Since the shifting loyalty was becoming quite apparent due to the prevailing condition, Shahu’s own position was equally becoming difficult. It is in this difficult situation that Balaji Vishwanath proved to be of great help to Shahu. Balaji quickly won over Kanoji Angria, the main supporter of Tarabai. He also led Shahu’s army against Nizam in 1713-15. Between 1708-10, the Maratha land was totally coaxed into continuing warfare between the supporters of Tarabai and Shahu. Balaji very shrewdly managed to bring the fall of Tarabai. Now Tarabai and her son were imprisoned and Sambhaji and Rajabai were placed on the Kolhapur throne. Shahu quickly appointed Balaji in 1713 for his valuable service.

By around 1716, Balaji appealed the Mughal emperor to grant Shahu the right over the Deccan. However, it was Rafi-ad-Darfat, the Mughal emperor, who gave the imperial farman to Balaji in 1719.\(^3^0\) The treaty included, apart from Shivaji’s swarajya the chouth and sardeshmukhi of the six subhas of the Deccan, in return to Shahu’s promise to

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protect the land and punish the robbers. This treaty proved to be very crucial in giving solid base to the Maratha empire. This also led to the strengthening of Satara’s position and the emergence of Poona under Chitpavan Peshwas. Kolhapur under Sambhaji remained operative but not with much success. Shahu tried his best to conciliate his royal cousin who was being helped by Nizam. Shahu earnestly pleaded Sambhaji in one of his letters to forget the differences and get united. He said, "this kingdom is a gift from God. How can you hope to win success by seeking the protection of a Muslim if you wanted to have a separate kingdom of your own, you could have communicated your desire to us. But to ask a share out of what we have gained is not right. You should at once quit the Mughals and come back to us. We will ourselves grant you whatever you need most willingly, but to claim a share in a kingdom has no religious sanction." But this letter equally failed to have any desired impact upon Sambhaji II. Shahu found forced to march against Sambhaji in 1730. Sambhaji was badly routed and made his way to Panhala. This made Sambhaji’s position worst. In between Tarabai acted as a mediator, and Sambhaji was urged to make a personal visit to Shahu.

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32 Sambhaji equally believed that his kingdom was exclusively a divine gift despite his strained relationship with Shahu, see The Ajnapatra, *JIH*, Vol. VIII, Part I, April (Madras, 1929), p. 84.

The meeting between these two royal cousin took place 30 miles south-east of Satara. It was arranged in a village where a large open tent or shamiyana was splendidly pitched and decorated. Over two lakhs assemblage were present during the meeting. The meeting has been graphically narrated by G.S. Sardesai, "An auspicious moment on the afternoon of 27th February, 1731, Saturday, was fixed for the actual meeting. Amidst the music of bands and instruments, Shahu and Sambhaji rode on their richly caparisoned elephants towards each other through long files of well appointed troops, receiving their homage. As soon as they sighted each other, they dismounted from their elephants and coming closer embraced each other warmly, punctiliously observing the traditional forms prescribed in the shastra. They then proceeded to Darbar, where the members of the two parties made their bows. After the Darbar the two sovereign again mounted an elephant and together drove to the camp of shahu. A grand dinner was arranged in the evening after which rich presents were distributed. The two princes spent a few days in the camp freely conversing and enjoying the amusements of hunting, music, games and other pastimes, each doing his utmost to please each other. Some novel programme was arranged every day. The merriment of the occasion was heightened by its synchronising with the celebration of the Holi festival, which commenced on 12th March and for which the host and the guest moved to Shahu-nagar for additional rejoicings. The whole of Maharashtra glowed in rapture at
the unaccustomed sights of splendour that characterised the celebration which long lived in the memory of that generation”

This ceremonial meeting shows the royalty in pomp and grandeur, with lavishness and extravaganza. It also speaks 'the rituals of royalty'. The meeting thus resulted in the conclusion of warna treaty, as the river demarcated the boundary of the two kingdoms. It included the territory south of the river and stretching right upto the bank of Tungbhadra. Sambhaji’s territory remained quite independent in all essentials. Although the treaty didn't solve the internal discord of these two kingdoms. However, it also remained a fact that the Kolhapur Raja kept away from the campaign as well as share made by the Peshwas or Satara Rajas. In the whole affair between Shahu and Kolhapur, the Peshwas remained quite neutral in relation to the divided house of Chhatrapatis. The Peshwas thought that it was Shahu's business to choose a successor, and he simply has to obey and serve the master sitting on the throne.

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34 This detailed description is given, in Sardesai, NHM, Vol. II, pp. 132-33.

35 See A. Pawar (ed.), Tarabaikalin Kagadpatra (Kolhapur, 1969-72), Nos. 50, 122, 173.

36 M. Eliphinstone, Report from a Conquered Territory, p.16.

37 Brij Kishore, Tarabai and Her Times, p.167.
There were many attempts to bring reconciliation between these two divided house of Chhatrapati from the people of Satara and Kolhapur. But it never seems to have materialised.\(^{38}\) When Sambhaji died in 1760, the Peshwas attempt to bring Kolhapur under their authority failed as Jijabai adopted a boy and installed him as Shivaji III. But Kolhapur's existence had become very difficult due to the Peshwas growing authority after the death of Shahu. It was the British intervention in 1812 that the Kolhapur could maintain its authority against the growing threat of Peshwa and the other families. Kolhapur, even after the death of Shahu, kept its independent position intact with its own 'astapradhan council, now becoming completely hereditary.\(^{39}\)

However, the seat of real sovereign of the Maratha empire-Satara, faced a serious problem of heir after Shahu, who happened to be childless. Shahu had intended to install Sambhaaji of Kolhapur on the throne but only on the condition that he has issue and since Sambhaaji also had no issue so it was eventually, the posthumous son of Tarabai's son Shivaji II, Ramraja, who was crowned as the Satara king.\(^{40}\) But it was a ploy which Tarabai played so well that she imprisoned Ramraja in Satara fort for a long time. All she attempted to

\(^{38}\) Aitihasik Patravyahar (Poona, 1933), No. 246.

\(^{39}\) Pawar, opp. cit., Vol. 2, No.128.

secure and concentrate more and more power in her own hands. This situation eventually gave Peshwas enough opportunity and determination to transfer all the administration from Satara to Poona. Peshwa’s attempt to transfer the power was achieved at Sangola “A complete revolution was thus silently effected transferring all power from chhatrapati to the Peshwa”\(^\text{41}\). The Peshwas now left the Raja and Tarabai at their own mercy.

**Politico-Ritual conflict**

There is no denying the fact that Shahu’s death nearly weakened the position of Satara, and Power in absolute sense passed to the Peshwas. They became *de facto* ruler. However, the position of Satara as a moral political centre remained till early 19\(^\text{th}\) century. It was during this 18th century phase that we witness the Britishers also taking strong interest in Maratha politics with the Maratha’s defeat at Panipat in 1761. The Britishers also started nurturing strong political interest in the Deccan. They kept allying with the Peshwas and their various sardars, as well as the State of Kolhapur. But their relationship with the Peshwas often remained very strained due to their well consolidated authority. It was the last Peshwa, Bajirao II, who succumbed

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\(^{41}\) Sardesai has discussed at length the plan and conspiracy of Tarabai and the Peshwas eventual emergence at Sangola, *NHM*, Vol. II, pp. 305-312.
to the British pressure by signing the treaty of Bassein. He, in fact, became a royal pensioner under the British. However, the Britishers wanted to install Pratap Singh Bhonsle, the nominal descendant of Shivaji, as Chhatrapati at Satara. It was intended to marginalise the remaining position of Chitpavan. Britishers were trying to provide a counterpoise to the Peshwas. Pratap Singh was installed as Chhatrapati in 1818, by the British government of Bombay. His installation led to a long drawn out conflict between him and the Chitpavan brahmins. The point of conflict remained whether the elite Maratha families are entitled to call themselves as ksatriyas, and to have texts from the vedas for their religious ceremonies. This dispute formed an essential and important part of political struggle between Pratap Singh and the Chitpavans. While Pratap Singh's supporters strongly claimed a Rajput descent. They argued that the Peshwas are instrumental in eroding the ksatriya status of the elite Marathas from the time of their emergence as a political power. The continuous assertion of Pratap Singh as a ksatriya, and the descendant of Shivaji, made Chitpavans truly scared of losing their political and social status. Since they had been able to enforce the religious hierarchies, fairly well during the Peshwa period,

42 See M. Eliphinstone to Grant Duff, 8 April, 1818, in R.D. Choksey, The Aftermath 1818-1826 (Bombay, 1950) p. 255.
so they vehemently denied Pratap Singh’s claim of Maratha society shaped by a warrior and landowning elite. They simultaneously, kept questioning the very pedigree of Shivaji, Sambhaji and Shahu as true Ksatriya, and hence as real Chhatrapati. In fact, it was the attempt on the part of Britishers to deliberately create a power which can be easily pitted against the brahmin Peshwa, and to draw away the Maratha loyalties from the Chitpavan government. Apart from a conscious attempt to revive the house of earlier chhatrapati’s, the British policy also intended to increase Pratap Singh’s resentment at the treatment of his family by the Peshwas. Britishers had been able to instill in Pratap Singh that the Peshwas had usurped the real Satara authority. James Grant Duff, as the resident of Pratap Singh, greatly influenced the Raja’s mind by invoking the role played by most of the Satara Chhatrapatis. The Britishers also intended to keep the Satara authority under check, and don’t let the Chhatrapati to act as a supreme authority.

The conflict dragged on for long and Pratap Singh decided to coronate himself in 1836 similar to Shivaji. He equally asserted his lineage with the Udaipur Rajputs. But the assertion remained quite disputed, and his authority although remained in operation but with the help of British policy. He didn’t defy the brahmanic government in a mere symbolic form, but got down to some concrete issues in
maintaining the internal caste discipline. This assertion once again aroused the composition of Maratha as a category, and its widening fold over the years. The dispute once again shows the upward mobility, a claim to Maratha ksatriya status, and the manipulation of ritual status. The turn seems to be taking the shape of identity, with its older attributes of chivalry and kingly activities, as it found the category more flexible with various other groups claiming a Maratha status by the middle of the 19th century. The Maratha identity, apart from moving around Maratha Kunbi groupings, also unfloated itself to take some more social groupings into its fold.

**Chitpavan's Brahmanic Dispensation**

The brahmanic dispensation was dominated by the Peshwas, mostly of the Chitpavan subcaste. The emergence of a kingly state often required a range of new scribal talents. However, the kingdom construed along Hindu Dharma also needs its own ritual specialists to represent a claim to independent sovereignty and to incorporate lesser lineages into the framework of its own rule. As Bayly has also argued that it was very often this new demand for their scribal and ritual skills which propelled brahmins historically into a closer association with the secular ruling dynasties. This fact helped them to endow their own views and in the construction of a Hindu social organisation.
with the kind of unique and pan-Indian religious authority. Instead of representing purely spiritual and otherworldly, the key groups of Chitpavan brahmins by 18th century emerged as the all powerful Peshwa ministers of purely nominal Maratha kings as they employed new scribal techniques in the creation of an increasingly fiscal and centralised state. But this new ruling class headed by the Peshwas showed remarkably flexibility in its social policy and allowed to deepen the emerging synthesis of elite and popular traditions. This was achieved by securing the religious domain and by linking themselves to the centres of religious establishments on the one hand as well as by seeking new vocations far removed from their traditional callings as prescribed by the sacred texts and popular traditions, on the other.

The caste and clan networks have been identified by people like Burton Stein, Ron Inden and Nicholas Dirks as the basic building blocks of the proto-south-Indian state. Similar to their emphasis, this chapter seeks to explore the

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acquisition of political power by a particularly dominant caste (Chitpavan), and how that affected their standing within the caste hierarchy. This chapter tries to look into the rationality as well as the internal logic of brahmanical institution in this dispensation of the 'classic brahmanic kingdom' which comes into being only in the 18th century Maharashtra. A closer look into the practices and how that related to or responded to the exercise of power and legitimisation of authority seems pertinent to see in this brahmanic dispensation. This 'realm of ritual practice' in its brahmanical manifestation was constituted by the performance of rituals, ceremonies of honouring, gift-giving and other practices which defined the relations between the Peshwas and the Chhatrapati in a specific way. The constituting elements of this realm and the way they were played out in this new dispensation present to us an instance of the process of 'invention of tradition'. It can be argued that the brahmanical institutions used certain older traditions and practices for responding to a new situation. The new situation was the legitimisation of the authority of the Chitpavan ascent in the realm of politics.

While explaining the legitimacy acquired by the Chitpavan brahmans, this discussion would try to show the complex interplay of politics as it became enmeshed within

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the ritual practices evident clearly in the way the symbolic relationship develops between Satara and Poona. Burton Stein in his argument on the dualism of ritual and politics seems to bypass this issue by arguing that the relationship between the king and his subordinates was only that of ritual and therefore not political in character.\textsuperscript{48} In fact Nicholas Dirks has shown in his discussion on the relationship between Tondamian Rajas of Puddokotai and the Vijayanagar ruler, how the various insignia, emblems and ritual legitimated the authority of the lineage chiefs\textsuperscript{49}. He shows it very clearly that these became entrenched within the power configuration.

\section*{Rise of Chitpavans as Peshwas}

The emergence of brahmans as a powerful force in the Maharashtrian society dates back to the 16th century as is clear from the fact that a considerable number of brahmans were serving in the higher administrative posts in the Deccani Muslim kingdoms.\textsuperscript{50} Under Shivaji's reign, the Konkanasth or Chitpavan brahmans as well as the members of other two sub-scastes, Saraswats and Desasthas, occupied six

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[48] Burton Stein, \textit{Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India} (Delhi: Oxford, 1980).
\item[49] Nicholas B. Dirks, \textit{opp.cit.}, p. 123.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
out of the eight posts in the astha pradhan council. They were entrusted with the responsibility of provincial administration, while Prabhus often served as karkunś. Since the early period of Shahu, brahmin sub-castes seem to have figured prominently in his administration.

Among all these caste clusters, it was the Desasthas who enjoyed pre-eminence until the period of Shivaji. Later it was Balaji Vishwanath, a Konkanasth brahmin, who displaced them gradually. The Mughal emperor also has to acknowledge the Chitpavans as Prime Minister or Peshwa as Sardeshpande or the District accountant of the Deccan. But it was only in the 18th century, by 1730s, that some of the Chitpavan families which emerged as Peshwas became all powerful throughout the western Deccan. The legends and popular traditions which the Chitpavan believed, contest, that "Chitpavan" is synonymous with "Chitpohle", which literally means "scanning of the hear", and so they spoke of themselves as "heart-searced" or "heart-stricker", because the god Parashuram (India) did not grant all their prayers. Crawford records that the Chitpavans not thinking it to be a respectable title, "changed it to "chitpavan" or

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51 Ibid., p. 198.
52 N. Banhatti, Ajnapatra (Poona, 1874), p. 9.
53 C.M.G. Arthur Crawford, Our Trouble in Poona and The Deccan (Westminister, 1897), p.125.
"pure hearted" or "sinners pardoned". These Chitpavans were the followers of the Rigveda and Krishna (Black) Yajurveda. Their original habitat lay on the western coast of Rajapur and Kolaba, and their myths trace their ancestral origins back to the exploits of Parashurama. The Parashurama Charita, a historical biography of the Peshwas, describes the brahmin as the 'divine incarnation of Parshuram'. The Bakhar further says that, "Parshuram being the cultural hero of Maharashtra, also became the patron deity of the Peshwas". The rationale of the author of the biography, according to Wagle, is to play down the role of kshatriyas in founding the Maratha empire. Brahmin Peshwas here are endowed with divine attributes, leaving them with no need to invent any fictitious genealogies unlike the Kshatriyas. Thus the Caritra for Wagle becomes a 'Brahmin epic'. The Caritra narrates at one place how in the process of establishing their authority the Peshwas had to contain kshatriya Maratha rivals such as Dabhade, the Angres, the Bhonsales, the Gaikwads and most importantly check

54 Ibid., pp.126-127
57 Ibid., p. 12.
58 Ibid., p. 13.
effectively the activities of Tarabai and the descendants of the house of Shivaji, on whose behalf the brahmin Peshwas were acting in the first place.\footnote{Ibid., p. 14.}

However, the Chitpavans within the brahmin hierarchy occupied a low position as many legends regarding their origin tell us. The names Chitpavan, Chitpol, and Chipuln appear to have come from the town of Chiplum in Ratnagiri, their original and chief settlement, the old name of which is said to have been Chitpolan. They began to call themselves Konkanasths after 1715 A.D. when Peshwa Balaji Vishwanth rose to importance in the Maratha kingdom. Enthoven mentions that, "according to the Sahyadri Khand, Parshuram was so defiled by the slaughter of the Kshatriyas that Brahmins refused to perform any ceremonies for him. At that time, the bodies of 14 shipwrecked foreigners happened to be cast ashore by the sea which then washed the foot of the Sahyadri hills. These corpses Parshuram purified by burning them on a funeral pyre or chitra, restored them to life, taught them brahmin rights and made them perform ceremonies to free him from blood guiltiness. Parshuram wishes to reward his new priests and as the Deccan had already been given to the brahmins, he prayed the sea to spare him some of its domain. The sea agreed to retire as far west as Parshuram could shoot an arrow from the crest of
the Sahyadri. The arrow was shot and reclaimed a belt of land about 30 miles broad. The banks of the Vashisthi, about 40 miles of North of Ratnagiri, were set apart from the new brahmins, and in memory of the process by which they had been purified, they were called Chitpavans and their settlement Chitpolan". 60 This story however was gradually suppressed by the Peshwas who now enjoyed a sense of caste superiority due to their political prominence in the Maratha country. 61

Before the emergence of Chitpavans as a strong political force, their chief source of livelihood was agriculture and the performance of various religious rituals. In the early 18th century there took place a change in their occupation and some of them started migrating from Ratnagiri to Desh, Poona and other political and administrative centres. The brahmins of several other kulas also gained social and economic prominence as a result of the military or political talents demonstrated by them during the Peshwa age. 62 However, the Konkanastha brahmins had the monopoly of all the secretariat and Daftar offices and, "they recieved respectable salaries as well as the

61 Ibid., p. 242-43.
privileges of having their goods exempted from custom duties and ferry charges".63

Although brahmins in general have been brought into severe attack by British administrators, generals and residents; but they also at many points could not conceal their appreciation for them as for instance, Mounstuart Elphinstone remarks that, "the Brahmans are, mild, patient, intelligent on many subjects even liberal and enlightened".64 Crawford also observes that, "the Chitpavans are probably the fairest race in Hindustan often with blue or grey-green eyes; small delicately formed hands and feet; well-cut, intellectual features; and generally a look of breeding that distinguishes them in any company. They have always been notable for their intelligence and administrative ability".65 Chitpavans claimed "...a superiority over other Brahmans in descent as in physique and intellect".66 The rise of Chitpavans to dominance seems to be a result of extremely circumspect and methodical mode of conduct and was achieved through great industry, assiduance and a perfection of strategic generalship.67

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66 Ibid., pp.126,127.
67 A. Wink, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
It is also believed that Desasthas looked down upon Chitpavans. But it is the Devs of Cincvad, an important lineage of Maharashtra, who were responsible for raising the politically powerful Chitpavan brahmins to a status of ritual equality with the Desasthas. In 1736, the Dev was entertained in Pune on the occasion of the thread ceremony of, Sadashivrao (Bahusaheb), nephew of the Peshwa. The Dev's showed keenness to attend the ceremony of Konkanasth brahmins, their ritual inferior. The Devs sought strong connection with Morgav, (a pilgrimage centre) which established their sanction in religious terms. The link of Peshwas with Devs was perceived by people as enhancing the legitimacy of the Peshwas among them. This relationship however remains at the religious plane, but it is often through the invocation of such religious and spiritual acts that a caste or class derives its political legitimacy from the people at large. The act can further be seen in a very stylized meeting which takes place just outside Pune between the Dev and the Peshwa. The meeting has been beautifully narrated in an eyewitness account by Captain Moor who observes the details of this journey, 'the details of which seldom vary materially', and which tell to Moor the high degree of estimation the hereditary deity is held. Moor

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69 SPD, Vol. XXII, p. 171.
writes, "Gabajee Deo goes at least thrice a year, on fixed
days to Mooriwsher, a respectival town of a few miles beyond
Jejuri... One of the days is the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of Maug, commiserating
the year to the 31\textsuperscript{st} of January. He leaves Chinchoor pretty
early; and the Peshwas and the court apprised of his
approach, go forth to meet him, generally about half way
between hill called Gunnijkuda, two miles off the city. The
Deo rides in his palkee, attended (I speak now of the
present Deo), by a suwaree elephant, given him by the late
Peshwas, Madhao Rao, a few (perhaps dozen) of his own
domestic horsemen and about a hundred servants on foot; as
he approaches the Peshwa, his palkee is put down, and he
seats himself on a carpet with a secret stone, which he
never quits, in a box beside him. The Peshwa alights from
his palkee or elephant, advances towards the Deo with folded
hands, the posture of a suppliant, postrates himself and
kisses his feet. The Deo neither rises, nor makes a salaam,
but with his hands raised a little, with the palm downward,
makes a benedictory gesticulation, accompanied by a motion,
signifying his desire that the visitor may be seated. The
Peshwa and a few distinguished persons, such as Imrit Rao,
Chimna Appa, & c. sit, but at some distance, on the carpet.
Two or three questions and answers of supplication and
blessing are exchanged; and the Deo bestows on the Peshwa,
and others, a quantity of rice and dal, perhaps a coconut,
or such trifle. The Peshwa receives them, makes a humble
obeisance and takes leave. The Deo enters his palkee, and
proceeds, followed the Peshwa & c. by the bridge to the city. The Peshwa quits him near the palace, which the Deo never enters, nor the house of any mortal, but always finds his tents pitched at fixed station\textsuperscript{70}.

This description shows that how the Peshwas acknowledged the superiority of Devs. Such a devotion, according to Enthoven, was because of, "the Dev's favour in raising the Peshwas to a position of social equality among the Deccan Brahmins\textsuperscript{71}". The Peshwas gave gifts to Devs, (varsasnas) which overtime became a necessary part of the ritual exchange between the supplicant and the superior. Thus, Peshwas made greetings, paid homage and gave gifts - all in a well set ritually prescribed and closely regulated form. In this manner each of them reaffirmed each other's domain of precedence in the realm of temporal as well as spiritual powers.

\textsuperscript{70} Edward Moor, 'Account of an Hereditary Living Deity to whom Devotion is Paid by the Brahmins of Poona and its Neighbourhood', Asiatic Researches, Vol. 7, (Cosmos, Delhi, 1979), pp.388-89. Moor says that he eagerly embraced the opportunity to visit Poona in 1800 to collect information respecting this extraordinary family, which enjoys the distinction of and hereditary incarnation of the divinity.

\textsuperscript{71} R.E. Enthoven, Folklore of the Konkan, compiled from Materials collected by the late A.M.T. Jackson, Indian Civil Service (Delhi, Cosmos Publications, reprint, 1976). p. 45.
Chhatrapatis and Peshwas

The receding of Satara's significance as a main political centre can only be understood in the background of the relationship which developed between the Chhatrapati's and the Peshwas. The office of the Peshwa was first created by Shivaji and its seventh occupant was Balaji Vishwanath. The Peshwas office had been held by four different families before it became hereditary in Balaji Vishwanath's time after nearly hundred years from its creation.\(^7\) It is quite evident that the brahmins enjoyed fairly comfortable position in Maratha administration since Shivaji's times. However, the Peshwa's position in the council of eight ministers, was not at all hereditary. The asthapradhān council seems to have almost ceased to exist in the later phase of the Peshwa regime.

It is in this context that the rise of Balaji Vishwanath during the period of Shahu becomes significant. The period after Shivaji's death till Shahu's proclamation as Chhatrapati was in a state of flux. Shahu after the release from the imprisonment of Aurangzeb was faced with the problems posed by Tarabai, the wife of Rajaram and the regent of her son, Shivaji II. Balaji Viswanath's unflinching loyalty to Shahu won him the post of mutaliq on

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\(^7\) M.G. Ranade, opp. cit., p. 3.
the occasion of Shahu’s coronation, along with the title of Senakarte, or organiser of armies in 1708; and in the same year, he was assigned by Shahu half of the Moksha realised by Khanderao Dabhade.\textsuperscript{73}

Balaji’s successful attempts in sidelining the Kolhapur Raja, won him the great appreciation of Shahu, and Balaji was honoured with Sikkekatyar and the robes of Peshwaship.\textsuperscript{74} Shahu invested Balaji with the robes of office on Nov 16, 1713 at a place called manjir\textsuperscript{25}. The author of Caritabakhar puts the Peshwas usurpation of real power in Balaji Vishwanath’s own words “The amsadhari of Bhrug known as Balaji at that instance became perplexed. This earth in the past was given away as a gift to the Brahmins by me in a platter. How can I enjoy on my own? That which is given of ones own accord can’t be taken back. I shall consider using another person for my aim I shall myself do the entire work; the appropriation of Raja will remain with other man\textsuperscript{26}”.

\textsuperscript{73} G.S. Sardesai (ed.), SPD, Vol. VII, (Bombay, 1930-1934), No. 1.

\textsuperscript{74} MIS, Vol. IV, p. 34.


\textsuperscript{76} N. K. Wagle and A.R.Kulkarni (ed. & tran.), Vallabha’s Parshuram Caritra, opp. cit., p. 60.
The Chitpavans gradually worked their way up from a very humble and ordinary position to the headship of state and eventually emerged as the defacto rulers. Earlier in the official hierarchy, they occupied a rank second to the pratinidhis. For this reason, in the attainment of supremacy, they had first to eclipse the pratinidhi, other powerful groups and finally the Satara king. S.N. Sen points out that this transfer of authority from the master to the servant was accomplished so gradually and silently, “that the succession steps important as they were in relation to the whole move escaped all contemporary notice”\(^7\). The Peshwas combined the offices of Senapati and prime minister in their own hands, and had become indispensable to Shahu. But it was still very difficult to defy the Satara royal authority. The Peshwa remained submissive, and the prestige of the Satara king equally remained intact until Shahu. The defiance of king’s authority was seen only during the period of Ramraja, the successor of Shahu. Shahu’s authority was well evident when he removed Nana Saheb from the office, although only for a few days.

A British envoy to the Satara court reported in 1739, “that Bajirao has become so powerful that he takes small account of the Raja. As his power is uncontrolled by

\(^7\) S.N. Sen, *opp.cit.*, p.198.
whomsoever, the Raja is compelled to an exercise of an outward civility to him. The sentiments of most are that Bajirao has in view to throw off his allegiance to the Raja and "although the civil correspondence with the Raja may not be amiss, care must be taken that he is not solicited with what interferes with Bajirao whose authority in the court is even such, that in the absence of the Raja, and contrary to the advice of the seven councillors, he can enforce a complete obedience to his sole mandates." But it seems that the Peshwas did not derive their authority only due to their being brahmins, rather they exercised their authority as the authorised deputy of the Chhatrapati. Moreover, within the territories under their direct rule, the Peshwas were like the Chhatrapati, "the sole depository of the sovereign authority of the state".

The Peshwas in due course became so dominant that Lord Wellesly addresses the Peshwas as a 'Sovereign', and speaks of a 'Maratha Empire'. This observation by Wellesly points to the fact that perhaps Lord Wellesly was quite unaware of the role of the Raja of Satara. But then Wellesly is speaking of the period of Nana Phadnavis, "when the relations even in its ceremonial aspect had become one of

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79 S.N. Sen, ASM, p.121.
80 S.N. Sen, ASM, p.121.
81 E. Thompson, opp. cit., p. 8.

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equality between Chhatrapati and the king'. With the Sangola agreement, the position and prestige of Satara Chhatrapati was greatly marginalised. It comes through more clearly in H. Russell's letter to G.G. in 1810, he says, "All the treaties between us and the Maratha state are executed by the Paishwa only. We consider and treat him in all public transactions as the real legitimate head of the Marhatta Empire. We admit his seal and signature to give validity to the most solemn acts without any reference to the sanction of a superior authority. None of our public engagements recognise or suppose the existence of any such person as the Rajah of Satarah."

This letter clearly speaks how the Peshwas had become strong enough to overshadow the presence of Maratha Chhatrapati. However, the fact remains that despite Peshwas overgrown importance in power and authority, the Chhatrapatis remained the nominal head of the Maratha empire. It is evident in Melet's letter to G.G., "Now though the Peshwa is the executive head of the state, yet are his rank and titles merely delegatory from the Rajas of Satara".

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82 H. Russell to Governor General, PRC, Vol. 7, p. 472.
84 Malet discourses on the correct titles to be used in the correspondence between the Peshwa and the Governor General, see PRC, Vol. II, pp. 165-67.
It remains an act of urgency to keep seeking the legitimacy from Satara kings. This involves the Peshwas to get into various kinds of gift-giving ritual performances, celebration of ceremonies, always keeping persons at the service of the king. The Peshwas continuously impressed their subservience and allegiance to the Satara Raja. The gifts, rituals and symbols constituted the main elements through which the Peshwas maintained their relationship with Chhatrapatis and sought their legitimacy by seeking the robe of honour as was the case even between the Mughal emperor and Satara kings. The form of appointment of Peshwas was done by investing them with the robe of honour, by granting clothes, from the period of Shivaji onwards and continued till the extinction of the Maratha empire. Even Bajirao II could not do away with this formal ceremony and Chhatrapati Maharaj had no trouble in granting him sanction the authority already seized, even if the grantees were usurpers. The Peshwa Madhavrao I wrote to Achutrao Ganesh that, “five 66th pratinidhi as before has been granted to Shriniwas Pandit”, requesting him to send the Pandit to the Raja to receive clothes of Honour. In 1792-93 Peshwa Madhavrao II ordered Rs. 1000/- to be spent for celebrating the birth of a son to Anandibai, wife of the reigning king. Similarly the Peshwa granted Rs. 25000/- for the funeral.

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85 S.N. Sen, ASM, p.197.
ceremony of Raja Shahu. In the same year more than Rs. 8000/- were spent at the time of new king’s coronation.\(^{86}\)

The pulls and pressures were so strongly maintained by the Chhatrapati of Satara that the Peshwa Bajirao II once observes, "the same forms of external respect towards the Raja have to be maintained similar to the days when Satara had efficient sovereign state, and the Peshwa only his minister".\(^{87}\) Russell also observed that, "The change that has taken place in the relative power and consequence of the Raja and the Peshwas, have made no difference in their personal behaviour towards each other. The Raja maintained in the ceremonial of his court all the state of a real sovereign; and the Peshwa approaches and treats him with the same mark of respect that are paid by the most dutiful subject to the person of the most despotic prince".\(^{88}\)

Hence, it would not be correct to speak on our part that the Raja of Satara although relegated to a symbolic authority, still maintained the pulls and pressures which were always present and it was difficult for the Peshwas to become the sole sovereign without seeking sanctity from the king.


\(^{87}\) H. Russell to Governor General, 30th June 1810, PRC, Vol. VII, p. 472.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., p. 472.
The meeting which takes place between the Peshwas and the Chhattrapatis in 1797 is further indicative of the fact that despite the diminishing importance of Satara's political role, the sanctity of sovereignty of the Peshwas remained rooted in Satara only. This meeting has been graphically narrated by H. Russell in a letter to the Governor-General. He observes "when the Peshwa approaches Satara, the Raja sends some person to the distance of two or three miles to meet him. This person conducts him to the raja's palace in the town. Upon his arrival at the gate of the palace, he is met by some of the Raja's Huzarats (personal troops) in that way to the Raja's Huzarats (personal troops) who go through the form of tying his hand tightly together with a handkerchief in the posture of respect and introduces him in that way to the Raja's presence...The Raja in addressing the Peshwa calls him mostly by his name Bajirao or frequently with greater kindness and familiarity simply 'Bajiba'. In public the Peshwa never sits in the Raja's presence; and even in, private he sits only when the Raja desires him to do so. If the Peshwa is accompanied to Satara by the Raja of Berar or any of the other Maratha chieftains, who nominally hold directly of the Raja of Satara, they are received with him into the Raja's presence, with forms generally resembling those observed by the Peshwa, but varying in some degree according to their different gradations of rank. If the Peshwa is accompanied by Holkar or Scindia (Maratha
sardars) or any of the chieftains who hold of the Peshwa and not of the Raja, none of them are entitled to the honour of being admitted to the raja’s presence. The Mankaris who are the ancient military tenants of the Mughal empire are upon all occasions entitled to be received into the Raja’s presence, and although the Peshwa himself does not sit before the raja in public, the Mankaris do. In all external forms and ceremonies of respect the Mankaris still preserve a superiority above the Peshwas. Whenever a Mankari meets the Peshwa, the Peshwa makes the first Salam (greetings); and if any personal intercourse takes place between them upon the arrival of a Mankari at Poona, the Peshwa must pay the first visit”.

Thus, the above description of the ceremony brings out quite clearly the Peshwa’s subordination to the Chhatrapati. It tells us about the importance of Satara as the Peshwa even becoming politically significant had to go to Satara to seek sanction from the Chhatrapati. But that this sanction was more in the realm of ritual relationship doesn’t mean that it was a mere show. In fact, the ceremony of visiting each other’s place was intended to strengthen and maintain the relationship of Peshwas with the Chhatrapatis. Russell

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89 Russell to Governor General, PRC, Vol. VII, pp. 473-474. This particular description of Russell speaks the leading forms which regulated the personal intercourse between the Rajah and the Peshwa, in the curious and almost unprecedented relation in which they stand towards each other.
further comments, "upon the occasion of every visit the Paishwa pays to Satarah, he gives an entertainment to the Rajah and his family; and recieves one from the Rajah in return..., and even while he eats the Paishwa stands before him with his hands joined, and formally goes through 'all the duties of a servant.' When the Rajaha visits the Paishwa's house, the Paishwa makes a presents of jewels and clothes to him,' and to each of the persons by whom he is accompanied according to their respective ranks". The political supremacy of Chhatrapati was always affirmed with his sole right to invest the new Peshwas with the robe of honour. 90 Each Peshwas had to receive from the rajah the Khilaut, or dress of honour. 91 The presence and power of the Chhatrapati is further evident that even in the conquered areas, the Marathas thought their duty to gurard the authority of the old rulers in form and presented themselves as mere representatives. 92 Peshwa's campaign outside also needed the sanction of Satara Chhatrapati. Even in a situation when the politics was being controlled by the Peshwas at Poona, it was Satara and the ceremony which invested the Peshwas with the sanction to exercise royal power.

90 SSRPD, pp. 4, 226, 231.
91 S.N. Sen, ASM, p. 113.
92 Ibid., p. 291.
Religio-Cultural Attributes of Sovereignty

Although factions, conflicts and control over the land revenue characterised the 18th century power struggle, but well beneath the legitimacy of the crown remained certain important religio-cultural attributes which went on to give sanctity as well as legitimacy to the new power groupings in the 18th century Maharashtra. The new power-pattern remained greatly tied to one established and well rooted authority of the land. Most of the power centres which came into being around 18th century, always derived the moral sanctity to its authority from the cosmic authority of the great Mughals. By around 18th century the Mughal power no more remained so politically effective and operative as it had been earlier. But it continued to have its symbolic reverberations in various forms of authority and administration evolved by new caste and clan groupings as well as the break away Mughal governors all around the subcontinent. Infact, the umbrella of Mughal imperial universalism was strongly spread over the emerging sub-politics, Hindu and Muslim alike. Even in the late 18th century, the new regional rulers were acting in the name of the Mughal Padsah and competing with each other for exalted Mughal titles, such as amir-ul-umara or wakil-i-mutlaq.\(^{93}\) A

\(^{93}\) Marathas equally strove a lot for the Mughal titles, see Wink, Land and Sovereignty, pp. 147-148; while Rajput attitude towards the Mughals could be seen in, ziegler’s “Some Notes on Rajput
similar imperial legacy, that of Chingiz Khan and Amir Timur, was found in Central Asia, where the great Turko-Mongol empires had already passed into oblivion.\textsuperscript{94} Any emerging authority had to seek legitimacy which could only be sanctioned by reference to the sublime Padshah. Hence the "emperor of the age" and "shadow of god on earth" could be imprisoned, mutilated or even killed, but never fully dispensed with as a source of legitimacy.\textsuperscript{95} So the politico-idiological maxim of the Mughal empire was continously guarded by the new regimes. Even the great Shivaji also identified his kingdom as a Vatan or zamindari right, derived from the Mughal empire.\textsuperscript{96}

The Maratha power of the 18th century showed all their keenness in seeking legitimacy from the Mughal rule. They often remained subservient in their relationship with the Mughal emperors, clearly seen in their correspondence with the Mughal authority. The emperors of Delhi was seen by the Marathas in a very high esteem as 'the lord of the


\textsuperscript{95} For the sacrosanct authority of the Mughals and its presence even till 19th century, see F.W. Buckler, \textit{Legitimacy and Symbols} in M.N. Pearson (ed.), \textit{The south Asian Writings of F.W. Buckler} (Ann Arbor, 1985), pp. 43-75.

\textsuperscript{96} See MIS, 15, No. 340.
The Marathas subservience is further seen in King Shahu’s objection of the Peshwa’s attempt to build the Delhi gate facing north. He clearly felt the defiance of the Mughal authority by doing this act. The Mughal emperors were often conceived as Sarvabhave, the lord of the land, similarly Balaji Janardhan or Nana Fadnis and BajiraoI referred the emperor as Prithvipati. Infact when shahu was released from the Mughal camp, he informed Tarabai that his claim to the Maratha throne, has the approval of the Mughal emperor. However, with the defeat of the Marathas in 1761, this form of subservience receded into mere reference, particularly in agreements and official treatises. The symbolic reference of Mughal emperor remained intact in most of the arjis and petitions, made by the Peshwas as well as Satara Rajas. The same situation was witnessed when the Peshwa government became too powerful that it forced the Satara royalty to retreat into a symbolic as well as moral authority, particularly after the death of shahu. By around 1751, the Satara chhatrapati was stripped off its power and

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97 See N. Banhatti, Ajnapatra, Ch. 1.
98 S.N. Sen, Administrative System, p. 112.
99 See, for example, K.N. Sane (ed.), Aitthasik Patrenyadi Vagaire (Poona, 1889), No. 32, while Nana and Bajirao I’s reference of the emperor could be seen in, The Autobiography of Nana Faranvis, p. 167; SPD, 14, No. 51.
100 G.S. Sardesai, Balajivishwanath, p. 34.
remained virtually a prisoner in the Satara fort. But, the symbolism of its authority was hardly renounced as evident in a letter from the Peshwa's brother Chimmaji Ballal to the Chhatrapati where the latter is addressed as Sarvabhaum. We also find that the Chhatrapati remained the fountain head of the Maratha power by his very right to invest every new Peshwa with the Khilat or Robes of honour. The Peshwa's orders were generally confirmed by the Chhatrapati's.

The other important aspects of the royalty of power had its expression in variety of land grants to the sacred and religious establishments. It has been an old tradition in India to grant land and sometimes cash as well to the religious institutions, particularly to the temples as well as to the brahmans. The religious grants happened to be an act of eternal merit in getting along with the dictates of Dharma. The Maratha Kingdom became known, much before the rise of the Peshwas, 'as the rajya which is beneficiant to

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101 See Sardesai's, NHM, Vol. III, p. 455, where Nana Padnis even thought of Satara House as a costly appendage with no duty to perform. Nana, infact, curtailed the allowances of Shahu II.

102 See Nandurbarkara and Dandekar (ed.), Sivadigvijaya, p. 247, the word sarvabhum is associated with Maratha chhatrapati as well. This letter of Chimmaji Ballal could be seen in, Sardesai's MIS, Vol. II, No. 418. Also see, S.N. Sen's extract from Chitnisi Bakhar, in Siva Chhatrapati, p. 199. In an interview with poet Bhusan, the Delhi emperor syas, "I am a Sarbahum".

103 See SSRPD, 9, No. 122; 4, No. 226.
God and Brahmans'. The 18th century brahmin regime abounds in its liberal religious pursuits; the grants of land, Dakshina to brahmins, and all other acts relating to Dharma and Adharma, were strongly preserved and was rather enhanced during the Peshwa regime.

The Maratha swarajya remained very generous all through in granting the land, and becoming the custodian of Dharma. As we know that the post of Pandit Rao or Danadhyaksha was created by Shivaji, for stricly the purpose of grants, and taking care of the adherence of Dharma by the common people. But this office of Pandit Rao seems to have been obliterated during the period of Sambhaji. He rather entrusted the 'plenipotentiary power' of his kingdom to one of his great favourites and poets Kavikailash. Infact, he virtually ran Sambhaji's administration and was greatly responsible for Sambhaji's failure. The striking aspect of Sambhaji's tenure could be seen in his own respect to the saint Ramdas. Apart from Shivaji, he also issued an order to his Desadhikari of prant Malkapur, asking him to continue the Inam of Lord Hanuman at chaphal to saint Ramdas. Similarly, Sambhaji also ordered the Desadhikari of Prant Satara to give 11 Bighas of fertile land in each of eleven villages granted as

104 Quoted in, A. Wink, Land and Soverignty, p. 232; also see Ajnapatra, JIH, I, April (1929), p. 95.
105 TKKP, No. 143.
Inam to Raghuwanth Dev Swami, who was in charge of the establishment of saint Ramdas at Chaphal. Sambhaji's minister, Ramchandra Pant, constructed a shrine at the place where Ramdas was cremated. However, Sambhaji asked to construct a bigger shrine in place of earlier one. While Rajaram, sambhaji's successor, invested all such powers to his Sachiv and the trusted Amatya, when he was leaving Maharashtra for Jinge. The Kolhapur Raja also kept granting the land earlier in Poona, and later in his own dominion. Moreover, the grants became much more frequent during the period of Shahu and the Peshwas. The Devasthan inam grants comprised of several villages, was also granted to the temple or popular shrines. Infact the land grants to religious establishments had become so deep founded prerogative of 18th centruy royalty that when Britishers took over power from Bajiro II, in 1818, the collector of Poona H.D. Robertson reported to the Decean Commissioner for renewing the land grants. The extract of Robertson's letter to M. Eliphinstone reads like this: 'on the auspicious day of Parva I ordered the commencement of public worship on old footing in Parbati and other pagodas dependent of the city'. Mr. Robertson wanted to deduct the amount spent on

107 Ibid., p. 56.
religious establishments. But he felt 'for the sake of few thousand rupees, I would endanger or rather not eradicate, any lurking wish for Bajee Rao's re-accession to the Masnud'. So, he ordered to carry things as before.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 221-222.}

Eliphinstone apprehended things so correctly that any fundamental change inherited from the Peshwa government may lead to natural discontent among the inhabitants despite many misededs of the earlier regime. So he strongly emphasised to keep up all the traditional relations of customary honour and gift-giving act in rallying the Marathas around the new government.\footnote{See Sardesai (ed.), Poona Affairs, PRC, Vol. 13, Part II, 1816-1818 (Bombay, 1953), p. IX.}

The marathas continously strove to build their power along Hindu Dharma. In the 18th century phase it found its overt manifestations in various forms, particularly discussed in the 4th chapter. But despite their attempts to get along with their regional faith, within the ambit of universal Hindu Dharama, they always expressed their nominal subservience to the Mughals and also remained an enthusiastic partner in the Perso-Islamic political culture. Their continous association with the Mughal empire in one or the other form, gave them the real political leverag to build up their one power along their religious traditi
Conclusion

By around 18th century the power-pattern in Maharashtra seems to be distinctly decentralised. Apart from certain well characteristic features, the new regimes remained imbroiled into constant conflict and factions to dominate others on the way in becoming independent sovereign. This equally provided a short of cross-check in balancing the power and authority. The three important power centres in Maharashtra with all the attendant attributes of sovereignty led to the development of the region at a very specific plane, gradually forming itself into a broader sense of regional power. Moreover, the zeal to get along with the Hindu Dharma remained quite instrumental in identifying them as a power grounded in their religious faith and belief. The desire to seek the custom, etc. clearly shows the various ancillaries of the Hindu Dharma into constant practices. The regimes not only guarded the 'rituals of royalty' rather they went on enhancing the pomp of royalty, evident in their ceremonial, ritual and political relationships with each other. Although remaining generally within the prevalent power-pattern of the 18th century India, the contenders of power in Maharashtra invoked religion, ritual and ceremonials to the extent that they represented their powers more as 'Marathas' than Chhatrapatis or Peshwas. Despite their avowed subservience to the Mughal emperor, they represented their sovereign self
along their Dharma with enough of tolerance and conciliating attitude to let others faith equally proliferate. By realising enough of revenue and booty from the conquered territories to represent the medieval logical corollaries of state formation. The varied power-pattern equally resulted in uplifting some more marginalised sections of society as evident in the politico-ritual conflict of Pratapsingh with the Chitpavan brahmins. By now the category Maratha itself gets considerably widened to bring in more and more left out streams of society into its fold.

The emergence of brahmins as an independent power at pune once again speaks the resilience and adaptive attitude of the brahminical traditon. They now not only asserted their ritual prerogatives but political acumen as well. They certainly tried to marginalise other sections but the 18th century context itself was so fluid that there were enough of avenues for others as well to emerge and put a check on the reigning authority. This came through more clearly in the Maratha expansion all around India where the Peshwa’s sardars were instrumental in taking the Maratha banner to other territories, and simultaneously asserting their authority, it is discussed particularly in the fifth chapter. Tradition remained in constant invocation to provide legitimacy to the rule, and also in constant reinterpretation to dispense the changing context.