Conclusion

The present exercise unfolds certain issues in relation to crown and community quite clearly. The subjective dimensions, in the case of Maharashtra, seems to have considerable proximity with the sense of community. The very shape and construction of region is also apparent in Maharashtra's regional shape along objective dimensions which started vigorously from the late 16th century onwards. Many important ingredients went together with the development of region before the objective factors found to be quite crucial in shaping the Maratha's regional identity. While it also becomes clear that along with region's political and economic development, the Maratha's emergence coincided with the growth of the medieval variant of Hinduism, known as bhakti movement. This movement, in Maharashtra, was called as Warkari movement which was quite instrumental in creating a social condition, and knitted many diverse sections of the land into a homogeneous whole. Its appeal along socio-religious line found fervent echo and considerably bridged the gulf between various sections of the society. Warkari movement, similar to the bhakti movement all around India, may not have been effective enough to put down the socio-religious prerogatives of brahmanical institution; but it certainly compelled the brahmanical tradition to rationalise its overbearing ideology by bringing it into constant surveillance and scrutiny.
Significant, however, is that the bhakti movement led to the growth of saint-poet's tradition which in the context of Maharashtra manifested in the series of saint-poets, pir-faquirs, sadhu-swamis existence throughout the 17th, 18th as well as early 19th century. Their association further with the ruling regimes constantly pressurised the sovereign and ruling elites to abide by the dictates of Dharma, in keeping up the moral and religious sanctity of the kingdom intact. This was also connected with the issue of legitimation from the people in general as the religiosity became quite pervasive throughout the land.

Brahmanism, here, equally found enough to derive out of certain important moorings of the bhakti movement, as it went-on to build brahmanic kingdom along classical percepts and traditional rituals. Its existence found out to be so essential that the very construction of crown slided into the classical constituents of kingship. The ideology of kingship more often sought to sanctify its existence by adhering to the attributes of Indian classical texts. The maxims of the texts enjoined upon the king and the brahmin to relate each other in invoking Dharma with enough of latitude, and guard it from getting thoroughly subsumed under the overarching Perso-Islamic culture. This comes through very clearly in Shivaji's own attempt to become a king and the realm he initiated. He flaunted the brahmanical obduracy and built up a kingdom out of the base provided by
the lower sections of society, but sanctified by the religious underpinnings under the guidance of brahmanical institution. He managed to wield each group so well that his own pedigree of being a shudra got a rational explanation where the brahmanical institution itself came down to his rescue and geneologically proved his Ksatriya origin. This, then, led to the hammering of Maratha's exclusiveness with mere Ksatriya status and forced the very category to unfold its base. The Marathas, hence, went through many historical phases, and by around 19th century it had become wide and strong enough to launch a non-brahmanical movement as well in Maharashtra.

The brahmanical tradition's resilience found its overt manifestation through their own classic kingdom at Pune. Brahmnism now stepped beyond their ritual roles and defined themselves along political roles as well. The brahmin subcaste, chitpavan, in particular, so assiduously combined their new roles with the traditional one that the realm also came be known as 'brahman rajya'. The royalty in the new realm was greatly ritualised, alongwith pomp, pageantry and ceremonials characterising the 'brahman rajya' in more intense and overt form. But the overambition to turn swarajya into samrajya equally dealt enough upon the brahmin rulers that they found it extremely imperative to accommodate rites and prerogatives of the new emerging elites under their own protection. The brahmins equally had to be the sharer of

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sovereignty in guarding the various political privileges. Thus, the brahmanical tradition entered and initiated itself into a compromise with the rising social groups, and had to counterbalance the emerging social contradiction. This was evident in the expansion of geographical frontier where the Peshwas and various sardars always remained at crosscheck due to many potentially strong contestants of power around the subcontinent.

This external expansion also showed the assimilation and amalgamation of Maratha Hindu culture with the culture of the conquered population. The Marathas, however, proved to be more long lasting than others more due to their military might, administrative skill and due to their constant representation of Hindu Dharma. They found out to be quite hospitable in areas like Malwa, Gujarat, Nagpur, Indore, Gwalior, Bundelkhand and extreme south to the places like Madurai, Tanjore and Trichonapally. They equally remained a strong force in Rajasthan and Hindustan, but not strong enough as they derived the kind of footage in these places. They managed to establish their administration, tradition and the invocation of Dharma considerably better than other successor states of the century.

All along this enterprise the 'Maratha' banner found to be more in representation than the social and political pedigree of a sovereign. Their political and economic
interest in the conquered areas were done under the banner of 'Maratha' rulers than the brahmin Peshwas, Scindia, Holkars, Gaikwads, etc. The brahmin rulers despite keeping away from the 'Maratha' category found it too essential and imperative to keep the Maratha banner intact in representation as it rationalised their political standing to the people of the region, and to the people beyond the region as well.

The 18th century Maratha polity certainly shows the distinctly decentralised character of power and authority. This very dispersed pattern was also instrumental in shaping the Maratha identity as the emergence of various power centres of Maratha branch within Maharashtra and beyond, broadened the Maratha's base as well as its representation. It led to the uplifting of various historically marginalised sections in such a way that they found more acquainted with Maratha tradition and administration than Chhatrapatis, Peshwas and sardars.

Indeed all along the construction of crown and community, the elemental configuration of medieval politics around conflict, factions and tensions remained too pervasive to be subsumed under their religion and culture. Each representation of crown reflected the nature and form of conflict well inbuilt into the pattern of power, not only in Maharashtra but all around the subcontinent. It equally showed the significance of the established political centres.
which was often needed to provide the legitimacy to the emerging power centres.

Furthermore, the construction of crown and community, as pointed out earlier, remained greatly tied to the various rituals, ceremonials, pomp and pageantry. Although these were the important ingredients of cultural context of power all around India, the Marathas found these equally demanding to express the royalty in a much more extravagant manner, and also to define the political hierarchy, positions and privileges vis-à-vis other ambitious and powerful sections. The rituals, of sacred nature or along Dharma, was often intended to derive legitimacy to rule from the masses, and the attempt to identify themselves along Dharma in guarding their own identity and perservin the religious heritage of the land as well. Pomp and pageantry of the political sovereign not only spoke the royalty of the crown but it was also intended to reflect the prosperity of the realm despite some unreceptive socio-condition of the kingdom at times.

Yet quite striking remains the religious moorings of crown and community, where Hinduism under the Marathas found its wider representation. The Maratha's strivings along Dharma shows the strong desire to carry and preserve the essence of Dharma. Hinduism, thus, seems to be preserving and incorporating its essence and elements under the ambit of universal Perso-Islamic culture. Although adhering to the
prevalent attributes of Hinduism, the Maratha’s articulation of their religion and their conscious use and representation in the drive to create their own politico-cultural identity, did find its regional flair due to their geographical landscape and due to their distinct physiographical character as well. It shows how the emerging political identity floated certain religio-cultural artifacts which eventually culminated into a historical processes, whereby it constantly sought the justification of its concealed identity against the dominant culture. This growth and domestication of one’s faith into another, either through Maratha’s long historical association with the Deccani Muslim kingdoms, and their adoption of various Mughal political-administrative practices into their own, shows the sophisticated and high point of maturity; where the Maratha’s representation as ‘fiercest Hindus’ co-existed admirably well, and broadened the very base of their self identity. Despite religiosity permeating the components of crown, yet it remarkably retained its secular character, well evident in their government and administration.

Moreover, we find that the important thread running in tying up these elements together to give base to crown and community was the invokation, invention and reinterpretation of tradition. Tradition remained in constant invokation with the use of rituals, ceremonials, pomp, and the constituents of crown. But significant is it’s reinterpretation in the changing context, where, apart from preserving its essence,
it reinterprets or widens itself enough to give proper rationality to the political authority and to the construction of identity. Tradition was invoked in both, secular and sacred aspects, to put up also as a counterpoise to the alien culture, whether represented by the Mughals or later by the Britishers. Tradition often found invented when judicial institutions retreated back in resolving the newly cropped-up issues, and used many ancient forms and methods to dispense the justice. Tradition equally gave enough substance to the development of community identity, whereby it built-up the political praxis and invoked religious practices to the extent, that it gave a social section its own political as well as cultural identity. This very development of identity along region in the beginning, and later its wider representation in political, social, cultural and religious forms, created the sense of Maratha community. Though community remains such a vague concept that it cannot have its representation in anything categorical, but can have its manifestation along some closed as well as wide forms and practices of a homogeneous social group, who, however, remains considerably heterogeneous in its composition. So the sense of community, in the case of Marathas, found more its manifestation in the form of 'symbolic' entity, where religion remained relatively instrumental, in defining the identity and legitimising the political aspirations of the region.