PREFACE

The present thesis arose out of my continuous keen concern with the historical literature on 18th century India. Since my M.A. days I remained considerably stimulated with the ongoing royal battle between Aligarh School and the Revisionist Marxist writings on the 18th century India, the latter generally done in England and America. Their continuous dialogue with each other instigated me to carve out my own space in bringing their unresolved conflict at the crossroad. In pursuing my latent interest I did a seminar paper on the historiography of the Marathas with Professor Muzaffar Alam. I dwelt into the various aspects of this ongoing battle, and gleaned through some left out space, which provided me some important issues to go ahead at the M.Phil stage under the guidance of Professor Dilbagh Singh. On the way to my M.Phil completion, what generally struck me is the religio-cultural base along with other important factors in understanding the political sovereignty in 17th and 18th century India. I found tradition endowed with tremendous repertoire in unleashing the religio-cultural moorings of a region and providing strong fulcrum upon which political authority could be interpreted. Tradition seemed to be repeating and reinterpreting often in putting up enough of wage against any attempt of absolute annihilation exerted by the changing milieu. It made me quite curious to dig out the seemingly varied tentacles of tradition in comprehending the complexity of political authority. The power also seemed to be drifting down haphazardly in lifting up the historically marginalised souls of Maharashtra as well as in shaping up the traditional institutions in the changing context.

The endeavour certainly ventures beyond the conventional boundaries, but restraints itself, from becoming a mere nudge and pull, with the shifting and drifting style of history as a discipline itself, in the last one decade. Rather, it reveals the genuine substance and artefacts spread well over the region and into the literatures available. My continuous concern with the Maratha history also remained due to its long time span and its wide geographical extent. Furthermore, my field trip to Pune, twice in particular, reminded me the strong historical
pride which the Maharashtrians derive out of their history. It had enough upon my mind to delve deep into the historicity of the Marathas in coming up with something substantial. Today, Shivsena may flare into regional and communal overtones out of its intended interpretation of the Maratha history, but Shivaji remains a historical symbol in many a manifestations than one, and religiosity remained too secular than communal in Medieval milieu. The Pune city still dwells in deep religiosity despite the deepening of volatile consumerism, and history equally remains a most sought out dwelling despite mushrooming Modernism around the region.

Comprehending 18th century form of crown and community at the edge of the twenty first century, certainly remains an exciting venture, due to the complexity of the age as well as due to the continuously changing conceptions and perceptions. The age itself reverberates in so many forms that the consequent tentacles of Alvin Toffler's `the third Wave, 'Fredrick Jameson's 'late-Capitalism', Daniel Bell's, `post-Industrialism', and Francois Lyotard's `post-Modernism' seem to be jostling at a frantic pace in its drive to carve out its own space. The whole consumer-capitalist ambience dwells deep into innumerable images and metaphors alongwith computer-internet's relentless coding and decoding of language and culture to the extent that the past sometimes balloons as a romantic remnant of the twenty first century.

It seems now extremly imperative to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who helped me out in completing this thesis. Firstly, I express my deep and sincere gratitude to my Guide, Professor Dilbagh Singh. He remained so patient all through that at no stage he exerted upon my mind in completing the work. He extended all his cooperation in pushing me through all the technicalities and finalities of the thesis. He remained quite patient and lenient in giving me enough of freedom to go ahead with my free style of writing. He earnestly went through all the chapters in handing me over with much needed comments and significant suggestions. I feel truly unable to dispense with the freedom and expertise which he offered me all along the way. Indeed I feel greatly indebted to his patient and scholarly guidance in enabling me to complete this thesis.
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