INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

“If a state was constructed by constructing a king, a king was constructed by constructing a god”.

Clifford Geertz

“Power is like the wind, we cannot see it, but we feel its force. Ceremonial is like the snow; an insubstantial pageant, soon melted into thin air”.

David Cannadine

Clifford Geertz’s eloquent expression shows the king dwelling deep into divinity in pre-modern Bali, which equally seems conforming to the constituents of the Maratha kingship as well; while David Cannadine’s elegant echo on ‘power and ceremonial’ is closed to the reality of dispersed power-pattern of 18th century India. The most striking aspect of this fluid, flexible and highly dispersed nature of political power in the 18th century India, particularly in the case of the Maratha state, seems to have closely resembled the constituent elements which make up ‘politics’ in the Indian classical texts like Dharmasastra and Arthasastra. The sovereign generally had to seek political legitimacy by consciously invoking the conjoint authority of king and brahmin. This particular relationship between king and brahmin points out the contradictory nature of Hindu Dharma as the brahmin’s involvement with the king tainted his image among the people. Yet this contradictory relationship was gradually emerging as the constituents of
sovereignty in the 18th century Maratha Hindu kingdom as well. The re-emergence of this particular power configuration further sought leverage and legitimacy by often seeking its association with religious establishments, performing certain rituals and worship, etc. The emerging political domain was on the way to blend a curious coexistence of sacred and secular maxims to the extent that the kingdom was considerably permeated by the language and attitude of worship, where king bestowed the emblems and privileges in a cultural context. In pre-modern Bali, king was more than the ecclesiastical head, represented his authority as the numinous centre of the world; the priests being the ingredients of his sanctity and hence part of the king’s regalia.\(^1\) Geertz also points out, in the Indic culture of classical Indonesia, the royal pageantry was hierarchical and mystical, where Gods, kings, lords and commoners formed an unbroken chain of religious status. The basic principles of Indonesian statecraft was that of court. It was supposed to be a copy of cosmos and the realm a copy of the court, with the king liminally suspended between god and men.\(^2\) This description although considerably closed also

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remains ambivalent in the Indian context. The religiosity of Bali rulers does seem to correspond to the reality of Maratha kingship as well.

The cultural ambience of kingship, thus, necessitates a look at religion and culture as two inextricably linked concepts in order to read politics and sovereignty in a much broader perspective. Religion here becomes the part of a cultural system. There is no denying that religious dimensions have roots in varied social and political life. The sedimentation of these added meanings in cultural, experiential and social forms over long periods of time has established religion as a powerful and enduring institution in virtually every known societies. Religions, moreover, symbolise the points of disjunction and continuity between secular and religious registers of meaning by means of myth, symbol, ritual, sacred text as well as the concepts of sacred space, time, community and being. Further, the attribution of religious significance is itself a cultural variable and it varies to the extent to which religious meanings had been identified, symbolized and codified in any

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3 For a detailed discussion of religion and its linkages with the concept of 'culture', see Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books, Inc., N.York, 1973), PP. 89-125. Geertz derives much of his ideas from E. Durkheim's views on culture and religion.

4 See Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures, pp. 89-95.
particular culture. The concepts of sacred, cleanliness and taboos become the defining paths of social identity in understanding the importance created in communal worship and celebration.

In the Maratha kingdom, cultural context of politics often had the strong underpinning of religious ideas and practices. The varied religious aspects generally manifest into a 'constellation of cultural conceits', to provide base to the 'crown' and 'community' in the 18th century India. The very cultural praxis, however, remains too diffused to be taken as an overarching construct of political sovereignty. It, thus, takes into account many more variables, which represents tradition relentlessly along old and new elements, with religion remaining as an important ingradient in the building up of politico-cultural identity. It attempts to restructure new and traditional variables while reading 'crown' and 'community' in the 18th and early 19th century context of Maharashtra.


The cultural base of the state formation in 18th and 19th century England, when the process collided with the cultural moorings of capitalism could be found, in The Great Arch, State Formation as Cultural Revolution in England (Oxford, 1985), pp. 3-12.
The fundamental structure of Maratha’s social and political relation was greatly geared to perpetuate the hegemony of the dominant social castes. But this very attempt of the elite lineage was constantly questioned and their hegemonic influence was considerably bracketed. Beneath the emerging and ongoing political processes, were the notion of honour, rituals, symbols, order, royalty, etc. These were being put into operation with more vigour, which simultaneously produced and reproduced, the hierarchy within the social and political set up. The use and the representation of such cultural constructs as historical processes derived its strength from the traditional structures of power, as well as from the hegemonic nature of the cultural construction of power. The 18th century Marathas or India remained linked to certain processes by which authority was constituted at each levels of representation. The Maratha kingship, similar to Dirk’s Puddukotai, seems “inflicted, at its core by politics and politics thus becomes the curious paradox of a king”. Yet the king is unable to transcend the constituent relations of the community. Power and authority seems diffused throughout the community. Thus the authority, in Heesterman’s words, is enclosed in the network of personal relations and its exercise, is bound up with corresponding shift in the actual

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distribution of power. The varied and dispersed character of 18th century power coheres the numerous scattered units which eventually culminate into a notion of identity - whether represented by the Marathas, Jats or Sikhs.

It is now well understood that the plethora of historical literature in last one decade, on South Asia, has provided a healthy corrective against any conventional construction of pre-colonial India. The Mughal empire seems 'overarched' and was superseded from below by regional states, more modern, in many of their functions. These states didn't represent a set of governing principles imported from a foreign or 'more advanced' culture, the early East India company, was a logical extension of the processes with distinctively 'indigenous origin.' The interregnum between pax Mugalica and pax Britanica has been characterised by a process of the 'commercialisation' and 'scribalization' of royal power. The metaphor of the body (state or state-formation) has been generally seen as universally applicable symbolic representation of the

9 For the intricate relationship which tradition does in regulating the power and authority, see J.C..Heesterman, 'Power and Politics in South Asia'in Moor (ed.), Power and Authority ( Delhi, 1979), p.73.

10 For a highly rich account of 18th century 'old regimes' in general, and N.India in particular, see Chris Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars; North Indian Society in the age of British expansion, 1770-1870 (First pub, 1983, rpt, 1992, Delhi) pp.10-25; also see his later work, Indian society and the making of the British empire, the New Cambridge History of India 11.1 (Cambridge, 1989), pp.7-37.
wholeness, enclosure, order and a singular claim of polity in political ideologies.  

But the state and state-formation, apart from having kings and the governments and their particular conceptualization of order, also incorporates some social and political developments, which could run counter to the rhetoric, concerns and the interests of kings and the nobilities. Such a conception, for Frank Perlin, is generated through the 'counter ideologies' which needs to be seen in the societal depth, as the various activities of the peoples of different sections constitute, inherit and generate a highly flexible and varied library of methods, terms, categories and techniques which mediate relationship amongst the population and provide the continuity through time and space. It would be also imperative, now, to see the treatment of culture and ideology in the important Medieval Indian history writing. While reflecting on some important historical writings on the bhakti movement and the 18th century, I will discuss the significance of early Maharashtrian scholar's writings relating to the Marathas in the chapters ahead.

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Reflections on Historical Writings

The treatment of culture and ideology, remained generally peripheral in the Medieval Indian history writing, particularly so, in the dominant school of history writing, represented by the Aligarh School. The attempt to study political authority along religio-cultural line was too sublimated, due to their continuous pre-occupation to construct history along traditional Marxist paradigm. The main concern of this school was directed to explain the 'Mughal State', generally, within the realm of agrarian economy, to look at 'class struggle' in Indian history. Such an exercise comes through quite strongly in Prof. Irfan Habib's treatment of 'monotheistic movement' in Medieval India.\(^{13}\) To him, this movement remains, merely, as an outlet of the development of 'ties of castes' and 'religious communities.' It opened new avenues for social mobility for the lower classes, represented by people like Kabir, Nanak, Dadu etc.\(^{14}\) What is important, to note in his argument, is the emphasis on the nature of stratification of these people's castes, and he once again seems pre-occupied with projecting the 'class character' of the movement. Habib's one way approach submerged the socio-religious and the political

\(^{13}\) See Irfan Habib, 'The Monotheistic Movement in Medieval India' (Mimeograph, Aligarh,) p.2-13. The content of the Bhakti movement remains very marginal in this writing.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, p.2-10.
content of the bhakti movement. He greatly marginalised the teachings of the bhaktas and the broader objectives of this movement. Prof. Satish Chandra does admit the ideological base which the bhakti movement provided in Maharashtra, as he says that the bhakti movement although, unable to make a dent in varna and caste system, did provide justification for mobility, and later crystallised into the Maharashtra Dharma. But he is yet to establish it at a strong empirical plain. He equally remains tied up with the zamindari background in looking at Marathas emergence.

A cursory look at the bhakti movement around the country does show the nurturing of a sense of solidarity and 'community identity' as well. It provides a structure of relationship which often invokes faith, and religion in the construction of crown and community. The bhakti movement was able to generate socio-religious fervour, to the extent, that it led to the growth of communal solidarity and its emphasis on vernacular literature, also made possible the linguistic cohesion. Moreover, the movement initiated a tradition of saints and poets, which later, found its manifestation in various garbs. They often invoked Dharma and remained instrumental in tying up the people in the concept of Bhagwan, transcending all the barriers of caste,

See Satish Chandra's three articles on the Marathas, in Medieval India; Society, the Jagirdari crisis and the Village (Macmillan, 1982), pp. 145-46.
class, community. This tradition seems to have its visibility also in many Maratha king's devotion to Muhammadan pirs and faqirs, apart from their attachment with Hindu saints, sages and swamis.

After Aligarh school, the vociferous champions of a new historical trend are historians like C.A. Bayly, D. Washbrook, Frank Perlin, Stewart Gordon, Andre Wink and Muzaffar Alam. Prof. Alam, going beyond the stereotypes, looks at Hindu-Muslim conflict in a slightly different way. To him, the earlier construction of such conflict seems hard to eradicate, as the initial process of Islamization certainly encountered failure in India. However, significant such an attempt is, but, not adequate enough to explain the larger issues involved. Chris Bayly touches upon such themes, but still, the issues of culture and ideology, remained revolving around agrarian economy and thus lacked substantial theorization. Chris Bayly, working within the Cambridge tradition of Indian history writing, maintains that, 'even in matters of authority and the administrative culture, there was much continuity between the high point of Mughal hegemony and the 18th century'. So Bayly shows the 18th century phase, as the most creative period in Indian

\[16\] See the Hindu-Muslim conflict having different dimension in M.Alam, Competition and Coexistence in Indo-Islamic Interaction, Itinerario, vol.XII, 1,1989,p.37.

\[17\] See C.A.Bayly, Indian society, p.18.
religious and cultural life. Bayly argues, that the contemporary political landscape strengthened Hinduism in many forms and further provided its own incentive for the cultural reinterpretation.\textsuperscript{18} He looks at Maratha victories as fostering a sense of 'community identity', expressed through the Marathi language and Hindu devotional religion; and the Brahmin administrators pictured the Maratha state, as a classic 'Brahmin' kingdom.\textsuperscript{19} Bayly certainly echoes the sense of community and classic brahmanic kingdom\textsuperscript{20} These concepts, however, are yet to find substantial empirical and theoretical reflections. Rich in narrative, with some new insights, Bayly certainly provides a healthy corrective to the pre-colonial order. But Bayly's description of 18th century Indian culture, still looks embedded in certain problems. He shows the period, as a complex one, with buoyant economy and variegated social and religious systems, yet presuming that it was not the decaying political system, rather, the very complexity of the old regime, which facilitated the arrival of colonial power in India. Is it not that the colonial power, for Bayly as well, dawns with the instrument of rationality to

\textsuperscript{18} See a detailed description of cultural efflorescence in C.A. Bayly's, \textit{Indian Society and the making of the British Empire}. pp.40-41.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid}, p.22.

\textsuperscript{20} The Maratha showing a sense of community and the conception of brahmins having classic 'Brahmin' kingdom, see again C.A. Bayly, \textit{Indian Society}, p.22.
the Indian sub-continent? Why is it that despite, giving a rich narrative of old regime, an issue expressed countless times in Bayly's own writings, it remains unable to convince him that the dichotomy existing between 'tradition' and 'modernity', has to be investigated and tested, seriously, instead of seeing these concepts as polar opposites. The significance of such a criticism would be evident, particularly, when the issues of 'tradition' and 'modernity' would be discussed later.

As far as the work on Maratha history is concerned, it is Stewart Gordon, who, way back in seventies, initiated the importance of looking at 18th century in its own terms. Gordon, first, deconstructs the conventional notion of the Marathas, as a marauding and plundering hordes, and then further moves on to see Malwa's integration into the Maratha empire through a 'slow conquest'. He does show the interface between the indigenous and conquered population. But the interface, still remains for Gordon, in the realm of agrarian economy. He equally reduced the ideological and cultural dimensions of the Maratha state, to mere hangovers.

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21 Malwa's gradual incorporation into the Maratha empire and a stage of state formation is there, in Stewart Gordon, 'The Slow Conquest' Malwa's integration into the Maratha empire, 1770-1760, MAS, 11,10 (1977), pp.1-3; also see his recent collection of articles, in Marathas, Marauders and state formation in 18th century India (Oxford, 1994), particularly, scarf and sword, pp.1-22.

of nationalist and communalist writings. It resulted in the marginalization of some significant issues, which have equal importance in establishing such relationship. After Gordon, it was Frank Perlin, who through his skillful but heavy style of writing, brought in the notion, 'counter ideologies'. Frank Perlin indeed unfolds some important issues to be looked up with more seriousness. Still, Perlin's understanding of ideologies, providing base to state and state-formation, remained generally in relation to 'fraternal brotherhood generated through the attachment of people to the Watan'.

This in itself, does not seem plausible to me, which can explain the complexities of the Maratha state, particularly evolved, under few important families of Central and Western India. Perlin, however, admits that the central processes of these old regimes were based on the complex interaction between two kinds of forces: centralised state building and local powerful families. Perlin discovers the 'infrastructural underbelly of state', in the administrative forms employed by the 'great households' of 17th century Maharashtra, which constituted 'library of categories and techniques'. But Perlin equally remained preoccupied in looking at prebendal

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23 See for Maratha's strong attachment with Watan, in F.Perlin, 'of white whale and countrymen in the 18th century Maratha Deccan. Extended class relations, rights and the problem of rural autonomy under the old regime', *Journal. of Peasant Studies*, 5,2 (1978).

24 For a theoretical and empirical, particularly in the context of Maharashtra regarding state formation, see F. Perlin, 'State Formation Reconsidered', *MAS*, 19 (1985), pp.415-64.
and patrimonial rights as the basis of power configuration in 17th and 18th century Maharashtra.

After Bayly's rich empirical study of the North India, it is Andre Wink who densely delved into Maharashtra and talked about whether the imperial unification of Indian subcontinent, prefigured modern territorial sovereignty or whether the emergence of Maratha swarajya was a realization of 'universal dominion' in accordance with Dharma. Wink rightly argues, that the 'Maratha swarajya' was almost always interpreted without contesting Mughal overlordship. Wink, however, gives too much of primacy to the conflict around the nested rights in land. For Wink, sovereignty remains a shared attribute between the king and the watandar, who have been considered as dayadas by Ajnapatra. The swarajya, thus, for Wink, is nothing more than a replica of watans. He, to substantiate his point goes on to build a theory of 'fitna', a concept used by Ibn Khaldun for the Magherab region. Unlike the general meaning attached to this term such as sedition, disruption and mischief, Wink gives new dimensions to the term by showing how fitna also incorporated reconciliation, forging of alliances, etc.,

27 A. Wink, Land and Soverignty, pp. 186-90.
which to him, became 'the normal mechanism of state-
formation in India'. In doing so, Wink attributed central
importance to this term and the entire history of Maratha
and the Indian subcontinent, starts revolving around
'fitna'. His notion of 'fitna' has been brought into severe
criticism by Prof. Irfan Habib and Prof. Muzaffar Alam. Both
of them, have accused Wink of interpreting 'fitna' in a
wrong sense. For Alam, fitna in Islamic literature has been
used in a sense of disruption only and therefore, often
interchangeably, with its Arabic and Persian synonyms like
'fasad', 'baghya', 'hangama' etc. It is this concept,
pointed out by Alam, which led Wink to interpret the rise of
Marathas as 'a consummation of Muslim empire than a mere
revolt against it'.

It seems that Prof. Alam's opposition of 'fitna' and
'asabhiya' (Clan-Collision) is bit misplaced one, because,
if we stretch Wink's own line of argument then it is
precisely their capacity for fitna - an illegitimate force,
always transcended in Muslim and Hindu religious theories,
needs the support of 'asabhiya'; which once done, becomes a
legitimate force. The way to 'asabhiya' goes via 'fitna'.
There is no shortcut, whereby, it can bypass 'fitna'.

28 See for Wink's elaborate notion of 'fitna', Land and Sovereignty, pp.21-34.
Although I find it a futile exercise to go into the meaning of a particular term, as to me, as long as the use and representation of a particular term by an author conforms to his conception of history, and as long as an author is capable to show a structure of relationship, until then, the dispute remains irrelevant. However, there is no denying the fact that Wink gives unnecessary importance to this term.

The above discussion provides enough of space to look up some important issues and see their significance in relation to state and the processes of state-formation. The issues which open up with such a discussion, are the construction of identity, the use and representation of tradition in the construction of identity: be it 'region' or 'community'. The rationality or the internal logic of brahmanical tradition alongwith the notion of 'classic brahmanic kingdom', interface in the realm of social and cultural relationship, the emergence of Scindia and Holkar alongwith frontier expansion;and thus the enduring character of traditional polity vis-a-vis the pre-modern polity.

The historical writings, thus, on 18th century, remained directed, to look at the political authority in the domain of agrarian and political economy. Despite some echo of vibrant religio-cultural activities of the 'old regimes', the writings passed it over with a cursory look in establishing economic base as the main foundation of various
regional powers all around India during this time. What they did was to locate the growth of regional identities along politico-economic constituents, where 'crown' remained generally marginal in its cultural moorings, while 'community' remained too peripheral, to be conceived at a broader plane. Here, I also attempt to look at the emergence of Marathas in the form of 'community'. The very category 'Maratha', seems to have passed through many stages by around early 19th century, that the semblance of community was gradually getting tied up, with the category itself, over the years. But before looking at the concept of 'community' in order to see the Marathas emergence into a community, it would be pertinent here to discuss briefly the constituents of 'region' and it's proximity with the concept of 'community'. It would be equally imperative, to look at the Marathas vis-à-vis other important social castes and groups of the period, namely Sikhs and Rajputs, to see certain important components in understanding the base of the 'Maratha identity'.

Region and Community

From the late 17th century onwards, we find many regions emerging in the form of regional identity. The constituting elements of the growth of regional powers were located generally in its geographical distinctiveness, physiographical characteristics, and a set of political
aspirations along with economic obduracy.\textsuperscript{30} The subjective dimension of region (regionalism) or the ideological-cultural base, hardly was provided with substantial theorization. The concept of 'region', does seem to have some proximity with the concept of 'community,' particularly its stress on geographical, political aspects; but community, as will be evident later, remains a much broader category which takes seemingly diverged constituents, apart from geographical frontier and political aspiration. It seems to have more to do with a shared historical experience, alongwith commonalities of interests. Further, the concept 'community' itself, can have its reverberations, in 'symbolic' and 'imagined' form, due to its growth along some highly abstract rectitude of a social group and the realities of the time.

Community, certainly, remains as one of the most elusive and vague concepts in the social science. It defies any precise definition. It has generally been, an aspect of study, in the sociological and anthropological discipline. With the widening of discipline itself, it is equally becoming a matter of serious concern for the historians as well.\textsuperscript{31} As a concept, it has been generally taken to denote

\textsuperscript{30} For the growth of various regional identities around 17th and 18th century, see M.Alam, Richard Barnett, Chetan Singh, C.A. Bayly, A.Wink, etc.

a group of people, within the bounded geographical area who interact within shared institutions, and who possess a common sense of interdependence and belonging. It seems more, as 'a variable, existing to some degree in many collectivities, to an extreme degree in few'. It is conceived as an organic, based often on blood relation, kinship, shared habitat and locality, and a set of common attitude, experiences, feelings and dispositions. Community, then, is looked up as an aspect of the way man relate to each other. R.M. Maciver, the sociologist, sees 'community as the commons life of beings, who are guided essentially from within, actively, spontaneously and freely relating themselves to one another, weaving for themselves the complex web of social unity.' He emphasizes the 'commanality of interests' quite strongly. The anthropological approach, however, has gone much beyond the definitional problem of trying to formulate a structural model of community by stressing more the meaning than anything else. It is evident in Victor Turner's reference to 'spontaneous and unstructured social solidarities.' For Anthony Cohen


33 Ibid pp.331-338.

34 There is also a good discussion of the relationship between state and community, in R.M. Maciver, Community; a Sociological Study (4th edition, Frank Cass Co.Ltd., 1970); PP.23-35.

communities remain more as a symbolic entity with no fixed parameters because it exists only in relation and opposition to other perceived communities. It is a system of values and moral codes which provide its members with a sense of identity. Benedict Anderson going bit further views all the communities as 'imagined', like nation itself being an 'imagined' variable. He, however, totally underscores the role of religion in the construction of community. The Maratha case, seems to reveal the growth of community feeling around religious leanings, as well as with other important elements of the community, having reverberations more in the symbolic and 'imagined' form.

The 18th century development, combined sacred and secular in such a complex manner, that the Marathas did seem to be representing some coordinated constituents of community. The sense of community was derived out of mutually casual as well as some very abstract and wired developments in the course of the emergence of multiple

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36 See this interesting anthropological account of community, Anthony Cohen, *the Symbolic construction of community* (1985), see introduction.

37 Benedict Anderson's work remains a model work for the community study where nation is also reduced to an imagined political community, see *Imagined Communities* (verso, 1983, rpt, 1992-93), pp. 2-7.

contestants of power. The community identity seems more diffused when they moved out of internal frontier where the stake to political claim was more important than anything else. But still the very sense of being Marathas then being Peshwa, Scindia, Holkar, Pawar remained too persuasive in their political interest and discourse along with the spread of their own culture and religious practices in outer frontier. These will further reflect how the Marathas were developing a sense of identity, much beyond region and more around community. The sense of Maratha identity seems particularly visible in an important observation of T. Jenkins. The Maratha rulers, observed Jenkins, have never left the plain manners of their nation; they are connected by the ties of blood and by constant familiar intercourse with every one of their principal officers, and born in the class of cultivators, consequently having a hereditary respect for that order.39

Yet another social group emerging as community around this time is, the Sikhs. The Sikhs were the descendants of Jat peasant from the Punjab. They developed their sense of identity out of their Sikh brotherhood, or the Khalsa, which was founded in 1699.40 The formation of Khalsa provided lot

40 For the evolution and transformation of Sikh Panths, see J. S. Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab (Cambridge, N.York, 1990), pp. 8-15.
of leverage for the development of communal solidarity. Their continuous strained relationship in the late phase with the Mughals since the execution of their Guru Arjun and Teg Bahadur, made them more cohesive and militant, and they derived much of their strength out of this conflict with the Mughals and eventually emerged in the form of community. This sense of community equally derived its strength from their regional distinctiveness in various aspects and the growth of Punjabi as a language. Further, Sikhism itself constituted as a set of beliefs along religious lines. The Marathas, although, remaining within the prevalent universal Hinduism of the century, derived more their strength from the medieval Hindu devotional movement and folk religious practices.

The important question remains that why is it that the Sikhs and the Marathas alone seem to have built up themselves into a community, why not Rajputs? This is indeed very significant question considering they were one of the most vital groups in the 18th century. It is also puzzling precisely because Rajputs around this time had certainly cultivated high and noble ideals of chivalry, and also showed internal cohesion. It seems the very category

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Rajput remained a loose category in the pre-colonial period. They despite their association with lower caste Hindus out of their frequent marriage in the early phase, remained homogeneous in their composition. They also remained in continuous conflicts among themselves, and with the Mughals and Marathas to the extent that it created lot of fissures in bringing them together. Their long association with the Mughals further denied them any strong unity which they can derive through their religion, language, etc. Moreover, the most important element in the case of Rajputs remained that the term itself was caste specific despite its development and movement through various historical phases. The Marathas, although similar in certain forms with the Rajputs, does provide some contrasting picture and shows considerable internal cohesion at least as 'Maratha' as a category is concerned.

Symbolisms of Power

The relationship between power, ritual and ceremonial, remains another significant dimension of this thesis. The 18th century regimes witnessed rituals and ceremonials inextricably linked to the emergence of political authority. The pomp associated with power here is much in contrast to Clifford Geertz's picture of Bali, where pomp was not in the

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43 See Richard G. Fox, Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule (Berkeley, 1971), see Introduction.
service of power, but power was in the service of pomp. However, the ritual in the Maratha context remained two dimensional: one it seemed to have strong secular character and another it had religious character. The secular character often spoke the royalty of crown and the consequent hierarchy of political powers; while religious rituals were intended for the conscious use of political legitimation from the people, and the desire to get alongwith Dharma in preserving the religious heritage of the land. Moreover at times there does seem to be interpretation of these forms of rituals in giving wedge to the existing political set up. How ritual and ceremonial became the integral part of the process of political set up is an important issue of the discussion. In the case of South India, it is Burton Stein, Nicholas Dirks and Susan Bayly who have shown the significance of religion, rituals and ceremonials. Burton Stein developed his concept of the 'segmentary state' for the Cola period (1000-1200 A.D.), and extends this concept till the period of Vijaynagar (16th century). Stein argues that the state had a 'segmentary' character, with a tiny core area centrally administered, and the rest of the area owing no more than a 'ritual' allegiance to the central authority. The authority of many South Indian kings before the 16th century was an extension

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45 B. Stein, Vijaynagar, p. 9-18.
of communal morality and lineage-clan organisation. In this way he brings in the separation between ritual sovereignty and political sovereignty. In talking about ritual, Stein in fact played down politics within the ritual. For Stein this ritual allegiance did not carry the essence of politics. But the importance of rituals and ceremonials come through more clearly in the work of Nicholas Dirks. His reconstruction of the pre-colonial 'old regime' of Puddukottai makes explicit that the territorial segmented system of authority and social organization of the Kallars was constituted as a unity by the royal enactment of gifting and privileging. Lesser Kallar Lords were linked to their king by ties of service and kingship while brahmans and other non-kallars were bound by gift. Dirks insists that kingship and brahmans both constituted a strong hierarchical force within the Kallar society but where the relationship remained interdependent rather than encompassed within the religious domain. The Crown, for Dirks, was never hollow until the arrival of British but it got divested of its meaning with the arrival of the colonial state. However,

46 The concept of 'segmentary state' in Indian context was developed first in B. Stein's, Peasant, state and society in Medieval South India (Oxford, Delhi, 1980).

47 Idem, Vijaynagar: the New Cambridge History of India 1.2, see preface, and pp.9-70

48 See this work's stress on the castes and its relationship which kingship along ritual, gift-giving etc., N. B. Dirks, The Hollow Crown, pp.5.10, 29-37, 47-49.

49 Ibid, pp.4-5.
Dirks is logically inconsistent in terms of resolving the problem of colonialism and modernization. Dirks at one time gives lot of importance to the British rule as he argues that the tentacles of British rule are powerful and far reaching while at the same time he talks about the vibrancy of the old regime even during the colonial period.\textsuperscript{50} Susan Bayly quite persuasively has shown the incorporation of the "folk" and the "classical" levels of religion in the South Indian context where she hardly finds any sharp separation between sacred and politico-military functions of sovereign. S. Bayly, however, also makes it clear that the acceptance of Hinduism by the smaller southern kingdoms was "largely a matter of historical timing." She rightly reiterates the reciprocity between the political and religious domains by relating shrines, divinities, and cults to regimes and ruling lineages. She argues that the deity's shrines are seats of sovereign power, the reigning lord cannot command his subjects unless he is able to control and explain his sacred 'kingly' shrines.\textsuperscript{51} The rituals were practiced to dramatise the rank and power of the rulers, and themes of tradition and kingship expanded to incorporate new motifs and religious symbols.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, p.383.


\textsuperscript{52} S. Bayly, \textit{opp. cit.}, p. 2, p. 44, 48 & 55.
The other cultural constituents of politics was the bestowal of various insignia, emblems, seals and robes of honour. These were the symbolic reflections of a person's position in the office. The robes of honour ceremony in 18th century seems to be very ubiquitous and was quite common and familiar during this period.53 The ceremony conveyed a short of relationship, which exists between a king and the recipient and was intended to keep up the royalty of kingdom intact. The robes of honour ceremony, was one of the important practices of the Maratha court, to derive political loyalty and place the person in political position.

All along this cultural context of the 18th century crown, the elements of conflict, factions seemed to be getting gradually institutionalised and political sovereignty was becoming the expression of a contestant's capacity to maneuver various forces in staking his claim. This seems to have become precondition not only in Maharashtra but all around India. It equally characterised the early modern state-formation in Europe.54 In the Maratha

53 The robes of honour ceremony originated in the Islamic world and it gradually passed over to the Hindu courts of S.Asia, which became a standard form of political practices in the 18th century India, see S.Gordon, 'robes of Honour'. A 'transactional' kingly ceremony IESHR, 33,3 (1996), pp.225-241.

context this prerequisite of politics finds better ramifications in Wink's conception of 'fitna'. It is although not to say that it didn’t exist in early times in India. Rather, these elements became too overt in its manifestation which frequently surfaced from the imperial Mughals to the intermediaries at the fringes. It also resulted in sharing of royal sovereignty. This had its expression earlier in the Chola age, in the concept of dayada. This was the idea characterising the segmentary political forms of the Chola and considerably underpinning the period of Vijayanagar. In the Maratha political treatise Ajnapatra the chiefs of the countryside, deceptively regarded as office bearers, were the sharers of royal power. This fact will come through in the entire 18th century context of Maratha power.

Tradition and its Invention

It is in this background that this thesis proposes an argument on 'tradition' and 'modernity'. There has been an attempt made to see the traditional polity in 'its own terms' which has been characterized in the recent literature as 'pre-modern polity'. The term traditional polity is generally understood in terms of its pejorative connotations

55 The concept of Dayada finds its expression in B.Stein, Vijayanagar, p.24.
but I will show the meaning and forms of tradition with its own rationality. The historical significance should not be attributed to tradition only when seen in the light of modernity. The very notion of 'modernization of tradition', according to Rudolph, seems more significant in explaining the 19th century India. But the use of such a notion for 18th century does not seem appropriate.

The battle between tradition and modernity still goes on. But instead of going into this battle the paper seeks to argue the vibrancy of tradition. 'Tradition' here defies any watertight definition unlike modernity. 'Modernity' as defined, is the result of Renaissance and Reformation and characterized as a new era of history associated with increasing secularization and innovation, which contrasted the modern time against the traditional and static past. But 'modernity', according to Heesterman, 'if it is dissociated from the realities of modern West, than with relative ease it can be defined as a Weberian ideal type, as for instance rationality'. However, to dissociate tradition from its context is very difficult. Tradition, in


58 J.C. Heesterman discusses traditions resilience particularly in the Ancient Indian context, in Power and Authority, pp.70.
this sense to me carries its own meaning and keeps interpreting itself to adjust and incorporate newly emerging elements. Heesterman rightly argues that the very essence of tradition is its contradictory co-existence in social reality.\textsuperscript{59} If tradition provides a critique of brahmanical institution through the bhakti movement, it also adopts and adjusts itself, with the innovative potentialities of the brahmanical institution and the castes.\textsuperscript{60} Thus the polar concepts like 'tradition' and 'modernity' do capture the essential paradox of symbolic life, but only statically. They, in fact, are the dialectical moments in the ongoing developmental logic of tradition.\textsuperscript{61} Jayant Lele says that, by locating the making of tradition in history, we can render it dynamic.\textsuperscript{62} Tradition, hence, ceases to be a dead weight against modernity. The latter is not to be called upon to wage its battle in seeking a 'collective annihilation of tradition'.

It is in this very wide meaning of the term, that the thesis will show how tradition, in regulating the power and authority also goes on in inventing some of its forms to

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, p.84.

\textsuperscript{60} Rudolph and Rudolph, op. cit., pp.271-275.

\textsuperscript{61} Tradition and modernity in the case of the bhakti movement has been given strong theoretical sociological underpinning, in J.Lele, Tradition and Modernity in the Bhakti movement (Leidan, 1981), pp.1-7.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, pp.1-3.
give a new shape to its temporal milieu. Hobsbawm points out that the contrast between constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure, at least some parts of its life as unchanging and invariant, makes the 'invention of tradition' interesting. A striking example is the deliberate choice of Gothic style for the 19th century rebuilding of the British Parliament.\textsuperscript{63} The invention of tradition rather is the response to novel situations, which takes the form of reference to old situations or which establish their own past, by quasi obligatory repetition.\textsuperscript{64}

Tradition equally, seems to me, inventing or using old forms to give substance to the new forms. These developments are not the sterile elaboration of tradition incapable of creativity rather the expression of the rich reinterpreting context of tradition. The striking resemblance of the component of sovereignty with Indian classical texts seems a testimony to this fact. The Maratha king's attempt to seek religious legitimation within the ambit of Mughal universal dominion provides an example of widening fold of tradition where it coexists with the Muslim forms and practices of government. The appreciation of brahmins and brahanical tradition by the saints and poets is its contradictory co-

\textsuperscript{63} Tradition in the context of European countries has been seen with an interesting account of its various forms, in E. J.Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (ed.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, CUP, 1983), pp. 1-4.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., pp. 3-4.
existence where it also shows the resilience of the brahmanical institution itself. Tradition by its continuous invention of older forms and its repeated invokation seems simultaneously connected with the concept of 'community'. Apart from all these, rituals, symbols, titles and emblems are intrinsic to tradition in giving base to royalty. The royalty, thus, seems related to rituals which David Cannadine aptly expresses as 'rituals of royalty'.

The thesis is divided into five chapters to look up these proposed issues at length. There has been an attempt to look at all these seemingly interconnected issues, 'strictly in its own terms.' Starting from the very concept of region in relation to Maharastra, the issues related to 'crown' and 'community' will be traced right from the period of Shivaji to see the 18th century millieu in a closely connected form. It will provide the motifs and grounds upon which the Marathas articulated their sense of 'identity.' As far as the sources is concerned, the thesis takes into account greatly varied sources, giving due importance to the three important 'political chronicles' of the time. It goes on to extract valuable information from all the relevent archival sources kept in National Archives, Teen Murti, ICHR, Delhi; Peshwa Daftar, BISM and Jayakar Library, Pune.

The thesis takes Marathi sources with due seriousness and derives important information, from the painstaking voluminous works, done by Parsanis, Vad, Sarkar, Sardesai and Rajwade.

The thesis, as pointed out, gives lot of importance to the political chronicles, namely Ajnapatra, Sabhasad Bakhar and Chitnisi Bakhar, as well as 91 Kalmi Bakhar. These works provide important lights on socio-religious activities of the state, king and ministers. They have almost provided a form of kingdom’s realm; works of Sardesai and Rajwade are of great importance, as they reveal the Maratha period in all its complexity.

Many important publications of Bharat Itihas Samsodhak Mandal, particularly Sivcharitsahitya, in 13 volumes; and some relevant articles of the quarterly have been taken into account. The thesis also gives enough importance to various family accounts relating to Maratha sardars, families. Equally indispensable are the works done by many colonial administrators who have stored valuable information, particularly in 14 volumes of Poona Residency Correspondence, apart from the letters, memoirs, accounts, reports, etc.

Along with these sources, I have also used Bakhars, hagiography or the biography of saints and poets. Bakhars,
although containing political narratives, does provide significant information in relation to the social, cultural and religious practices of the Peshwa period. The 18th century poet, Mahipati, has provided extensive hagiographical accounts translated into English, particularly by J.E. Abbott and others. Apart from the translation of abhangas and bharuds, the saint poet's own writings constitute a rich storehouse of information. Despite the doubtful authenticity of Bakhars and hagiography, I find hardly any conceptual gap, particularly, in the realm of religious and cultural practices. Thus a structure of relationship exists in both the sources: hagiography and the so-called secular sources lying in the archives. Moreover, various other sources including English translation of Persian works, as well as most of the important early English writings, have been looked up with due concern.