



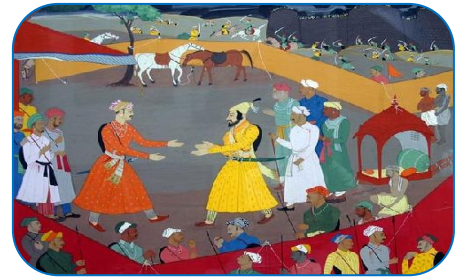
## CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MAHARASHTRA

**Dr. Niranjana Kulkarni**

**Head, Dept. of History (UG & PG), Hon. Shri. Annasaheb Dange Arts,  
Commerce and Science College, Hatkanangale.**

### ABSTRACT :

18th century holds a prominent position in the history of Maharashtra and, in general, that of India. The Marathas, during this century, spread across all regions of India and exposed to various regions and their regional cultures. These regional cultures left deep influence on the cultural life of the Marathas. Due to the harmonious combination of these influences and local energies, we witness a cultural development in the 18th century Maharashtra.



**KEYWORDS :** prominent position , spread across all regions of India .

### INTRODUCTION

The cultural development can be discerned through architecture (both religious and secular), woodwork, wall paintings, manuscript illustrations, miniatures, glass-paintings, ornaments and jewelry, literature etc in the 18th century Maharashtra. In this paper, we would go through some of these artistic creations in brief, acknowledging modern researches on these topics. We would concentrate on the development of architecture and paintings of this period. This would help our understanding of composite culture of 18th century Maharashtra.

At the outset let us understand the political context within which the cultural development took place in Maharashtra.

### POLITICAL CONTEXT

After the fall of Yadava (1398 AD) by Khalajis of North, Maharashtra witnessed the arrival of all together different culture, i.e. the Islamic culture. The Islamic culture not only deeply influenced the political life of Maharashtra but also left deep influence on the general life-style of people. During 14th to the first half of 17th century, Maharashtra was ruled, at first by Bahamani and then by Nizamshahi in its northern half and Adilshahi in its southern half. Due to the need of administration of such alien region and constant wars among them, these rulers strongly felt the necessity of local intelligentsia and militia. Thus, we found the emergence of learned and warrior families in Maharashtra. We find reference of various warrior families holding regions and loyal to these rulers. They comprised of Mane, Ghatage, Ghorpade, Bhosale, Nimbalkar, Jadhav, Thorat, Chavan etc. At the same time, the saints of *Bhagvat* and *Mahanubhav* cults busy in unifying the caste-ridden society in one thread of devotional-worship/Bhakti. Then, in the first half of 17th century, we find the speedy approach of Mughal from North India in the Maharashtra. They, with the help of Adilshahi, put an end to Nizamshahi (1633) and thus Maharashtra was divided between Mughal in northern part and Adilshahi in south, keeping river Bhima as dividing line between them.

Around 1630-1645, Shivaji (b.1630-d.1680), son of Shahaji Raje Bhosale, the *jagirdar* of Adilshahi, proclaimed independence and vowed to create '*Swarajya*'. The region around Pune was his centre of activity. He pledged to create 'independent and sovereign state of Maharashtra' and to protect the land, language, religion and culture of Maharashtra. The years 1645 to 1660 witnessed his conflict with the Adilshahi. After 1660, he concentrated his struggle with the Mughal. Then, after the success in his mission, he coroneted himself as *Chhatrapati* and declared his state as independent and sovereign (1674). During 1677-78, he undertook a large campaign in the southern Deccan (Karnataka-expedition) and made his second base in Tamil Nadu at the fort of Jinji. He was a great warrior, farsighted ruler, intelligent administrator, generous to the public and compassionate in nature.

After the death of Ch. Shivaji Maharaj (1680), Maharashtra faced the wrath of Mughal. Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor, along with large army, entered into Deccan to destroy all the rulers like Adilshahi, Qutbshahi and the Marathas. He successfully and within short time merged the former two states into Mughal Empire (1683 and 1685). It was the last, i.e. the Marathas, which troubled him up to his death. The Marathas responded aggressively to the Mughal under three generation of able leadership of Ch. Sambhaji Maharaj (1680-1689), then, Ch. Rajaram Maharaj (1689-1700) and then Maharani Tarabai (1700-1707). Besides, able men of Maharashtra involved in this struggle to save their '*Swarajya*'. This struggle is known as the 'Struggle for Independence of Marathas (1680 to 1707)'. With the death of Aurangzeb (1707), this struggle ended and won by the Marathas.

After the death of Aurangzeb, Shahu, son of Ch. Sambhaji and captive of Mughal, was released and then, Maharashtra witnessed a new struggle, now the civil war among the Marathas. Shahu and Maharani Tarabai both claimed on the throne of Maratha *Swarajya* and engaged in the struggle between them. Thus, we find the division of Maratha noble men in two parties and the emergence of two seats, the Satara seat under Ch. Shahu Maharaja and the Kolhapur-seat under Maharani Tarabai (1708). Ch. Shahu Maharaja with the help from his prime minister (*Peshva*) Balaji Vishvanath Bhat, won over the civil war and became ruler of the Maratha power. However, the coming years showed that his position became constitutional and real power lied with his Peshva, who was governing from Pune. In the victory of Ch. Shahu Maharaj, various Maratha noble families assisted him. Now they needed important shares in the power. Then, the Peshva came with the concept of *Maratha Rajmandal*(Confederacy). According to this plan, India was opened to these warrior-nobles to win and establish the rule of Marathas over various regions. Like, the Gujarat assigned to Ghatges, southern Madhya Pradesh to Holkars, northern Madhya Pradesh to Shindes and like this. Thus, under the leadership of series of Peshva, from Balaji Vishvanath (first) to Bajirao II (last), Maratha rule spread all over India (1710-1818).

From northern Karnataka to Modern Pakistan and from Gujarat to Orissa, the horses of Marathas trod the entire regions of India. This spread of the Marathas is known as 'Maratha Empire'. Although the spread of Maratha was wide and across the country, it did not come up with long-term political impact. Instead, important is the communication and cultural exchange among them which displayed an ever-lasting cultural impact. The Marathas draw large cultural influences from various regions across the country and put into effect in Maharashtra. The local energies also played prominent role in this cultural development. With such harmony, we find cultural life of Maharashtra in 18th century.

### Architecture

The architecture in Maharashtra bore considerable amount of cultural influence from various parts of the country. During 17th century, it had influence from more close regions of Maharashtra, viz. Karnataka or Madhya Pradesh. We can find such influence on entire living style of the Marathas, like, administration, courtly manners, dietary habits, dressing pattern etc. During 18th century, Maharashtra exposed to various other regions of the country. Hence, we find influence of Mughal court, Rajput court, Madhya Pradesh and southern India. To understand this cultural exchange we would classify architecture under two broad categories, secular and religious.

## SECULAR ARCHITECTURE

### *Cities and Residence*

Since ancient times, we have evidences of houses on *chatu-shala* pattern and general layout of the cities. In 18th century, we find the influence of non-Maratha rulers, like, Nizamshahi (Ahmednagar), Sultans (Bidar), Adilshahi (Bijapur) on the civic architecture of this period, especially in water-management.

In this period, we find the layouts of *cities* on the evidence of Toke (Dist. Ahmednagar) and influence of Daulatabad (Dist. Aurangabad). It shows that, the city based on the chessboard pattern, having specific parts dedicated to communities following specific occupation. It consisted of, along with houses, temples, mosques, market and craft-areas. The city of Pune centralized around Shanivarvada or the palace of Peshvas. This palace was surrounded by the mansions of noble men, which again surrounded by residence of specific communities called as '*Petha*'. If the town is founded by Islamic ruler or comprised of Muslim population in large number, we find main mosque (*jami masjid*) along with the ground-fort in the city.

We find various types of *houses* in this period, viz. palaces, *gadhis*, *vadas*, houses, huts. The palaces were of rulers, the *gadhis* were of noble resided at district place (*pargana*) or a lord, the *vadas* were of village-headman or rich person in the villages. By observing the *vadas*, a specific pattern can be seen in these structures, known as '*chatushala*-pattern'. A spacious courtyard bordered with a high plinth, generally made of stone. On the plinth, leaving some area, rooms constructed along three sides of that courtyard. These rooms used by residents of that house. They mainly consists of kitchen, dining room, record-room etc. The space/rooms on the forth side, i.e. inner part of the door-wall; used for servants, guards or keeping cattle. If it is of two storeys we find stair-case in the walls. The upper storey used for serious discussions, welcoming of guests, festivities etc. This was called as '*Sadar*' or '*Darbar*'. The walls of this floor had netted windows for the women folk to participate in the discussion. These netted windows reflect influence of Gujarati style.

Except the plinth and the walls (which were made of stone), the entire structure was made by using wooden pillars, wooden rafters, wooden roof and wooden slab. The pillars are wide at base and tapering towards height and richly decorated with floral design. These pillars made in the fashion of cypress (*suru*)-tree. This foliated arches or floral decorations show the influence of Mughal paintings, like that on 'Tomb of Itmad-daula' near Agra. The walls are decorated with wall painting, bearing influences from art-styles of Mughal, Rajasthani, Gujarati and of Madhya Pradesh. The galleries and windows reflect influence from the *havelis* of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The doors and staircases constructed in arch-methods. Windows were minimal and kept narrow. Such *vadas* have large-fortification made of stones. It had a big gateway (for occasional opening) and a small one, called as *dindi-darwaza*, for regular moving in and out.

The bigger *Vadas*, planned on the same concept, had increased numbers of the courtyards (and subsequent structures), placed adjacent to each other. The bigger form of *Vadas* and lesser form of ground fort is the *gadhi*. The concept is same; only the scope is widen with large fortification, having bastions at regular intervals. The palaces are like bigger *gadhis* and *vadas*, which have large number of courtyards and storeys.

These houses, Mate informs that, bore influence both from Gujarati style and Mughal style<sup>1</sup>. We can see the influence from Gujarat on the decorative woodwork. Like square pillars, the decoration of *hasta* (brackets; joint where pillars join roof) in high relief, decorative door-columns and doors and the decorative members like that of pendants (*lolaka*). We also find such influence in the mansion of Shurpur in Karnataka. The doors and staircases also had deep decoration. The galleries of floors also depict such influence of Gujarati *havelis*. On the other hand, the arches for the staircases show Mughal or Islamic influence. The pillars in the form of cypress-tree bear the same. The arches, parrots at the foot of arches, lotus-decoration on arches and overall delicate carving and plain treatment also show influence of Mughal style.

The palaces or bigger *Vadas*<sup>2</sup> consisted of various halls called as *mahals*. Thus, if first floor attached with two/three floors, the topmost floor was called as '*Hava-mahal*'. It had swings and a place for enjoying scenic beauty of surrounding. Sometimes, these had halls of which the walls were made with glasses/mirrors, hence called as '*Arase Mahal*'. Some halls have beautiful painting on their walls hence called

as '*Chitrashala*' or '*Rangmahal*'. They had galleries like those of *havelis* of Jaipur and Agra. The concept of such halls shows influence of North Indian palaces and *havelis*.

### Water Source and Management

Apart from traditional systems of wells, step-wells<sup>3</sup>, tanks, bunds we find specific system of water management in Maharashtra. This concept is borrowed from the Bahamani<sup>4</sup>, Sultanates of Bidar, Nizamshahi and Adilshahi. Mate describes the water system of Pune in a vivid manner. In Pune, Mate informs, two bunds situated at the hills of Katraj near the city. From there, water was carried to the city, through underground earthen/stone pipes. These pipes called by contemporary bards as '*Jahapani*' bearing influence of Deccan sultanates. The pipes provided with 'water-towers' at regular intervals. These water towers are open from the top. Thus, it provides fresh air/oxygen to the flowing water. At the same time, it dissolves bubbles, which might block the flow. Besides, its structure allows dirt to remain at foot and clean water flow forward. These towers were made of such wide size so that a person can enter into it and clean the blockages. These pipes carried water to the small tank (*haud*) located in parts of Pune. From these small tanks, water carried by the people for their needs. These pipes went to residence of rich people where they had individual taps and facility of fountains, too. Similar kind of water system can also be observed in the contemporary cities like Kolhapur, Miraj etc. in the 18th-19th century.

In this period, we also find stepped wells (*bawadis*) and tanks in Maharashtra. A special mention should be made regarding the '*river-ghats*'. Here, wide steps constructed on the banks of the rivers in such fashion that each descending step moved further from the previous step. These steps were made wide so that people could use it for various purposes, like, daily needs (fetching water, washing clothes, bath), performance of religious rites etc. These steps are called as '*river-ghats*'. To avoid the danger of damage to the steps in the times of flood, bastions were also constructed at the regular intervals in the *ghats*. These *ghats* also had some space for worship and changing cloths, called as '*Ovari*'. These *ovaris* were constructed by using the method of arch, showing influence of Islamic architecture.<sup>5</sup>

### Roads

Due to regular journeys in this period, we find management of roads in Maharashtra. The roads, although were not wide, made of dressed stones. We find arrangements of trees along these roads. We find government orders for the maintenance of such trees. The government was also aware of the maintenance of these roads. Especially, the roads in the pass-section always got damaged in the months of rains. Hence, we find the government made provisions to maintain these roads regularly.

### Religious Architecture

So far the religious architecture is concerned we find influence of North and South India; as also the traditional Hindu concept with the then foreign Islamic one.

Temples are the main form of religious architecture. Mate classified and studied the temples in Maharashtra<sup>6</sup>. He classified these temples in following classes, the Yadava/*Bhumija* style, the North Indian Nagara style, the Maratha style with specific *shikhara* and the assorted. The temples of Yadava/*Bhumija* style show deep influence of the Paramara-style of Malwa (Madhya Pradesh). Hence, we find such temples in northern region of Maharashtra, like Pimplaner, Nandurbar. They were star-shaped and had broken walls/exterior through the arrangements of '*ratha*' and '*thara*' for light and shed effects. Then, we also find temples made like that of Nagara style of North India, like, Nasik, Shrigonda, Jalana, Pune. They had conical *shikhara*.

During the Peshva period (1720-1818), the Marathas exposed to the artistic activities of North as well as south India. Hence, the temples of Maratha style bore strong influences from both the regions and religions. We find that, these temples were constructed on the plan of mosques, profusely using arches and domes as architectural members. So far the plan is concerned, we have a *garbhagriha* and a *mukhamandapa* before it. The plan is either square or rectangular. The exterior i.e. walls, made of stones, were also plain and

devoid of any decoration or sculptures. However, it is the *Shikhara*, which makes the difference. On the style of *Dravida*, the *shikhara* were made of steps, means the upper storey is shorter than the immediate lower storey. This *Shikhara* is made out of lime and bricks. The series of 'kut-shala' of *Dravida* style replaced with niche-block (*konada*) and bands of Islamic style. These niches on the storeys of *Shikhara* capped with rounded architectural members on their tops. The galleries of havelis of Rajasthan and Agra influenced this small canopy. Again, these niche were filled up with lime statues remind us *Nayaka* temples in South India, e.g. Madurai. These statues were not only of deities but also of noble men. Sometimes, these noble men were clad in European dress show the contact with and influence of European people, e.g. French, English, Portuguese. The costumes of these figures show deep influence of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. These *Shikhara* generally circled with small-minarets closely resemble to the Islamic architecture.

### Paintings

Similar to the architecture we find the influences of new regions on the paintings, too. Especially, the regional styles of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, as of Mughal; had deep impact on the Maratha paintings of this period. Nevertheless, the contents of such paintings are mostly Maratha. According to Ranade, although these paintings borrowed influence from other regions, the Maratha paintings display legacy of folk-art of Maharashtra.

We find that Bajirao I (second Peshva) appointed artists to draw paintings on the walls of Shanivarvada at Pune. We also find names of artists in contemporary records, like, Shivram, Ragho, Tanaji, Anuprao, Mankoji etc. Besides, famous artists from various regions also invited and appointed in the courts of Marathas. It is informed that Nana Phadnis invited painters from Delhi-Agra and required illustrated manuscript of *bhagavata* from Jaipur. Sawai Madhavarao (sixth Peshva) appointed English artists James Wales and Daniels in his court at Pune. We also find that, under the guidance of these foreigners, a training workshop was also arranged for local artists.

The paintings of this period comprised of various types, like, wall paintings, *patrika/kundali*, *patchitra*, manuscript-illustration, miniatures and special paintings. Glass-paintings also became popular in late 18th-early 19th century Maharashtra.

The subjects of paintings borrowed from religious mythologies like *puranas* and epics. However, as Ranade informs that like the literature of contemporary period, under the garb of mythologies, the mundane stories also depicted in these paintings.<sup>7</sup> The popular themes are incarnations of Vishnu, *Draupadi-swaymvara*, Nala-Damayanti, exploits of Krishna (*gopi-vastraharana*, Krishna playing holi with *gopis*) etc. Besides, we also find separate paintings of deities like Ganesha with Riddhi-Siddhi, Shiva, Shiva-paravati, Vishnu-Laxmi etc. Scenes from hunting, Persian/Arabic love-stories (*laila-majnum*), cavalry-wars were also painted which show strokes with force and speed.

The **wall paintings** generally drawn on either the walls of temples or that of big *vadas* or the mansions. Besides, on religious occasions, the walls of houses were also painted with beautiful paintings. As the walls had wooden pillars into them, the space created between two pillars provided a *bhumi*(canvas) for these paintings. The canvas generally made in white or pinkish shade. On this background, figures drawn in various colures like green, yellow, red, blue, orange etc. The outlines made in black and, braking but bold and forceful lines. The figures mostly clad in Maratha-dress and ornaments, like, headgear of Pune-style, *nauvarisari* (*sari* of nine yard), *khope* (peculiar hair pin), *bugadya* (ear-rings), *nath* (peculiar kind of Maratha-nose-ring), *chiri* (a *kunkum*-line) on forehead etc. Their unusual slanting forehead, stretched nose and small protruding lips of women and big eyes, thick moustache, roundish figure of men show peculiar Maratha style of painting. The painting also depicts houses and palaces, temples-*dipmalas* that were there in Maharashtra.<sup>8</sup> Such details indicate the cultural life of Maharashtra, however, the settings, transparent drapery, choice of bright colours and background mostly bear influence from Rajasthan.<sup>9</sup> Chavan also supports this vies; however, she searched in these murals, the combination of north Indian influence with the local folk theater and traditional devotional cults in Maharashtra<sup>10</sup>.

Then we find *pat-chitras*(story-paintings). These *pat-chitras* made for religious festivals, like the *Sankrant-pat* on the festival of Makar Sankrant and *Pithori-pat*, having the worship of 64 *yoginis*. The women and goddesses in such paintings clad in Maratha-dress and ornaments. These paintings also depict daily life of the people, like, farmer watering his fields, women with saddle-querns etc.

The tradition of *Manuscript illustration*<sup>11</sup> of Maharashtra show influence from Jain manuscripts of Gujarat, Udaipur and Persian manuscripts. Such manuscripts were kept in *mathas* of Nath-cult, Datta-cult, Mahanubhav-cult, Ramdas -cult etc. The Peshvas and their nobles also kept the collection of such illustrated manuscripts. The doctors of this period also had manuscripts devoted to their specific subjects<sup>12</sup>. The art of *miniature* emerged out of this tradition. Thus, we find '*Ragmala*',<sup>13</sup> '*Talmala*'<sup>14</sup>, type of miniatures and miniature-portraits like that of Mughal miniature. The portraits comprised subjects like person in standing and seating position, person observing dance, horse-rider, king showing himself from window etc. Other details in such miniature throw light on the dressing pattern, ornaments, nature, and architectures of the same period. These also show influence of other regions of India on these miniatures. We also find potrait-miniatures of some historical figures like Ch. Shivaji Maharaj, Bajirao Peshva on white horse, Nanashheb Peshva enjoying dance, Raghunathrao in seated position etc. These also consist of court-miniatures of Sawai Madhavarao Peshava, Mahadaji Shinde, Nana Phadnis etc. These miniatures show deep influence of regional styles of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. In his study of *glass-paintings*, Sarode also informs us that these paintings bore considerable influence of Mughal and British art.<sup>15</sup>

From the discussion, we can conclude in following manner:

- Due to the concept of *Maratha Rajmandala*(Confederacy), the whole of India opened to the warrior Maratha families for undertaking expeditions.
- The warriors not only established themselves in those erstwhile foreign regions but also invited other Maratha non-warrior families over there for various businesses.
- Thus, whole India exposed to Maharashtra, which opened its door to all types of influences.
- Though the content and needs were remained of originally Maratha, other factors like the details, visual effects etc. bore deep influence of other regions of India.
- Hence, the cultural development in Maharashtra in 18th century bore strong influences of all other regions and religions of contemporary India.

Thus, the cultural developments in 18th century Maharashtra testifies that the culture is always a shared phenomena and whatever specific culture we have in India, it is not isolated but bears legacy of other cultures. This is a message of history to such people who construct barriers between various cultures on the name of so-called identity and man-made borders.

.....

*I wish to acknowledge UGC for their financial assistance to my project of which this paper is a part.*

<sup>1</sup> Mate, M.S. *Marathyanche Sthapatya*, in Kulkarni A.R. and G.H. Khare (eds.) *Marathyanchalitias*, Vol. II, Continental Publication, Pune, 2010, pp.370-389

<sup>2</sup> Mate, M.S., *Deccan Woodwork*, Deccan College, Pune, 1967

<sup>3</sup> These steps wells/tanks generally known as *barav* and *bavadi* near Bijapur region. Some of the noteworthy step-tanks/wells are at Sindhkhedraja, Limbshri, Bavdhan etc., Kule, Mukund *Itihasache Sakshidar*, Manovikas publication, Pune, 2007

<sup>4</sup> Mate, M.S., *Daulatabad: A Report*, Deccan College, Pune: Aurangabad, 1992

<sup>5</sup> We can find such *ghats* at Wai, Sangli, Miraj, Kolhapur etc. Besides, Ahilyabai Holkar also constructed *ghats* on Narmada in Madhya Pradesh.

<sup>6</sup> Mate, M.S., *Maratha Architecture (1650-1850)*, Mansanman Prakashan, Pune, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Ranade, Usha *marathichitrakala*, in Kulkarni A.R. and G.H. Khare (eds) *Marathyanchalitias*, Vol. II, Continental Publication, Pune, 2010, pp.390-399

---

<sup>8</sup> The remains of such wall-paintings are found in the *vadas* of Pune, Satara, Wai, Nasik, Chandavad, Nipani etc. and the temples of Morgav, Khandoba of Pal, Benavadi, Pashan (near Pune) etc.

<sup>9</sup> Apte, B. K., *Maratha Wall Paintings: Wai, Menavali, Satara, Pune*, State Board For Literature and Culture, Maharashtra, Mumbai, 1988.

The murals on a Jain temple at Jamod, having figures of Jain tirthankaras, painted in deep red colour with green background, also show influence of Rajasthani and Padhadi style, Mate, M.S. *Jamoda Jain Murals*, Pune, 1977

<sup>10</sup> Chavan, Kamal *Maratha Murals: Late Medieval Paintings of the Deccan (1650-1850)*, B. R. Publishing Company, Delhi, 1983

<sup>11</sup> Randade, Usha, *Late Medieval Manuscript Illustrations of the Deccan*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pune, Pune, 1979

<sup>12</sup> We find such manuscripts in the collection of Nasik, Wai, Satara, Paithan, Aurangabad, Dhule, Mumbai, Vadodara, ItihasSamshodhak Mandal-Pune etc.

<sup>13</sup> The *ragamalas* are miniatures inspired by musical melodies of Indian classical music. The miniature is generally measures around 4 cm x 3 cm. The subject quoted in the upper portion of the paper and the painting below it. These '*ragmalas*' based on the poetic work of the same name created by Kshemkarna in 13th century. The series consists of six main ragas with other ragas, together making total of 84 ragas. These are preserved in the collection of Prince of Wales Museum (Mumbai), Parasnis Collection (Pune), Marathvada University (Aurangabad), Bharat ItihasSamshokhak Mandal (Pune); for history of '*ragmala*' paintings, see, Mate, M.S. & Usha Ranade, *Nasik Ragmala*, Deccan College, Pune, 1982

<sup>14</sup> The '*talmala*' based on the sound of mridanga. The collection of such '*talmala*' preserved in the Bharat ItihasSamshodhak Mandal (Pune), Ranade, Usha and Kamal Chavan, *Tala paintings*, Pune.

<sup>15</sup> Sarode, Mahesh, *MaharashtratilKanchchitre (1775-1850)*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Deccan College, Pune, 2002