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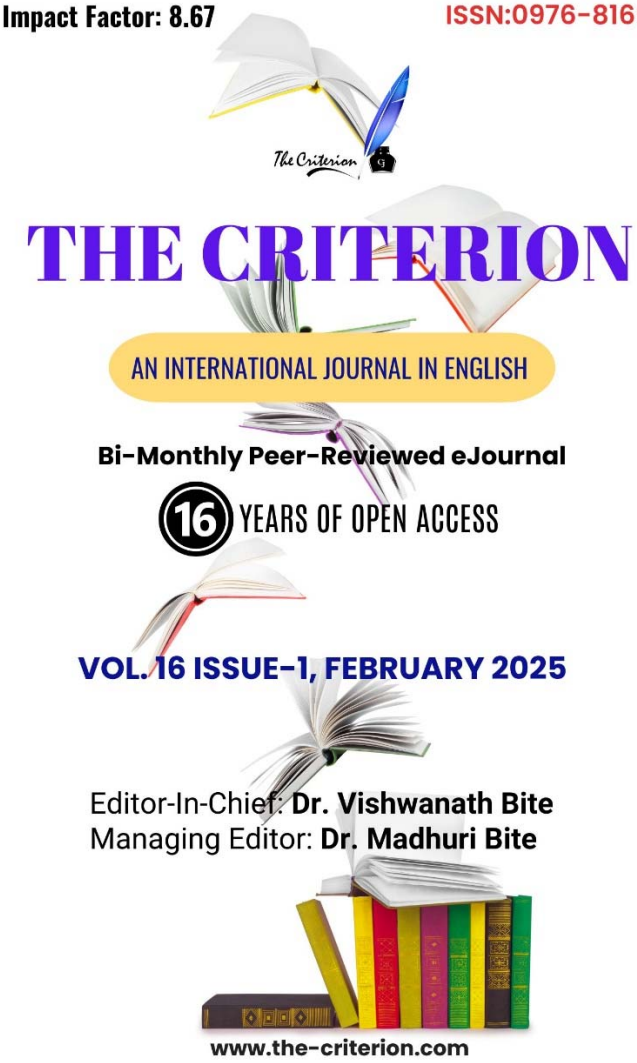

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The Role of Language and Literature in Assertion of Regional Identity: A Study of Deccan/Dakhn

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Abstract:

The present paper examines role of language and literature in shaping regional identities, emphasizing that language and nation are not always unifying elements or fixed markers of identity. It argues that racial, religious, and linguistic identities do not necessarily determine the formation of a nation nor prevent an individual from becoming part of it. The paper traces the historical evolution of the idea of India, beginning with ancient texts like the Manu Smriti, Mahabharata, and kingdoms, and continuing with the contributions of travelers and poets. It highlights how *Dakhni*/Deccani as a language, culture, sultanate, and identity emerged in the backdrop of the Mughal aggression. The paper examines the emergence of the Deccani language as a distinct identity for the region, blending elements of Sanskrit and southern languages, thus serving as a language of the masses. This prioritization of Deccani over Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic reflects the region's cultural identity, particularly when the Bijapur Sultanate opposed the

Mughal Empire's attempts to dominate the Deccan. The Deccani Sultanates, while maintaining Persian as the literary medium, also celebrated their local language, asserting a regional identity against Mughal forces. Poets like Nusrati criticized Mughal aggression, highlighting the complex interplay of nationalism, language, and regional power dynamics. The paper also argues that identity is inherently fluid, with individuals negotiating multiple identities at different times. In certain situations, one identity may take precedence over others, but such shifts are temporary and do not negate the legitimacy of the other identities. The ability to prioritize identities based on context is a fundamental characteristic of individual identity. The paper concludes by asserting that individuals are multifaceted, and it is this multiplicity of identities and the ability to balance them that makes them whole.

Keywords: History, India, Deccan, Language, Identity, Nation, Urdu, Region.

Language, Nation and Identity

Language and Nation are not necessarily unifying elements, nor are they absolute markers of identity. Differences of race, religion and language neither effect the formation of a nation nor prevent an individual from becoming a part of it. Similarly national identity is seldom confined by geographical boundaries. Nations, like human beings, do not enjoy eternal existence and are subject to change often due to external influences beyond the control of their inhabitants. Nations often witness change and are sometimes replaced, merged or subjugated, but their existence is an indicator of liberty which would cease to exist if there were just one single universal authority administering the world.

Nation and nationality in the Indian context are a relatively modern notion which evolved over a protracted period of time. The concept of India as a nation that is current in present times

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would not have been comprehensively understood by inhabitants of the region in earlier periods of history. What did exist was 'an idea of India' which term itself has gained currency in recent years since its first use by Sunil Khilnani.[1] While Khilnani's work does not specifically dwell on the origins and evolution of the concept of India as a nation, the term he coined evoked a response leading to comprehensive exploration in that direction. This exegesis of Indian history was essentially "concerned with how from being a country, whether as an essentially geographical expression or as a cultural entity, India became, or came to be regarded as a nation."[2]

It is certainly not a coincidence that the concept of 'nation' is first encountered with the advent of a pan-Indian empire under the Mauryas. It is in the edicts of Ashoka (268 BCE - 231 BCE) dating to c.250 BCE, that we first come across the mention of 'Jambu Dipa', which is probably an early name for India.[3] There has however been much speculation about the term itself and it has been suggested that "Jambu Dipa' might actually be a reference to "the entire human world".[4] Even if one were to concede that connotation in the edict actually alluded to the region under Ashoka's rule, the fact that the limits of his empire did not extend beyond southern Karnataka is evident in his mention of "the people of the south with whom he was on friendly terms – the Cholas, Pandyas, Satiyapuras, and the Keralaputras".[5] This leads us to conclude that the entire sub-continent was never a single political entity even during Mauryan times.

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[1] Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, (1997); Penguin Books, 2016.

[2] Shireen Moosvi, 'Preface', in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, (New Delhi, 2005) p.vii.

[3] Irfan Habib, "India: Country and Nation – An Introductory Essay" in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, (New Delhi, 2005), p.2 (also, fn. 4).

[4] Martti Kalda, "The Propaganda of the Edicts of Ashoka", http://www.academia.edu/25307067 (accessed 17.03.2017).

[5] Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India –From the Origins to AD 1300*, (London, 2003), p.185.

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With evidence of the concept and territorial limits of India in early history remaining tenacious, one needs to explore the mention of the region as a nation in epics. Early Buddhist texts mention the sixteen *Mahajanapadas* (tribal footholds) which were spread over northern India from the Kabul valley to eastern Bihar and "their being grouped together meant that they were supposed to belong in varying degrees to the same cultural complex. To a limited extent the idea of a 'country' was thus taking shape, though it had yet any name of its own."[6]

The frequent mention of 'north' and 'south' as two distinctive regions in most historic sources has led to a belief that such demarcations imply the existence of a larger whole. Though as yet unnamed, this implication is often considered in its essence, sufficient proof of the idea of India having been in existence in those times. A closer look at the texts reveal evidence to the contrary. *Manusmriti*, composed c.100 BC, defines 'Aryavarta' as the region bounded by the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhyas in the south – a region in which Brahmanical rituals prevailed.[7] The *Mahabharata*, compiled between 200 BCE and 300 CE, mentions 'Bharata Varsha', which again excludes a larger part of the Deccan and southern India.[8] With minor changes, the division between north and south continues to be evident in numerous sources ranging from inscriptions like the Allahabad Pillar of Samudragupta (c.335-376) to the *Vishnu Purana* (dated to anywhere between second century BCE to the eleventh century CE).

Hieun Tsiang, who travelled through India in the mid-seventh century CE, was probably the first to dwell at length on the topic of a specific name for India. He refers to it as *Yin-tu*, which most certainly derives from 'Hindu' the Persian name by which both the region and its inhabitants had become known and which later, confirming to etymological developments in Iran,

[6] Ishrat Alam, "Names for India in Ancient Indian Texts and Inscriptions" in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, (New Delhi, 2005), p.38.

[7] Ibid., p.38.

[8] Ibid., pp.38-39.

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transformed into 'Hindustan' as far as the territorial designation was concerned.[9] Interestingly, Hieun Tsiang notes that "the people of India had hardly an occasion to use a name for their country, and that the foreigners' name for their country was largely acceptable to them."[10]

This curious state of affairs seems to have persisted well into the fourteenth century when we find native rulers still differentiating their territorial holdings as being situated outside the bounds of *Bharata Varsha*. An inscription dating to 1356 CE which records a grant of Harihara mentions that "the impregnable city of Vijayanagara in the Karnataka country which lying to the south of *Bharata Varsha* excelled the city of Indra."[11] This assertion, coming at a time when there was a widespread acceptance by the majority population of the term 'Hindu' in its restrictive definition as designating the adherents of a particular religion, is rather perplexing.[12]

The term 'Hindi' as designating an inhabitant of 'Hindustan' gained currency subsequent to Muslims establishing themselves firmly in India. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, we encounter widespread mention of the term in literary sources. There is also a perceptible change in Muslim definitions of their individual and collective identity which is best manifest in the writings of Amir Khusrau (d.1324). Possessing a multifaceted genius which was deeply rooted in Indian culture, Khusrau does not tire of singing praises of India.[13] In one of his laudatory couplets he asserts his identity as an Indian-Turk who prefers the Hindawi language over Arabic.

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[9] "To begin with, the Iranians has long extended their version of the name to the Sindhu river, which they called "Hindu" ('h' in early Iranian standing for 's' in Indo-Aryan), to the country lying along and beyond that river. Whence came the name 'India' given by the Greeks; and the Chinese 'Yin-tu', representing 'Indu' in actual pronunciation. In post-Hellenistic Iran territorial names began to be given the suffix *–stan*, so that 'Hindu' would become 'Hindustan', on the analogy of other Iranian territorial names (such as Sakastan [=Seistan], Gurjistan, Khuzistan, etc.).

[10] Ibid., p.42.

[11] *Epigraphica Indica*, vol.XIV, p.88.

[12] For the evolution of terms mentioned, Cf., Irfan Habib, "India: Country and Nation – An Introductory Essay", p.5.

[13] Cf. Amir Khusrau, *Nuh Siphir*. (see chapter III for a remarkable eulogy of India). Also, Mohammad Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau* (Calcutta: 1936).

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Turk-e Hindustaniam man Hindawi goyam jawab,

Shakkar-e Misri nadaram, kaz Arab goyam sukhan.

I am an Indian Turk, I will respond in Hīndawī,

For I am no sweet talking Egyptian, to converse in Arabic.

It is evident from the writings of Khusrau and some of his contemporaries that by the end of the thirteenth century a sense of belonging had taken root in the collective psyche of Muslims in India. This development in turn brought about a tendency for the display of blatant patriotic zeal, which was at times justified by recourse to religious tenets. In one such instance Khusrau claims;

> Why, someone may ask me, all this zeal and admiration for India? It is because India is the land of my birth and is my own country. The Prophet has said that "the love of one's country is part of the faith". As it is my country, I am going to speak about it within the limits I have set to myself.[14]

As evident in Indo-Persian poetry, a seamless transition from one facet of an individual's identity to another was achieved with relative ease, without one infringing on the domain of other. Khusrau could thus simultaneously identify himself as an Indian by nationality and a Turk by ethnicity, who preferred to converse in the vernacular Hindawi rather than Arabic, which was universally accepted as the language of Islam – the religion that he professed.

It is this notion of nationality, along with the related patriotic assertions, that found its way into the Deccan with the establishment of Sultanate hegemony in the early part of the fourteenth century. Interestingly, Khusro himself had accompanied a Sultanate expedition to the

[14] Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, (Bombay; 1957), p.120.

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Deccan and in all probability would have communicated to his mentor Shaik Nizamuddin Aulia, the renowned Sufi mystic of Delhi, the immense potential in the region for spread of the Chishti order's doctrine. Shortly after Khusrau's return from the Deccan, Shaikh Nizamuddin dispatched a multitude of his disciples to the Deccan and this in turn lead to a fostering of interfaith relations in the region.

The Role of Language in Fabricating Identity

Language has long been considered as a prime indicator of identity. Samuel Johnson considers language as "the pedigree of nations". He sees a strong connection between language and nation and feels that with the loss of language there is a void which makes it difficult to reconstruct the past of a nation and an inability to trace the history of ancient nations. Language, he feels, is a very vital medium in attempts at recovery of a "lost" national identity.[15] Johnson's view is undoubtedly rooted in the concept that a shared "common descent, language or history" is essential for a region to be termed as a nation. While language is certainly an effective catalyst in the creation of a shared identity through cultural unity, it is but merely one benchmark for differentiating between communities. India, with its multitude of languages, would never be able to gain recognition as a nation if this criterion was considered indispensable. As Irfan Habib reiterates;

> "India, a country of several languages, could in the older definition be conceived, at best, as a country comprising several "nationalities", each based on a separate language; but we now realize that if language is not the primary criterion, but rather only one of the possible instruments in the

[15] "There is no tracing the connection of ancient nations, but by language; and therefore I am always sorry when any language is lost, because languages are the pedigree of nations." Cf. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, (Boston; 1832), vol. I, p.397.

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> process of nation-formation, then, India too, could emerge as a nation in due course, despite its various languages, whatever the conventional definitions of the term "nation" might be.[16]

A nation and its people can best be understood through its national literature. Even in the rare instances where a single language happens to be the medium of expression for a nation, regional dialects with their unique syntax promote sufficient linguistic and cultural eclecticism preventing it from becoming a defining index of national identity. Nevertheless, language remains a prime and important indicator and a sense of national pride compels and inspires writers to use a language and produce literature representative of their national ethos. This is why we find that often nationalistic literature is also used for propaganda in furthering national interests apart from inculcating a sense of pride among the citizens. Unfortunately, it can also at times be used to bring about a diametrically opposed result when marketed selectively.

The Evolution of Dakhni Language

In keeping with the tradition of their order to communicate in a language familiar to the masses, the Sufis of the Deccan nurtured Dakhni, the nascent form of Urdu. Within a century of it making its appearance in the Deccan, the language had developed sufficiently to enable communication of the most complex aspects of Sufi dogma in the simplest of terms.[17] In fact, the Sufi orders were replicating an ancient Indian methodology with regards to propagation of revolutionary ideas. Their objective was to reach the masses and for success they, like the

[16] Irfan Habib, "India: Country and Nation – An Introductory Essay" in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, (New Delhi, 2005), pp.9-10.

[17] Cf. Shugufta Shaheen, *Facets*, (Hyderabad; 2011), pp. 1-25.

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Buddha [18] and Ashoka [19], found it imperative to communicate in a medium easily comprehensible to the masses.

Language, Nation and Identity in Dakhni Literature

Identification of the Deccan as essentially a territory outside the Aryan influence had prevailed into medieval times. Despite a marked variation in the definition of the region in historical sources, which often tended to either include or exclude territories outside the geographical bound of the Deccan at will, there is almost universal agreement on the fact that it was a region readily identifiable as united due to its common history and culture. The sense of being different was heightened only when in comparison to the north, as such an evaluation results in a sharp contrast, and contribute to highlight the factors that definee collective identity immediately apparent.

The idea of India as a 'nation' "was formed, and enriched step by step".[20] As a result, the recognition of India as a single country was at best a hazy notion even during medieval times. The credit for inculcating a sense of solidarity with regards to national identity for the sub-continent goes to the Mughals. By creating "a political uniformity and a sense of larger allegiance"[21] the Mughals succeeded where others had failed. The degree of acceptance of this fabrication is open to debate, as we witness a constant assertion of a separate national identity, especially in the Deccan, where the Bahmani successor states remained firm in their conviction of being different. Sajjad Shahid notes, "Their point of view persisted well into modern times

[18] "The Buddha wishing to reach a wider audience taught in Magadhi". Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India –From the Origins to AD 1300*, (London, 2003). pp.163-63.

[19] "The Ashokan inscriptions were generally in the local script" Ibid., p.182.

[20] Irfan Habib, "India: Country and Nation – An Introductory Essay" in Irfan Habib (ed.), *India – Studies in the History of an Idea*, (New Delhi, 2005), p.8.

[21] Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, (Allahabad,1963), p.14.

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with inhabitants of the region asserting their nationality as being "*Dakhni*" in contrast to north Indians who were designated "*Hindustani*". This incidentally, was not the only challenge to the concept of India being a single nation; the Simon Commission Report (1930), basing its argument on India's religious and linguistic diversity, attempted to deny the fact that India had ever been a nation.

Undoubtedly beginning with the established notions of the Deccan as being a distinct territory, especially in relation to north India, the Bahmani Empire and its successor states succeeded in fabricating a national identity for the region. The most important marker of this often zealously asserted identity was the development of Dakhni, a shared language for the region. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, Dakhni had gained sufficient dexterity to be considered as a language suitable for literary expression. From being primarily restricted to mystic discourse, which undoubtedly provided the ground for its increasing popularity, Dakhni began to witness a demand for its day-to-day themes and non-religious literature. Fakhruddin Nizami's *Kadam Rao Padam Rao,* one of the first important Dekhni *mathnavi,* was composed in Bidar around c.1425, though drawing heavily on Sanskrit and other south Indian languages, indicates that the poet "was expressing himself through a living medium." Subsequent development of literary traditions stressed on promoting the spoken form of the language, thereby ensuring wide popularity.

The breakup of the Bahmani Empire (1483-1518) gave a boost to the Dakhnī language with the five successor states providing as many centres of patronage. Although the new sultanates promoted the language, significant literary activity was primarily concentrated in Bijapur and Golconda. Between them, these two sultanates were home to at least three rulers who made notable contributions to the language and its literary tradition in Dakhani such as Muhammad

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Quli Qutb Shah of Golconda (r.1580-1611) has the distinction of being the first Urdu poet with a diwan to his credit. Ibrahim `Adil Shah II of Bijapur (r.1580-1626) is the author of *Kitab-i Nawras*. Ali Adil Shah Shahi of Bijapur (r.1638-74) too has a diwan to his credit. It is in the Bijapur and Golconda schools of Dakhni literature that one repeatedly encounters a sense of belonging to the region. The firm rooting of narratives in the Deccan, even in instances where the primary plot is essentially an import from the Persianate world, is achieved through the use of imagery unique to the region.

Beginning with the language itself, poets of the Deccan often render justifications for their preference for Dakhni over Persian, Sanskrit, or other languages then current in different parts of the Deccan. Mohammed Ibrahim Khan San‘ati, a poet of Bijapur and the author of *Guldasta* (n.d.) and *Qissa Be Nazir* (1644), explains his preference of Dakhni over Persian and Sanskrit in unequivocal terms.

Rakhya kam Sahanskrit kay iss mein bol,

Adik bolnay say rakhiya hoon amol.

Jisay Farsi ka na kuch gyan hai,

So Dakhni zuban uss ko aasaan hai.

So iss mein Sahanskrit ka hai murad,

Kiya iss tay aasaangi ka swaad.

Kiya iss tey Dakhni mein aasaan kar,

Jo zahir disein iss mein kai hunar.

I have restricted the use of Sanskrit words,

And made (my work) free of rambling narration.

Those who have no knowledge of Persian;

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Find it easy to comprehend Dakhni.

My narrative captures the essence of Sanskrit,

And renders it sweet and simple.

By rendering it lucid in Dakhni (I have ensured),

That innumerable inherent flairs become instantly apparent.

Interestingly, the popularity enjoyed by Dakhni seems to have continued even after subjugation of the Deccan by the Mughals, who had continued with the tradition of retaining Persian as the preferred literary medium.

Wajihuddin Wajdi, in justification to his translation of Shaikh Fariduddin Attar's Persian mathnavi *Mantaq-ul Tair* into Dakhni (*Panchi Bacha*; composed 1131 H / 1718) states;

Asal mein yu tha kalam-e Farsi,

Ahl-e ma'ani ku misaal-e Aarsi.

Tha diye jun Farsi mein yu kalam,

Kam samajh saktay the is ku khas-o aam.

Garchay main bhi kuch nahin ma'ani shanas,

Kaan minjay is kay samajhnay ka qayas.

Lekin is kay dekh kar dilchasp bol,

Yak bayak yu dil manay aya kalol.

Qasad kar Dakhni zaban mein leykay aa'un

Ta rahay duniya manay mera bhi naa'un

Originally, this poetry was in Persian,

A mirror for intellectuals to reflect upon.

And because it was composed in Persian,

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Comprehension among the masses was limited.

Though being no master of vocabulary,

And hence unable to fathom fully such verse.

But being floored by its captivating words,

A storm instantly welled up in my heart;

Urging me to translate it into Dakhni,

So that my name too is immortalised in this world.

Mohammed Nusrat Nusrati (d.1085H/1674-75), the court poet of Bijapur during the reign of Ali Adil Shah, asserts the beauty and grace of Dakhni in his inimitable style while speaking about his translated work *Gulshan-e Ishq* (1068 H/1657-58).

Safaai ki surat ki hai aarsi,

Dakhni ka kiya sher hun Farsi.

Clarity, comparable to a polished mirror,

Thus into Dakhni have I rendered Persian poetry.

Asadullah Wajhi, the court poet of Golconda, who lived through the reigns of four sultans; Ibrahim Quli, Mohammed Quli, Sultan Mohammed and Abdullah Qutub Shah, asserts in his renowned mathnavi *Qutub Mushtari* (1018 H/1609-10) that the sweetness inherent in the diction of Dakhni is unrivaled.

Dakhan mein jun Dakhni miti baat ka,

Ada nain kiya koi iss dhaat ka.

The sweetness of Dakhni language in the Deccan,

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None have expressed so eloquently.

Ibn Nishati (*Phool Ban* 1066 H/1655-56), who was an important official in the reign of Abdullah Qutub Shah apart from being one of the primary formulators of Dakhni literary traditions, exhorts fellow poets to make the world acquainted with Dakhni culture.

Isay har kas kay tain samjha kun tun bol,

Dakhni kay baataan sariyan pe khol.

Be eloquent and ensure that everyone understands;

Let the culture of Dakhni be known to all!

It is well established that Dakhnī poets were conversant in the region's languages. Syed Meeran Hashmi (d.1697), the renowned poet of Bijapur, asserts his linguistic range in a self-laudatory couplet which substantiates the theory that numerous others would have been equally dextrous in their use of regional vocabulary;

Muay muṇh kay woh kya hongay, usay sab raabta hai maaṇ!

Arbi, Farsi, Dakhni, Tilangi, hawr Marati ka.

Who else can compete, for he has a command my dear;

Over Arabic, Persian, Dakhnī, Telugu and Marathi.

It is essentially a sense of belonging and the assignment of "primary loyalty" to the country that one belongs to, which results in crystallization of a national identity. Literature provides an indication of the degree to which this sense of belonging has taken root. A couplet of Abdul Jaleel, a late seventeenth century poet of Hyderabad, hints at the remarkable degree to which national identity had found manifestation in the Dakhni mind.

Watan soun jo raeda soun atha dil,

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Makkay mein bhi na paya chain ek pal.

So besotted was the heart with the motherland,

That it found no peace even after reaching Mecca

It is often assumed that Muslims find peace, tranquillity and homliness whenever they come to Mecca and Medina but this poet breaks this notion and prioritize homeland/Hyderabad/Deccan/India even after reaching to Mecca.

In other instance, Qazi Mehmood Bahri (*Man Lagan*; c.1690) compares his love for, and bonding with the Deccan to the inseparable bond between Nal and Damayanti, the classical lovers of Hindu mythology who find frequent mention in Sufi and Bhakti narratives. For Bahri, considering the nation as the beloved, instead of as motherland/fatherland/homeland or the more frequently encountered designation in India of motherland, is understandable as he was a renowned Sufi of his times.

Bahri kun Dakhan yu hai kay jiun Nal ko Daman hai;

Bas Nal ko hai lazim kay Daman chor na jana.

One frequently encounters patriotism in the Dakhnī corpus fervent assertions of identity; national, regional and linguistic. In one such patriotic outpouring, Golconda poet Tib'i, as part of his narrative poem *Bahram-o Gulandam* (composed in 1088 H/1677-78), brings his wrath to bear on those who forget their national affiliation.

Jis ko yaad karta naiṇ apna watan,

O murda hai, pairan hai uss ka kafan.

Agar koi ghurbat mein shahi kayray,

Agar mal haor mulk _ lakhan dharay.

Apas koyi dekhay khuṇ jun ankhiyaṇ,

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Devay khakh tan ka watan ka nishan.

Watan sab kuṇ duniya meiṇ pyaraa ahay,

Safar hai so joon baad-o baraan ahay.

One who disremembers his nation,

Is but a corpse; the shroud his rightful garb.

If someone lords even when poor, then;

He is one who has refused treasure for country.

If one were to observe with perceptive eyes;

The patriot's ashes will point to his national ties.

The nation, cherished by all in this world;

Even for a life spent wandering like the storm.

There are to be found in the Dakhnī repertoire, hundreds of such examples of patriotic expression. One of the strongest condemnations of the Mughals in literature comes from the pen of Nusrati, the poet laureate of Bijapur. The raison d'être behind its composition is the Mughal attack on Bijapur as part of Imperial plans to usurp the Deccan. The fact that the aggressor is a Muslim, does not in any way restrain Nusrati who happens to be their co-religionist. Patriotic fervour makes short shrift of religious affinity and the poet thunders his contempt of the imperial forces in unequivocal terms providing Urdu literature with one of its most powerful diatribes. Here, nationality is asserted through censure of the adversary who happens to personify the 'other'.

Maghulan kitay mulk va kayi shaher kay,

Kitay Hind va kayi mavaran nahar kay;

Jughti, Qazalbash, Uzbek bali,

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Qandhari kitay, Balqi o Kabuli;

Murawwat kay muflis, mohabbat kay shum,

Firasat koun tooti, nahusat meiṇ bum;

Fereb in kay fan mein bada fard hai,

Janam jan ka Iblis shagirad hai;

Nachay jin mein aslaa murawwat ki buay,

Karein us suon bad jis tay neik unn pay huay;

Badi baap soun apni mirath jaan,

Biradar ka khun, na sheer-e madar pachan;

Dekahein kuchh hai jahan fa'idah aap koun,

Nichordhay sagay bhai hoar baap koun.

The Mughals, from many nations and cities;

Many from Hind and numerous Transoxianians.

Chughtai, Qazalbash, Uzbeks brave;

Qandahari many, Balkanians and Afghans.

Paupers in compassion, deceivers in love;

Renowned for intelligence but inauspicious as an owl.

The art of treachery for them a matter of pride;

That has made Satan, their pupil in eternity.

Never in them the faintest sign of empathy;

For they return a favour with nothing but harm.

Considering evil a paternal inheritance;

They care neither for brother nor mother.

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Sensing opportunity they move in for the kill,

Draining the blood of brother and father at will.

It is said that identities can be both real and constructed. At times, they can be significant and essential – even vital to the survival of an individual, a community or even a nation. In recent times, Telangana has witnessed positive change as a result of the assertion of regional identity. Historically, the Deccan has comprised of three distinct regions – Maratha, Kannada and Tilang. It is interesting to note that even during the peak of confrontation between the Mughals and the Deccan sultanates, in which the latter were generally united as a nation, a strong undercurrent of regional aspirations persisted. This seems to have been especially true in the case of Telangana as it is in the Golconda corpus of Dakhni poetry that one encounters perhaps the earliest and certainly the most blatant proclamation of regional identity. The fact that this assertion comes from the pen of Wajhi, the Qutb Shahi court's poet laureate, makes it even more telling.

Dakhan sa nahin thaar sansaar mein,

Punaj fazilaan ka hai iss thaar mein;

Dakhan hai nageena angothi hai jag,

Angothi koun hurmat nageena hai lag;

Dakhan mulk koun dhan ajab saaj hai,

Kay sab mulk sar howr Dakhan taj hai;

Dakhan mulk bhowteej khasa ahay,

Telangana iss ka khulaasa ahay.

Comparable to the Deccan, there is no place on earth;

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Indeed to innumerable intellectuals it has given birth.

The Deccan is a gem, the world a ring;

And verily the gem makes it a worthy thing.

Amazing grandeur to the Deccan nation brings renown;

For all other nations together, wear the Deccan as a crown.

The Deccan – a land of dazzling luminescence,

And Telangana indeed is its very essence.

Identities, in the post-modernist world have become more fluid and fragmented than ever before resulting in multifarious psychological issues requiring a constant change in perceptions and resultant definitions of group behaviour. This entails a state of flux to salient indices which define identity and require constant repositioning of even such fundamentals as group loyalties.

To conclude, identity is never monolithic and an individual negotiates multiple identities at any given moment in time. The assertion of regional identity through language and literature in the Deccan highlights the complex and dynamic nature of identity formation. One may come across a situation when there arises a conflict requiring the assertion of one particular identity over others. However, such a situation, despite being crucial, can only be temporary and at no time can the legitimacy or loyalty of other identities be questioned. The challenge of such temporal situations is often overcome by prioritization and the required manifestation becoming dominant while other identities become either secondary or dormant. It is entirely an individual's prerogative to decide which identity comes to the fore and which remains dormant in a particular situation. In any case individuals are multifaceted and it is these variegated identities and the capacity to owe allegiance to them all, that make them complete individuals. Dakhni literature provides irrefutable evidences of this remarkable ability of individuals and

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enlightens us regarding the ease with which conflicts within an individual identity were addressed in the Deccan. The emergence of Deccani language as a regional marker exemplifies how linguistic practices can serve as a form of resistance and assertion of autonomy. It reveals that identity is never monolithic, but instead, shaped by historical, cultural, and political forces. The Deccan's literary tradition underscores the ability of individuals to navigate and assert multiple identities, demonstrating that the negotiation of regional, linguistic, and national identities is a continuous and evolving process.

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