

SRF's emailed replies to an inquirer, provided by him for the website:

1) What motifs were of importance for the Dakhni poets? **Dakani ghazal is mostly about love. The protagonist is very often the woman lover, not the male lover. Sufi themes also occur, but not much. The longer poems (Masnavis) are mostly about courtly love, often allegories for divine love and Sufi themes. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah wrote a number of poems about the seasons, customs and festivals. There were special purpose poems: songs that women sang while grinding corn; songs celebrating the birth of the Prophet; songs about domestic matters.**

2) You have mentioned in your work that Dakhni poets were relatively freer compared to other poets in the subcontinent at that point -- what may have been the reason for that? **The reasons are complex and not easy to unravel. It could be that they thought that Persian or Arabic words could be totally domesticated, and used in poetry the way they were spoken. Maybe they thought that poets could take liberties. Or perhaps they considered poetry in the local language as lacking the cachet of 'higher' poetry, so it could fool around. Occasionally, there were admonitions from the poets themselves that the original pronunciation of Arabic or Persian should be respected. But it was never done in practice, except maybe by some poets in the late 18th c.**

3) In an aesthetic sense, how does the word of the Dakhni language (sound) appear in your mind? **Sorry, I am not quite able to hear the poem as it was heard by a contemporary listener. The reason is that many of the words are pronounced in what seem to be outlandish, even bizarre ways. The sense may come through, either spontaneously or after some effort, but the poem is read mostly with the eye, with little aid from the ear.**

4) The human voice and the fluidic sculpture has been the foundation of the basis of the arts in India. How would you describe the spatial-temporal relations between the word (bol) and metre (taal) in Dakhni poetry? **I am not sure fluidity is the main principle here. I would incline to think that the language as a literary medium was in its infancy in its Gujarati (Gujri) and Dakani phase. You can see a lot of flexibility of pronunciation and versification in Early English poetry. The same is true of early Persian poetry (though it had already imbibed much of the codification imposed on ancient Arabic poetry by metrical theorists who wrote mainly with the Arabic in view, but the rules were accepted by the Persian poets too). Pre-Islamic Persian poetry was much freer. So also ancient Arabic poetry.**

5) Do you see a correlation between the poetic word or bol and the architecture of the various kingdoms of the Deccan? Particularly their version of the dome and the minaret? **I am not sure that is the case. The symbolism of the minaret and the dome was well established and was entirely religious-Sufi-theological. As far as I know, it had nothing to do with language.**

6) This word 'syncretism' has been used a lot for the culture of our sub-continent, how does the syncretic or the synthesis of the Indic and Islamicate occur in Sabk-i-Hind? Well, in sabk-e hindi, syncretism is mostly in the world view, in the decisions regarding what should go into a poem; what makes a poem, or what are the implications of using language to express experience, or emotion. How far can language go? Does language go far enough? These are not considerations one can find in Persian or Arabic. They are typically Indian.

Aside from your insightful work on Dakhni poets like Vajhi, Nusrati, Shaikh Ahmad Gujrati is there anyone else who takes on Dakhni poetry as their primary subject in Devanagari and/or English? Please do recommend any work. Sorry, my reading of criticism in Urdu or English on this subject is limited. In Urdu, it is entirely colonialistic and academic. In English, I haven't seen anything different. But there's very little in English.

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