Trajectories in the Construction of '*Maharashtrian*' Identity

Rajula Nanji Shah

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Department of Sociology

University of Mumbai, Mumbai, India

Abstract*:* With a theoretical lens of symbolic interactionism and methodological lens of social constructionism, this paper examines the construction of 'Maharashtrian' identity through its various predominant trajectories. Harnessing purely on secondary data, this paper intends to understand and survey the trends in emergence of identity politics in relation to ethnicity, particularly relating to language as one of the factors influencing it along with region and religion, while keeping independence and thereby re-organization of states on linguistic basis in its backdrop. For this, four major phases or movements in Maharashtra's history are discussed that have dramatically influenced the construction of 'Maharashtrian' identity. The paper concludes by suggesting the uniqueness of Maharashtrian identity, especially for Mumbai, where the socio-economic dynamics have been comparatively different than the others regions in Maharashtra.

Keywords*:* Identity, Symbolic Interactionism, Maharashtra, Shiv Sena.

I.   IDENTITY – AN INTRODUCTION

The constructionist tradition treats identity as a social construction, not as a natural phenomenon, rather as a human creation that is produced by groups of human beings in order to solve problems, defend or enhance their positions, justify their actions, establish meanings, achieve understanding, or otherwise negotiate their way through the world in which they live (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). Further, it is difficult to comprehend and understand one's identity is this complex globalized world, where there is a multiplicity of identities, which are also undergoing rapid changes. Hence it seems, one's identity can never be fully captured and articulated into words. In today's globalized world, the resurgent demand for 'recognition' has rapidly assumed great importance and attention. This can be analytically seen as politics of recognition which is in fact entangled in the threads of identity politics. It is in the name of identity and recognition, that a lot of unhealthy politics take place that are usually intended to harm or destroy a particular group's identity.

Joseph (2004) aptly states two basic aspects to a person's identity: their name, that demarcated one from the rest and then that intangible 'something' that constitutes who one really is, which cannot be described in one word – yet attempts for which have been made, for instance, soul and ego. However, such connotations do not justify what that 'something' signifies and means. Actually, it seems nearly impossible to have just one word to describe this other aspect of one's identity. A person's or a group's identity is something that makes it unique in comparison to the others. That means it can be understood as something that makes an individual identical to others in his/her group as well as differentiate him/her from others or other groups. In that sense, the notion of one's identity comes into existence in the context of 'others'. Awareness of another's identity is deeply related to one's own idea of identity. And therefore, according to Allan (2006), it is symbolic interaction, that we engage in on a daily basis, that results in the emergence of 'meanings' that constantly drives our identity.

Harnessing purely on secondary sources, this paper intends to understand the emergence of identity politics in Maharashtra, particularly with language, region, culture, religion, ethnicity in its backdrop. Hence, the whole argument revolves around the construction of Maharashtrian identity. This paper works within the framework of symbolic interactionist theories of identity construction to look at the complex process of the construction of Maharashtrian identity through its various trajectories. My argument, therefore, is that the Maharashtrian identity is constructed in the specific context which includes its traditions, history, the event

of state re-organization as well as the rise of Shiv Sena. This paper attempts to do a micro-study of select secondary sources to illuminate the issue of identity politics in Maharashtra's context. It is acknowledged this paper looks at the issue from a certain vantage point and is situated within a specific framework, hence there could be multiple other frames and elements that equally justify others ways of examining the issue at hand.

Today, India, although democratic and secular, is witnessing identity assertion from various sections in the society. There are struggles and conflicts surrounding the assertion of certain identities by certain groups, which are often fought on lines of region, language, religion, caste and community. In this regard, Llamas and Watt (2010) look at the complex relationship between language and identity as a "fundamental element of our experience of being human" (p. 1). Strangely, neither are identities nor language are static. Both are constantly shifting and being renegotiated in response to the ever changing contexts of our interactions. Thus, our identity seamlessly gets shaped and reshaped through our interactions which are apparently impossible without the use of language.

Given the complexities of group identity in India, I therefore, prefer to look at the whole argument of identity politics from the perspective of ethnicity, as it best demonstrates the politics of recognition, which is indeed based on identities emerging from language, religion, region and caste. Ethnicity, as it is employed here, includes elements of nativism, linguistic, regional or caste loyalties. Such identities, which have conflicting interests and thereby result in conflict situations, are not just multiple but also overlapping and at times confusing. As I look at India as a plural society, in my view, therefore, the term 'ethnic' best represents the problem undertaken here. This paper is devoted primarily to an examination of how eventually the nativist appeal deriving from the coherent ideological framework of Shiv Sena's ideology was articulated to mould the Maharashtrian identity.

II.   LINGUISTIC RE-ORGANIZATION OF INDIA

It is popularly known to us that the colonial administration, while expanding from its original coastal bases, adopted territorial divisions which was purely based on administrative convenience resulting in provinces and presidencies, and therefore was not based on any obvious principle. However, post-independence, with the growing political influence of the Congress, along with its internal organization, Congress recognized a 'democratic' principle in the proper territorial organization of the state on the basis of linguistic regions. The political transactions were assumed to be facilitated by the vernacular language of these linguistic states. This practice also implicitly implied the idea that the great diversity of India ruled out the realization of any homogeneous cultural nationalism and therefore recognition of the legitimacy of regional cultures based primarily, although not exclusively, on languages was deemed important. What we saw after independence was but obvious. Various demands started flowing in for a greater recognition of regional identity (Kaviraj, 1997). An important thing to mention here is that the demand for state bifurcation on the basis of language was not seen as anti-India or anti-national by the Congress at the Centre, as in the 1920s, Congress had explicitly proclaimed that after independence, India would be administratively demarcated on linguistic lines (Gupta, 1997). Thus, what we then saw was the formation of the State Reorganization Commission (SRC) in 1956.

To begin with, the Partition of Bengal in 1905 had already laid down the long drawn-out process of territorial reorganisation in modern India. It should also be remembered that by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the rise of proto-nationalism had begun to gather religious and regional linguistic underpinnings. Hence, in the first two decades of post-independent India, due to constant pressure and persistence of linguistic, religious and tribal movements, the central government yielded, creating Andhra Pradesh (Telugu-speaking), Tamil Nadu (Tamil-speaking), Karnataka (Kannada-speaking), Gujarat (Gujarati-speaking), Maharashtra (Marathi-speaking), Punjab which was trifurcated into Punjab (Punjabi-speaking with a Sikh majority), Haryana (Hindi-speaking with Hindu majority), and Himachal Pradesh (Hindi-speaking with Hindu majority) in the 1950s and 1960s (Singh, 2008). However, this whole process of bifurcation did not end here. Such a territorial reorganisation was later extended to the north-east in the 1960s and 1970s.

III.   POLITICS OF REGIONAL IDENTITY

Dipankar Gupta (1997) has argued that "the acceptance of cultural and linguistic differences is the enduring basis on which Indian politics is played out" (p. 229). He, too, traces India's post-independence history to 'three great occasions' – linguistic, nativist and regional. The demands for unilingual states were seen erupting soon after the independence. The second occasion is applicable when the 'natives' of these unilingual states started demanding that economic opportunities in their states to be reserved predominantly for them (the "sons of the soil" phenomenon). And the third one is comparatively the contemporary one where we see greater regional autonomy for the states in economic matters. The linguistic demands in particular, and the nativist movements[1] to a somewhat lesser extent, can be seen as having a repeated emphasis on the primordial identity which was based on language. However, the regional movements are more secular in character precisely because such regions contained many minority linguistic groups along with a major one, and therefore these should be seen as region-oriented, than any linguistic group oriented.

The articulation of politics of recognition and assertion based on ethnic identities has surfaced time and again in the Indian society. We see assertions and insurgency particularly in Northeast, where the disagreements are on the grounds of separatism, language, nativism, and so on with disagreements taking violent forms. Then there are issues regarding formation of certain states on linguistic demands. There are cases where the regions within regions are becoming more powerful and demanding for various political and other reasons (Kumar, 2011). Other major issues include the Vidarbha statehood (Kumar, 2001) and the tensions, though not linguistic, that led to the Telangana formation. Another major issue concerning India worth mentioning are the autonomy demands in Jammu and Kashmir. Then there innumerable cases of communal tensions[2] and ethnic strife which often emerge from regional, religious, linguistic and other contestations and then they are given various political connotations. For instance, the 2013 Dhule riots, which saw some deaths and total *bandh*-like situation, had started off from a trivial disagreement between two in some restaurant but took ethnic overtones in its articulation[3] and masses were mobilized to assert their identities.

Over the span of few decades, there have been native-migrant ruptures in Maharashtra, and particularly in Mumbai. Such anti-migrant sentiments then result in, among other things, reactions like importance given to domicile (which is also picking up pace in other parts) and thereby preference given to local people in education, government jobs and housing schemes, and so on. As we know, in Mumbai, nativist sentiment has found explicit political expression in the political party, Shiv Sena, formed in 1966, to safeguard the interests of the "sons of the soil" (Katzenstein, 1973).

The multiple facets of Maharashtra's socio-cultural scene as well as history range from mainstream religious tradition and the divergent sects of folk religion, to the moulding of religious identities in the hostile presence of the British rule and the political tensions in the post-independent India, besides the upsurge of Maratha power and the assertion of Maratha identity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the political and social reforms of the nineteenth century and also the political protest movements in the twentieth century. Most of these, resulting from a combination of regional specificities, wield a powerful influence on the Maharashtrian psyche (Kosambi, 2000). Precisely for these reasons, this paper intends to look from four major perspectives or stages in its history – Maharashtra's folk tradition, rise of Shivaji Maharaj, Maharashtra in its nascent stage and the rise of Shiv Sena – that together helped shape Maharashtra's present identity.

IV.   THE FOUR MOVEMENTS THAT SHAPED MAHARASHTRIAN IDENTITY

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[1] Although based on linguistic identity, such demands were more based on economic aspects than the primordial affiliation to a particular identity, i.e. the demand being economic but mediated through specific linguistic identities.

[2] Particularly the Babri Masjid demolition and the riots that followed that, as also the Godra riots.

[3] Such behaviour is also apparent in mundane situations like travelling in local trains, where trivial issues provoke people (but I have observed this more in women compartment) to comment or pass statements which have regional or religious connotations. This, I have observed, specifically against persons from weaker sections like fisher women, Muslims, construction workers and like.

Maharashtra's Folk Tradition

The Bhakti movement, with its ample regional literature, should be credited to have provided impetus to acceptance of regional languages amongst the remote masses. Maharashtra's folk tradition, particularly the Bhakti movement, invoked a rare sense of pride in everything that was unique to its region. The growth of regional consciousness in Maharashtra (the region of Marathi language) is essentially a phenomenon of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, even from the thirteenth century, Varkari poet-saints are known to have fostered the religious spirits. Varkari poet-saints, devotees of the god Vithoba of Pandharpur (Sholapur district), with their regular pilgrimage, provided "one of the clearest symbolic expressions of the unity of Maharashtra, bringing together as it does pilgrims of many different castes from all parts of the Marathi-speaking region" (Feldhaus, 1986:534). A thirteenth century saint Dnyaneshwar (famous disciple of Vithoba) wrote or rather composed and sang in Marathi, the meaning of the Sanskrit Bhagawad Gita. Besides, the shrine of Pandharpur was a famous place of pilgrimage (Karve, 1962), further proving that these Bhakti movements indeed generated the sense of Marathi linguistic identity.

There are also the *Mahanubhavas*, like the Varkaris, a Maharashtrian bhakti sect founded in the thirteenth century, rare, but visible even today. They are known to have produced large body of old Marathi literature on the social and religious life of medieval Maharashtra and the religious meanings of the region (Feldhaus, 1986). Thus, the regional consciousness of the people in Maharashtra started getting shaped and reshaped once the obvious was legitimized that is the importance of *Marathi* was established. The pilgrimage places in Maharashtra eventually became very important for promoting regional identity. With this we see how with the help of regional language, the land of Maharashtra was glorified in religious terms. And it was largely through the folk and non-Brahman traditions, using vernacular languages and dialects, that the image of Maharashtra was glorified as a place of religious significance.

Ironically, it is also worth noticing the syncretism found in Maharashtra's cultural landscape. Over the centuries of coexistence, it is noted, the Hindus and Muslims made some adaptive compromises to co-exist, bearing a few clashes between the two. Some Muslim saints, like Shaikh Mohammad, are known to have joined the Bhakti movement in the medieval period. Such accounts consider Shivaji's image, of a Hindu warrior resisting Muslim domination, as a 'myth', as being an astute strategist as he was, Shivaji was open to groups of all kinds (Burman, 2001). However, the myth of Shivaji as it appears in the popular imagination has been exploited for political purposes (Date, 2007; Laine, 2000). Different people have presented Shivaji's image differently depending on their orientation and purposes.

Shivaji Maharaj: A Maharashtrian Warrior

In reflecting upon the multiple trajectories in the construction and moulding of Maharashtrian identity, it is now indispensable to look at the role of Shivaji's image and its impact that will be profoundly shaping Shiv Sena's ideology in future. Shivaji is, no doubt, a time-tested symbol of history, culture and identity formation be it traditional folk culture, popular imagination, or in the politics of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and the Shiv Sena (Vartak, 1999). Shivaji's life and legend serve as major points of reference in the world view of the Shiv Sena[4]. Shivaji has been Shiv Sena's and Bal Thackeray's all time hero, including most of the Maharashtrians (Gupta, 2009). In fact, using Shivaji as symbol of Maratha pride, whenever the Hindutava appeal was not thought to be adequate, the Marathi pride was resurfaced by the Sena. For instance, in elections to the Mumbai corporation in 2002, Shiv Sena relied heavily on the question of Marathi pride and managed a comfortable victory (Palshikar, 2004).

Such an illuminating image of Shivaji particularly started evolving in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was in this phase that British colonialism was being established in Western India, which in deed resulted in some significant changes in the polity, society and economy of the region. Since, movements of identity formation tend to use symbols for mass mobilization through obvious attempts for the revivals and reconstructions of the past, which is like a 'golden age' that has deteriorated to the present. And it was in this

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[4] The main distinction, though, is that although for the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, 'Shiv' symbolises Shivaji, whereas for its northern followers, 'Shiv' represents the deity, Lord Shiva.

context that the various images of Shivaji, as a symbol, were popularized. Mass media were indispensable for such a phenomenon. Press, in particular, gave some amount of legitimacy and wider circulation to ideas revolving around Shivaji, even though as a symbol, Shivaji was often used in traditional oral medium of '*pawada*' and '*lavani*' (genre of Marathi poetry and music), or in literature and journalism or the public meetings and festivals.

This, along with English education, influenced the Western educated middle class. Besides already existing emotional identification with the glories of the Maratha past, Shivaji's resistance to the established Mughal authority became a popular political symbol in the context of rising nationalism and identity formation. Due to his resistance and radical nature, the image of Shivaji thus became a symbol that could be used in a variety of shifting contexts whether it was Brahman dominance, Muslim rule or colonialism. It was within this ideological context that Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar and Shivram Mahadeo Paranjpe emerged on Maharashtra's scene. They remained committed to classical Hindu doctrines as well as advocated their belief in the progress of society.

Amongst the persons holding non-Brahmanic interpretations of Shivaji, Phule was most profound. He designed a new collective identity for all of Maharashtra's lower classes through an intelligent use of existing symbols, myths and legends in the living folk tradition. Besides, in order to popularise his interpretation of Shivaji, Phule used the traditional medium of the *powada* – simple, colloquial, non-Sanskritised Marathi language thus became more accessible to the lower classes. Thus, the non-Brahman identity formation began to shape by Shivaji's legacy of uplifting the downtrodden. Towards the beginning of 20th century, we see personalities like V D Savarkar, Rao Bahadur Gopal Hari Deshmukh, popularly known as 'Lokahitawadi', Ranade and Rajaram Balkrishna Bhagwat, who with their approach cemented the so-far strongly held image of Shivaji. Thus all the attempts were made to keep the image of Shivaji alive in the minds of the people of Maharashtra. Further, he was also depicted as a national hero who fought against the foreign rule. The popular imagination today, in Maharashtra, looks at the Shivaji Movement as showing Shivaji as the leader of the Marathas and a champion of the Hindus (Vartak, 1999).

Maharashtra in its Nascent Stage

The formation of the state of Maharashtra itself revolved around the concept of 'mother tongue'. The Samyukt Maharashtra Samiti (unity of Maharashtra) was created in 1956 as the major spokesman for Marathi linguistic provincialism with its main objective as to persuade the Government of India to separate the Marathi from the Gujarati-speaking areas of Mumbai state and to form the Marathi-speaking area into the unilingual state of Maharashtra. On May 1, 1960, the Samiti's efforts were rewarded when the new state of Maharashtra was created with Mumbai as its capital (Stern, 1964). The state of Maharashtra, which incorporates most of the Marathi-speaking people of India, itself emerged as an expression of collective and individual ambitions (Rosenthal, 1974).

Since then, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra has been an example of nativist movement that got transformed into a political party. The Shiv Sena of the sixties and seventies emerged as an organization that was explicitly local and nativist in its nomenclature and orientation. Thus throughout its nascent stage, the state of Maharashtra, with the help of Shiv Sena, has been reinforcing the uniqueness of Maharashtrian identity. Hence, Maharashtra's nascent stage acted as a mediator between the socio-historical phases, particularly involving folk traditions and rise of Shivaji, and the rise of Shiv Sena as a political party, that together resulted in a negotiated Maharashtrian identity that we see today.

The Rise of Shiv Sena

It was in the state of Maharashtra, with apparently majority of Marathi speaking population, that the nativist or 'son-of-the-soil' movement arose taking the form of Shiv Sena. Although the Shiv Sena is predominantly confined to Mumbai, it is an important symbol of nativist sentiment in India. Formed on June 19, 1966, Shiv Sena ('army of Shiva') derives its name from Shivaji Maharaj, the seventeenth century founder of the Maratha Empire (1672-1818) who, among his many deeds, defended Maratha territory against the incursions of the Moguls from the North. Soon after its inception, Shiv Sena started claiming '**Maharashtra for the**

Maharashtrians'. It particularly focused on mobilizing youth and middle class competition for white-collar jobs. This latter point very well explains why Sena initially attacked South Indians. However, after gaining access in local politics, Shiv Sena moved to concentrate on issues pertaining to 'anti-nationalism', thereby attacking Communists and Muslims. But, still Sena is known to return to the native-outsider issue.

Over time, Shiv Sena earned a reputation of being "ruthless" and violent and this image of theirs was consistently presented by newspapers and other media about its violent clashes. This kind of a militant image was also partly generated by the organizational structure of the Sena, which was highly autocratic. Beginning in 1967, over 120 branch offices were established throughout the metropolitan area (by the end of 1988, it had about 40,000 branches spread all over Maharashtra), having *Shakha Pramukhs* as the branch leaders. However, the ultimate power rested in the hands of top leadership that was Thackeray. It should also be noted that Shiv Sena was more than a middle class phenomenon. It arose, rather, from a broader and perhaps more profound disorder – that Maharashtrians as a community were, and felt themselves to be, subordinate on their 'own native soil'.

Demographically speaking, in 1961, Maharashtrians were a minority i.e. 43% of Mumbai's total population. However, Maharashtrians still constituted the largest single linguistic community. The next largest, Gujaratis, were 19%; South Indians including the four major South Indian linguistic communities, comprised 9%; and, the Hindi-speakers were 8%. Nevertheless, when we look at this in terms of language composition, we see the fact that non-Maharashtrians (non-Marathi speakers) numerically exceeded Maharashtrians (predominantly Marathi speakers) in their own 'native city' clearly affected the outlook of Maharashtrians towards themselves and towards 'others' (Katzenstein, 1973, 1979). So it was this apparent designation of Maharashtrians, as comparatively economically backward group[5], that Shiv Sena potentially made use of to trigger the nativist movement in Maharashtra, which in a short period of time changed the Maharashtrian psyche leading to the consolidation of the Maharashtrian identity.

The Shiv Sena, through its 'consciousness-raising' *Marmik* (straight from the heart), a weekly Marathi magazine, played an important role in intensifying the inhibited frustration of the locals for not having seen any concrete changes in their economic positions since the status of capital being given to Mumbai. Therefore, the economic and social disparity between Maharashtrians and non-Maharashtrians in Mumbai constituted the fundamental source of nativist sentiment in the city; the immediate stimulus to Shiv Sena, however was not material but psychological: the change in Maharashtrian expectations and consciousness moulded by Samyukta Maharashtra and the revitalization of these feelings achieved through the outcries of *Marmik* resulted in the emergence of organized nativism in 1966 (Katzenstein, 1973). In fact, *Marmik*, in an attempt to reach out to Marathi literate crowd, also unintentionally started creating an impression on the minds of the locals, the importance of the need to express in one's own language and that too the feelings which the locals probably always experienced but never expressed loudly and openly. In this regard, Shiv Sena was able to effectively channel emotions based on cultural and linguistic identity, or in other words an ethnic Marathi identity constructed through the use of mass media (Shaikh, 2005).

Over the period of time, Shiv Sena started focussing on issues other than natives-outsiders turmoil. It became anti-Congress after the Emergency and even more anti-communist and anti-Muslim. This anti-Muslim communalism was later to become the centre stage of Shiv Sena's distinctiveness as a political party. Shiv Sena, which had literally grown out of the Marathi weekly devoted to cartoons, the *Marmik*, now spreads its message not only to its followers, but the lay public as well, through its mouthpiece, a Marathi daily, *Saamana* started in 1989. It is no more a party of the urban-based lower middle classes alone, but attracts a strong and devoted following from all regions of the state. All this became possible only because Shiv Sena inherited the legacy of the emotional appeal mobilised by the movement for the formation of the Marathi-speaking state of Maharashtra. It claimed that Mumbai 'belonged' to Marathi people and therefore, the city must bear the imprint of Marathi culture and society. By invoking the so far upheld memories of Shivaji, the seventeenth century Maratha warrior, it claimed to represent the interests, not merely of the residents of Mumbai, but all

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[5] Many studies have shown the apparent relative occupational backwardness of the Maharashtrians, when compared to other linguistic communities in Mumbai.

the Marathi people and not merely their employment interests, but cultural interests as well as anxieties (Palshikar, 2004).

On one hand we see Shiv Sena focusing on the plight of the jobless Marathi youth of Mumbai and thereby invoking the spirit of the Marathi identity, on the other hand, it also became visible that its regionalism, expressed in the form of nativism in Mumbai, strongly consist elements of nationalism. It very intelligently accommodated region within the confines of the nation and was therefore successful in appropriating Shivaji as a symbol of Maharashtrian identity. By mid-1980s, Shiv Sena was already a Hindu nationalist force. This became a prerequisite as it intended to penetrate deep in Maharashtra's other regions which necessitated the shift of its emphasis from the regional to national in order for the Sena's appeal to be relevant in the rural environs of Maharashtra. With this nationalism taking a 'pronounced militant Hindu shape', Shivaji was once again brought into the discourse, this time not as a regional-national hero but as a 'Hindu' king who put brakes on the 'Muslim' expansion (*ibid*).

V.   CONCLUSION

The Marathi language is today spoken by more than fifty million people in the western parts of India, having a literary tradition from eleventh century. As it unfolds, we understand that the Maharashtrian identity began to get its present shape and form with the folk traditions including the non-Bramanic cults, the rise of Shivaji as a warrior hero, the political struggle for a new state for its Marathi people ending in 1960 and the dramatic political upsurge of Shiv Sena and its unquestionable creation of Marathi *manus* identity, have all significantly shaped the Maharashtrian identity. At this point it is important to stop here and understand what we mean when we say Marathi identity or Maharashtrian identity? It must not be forgotten that this Maharashtrian identity is itself divided into region, caste and community. And moreover as Date (2007) points out the Maratha community is not homogeneous and that there are the 96 odd Maratha clans who are socially a class apart, besides the believers of other religions and cults who are have syncretized their cultures with their coexistence as we have already seen above.

Today what we see as Maharashtrian identity is largely an identity that arose in Mumbai and of course within the context of Shiv Sena. There are, however, as we see, other sides to this identity too. Shiv Sena has been variably successful outside Mumbai and this proves, as Katzenstein (1973) claims that the Maharashtrian consciousness aroused by Shiv Sena was not region-wide in the way the Samyukta Maharashtra sentiment was; it was, rather, more limited, generated by the special conditions of Mumbai metropolitan life and the place of Maharashtrians within it. Even Marathi is spoken differently in different regions of the state thus maintaining its distinct identities. It is not to deny the overarching state identity, but in many practical terms, it is the regional identity, within the state of Maharashtra, that is asserting its recognition more loudly and clearly. Probably, this is why today people of Vidarbha want to break away from this general identity. In this case, however, it cannot be ignored that Vidarbha has a greater population of Hindi speakers. And therefore, the assertion of Maharashtrian identity, as seen in Mumbai, is though not entirely, but to great extent, a creation of Mumbai itself. The way Marathi language is asserted in Mumbai, it is not the case elsewhere in Maharashtra. This is not to say that the assertion of identity, particularly linguistic, is absent in other parts in Maharashtra, but it is rather different in its form and content.

VI.   ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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