

## CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to highlight the portrayal of woman in the devotional literature of the *Bhakti* period. Most of the existing studies on woman for this period are largely based on the official sources. So, the present study is based on the devotional literature of the *Bhakti* as now a days literature is considered as one of the important sources of history as the scope of history is vast which is not only confined to past politics but also touches almost every domain of human life. This is as true of devotional literature as of literatures any other form. Devotional literature contains 'the religious writings that are neither doctrinal nor theological, but designed for individuals to read for their personal edification and spiritual formation'. Devotional writers do not particularly write on material matters yet as they are the product of the society, they give valuable information about the life of their age. It is in accordance with these views of literature that the study of *Bhakti* period devotional literature has been undertaken to analyse the condition of woman during medieval times. Undoubtedly the attempt for the present research work can not be substituted for the studies based on official sources but might provide help in giving direction to arrive at a more comprehensive idea of the condition of woman in different regions of India during the period under study.

Devotional literature of the *Bhakti* period contains the writings specifically poetry of *Nirguna* and *Saguna* devotees (*Bhakts*). *Nirguna*

devotees (*Bhakts*) believe in one formless God and have no faith in *Avtarvad* whereas *Saguna* devotees (*Bhakts*) worship the incarnations of God like *Vishnu*, *Rama* and *Krishna* and they considered Lord Krishna as of *Avtar* of God on earth. These *Bhakts* (devotees) wrote devotional poetry in praise of God in the vernacular languages instead of *Sanskrit*. Though they did not write purposely on material matters yet their writings by employing allegory throw valuable light on life around them.

For the understanding of the *Nirguna* exposition Guru Granth Sahib has been undertaken as the greatest unaltered and undiluted Text pertaining to medieval India. And for *Saguna* understanding contemporaneous Braj literature is used. Braj literature contains the literary works of Braj *Bhasha*. Braj *Bhasha* was the richest form of Hindi in the medieval age.

On the basis of Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature this work compares the two famous categories of *Bhakti* (*Nirguna* and *Saguna*) to explore the feminine dimension pertaining to them. For this purpose, this study passes through two phases, spiritual and social. Spiritual phase is further divided into two parts. In first part an attempt is being made to explore how Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature relate the feminine imagery on the Divine level and second part makes it clear that why feminine imagery is used? Social phase clarify, whether their spiritual dimension is equally relevant in social sphere or not, whether both ideologies advocated for the equality of woman in

society too? In this phase woman is depicted as girl, wife and mother. Apart from it this phase provides detailed information about female dress, make-up, ornaments and her day to day activities during the period under study.

This work is divided into five chapters. I chapter is named as, **‘Woman in Indian Ethos’**. It traces the general condition of Indian woman from pre-historic time to medieval period. In the pre-Aryan India Matriarchal (mother dominated) social system was prevalent. This is evident from *Sankhya Shastra* which is considered a pre-Aryan work. The status of woman was very high in all walks of life at that time.

Vedic Aryans were Patriarchal (father-dominated) as becomes clear from *Rigveda*. Girls were less welcomed than boys but it did not lead to female infanticide during that period. Mention of *Brahmavadinis* indicated that discrimination in education on the basis of sex was unknown. Child marriage and seclusion of women was absolutely unknown. Despite of male dominance, the position of woman as wife and mother was held in esteem. Indeed, it may be argued that *Vedic* religion had an appreciation of both femininity and complementarily between husband and wife, albeit within a patriarchal structure.

Coming to the later-*Vedic* period in Indian literature, the desire for a male child becomes very strong as becomes evident from the *Brahmanas*, the *Upnishads* and the *Grihya Sutras*. At that time this

belief was established that sons alone were competent to redeem their parents from hell. Thus, it becomes obligatory for a man to marry again and raise son to himself if first wife failed to give birth to a son. This led to the practice of polygamy. There was a gradual decline in female education. Child marriage had not come into form by the *Grihya Sutra* period. In the *Grihya Sutras*, first time, a definite classification of different forms of marriage was given. There were eight types of marriage. These were *Brahma*, *Daiva*, *Prajapatya*, *Arsha*, *Gandharva*, *Asura*, *Paisacha* and *Rakshsa*. *Sati* custom was rare and widow had the option of remarriage. But the proprietary rights of woman continued to be unrecognized.

The decline in the status of woman started with the writing of *Manu Smriti*. He favoured the idea of marrying girls at a tender age. Girls were considered incompetent to receive education and study *Vedas*. This incompetency of woman reduced her to an inferior status of *Shudra*. *Smritis* prescribed a subordinate social role to woman. *Manu* is of the view that it is the main duty of a wife to serve her husband because with the service of the husband she can get salvation. *Manu* discouraged the custom of *Sati* by equating it with suicide. The position of woman was improved in the sphere of proprietary rights in this period as *Manu* advocated that the widow should be recognized as an heir to her husband's property.

During *epic* period there was no female infanticide in the society as informed by *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Even there was evidence

of the adoption of girls by the parents who were not blessed with daughters. *Sita*, *Kunti* and *Sakuntala* all were adopted girls. Education was provided to girls and child marriage was prevalent. The practice of polygamy had been very widely prevalent and the practice of polyandry was also there in the *epic* period. The earliest reference to the practice of *Purdah* was found in the *Mahabhart*a. It was prevalent among the royal ladies. Prostitution had also prevalent in the society. The *Mahabhart*a also gave two instances of *Sati*. *Madri* immolated herself on the funeral pyre of her husband *Pandu*. The four wives of *Vasudeva* namely *Devaki*, *Bhadra*, *Rohini* and *Madira* burnt themselves with the body of their husband.

The Buddhist canonical literature, the *Jataka* books, the *Milindapanha* and the *Vinayapitaka*, particularly the portions of it known as the *Bhikkuni Khandhak* (that is the tenth and last *Khandhaka* of the *Cullavagga*) and the *Bhikkhuni-Vibhanga*, provided the information regarding the views of *Buddha* towards woman. Although *Buddha* allowed the admission of women into *Sangha* but his permission to woman was conditional. Women had to follow rigorous discipline than monks. Buddhist canons hold that the adoption of daughter is quite valid. There are no records of female infanticide in Buddhist literature due to the doctrine of non-violence. There is little mention of child marriage in the canonical literature. Monogamy prevailed at that time and the practice of polygamy was only limited to aristocracy.

*Jain* Texts were mostly written by monks who believed in the superiority of the celibate life to that of married life. *Digambara* sect believed that woman could not attain *Moksha* without rebirth as man as she could not be allowed to go naked. On the other side, *Swetambaras* believed that a woman could attain salvation. This sect is of the view that there is no harm to soul by wearing of white garments.

*Yogic* literature also stressed the need of renouncing woman for the attainment of salvation. They considered woman as the temptress who perpetuated miserable life. They used derogatory words for woman in their writings. They called woman '*Baghni*', and she-wolf, who robbed man of his youthful vigour.

During *Rajput* period woman suffered from several handicaps although their honour was dear to them. Female infanticide and the practice of '*Jauhar*' were widely prevalent among the *Rajputs*.

The coming of the *Turks* to India did not bring any good change in the position of woman. Female education was limited to the women of upper class. The custom of polygamy was also there as Muslim law allowed a man to keep four wives at a time. The practice of *Purdah* was widely prevalent as Muslim woman was not free for public appearance.

During *Mughal* period, who ruled India after *Delhi Sultanate*, female infanticide was continued in some sections of both *Hindus* and *Muslims*. Child marriage was also there. European travelers specifically Tavernier, Manucci and Thevenot had provided

information about this social evil. Manucci admitted the prevalence of the custom of dowry among *Hindus* and *Muslims* particularly in its richer and higher sections. *Manucci*, *Thevenot* and *De Laet* recorded that polygamy was also prevalent in the *Muslim* society. The practice of *Purdah* was also there. *Badauni* writers that in the time of Akbar *Purdah* was observed strictly. Foreign travel Johan Marshall observed that the rigour of *Purdah* was so strict that even male doctors were not allowed to see the ladies of princely and noble families. The plight of a widow was very miserable in medieval India. She had to commit *Sati*. Foreign travelers *Alberuni*, *Ibn Battuta*, and *Bernier* had described this custom in detail. *Alberuni* recorded that if a widow refused to become *Sati*, she was ill treated as long as she lived. *Ibn Battuta* noticed an example of *Sati* near *Pakpattan* and several others elsewhere in India. *Bernier* referred to the sad plight of *Hindu* widows.

Therefore, it was in such a scenario that the *Bhakti* movement started. It is divided into '*Nirguna*' and '*Saguna*' and more recently between *Vasihnava Bhakti* and *Sant* Tradition. The '*Nirguna*' and '*Saguna*' model was first popularized by Hindi scholars such as *Ramachandra Shukla*, *P.D. Barthwal* and *Parashuram Chaturvedi*. The last four decades have witnessed a surge of Western scholarly interest in medieval Saints. *Ramanujacharya*, *Ramananda*, *Vallabhacharya* and *Surdas* are the prominent *Saguna Bhakts* (devotees) whereas *Namdev*, *Kabir* and *Guru Nanak* are included among *Nirguna Bhakts*.

These writers wrote devotional poetry in praise of God in the vernacular languages instead of *Sanskrit*. Though they did not write purposely on material matters yet their writings by employing similes and metaphors throw valuable light on life around them. For the understanding of *Nirguna* exposition Guru Granth Sahib has been undertaken and for *Saguna* understanding contemporaneous Braj literature is used.

Guru Granth Sahib is the name given to the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs. It is the treasure of *Bhakti* literature poetry and spiritual elevation of mankind. The essence of its ideology is to integrate humanity, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. It was dictated by Guru Arjan to Bhai Gurdas. It consists the *Bani* of first five Gurus, Hindu *Bhakts* (devotees), Muslim *Sufis* and *Bhatts*. It had different names during different times i.e. *Pothi Sahib*, *Granth Sahib*, *Adi Granth* and *Guru Granth Sahib*. In this work the last name Guru Granth Sahib has been used in the title as well as throughout the work.

The tradition recognizes three main version of Guru Granth Sahib. These are '*Kartarpuri Bir*', '*Bhai Banno Vali Bir*' and '*Damdami Bir*'. By the end of Nineteenth century Guru Granth Sahib has been published by various organizations. All the printed copies of the Guru Granth Sahib are based on *Damdami Bir*. In the 1990s the Text of the Guru Granth Sahib also becomes available in a digital format published by a variety of individuals and organizations. In 2012 an



application Sikh World is developed from where the whole Guru Granth Sahib can be downloaded with commentary and English translation.

Braj literature contains the literary works of Braj *Bhasha*. Braj *Bhasha* was the richest form of *Hindi* in the medieval age. It was the language of Braj region. The Braj region located in the vicinity of *Delhi* and *Agra* and included the places like *Itawa*, *Aligarh*, *Mathura* and *Brindaban*. Braj language acquired a literary character during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth century when it received religious patronage through *Surdas* and other *Ashtachhap* writers. In Braj literature *Surdas*, *Parmanddas*, *Kumbhandas*, *Krishandas*, *Nanddas*, *Chaturbhujdas*, *Govindswami* and *Chhitswami* are known as *Ashtachhap*. In this work the focus of Braj literature is primarily limited to the works of *Ashtachhap* writers as they are the contemporary to the Sikhs Gurus. Secondly the writings of *Ashtachhap* writers are the best works of Braj *Bhasha*. After these writers this language had lost its prestige and *Khadiboli Hindi* (Modern standard Hindi) began to supplant it.

On the basis of Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature this work will compare the two famous categories of *Bhakti* to explore the feminine dimension pertaining to them. Their devotional poetry is marked by intensity and spiritual insight. Metaphor is the most important factor in their poetry. The metaphors create imagery. If there is no image, there will be no poetry because imagination

contains reality. Every poetic image serves mainly two purposes. It gives shape to poet's experiences along with depicting the world around him/ her.

Thus, the composers of Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature have used a wider range of imagery in their writings. The abstract spiritual ideas and subtle thoughts are saved from becoming obscure and misty only through the use of poetic imagery. Both ideologies (Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature) have used imagery to make the masses understand their higher spiritual experiences.

Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature have used images from nature, from indoor and outdoor life to explain their spiritual ideals. The writers of both ideologies have almost the same type of spiritual, social, political and intellectual experiences. Therefore, in their poetical compositions they repeated the same thoughts and applied the same imagery. Imagery of the clouds and lighting, of the weather and its changes, of mother-child love, of wife-husband love, of *Yogic* activities, of domestic activities and imagery of lives of animals and birds are some examples of common imagery used by both ideologies. This similarity of imageries is helpful to understand their views and thoughts.

**II Chapter 'Thought Content of Guru Granth Sahib and Braj Literature'** throws light on the fact that though Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature belong to the two different thoughts of *Bhakti* cult i.e. *Nirguna* and *Saguna*. But they are allied with each other on the

basis of certain shared emphases: recognition of the both states- *Nirguna* and *Saguna* of the Lord; believe in the fact that *Jiva* (creature) and world are the creation of God; about the influence of *Maya* on the individual's; the necessity of devotion; the repetition of *Naam*; importance of *Guru* and *Satsang*; condemnation of caste pride and stress on discountenancing *Yogic* practices.

Furthermore, the writers of both ideologies (Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature) composed their couplets (*Bani*) in *Ragas*. The end of *Kartarpur Pothis* has table of contents which divides up the thirty *Ragas* into eight sections. This division has great importance. The only possibility could be that this division may have been related to eight *Pahirs* that make up the day, with each set of *Ragas* intended for one *Pahir*. This same principle forms the basis for the eight *Artis* (Prayers) performed throughout the day in *Vaishnava* temples. Braj writers have mentioned about these eight *Artis* performed in the temples of their *Sampradaya*. Further the *Kartarpur Pothis* begins with *Raga Sri*, a favorite *Raga* of the *Vaishnavas*, and its first section ends with *Raga Tilang*, a favorite of the *Sufis*. This placement of these *Ragas* in key points in the Sikh Text seems to indicate Guru Arjan's engagement with the two major religious groups i.e. *Vaishnavas* and *Sufis*.

Due to the effectiveness of Braj language during Sixteenth and Seventeenth century Guru Arjan Dev has used this language in *Sukhmani Sahib*, *Phunhay* and *Chaubolay*. *Sholkas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur are also in this language. On the other side, *Ashtachhap*

writers have also used Punjabi language in their works. Because of above similarities the couplets of two *Ashtachhap* writers i.e. Surdas and Parmananddas are included in Guru Granth Sahib. The above mentioned description is the reason to take Guru Granth Sahib and contemporary Braj literature (*Ashtachhap* writers) for comparative study without ignoring their theological differences.

Both ideologies have faith in the existence of **God**. Guru Sahib emphasized on the worship of *Nirguna Brahma* and do not have faith in *Avtarvad*. On the other side, *Ashtachhap* writers believed in the *Saguna* form of God and considered Lord Krishna as the *Avtar* of God on earth. Guru Granth Sahib believes that God created the *Avtars* by Its will. God is above the *Avtars* like *Rama* and *Krishna*. The *Nirguna* perception of *Krishna*, *Rama* and *Hari* is that of a non-incarnate formless and absolute Supreme Being.

Guru Granth Sahib holds the view that **Jiva** is the creation of the God. By the order of the True Lord the *Jiva* comes into existence. *Ashtachhap* writers believed that *Jivas* are not created but are manifested by *Brahma* out of himself. In *Jiva*, *Brahmas* 'Sat' (truth) and 'Chhit' (consciousness) *guna* (quality) remained. So, *Jivas* are part or fragments of *Brahma*. Vallabhacharya, the preceptor of *Ashtachhap* writer's divides *Jivas* into three categories i.e. *Pushti Jiva*, *Maryada Jiva* and *Pravaha Jiva*. *Pusti Jivas* are well-nourished, complete and have the *Anugraha* (grace) of Lord *Krishna*. *Maryada Jivas* are within the limits of the actions and live in expectations of the rewards that

the *Veda* promises in Heaven. *Pravaha Jivas* are those who crave riches and sensual pleasure on earth. *Pushti Jivas* are considered the best *Jivas*. Vallabhacharya considered that all *Bhakts* (devotees) are *Pushti Jivas* and that the *Bhaktimarga* is the *Pushtimarg*. The followers of the *Pushtimarg* are satisfied only with direct experience of the Divine body of *Shri Krishna*. Therefore Braj writers considered *Gopi* (female) as the Guru of *Pustimarg* who enjoyed physical love-play with Lord Krishna during his life in Braj on earth and who enjoy eternally the love of *Shri Krishna* in the endless *Lila* in *Goloka*.

As far as Guru Granth Sahib is considered no such division of *Jivas* can be seen. Guru Granth Sahib considered that creatures are of two types i.e. *Gurmukh* and *Manmukh*. *Gurmukh* is that *Jiva* who attain the company of the Lord. *Manmukh* is an ego-centered person who craves only for the riches of the world. *Gurmukh* resembles with *Suhagan* of Guru's thought. As *Gopi* of Braj literature, who is a *Pushti Jiva*, is the prime preceptor of *Bhakti*, similarly *Suhagan* of Guru Granth Sahib, who resembles with *Gurmukh* is considered guide on spiritual path.

Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature believed that God is the creator of the **world**. *Ashtachhap* writers have explained the Ancient theory that *Brahma* has created the world, *Vishnu* is the sustainer and *Mahesh* is the destroyer of the world but they have established the unity of three of them with Lord *Krishna*. On the other side, Guru Granth Sahib states that Lord is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer

of the world. Earlier there was only One Lord there was no *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahesh*. In Japji it is mentioned that these three are born from One Divine Mother. *Ashtachhap* writers differentiated *Jagat* and *Sansar*. They believed that *Jagat* is the creation of the God and it consists of God's 'Sat' *guna*. *Sansar* is created by the ignorance of the *Jiva*. It is created by the *Avidya Shakti* of *Maya*, so it is false. There is no such classification of *Jagat* and *Sansar* in Guru Granth Sahib. Both ideologies have explained the creation of the world through the example of the bubble in the water. It is stated that as the bubble in the water well up and disappears again, so is the world created from the God and it again mingled in God.

Guru Granth Sahib is of the view that **Maya** is not a separate ultimate reality. It has been created by the God. But the illusion of *Maya* takes an individual away from God. *Ashtachhap* writers divided *Maya* into *Vidya* and *Avidya Maya*. *Vidya Maya* is that *Shakti* or power of *Brahma* which creates and destroys this world with the *Ichha* of *Brahma*. This is under the control of *Brahma*. *Avidya Maya* brings out the misery of the *Jiva*. Because of its influence the individual forgets self nature as a part of *Brahma*. Guru Granth Sahib does not divided *Maya* into these two parts directly yet through the hymns like *Nanak Sachay Kee Saachee Kar* and through *Ha-umai-Maa-i-aa Mohnee Doojai Lagai Jaa-ay*, one can find references about *Vidya Maya* and *Avidya Maya*.

About **Yogic** practices both ideologies believed that instead of these practices a devotee should rely on the *Bhakti* and *Service* of the Lord. Guru Granth Sahib has used metaphors from the ideas and practices of the *Yogis* with its own orientation. Guru Nanak tells the *Yogis* in detail what *Yog* is not and what it should be. *Yog* does not consist in donning the cloak, holding the staff, or smearing the body with ashes. It does not consist in wearing the earrings, shaving the head, or blowing the horn (*Singi*). The real *Yog* is to live 'detached-in-attachment'. Similarly in *Ashtachhap* writings *Gopis* are giving a very different interpretation of *Yog* to *Udho*. They are saying to *Udho* that the *Yoga* which he is teaching to them they are the followers of that. Their hairs have grown as '*Sali*' (sacred thread) and their body burned by fire of separation from the Lord. Their heart is like horn (*Singi*) in the *Viyoga* of the Lord.

The literature under study even objected to the way of life of the *Yogis*. Guru Granth Sahib stated that some people wander as *Yogis* having put on ochre colored clothes, but within them there is much worldly thirst and desire for clothing and food. Similarly, Braj writers do not have sympathy for *Yogic* practices. It is stated that a *Yogi* puts on external marks, matted hair, pierced ears and ashes on his body. But the followers of *Shri Krishna* have actually suffered the burning of *Viraha* and show internal as well as external evidence of it in his/her devotion.

Both ideologies have no faith in **Sananyas** (renunciation). Guru Nanak Dev stated that one should live 'detached-in-attachment'. Braj writers also emphasized that one ought not to retreat from the world, but instead live gratefully within it as an active participant, as a householder. Parmananddas says that one should live in one's house just like a passer by. Guru Granth Sahib further states that those who have achieved the true *Sabad* they have become *Udasi* while living within their homes. Similarly *Ashtachhap* writer's say that in *Krishna's Viraha* the *Gopi* of the *Gokul* become *Udasi* by making forest (*Ban*) in her house.

Although both ideologies have emphasized on the necessity of **Guru** yet the Guru in Guru Granth Sahib is '*Sabad Guru*' which is its unique quality. Contrary to this *Ashtachhap* writers are the faithful devotees of Vallabhacharya and his son Vitthalnath. About this difference it may be concluded that in no *Sampradaya* of *Bhakti* '*Sabad*' is considered as Guru except Guru Granth Sahib.

For Guru Granth Sahib **Mukti** is the attainment of the lotus feet of the Lord. The state of bliss and joy at the feet of the Lord is inexpressible. On the other side, *Ashtachhap* writers have no desire for attaining *Mukti* and going to heaven. They considered *Gokul* better than Vaikuntha.

Both ideologies do not have faith in **caste pride**. But in spite of this it should kept in mind that *Ashtachhap* writers have completely dissociate themselves from *Muslim* and called them '*mlechchha*'. On



the other hand, the writers of Guru Granth Sahib apart from theoretical also took practical steps by starting '*Pangat*' to root out caste from society.

Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature have laid great emphasis on **Satsang** and company of the Saints. It is stated that *Satsang* is essential for a happy life and for spiritual enlightenment.

**III Chapter entitled, 'Perception of Woman : The Spiritual Context'** analyses the perception of woman in Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature. This Chapter is divided into two parts. In first part different feminine imageries are mentioned which both ideologies have used to comprehend God. In second part it is made clear that why these ideologies have used feminine imageries for God.

This analysis of perception passes through the three phases i.e. mother imagery, wife imagery and female species from the animal world. First phase deals with the idea that both ideologies used the imagery of mother-child love for depicting the love of devotee for God and of God for devotee. It is stated in Guru Granth Sahib that as a mother loves and cares her child, same way, the devotee should have attachment to the Lord. Guru Arjan Dev says that as the mother is rejuvenated upon seeing her son, so is the Lord's humble servant imbued with Lord, through and through. Here Guru Arjan has used the imagery of mother son love, instead of mother-daughter, to explain the relation between God and devotee. The imagery is taken from daily life of the people. As during medieval period less importance is given

to girls as compared to boys in the society so Guru Arjan only to clarify his spiritual ideas to common people has used the imagery of mother-son love.

Because of mother's devotion to her child *Ashtachhap* writers have mostly kept themselves in place of *Yashoda* instead of *Nanda*. They believed that to achieve the Lord *Krishna* one should worship him through the image of *Mata Yashoda*. *Mata Yashoda* has received that '*Anand*' through her motherly devotion which is not even received by *Devatas*. Except Kumbhandas all the *Ashtacchap* writers have used imagery of mother-child love to express their *Bhakti*. Surdas and Parmananddas are excellent in the use of this *Bhava* to express their *Bhakti*.

Further, the mother image offers that as a mother has care for her child, similarly, God looks after Its devotee. Guru Granth Sahib states that as the mother loves to see her son eat, same way, the true Guru loves to put food in the mouth of *Gursikh* (devotee). *Ashtachhap* writers also believed that as a mother takes care of her child and protects her/ him, Lord Krishna also does the same for His devotee. As a child becomes annoyed with mother and mother makes the child joyful. Similarly Lord is like a mother to devotees who always forgives their mistakes. Guru Granth Sahib states that like mother, God never counts the short-comings of the devotee. Thus, both ideologies have idealized the love of a mother for her child and held it up as an example for a devotee to God.

Turning to wife imagery it is stated in both ideologies that one can attain union with God by following the wife's example of loving devotion. The human soul (*Jivatma*) is represented as the wife who is forever seeking union with her husband (Lord). Thus *Suhagan* of Guru Granth Sahib and *Gopi* of Braj literature are the guides on spiritual path. All the *Ashtachhap* writers have expressed their *Bhakti* through the image of *Gopi* but Surdas is best in it. Nanddas and Kumbhandas' writings are also important from this view. Due to *Suhagan* and *Gopi's* capacity to receive God, the writers of Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature have identified themselves with wife imagery and expressed the ardor of their hearts through her voice. They called themselves the wives of the Lord.

The metaphor of wife is further extended to the *Suhagan* and *Duhagan* in Guru Granth Sahib. *Suhagan* is metaphorically used to represent *Gurmukh* whereas *Duhagan* symbolically resembles with *Manmukh*. Among *Ashtachhp* writers Surdas, Parmananddas and Govindswami has also used the metaphor of *Suhagan* and *Duhagan*.

Thus *Suhagan/ Gurmukh* is a woman who is beloved of the Lord, whether in the body of a man or woman. *Suhagan* wins the favour of her Spouse and enjoys union forever. On the other hand, *Duhagan* is deprived of union due to her ignorance of the Lord. *Duhagan/ Manmukh* craves only for the riches of the world and not for the company of her Lord.

*Duhagan* and *Maya* both are associated in Guru Granth Sahib due to their ignorance of Ultimate Reality. Because of this comparison

some Western scholars pointed out that in Sikh Scripture woman is often associated with *Maya*, 'indicating its apprehension of female as a barrier to the attainment of emancipation'.

Here, it must be kept in mind that these are philosophical concepts which needed to be discussed in their context. Apart from wife there is also mention of mother, father, son and daughter as objects of *Maya* in Guru Granth Sahib. Thus the definition of *Maya* is equally applicable to both man and woman. In *Ashtachhap* writings too, specially in Surdas', wife is compared with *Avidya Maya* and wealth. But these references are also contextual and needed to be understood in their context.

Another objection about the use of wife imagery in Guru Granth Sahib is that it allowed the masculine identity to God. Doris R. Jakobsh pointed out that the Ultimate Reality in Sikh Scripture is most often conceived in masculine terms, as *Akal-Purakh* and *Karta-Purakh*. Here it must be cleared that in Guru Granth Sahib both feminine and masculine imagery is used for comprehending the Ultimate reality. God is addressed as mother, father, sister, brother and friend-thus as both male and female. Even in some hymns God's beauty is explained in terms supposedly appealing to the woman. Further it is stated that only God has the power to assume the form of both man and woman for self-manifestation. But the commentators, interpreters and translators of Sikh Scripture have primarily elaborated the masculine principle and overlooked the feminine. They have used word 'He' for God in their translations which becomes

misleading for those who can not read the language of the Text. God of Guru Granth Sahib is beyond gender, so to avoid misconceptions **'It'** is a better word to use for God instead of 'He' as informed by Nikky Singh. In this work word 'It' is used for God of Guru Granth Sahib to represent Its *Nirguna* state.

As far as Braj literature is concerned these writers worship the Lord in *Yogual Rupa* (both male and female). They have made no difference between *Krishna* and *Radha*. They have asserted that *Radha* and *Krishna* are one and the same. According to them *Parm Purush Krishna* is the *Shaktiman* and *Prakriti Radha* is the *Shakti* (Power) of the Lord. But it is very surprising that all the temples of *Vallabha Sampradya*, to whom *Ashtachhap* writers belong, are only of Lord *Krishna's* instead of *Yogual Rupa*.

Third phase of the use of female imagery to express *Bhakti* towards God is extended to include females in the animal world. Guru Nanak seeks to identify himself with the females of several species to express his yearning for union. He wishes, he is a doe (*Harini*) living in the *jungles* or a *Koel* (*Kokil*) singing in the water or a she-serpent (*Nagin*) within the earth in each case enjoying the proximity of the Lord. Guru Arjan called himself a fish in a hymn to express his *Bhakti* towards God.

Among *Ashtachhap* writers only Surdas expressed his *Bhakti* towards Lord *Krishna* through the medium of the cows of Braj. In *Bhramargit*, *gopis* are informing to *Udho* to tell *Krishna* that the cows of Braj are suffering extreme misery in his *Viyoga*. They are in the

habit of going and smelling the places where *Krishna* has grazed them. The water (tears) continuously coming from their eyes and they are repeating the name of the Lord *Krishna*.

To conclude this part, it may be argued that the use of feminine imagery and female voice by these ideologies is an indicative of the high regard that they have for woman. But some Western scholars pointed out that the use of feminine imagery and female voice in Guru Grant Sahib is certainly not a unique thing as many North Indian Saints have also used it. The use of feminine imagery and voice is not only confined to North Indian Saints but also used by the prophets of the Old and New Testament, Christian Saints and *Sufi Sheikhs*. But the vocabulary and the sense of this idea used by others differ in many respects from the form and essence of Guru Granth Sahib. It becomes clear by taking an example from Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature. Although *Ashtachhap* writers explained the spiritual path through the image of *Gopi* at philosophical level but practically woman is not directly related to God. She is secondarily related through the medium of male. Contrary to this, the woman of Guru Granth Sahib devotes a very direct encounter between her and Ultimate Reality.

**IInd part of this chapter is ‘Quest for Feminine Qualities’.** In this part it is made clear that why these ideologies have used feminine imageries for God when all the writers of both ideologies are male. It has seen in the earlier part that both ideologies have largely used the

*Vatsalya Bhava* (mother imagery) and *Madhura Bhava* (wife imagery) to comprehend God despite of the fact that all the writers are male. Some scholar's raised objection about the use of these female imageries. Doris R. Jakobsh concludes that addressing the Divine through the feminine voice allowed for the maintenance of masculine identity to God. Here it should be pointed out that female imagery and voice have used neither to permit masculine identity to God and nor to place woman secondarily but to showcase the qualities of woman. To achieve the Ultimate Reality, one should have the qualities of love, devotion, sacrifice, fear of God, patience, forgiveness, truthfulness and humility. As woman has these qualities in abundance, more than a man, so both ideologies (Guru Granth Sahib and Braj literature) considered these feminine qualities very helpful in the quest and attainment of the Lord.

Guru Granth Sahib glorifies these feminine qualities and enjoins upon all humanity to cultivate them for comprehending Lord. One is advised to go and ask *Suhagan* that through which qualities she has achieved the Lord. Similarly, *Ashtachhap* writers have asked *Gopi* that with which qualities she has received Lord Krishna. Braj writers have emphasized on feminine qualities by conceiving man as complicated and subtle and woman as plain and transparent.

Guru Granth Sahib recorded that woman is the one who has the qualities to recognize and achieve the God. She has the capacity to chart out the way that makes the Ultimate Reality accessible to

human experience. Krishandas, one of the *Ashtachhap* writers, has laid importance to this idea by declaring that in the whole world nobody has the capacity and quality like Braj woman to comprehend Lord.

Both ideologies emphasized that to receive Ultimate Reality quality of **love** is the foremost. They believe that the gap between Divine Reality and the individual is bridged by following the woman's example of loving devotion. That wife is called *Suhagan* who has love for the Lord. Love is the true wealth of her life and she experiences a kind of bliss in the company of her True Lord. Surdas and Nanddas choose the love of *Gopi* to express their ideas and thought in *Bhramargit*. Through *Bhramargit* they have explained the superiority of *Prem* (love) over *Gyan* and *Yoga*. *Udho* has been made the mouthpiece of *Gyan Bhakti*. He tries to dissuade *Gopi* from the path of 'Prem' by an appeal to her intellect. Contrary to this, *Gopi* is generally not inclined to enter into a logical discourse or intellectual inquiry. She said to *Udho* that her only concern is to love Lord Krishna.

With love, quality of **devotion** is also necessary. Woman's yearning for union and agony of her separation (*Viraha*) immediately enters into the soul and stir powerful vibration there. The entire *Baramaha* of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev and Nanddas, one of the *Ashtacchap* writers, is an example of it where the *Viraha* of a lonely woman is used for depicting the yearning of individual soul for union



with God. This quality has great importance on spiritual path because without pangs of separation love cannot grow.

**Removal of ego** is considered as an essential trait which is required for the union with Almighty God. Wife of Guru Granth Sahib forgets her identity and fixes her mind on God-Husband after removal of ego. Among *Ashtachhap* writers Govindswami and Nanddas have explained the necessity of this quality on the spiritual path.

Guru Granth Sahib states that along with quality of love, **fear of God** is also essential on spiritual path. Woman should adorn herself with fear (*Bhai*) of God to become *Suhagan*. *Ashtachhap* writers do not have mentioned this quality in their writings.

Feminine quality of **patience** is also necessary in the pursuit of Ultimate Reality. Both ideologies concluded that a wife (devotee) who has patience is loved by God-husband. Quality of **truthfulness** is also emphasized in Guru Granth Sahib. It is stated that if the wife has the quality of truth then God-Husband never goes away from her.

**Sacrifice** is also a necessary trait. Wife of Guru Granth Sahib and *Gopi* of Braj literature is ready to sacrifice her everything in lieu of Lord. She sacrifices her body, mind, wealth and everything for the sake of Lord.

Furthermore, Guru Granth Sahib informed that anybody who remains **humble** like wife achieves the Ultimate goal of life. *Ashtachhap* writers have also explained the importance of this quality on spiritual path. Women leaders of the liberation movement fighting

for equality with men at all levels, too, at times, appear to corroborate the idea of humility on the part of women. Simone De Beauvoir, one of the pioneers of feminist thought in her famous work '*The Second Sex*', also speaks of this ideal and appear to corroborate this quality on the part of woman.

Humility brings quality of **obedience**. Wife (devotee) of Guru Granth Sahib never objects the doings of God-Husband. She obeys God's command without objection. *Gopi* of *Ashtachhap* writers is ready to obey the will of the Lord Krishna without any objection.

Apart from these qualities Guru Granth Sahib considered quality of forgiveness as an essential trait for the attainment of God. *Ashtachhap* writers do not have paid attention to this quality.

Even Social Scientist today has started realizing that feminine qualities like love, humility, patience and self-sacrifice can pave way for a better social climate. World famous Psychologist Dr. H.B. Danesh in his work 'Violence-Free Family' states that the feminine qualities of love and service are gaining ascendancy which will banish violence from the family and the society.

To conclude this chapter it can be said that both ideologies have considered above mentioned feminine qualities as very helpful in the attainment of God. One thing that deserves special mention here is that while feminine qualities are recommended for a woman (devotee) the masculine qualities like chivalry and cleverness have not been overlooked. A woman is not expected to be a spineless creature

without having an independent personality of her own. Boldness and chivalry are essential attributes of an ideal woman of Guru Granth Sahib. *Mai Bhago* is an example of it. Even *Mata Sundari* not only took keen interest in Sikh polity, but also successfully guided the destiny of the *Panth* in a crucial time.

Here it must be kept in mind that though the content of both ideologies is common but the effect is not quite the same. There is a dichotomy in behaviour of *Ashtchhap* writers about the salvation of woman. On one side, they define the spiritual path through her voice whereas on the other side they accept that her salvation lies in the service of her husband. Contrary to it, Guru Granth's message maintained that woman and members of lower caste are not in any way barred from attaining salvation. It's goal of emancipation is equally open to a man as much as to a woman. Even at spiritual level woman has been bestowed with a special status when *Gurbani* calls her the best of the best.

Further *Ashtachhap* writers classified woman into different categories. This classification can be specifically seen in the works of Nanddas, Surdas and Krishandas. Nanddas in his work *Ras Manjari* classified woman into *Swakiya*, *Parakiya* and *Samayana* according to religions ethos. Each of these three is further divided into *Mugadha*, *Madhya* and *Parora*. These are further divided into many categories. Guru Nanak and his successors have not classified woman anywhere in their writings.

Third difference is also interesting to note that *Ashtachhap* writers, specifically Surdas repeats some common prejudices against woman. He compared woman to *Kali Nagini* and at another place she is called even worst than *Nagin*. These references of Surdas are contextual which needed to be discussed in their context. Some scholars objected that there are negative approaches towards woman in Guru Granth Sahib also. One of these scholars is Doris R. Jakobsh who represented Guru Ramdas as a high critic of woman on the bases of his one hymn. The view taken by Jakobsh is partial and therefore misleading. Guru Ramdas talks of the *Manmukh* in contrast to *Gurmukh*. The sinful and ignorant men are those who listen to their women out of lust as a moral weakness and ignore the Guru's instructions. Even in the end of the hymn it is clarified that both woman and man are the creation of the God. Thus the deprecation of woman is totally alien to Guru Granth Sahib. It is said that Guru Arjan rejectes the composition of Chhaju to include in Guru Granth Sahib as being too derogatory to woman.

In *Ashtachhap* writings especially in Naddas one may note some signs of eroticism. Contrary, Guru Granth Sahib does not have any description of this types it refutes and rejects this view by declaring that uncontrolled passions are gateway to sorrow and disease.

Noticing these differences one must agree with J.S. Grewal that Guru Nanak created a larger space for woman, perhaps in the whole range of Indian literature springing from devotional theism.

**IV Chapter is 'Depiction of Woman: The Social Context'.** One finds the depiction of woman as a girl, wife, widow and mother in both ideologies. Braj literature has provided a vivid picture of woman in her social milieu. It authenticates the presence of child marriage, dowry, *Purdah*, *Sati* and miserable condition of widow in society during medieval period. But it neither opposed these social vices nor raised a voice against them. Thus, it may be argued that regarding social condition of woman, *Ashtachhap* writers merely echoed the traditional views and could not protest against social inequalities towards woman due to the social pressure of their society.

Contrary to it, in Guru Granth Sahib these social evils are strongly opposed for the upliftment of woman. Guru Nanak is the first among the Saints of India who has championed the cause of womanhood in Indian society. He has pointed to the orgy of dishonouring of womenfolk by *Babar's* soldiers near *Saidpur* later on called *Eminabad*. He wrote about the suffering of Indian woman in *Raga Asa*. This portrayal of suffering is universal and it includes the plightful condition of all women whether belonging to *Hindu*, *Muslim*, *Bhatti* and *Thakur* denomination. Women's state of suffering is defined in three ways: suffering due to dishonour; suffering by physical death and suffering due to emotional stress. Seeing such a pitiable condition, Guru Nanak felt need to give woman a proper place in the society. Thereafter the status of woman in the society remained his deep concern. His successors have taken revolutionary steps to

eradicate social vices. They strongly opposed the evil custom of female infanticide, *Purdah*, dowry, *Sati* and *Sutak*. They do not favour the idea of child marriage. They favoured the idea of widow remarriage to improve the condition of widows in the contemporary society.

During medieval period the birth of a son was welcomed and that of a daughter was looked down upon as misfortune. Even Mughal Emperors like Babur and Akbar were anxious to have male child. Noticing this preference given to boy in contemporary society Guru Granth Sahib refers to the pleasure on the birth of a son and special treatment given to him in the society. This reference of Guru Granth Sahib only occurs to authenticate the preference given to boy in the contemporary society not to support this idea. *Ashtachhap* writers also mentioned about the joy and pleasure at the birth of a male child. They have referred to a special tradition among Braj people where they celebrated the birth of a boy by sprinkling a mixture of milk and turmeric and dancing at the same time. They have also mentioned about the celebration on the birth of a girl child. *Dr. Hargulal*, an eminent scholar of Braj literature, has informed that in the contemporary society the birth of a girl was equally a source of happiness like boy.

Female infanticide was prevalent in the society. Guru Granth Sahib strongly opposed this evil by announcing that it is sinful to slaughter a *Brahman* or a cow or a daughter as it has curse for millions of evils. But *Ashtachhap* writers are silent about it.

Braj literature also referred to the kind of life which an unmarried girl is expected to lead in her parental house. Chaturbhujdas has mentioned that girls had less freedom as compared to boys at that time. Surdas referred that after the age of twelve some restrictions were put upon girls. They were not allowed to move out of their houses. They were advised by their parents to stay at home under their protection.

Child marriage had become a common feature of the social life at that time. Surdas saying that a girl of twelve was considered to be of marriageable age bears a testimony to this. Guru Granth Sahib too, refers to the child marriage. Word *Iani Bali* and *Ianariey* are used for a child bride. Guru Granth Sahib does not favour the idea of child marriage. It has shown sympathy for such girls who are married even before they could understand the meaning, rights and duties of a married woman.

*Ashtachhap* writers specifically Surdas and Nanddas referred to the presence of dowry in society. They only mentioned about it. But in Guru Granth Sahib dowry is condemned as mere show of one's ego and riches. It is stated that material dowry is false, egoist and vain show, whereas the real dowry is the blessing of Lord's Name.

After marriage, the girl lived in the family of in-laws where mother-in-law exercised control over her and her commands were to be carried out. Guru Granth Sahib states that if the bride failed to come up to her expectations, her life became miserable.

Parmananddas also referred that she had to live under the strict supervision of mother-in-law. Even she has to please each and every member of her husband's family by rendering every possible domestic service. To make her free from these inequalities, Sikh Scripture honoured the womenfolk as the symbol of domestic harmony and happiness, social cohesion and unity. She is considered the noblest in all the family.

The practice of *Purdah* was prevalent in the contemporary society. *Ashtachhap* writers highlight that a milder and less elaborate form of *Purdah*, commonly, known as *Ghoonght* have been observed by *Hindu* woman. Guru Granth Sahib openly condemned *Purdah*. It is compared to suppression and emphasis is given to cast it off. Among *Ashtachhap* writers only Surdas, to some extent, condemned this custom.

Polygamy was also there. Guru Granth Sahib condemned this evil by saying that if a man has physical relation with a large number of women; then he has to born again and again. He can not get rid off from transmigration. Among *Ashtachhap* writers only Nanddas emphasized to maintain relation only with one's wife.

Both ideologies throw light on the existence of adultery in society during the period under study. There were men and women in the society who had relations with others apart from their partners. Derogatory words like 'sinner' and 'blind' have been used for man who has relation with other woman instead of his wife in Guru Granth



Sahib. Both ideologies emphasized on the sanctity of married relationship by declaring that anyone from husband and wife who has relation with other may suffer from physical diseases.

On one side, *Ashtachhap* writers demand fidelity both from husband and wife for the smooth running of relationship but on the other side they announced that a wife should not leave her husband if he has guilty of having relation with other woman. Guru Granth Sahib suggests that fidelity is essential not only for a wife but for the husband too.

A woman was considered to have become impure and untouchable for certain number of days after delivery and even during the menstrual period. It was known as *Sutak*. The foreign travelers like Manucci and Alberuni have noticed this strange custom. This custom was even prevalent in *China* and *Japan*. This custom is strongly condemned in Guru Granth Sahib. The impurity of *Sutak* is condemned as mere superstition. It is stated that impurity lies in the heart and mind of a person and not in the stained garment. *Ashtachhap* writers do not have mentioned about this custom in their writings.

The condition of widow was very miserable. She had to become *Sati*. Guru Amardas and Guru Arjan Dev strongly condemned this evil. In Guru Granth Sahib word '*Sati*' has been used in different connotations, it implies truthful, immortal, disciplined, virtuous, generous and pure etc. Among *Ashtachhap* writers only Surdas,

mentioned about this evil. He seemed to support this custom by announcing that woman who had become *Sati*, would get rid off from transmigration and she never born again. Although there is no direct reference to widow remarriage but one of the hymn states that a wife can get satisfaction only from her husband and from none else, it can be said that Guru Granth Sahib favoured the idea of widow remarriage so that a widowed could lead a normal and socially respectable life. Guru Granth Sahib favoured the idea of widow-remarriage in order to prevent a widow from becoming a victim of temptation.

Both ideologies have emphasized to follow the path of *Grihasta* (married life) to restore to woman her due place and status equal to a man in life. Guru Granth Sahib declares that a person can attain liberation even living with progeny and wife. *Ashtachhap* writers also realized the importance of wife in family. But all of them did not follow the path of *Grihasta*. Surdas, Parmananddas, Nanddas, Krishandas and Govindswami remained unmarried for the whole life.

During the Muslim rule the evil of prostitution appears to have spread far and wide. Guru Arjan Dev informed that people had no scruple in visiting prostitutes. Among *Ashtachhap* writers Nanddas also mentioned about this practice. It is stated that these women were good in talking but their hearts were unclean. Guru Granth Sahib not only authenticates the presence of this evil in society but also condemned this practice. It is also stated that not only women were

prostitutes but the men's who were morally degenerated also like prostitute. So, Guru Granth Sahib equally applied word prostitute to both woman and man.

Apart from the evil of prostitution there was trade of women on the frontier areas. Guru Granth Sahib referred to the practice of offering woman in charity at pilgrimage places. It does not appreciate this practice. It is stated as a useless practice. One is advised to purify oneself and worship the Name of Lord to achieve liberation instead of performing these types of rituals.

Great importance is given to woman as mother in both ideologies. In Guru Granth Sahib mother exists as a person upon who depends creation and nutrition. A hymn of Guru Nanak refers to the indispensability of woman as a mother. The hymn states that it is from woman, the condemned one that we are conceived and it is from her that we are born. It is the woman who keeps our race going. It is the woman who is sought when one loses one's previous wife. It is she with whom we establish our social ties. Then why denounce her from whom even Kings, great men and commoners are born? From woman is born another woman, without woman there is none. Only God (Who is according to Sikh Scripture is *Nirguna*) is free woman. On the other side, Ashtachhap writers, as they believed in *Saguna* form of God, declared that even God is not free from woman. They have praised mother *Devaki* for giving birth to Lord *Krishna*.

To conclude this chapter it may be said that in Braj literature a woman's position is subordinate to her husband as she is advised not

to leave him and to do service to him. Whereas Guru Granth Sahib negates the tradition ridden view that wife should live in the custody of husband. It is a remarkable step as no one condemned this view from *Manu's* time. Thus Sikh Scriptural message is not the subjugation of female to the male. Guru Granth Sahib states that man and woman are complementary to each other and there is no difference between them.

**V chapter named as ‘Depiction of Female Dress, Make-up, Ornaments and Activities.’** In Guru Granth Sahib, female dress, her act of applying make-up, wearing ornaments and her activities have been described with spiritual significance. Whereas in Braj literature this account only brings into focus the social status of woman during the period under study. *Ashtachhap* writers have provided detailed information about female dress. *Sari* was the most common wear used by the ladies. *Ashtachhap* writers have informed about different kinds of *Saris* used by ladies at that time *Kausambi Sari* was in trend during that period. *Thigni Sari*, *Dandhi Sari*, *Tansukh Sari*, *Chunri Sari*, *Jhoomk Sari* and *Patori Sari* were also used by ladies. *Cotton Sari* was commonly used by all women. *Langha-Choli*, *Salwar-Suit* was also worn by ladies of that period. *Duppata* also known as *Chunri*, *Chunni*, *Cheer* and *Odhani* was used to cover the head.

In Guru Granth Sahib female dress has a symbolic meaning. Woman is advised to wear the robe of love, humility and forgiveness. It is stated that those who are busy in dressing themselves in silken

robes but do not appropriate God's Name, cannot attain peace. The red robe which is only worn for the sake of lovely appearance is useless. It is stated that one should only wear clothes which do not distress the mind and body. Further, one should not wear clothes as fine as air.

Next to dress was make-up which mostly occupied the attention of the ladies. All the sixteen items of *Sigar* found mention in both ideologies. *Ashtachhap* writers have provided information about the use of *Ubtan*, *Snan*, *Keshvinyas*, *Maang Bharna*, *Anjan*, *Mahawar*, *Bindi*, *Mehandi*, *Gandh*, *Phulmala*, to put *Til* and to redden the lips by ladies to beautify themselves.

Woman embellishment is assigned spiritual significance in Guru Granth Sahib. Her cosmetic does not only enhance her physical appearance but also contribute to her intellectual strength. She should adorn herself with the *Sabad* and *Gyan* of the True Lord. The *Anjan* that she uses to darken and beautify her eyes is to be interpreted as *Gyan*. It is stated that if a woman adorn herself with all the sixteen items of *Sigar* but she does not adore the master of the world all her make-up is useless. One is advised to give up worldly make-up and instead of it *Sigar* of fear is advised to do. Only that woman (devotee) is liked by the Lord who applied the make-up of *Sehaj*.

*Ashtachhap* writers have furnished information that different types of ornaments were used by ladies from head to toe at that time.

These ornaments were made of diamond, gold, pearls and flowers. *Sheesphul* for head, *Latkan* for forehead, *Khumbhi*, *Karnaphul*, *Khuthila*, *Tatank*, *Kundal* and *Jhumka* for ears, *Besari*, *Nath* and *Bulak* for nose, *Kanthsiri*, *Motsiri*, *Muktamal*, *Hamel* and *Tauki* for neck, *Bajuband*, *Kangan*, *Churi* and *Chura* for arms, rings for fingers, *Kshudra-ghantika*, *Kardhani* and *Kinkini* for waist, *Bichuwa* and *Nupur* for toes and *Paizeb* and *Jehar* for the ankle were used.

Guru Granth Sahib takes jewellery in different connotations. Female ornaments are related to her mental state. A woman should make good deeds her ornaments and her mind the thread. She should be able to string the diamond of *Naam* which is beyond all prices. She should wear the garland of *Naam* around her neck and *Kangan* of the doership of Absolute One God. It is stated that a wife who wears all ornaments and apply make-up on her body but do not recite *Naam* then all these things are useless. These are responsible for transmigration.

Woman played a major role in the daily life of the society during the period under study. Both ideologies have provided valuable information about her day to day activities. Early in the morning she churned milk. In Guru Granth Sahib this daily female activity of churning milk and obtaining butter is used as a symbol for meditating on the Holy Name and obtaining *Amrita*, the Divine elixir. The metaphorical churning up of the butter, the envisioning of the transcendent is the most important action (meditating on Divine

Name) illustrated through a feminine occupation (the churning of milk every morning) in Guru Granth Sahib which is a symbol of the significance attached to the feminine principle in the Sikh Scripture.

*Ashtachhap* writers have also used milk and milk products to spiritual level. They compared 'Goras' (milk and milk products) to the *Rasa* of senses. It is the prime duty of the devotee to sacrifice the pleasure of senses to achieve Lord. It is explained by *Ashtachhap* writers in '*Dan Lila*' where the Lord Krishna demanded from the *Gopis* to give him *Dan* in form of 'Goras' which is indirectly a demand to sacrifice the pleasure of senses.

Woman went to fetch water for drinking and other purposes. Word *Panihari* is used for woman water carriers in both ideologies. Woman had to prepare and serve food to the whole family. After then she had to sweep and clean her house. Embroidery is also included in her working sphere. This activity is also imbued with spiritual importance in Guru Granth Sahib. If a woman makes embroidery of the Holy Name and worn such a frock; then she is the true bride. In this hymn the female activity of making embroidery is symbolically used for reciting the Holy Name. The word home is used for keeping oneself away from the five lower passions i.e. *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha*, *Moha* and *Ahankara*.

It must be kept in mind that women at that time played an important role in the economic life of the society. They sold goods of daily use carrying them on their heads from place to place. Both

ideologies have mentioned about the women who used to go to sell milk and milk products to nearest places. Word *Gujari* has been used in both ideologies for those women who sold milk and milk products at that time. They also went out of their houses for selling fruits and other goods of daily use.

To conclude this chapter, it can be said that both ideologies provide valuable information about the dress, make-up, ornaments and activities of woman during the period under study. Some information about her role in economic life of the society is also provided. Braj literature provides this information only to highlight the social status of woman in contemporary society. On the other side, in Guru Granth Sahib female dress, her make-up, ornaments and activities all are depicted with spiritual significance.

After analyzing both ideologies from feminine point of view, it can be concluded that Guru Granth Sahib creates a larger space for woman as compared to contemporary Braj literature. But the Sikh community has yet to fully appreciate the feminine views pertaining to Sikh Scripture to mitigate the gap between theory and practice. According to the theory of Sikhism there is gender equality but it is not reflected in the practices and customs prevalent in the Sikh community due to the dominance of Punjabi culture. The hold of Punjabi culture on the Sikh religion has resulted in Sikh practices and customs being more reflective of Punjabi norms than of Sikh spiritual values.



This type of study which is based on devotional literature has its own merits. Although it does not directly provide information about materials matters yet by employing allegory it provides valuable information about life around it. The official sources contain only one version of the reality. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to know the other side also before arriving at a definite conclusion. It has been found that religious literature, after examining it with its limitations reinforce historical evidences further.