

Aspects of Society and Culture in Reeti Poetry

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DECLARATION

Certify that the M.Phil. dissertation entitled "Aspects of Society and Culture in Reeti Poetry" submitted by Ms. SANDHYA SHARMA has not been previously submitted for any degree of this University or any other University.

We recommend that this dissertation be presented before the examiners for evaluation.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The present work is an attempt at a historical analysis of **Reeti** - poetry. Though the period 1650 - 1850 A.D. of the **Reeti** - poetry or **Reeti-kal** extends over two centuries, we will confine our study only to the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We feel that for the history of this important phase, the historians have generally depended on conventional sources, namely, the court chronicles and factory records. Indeed, in reenacting our medieval past, we have very largely, if not solely, depended on these sources.

There is, of course, some evidence of the use of the **bhakti** literature* but the non-Persian literature,

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- * (a) Vajdeville, Kabir
- (b) Irfan Habib, 'Historical Background of the Monotheistic Movements in the 15th Century', Paper read at University of Delhi.
- (c) Savitri Chandra Shobha, The Life and Concepts in Medieval Hindi Bhakti Poetry.
- (d) Tara Chand, The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture.
- (e) Yusuf Husain, The Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture.
- (f) Harbans Mukhia, 'The Ideology of Bhakti Movement' in D. Chattopadhyay (ed) History and Society.

with its possible exception has generally received a step - motherly treatment at the hands of the historians. The **Reeti** - poetry has almost completely been neglected. There are references to some of **Reeti-kal** poems like **Jang Nama**, **Chhatra Prakash** and **Nadirshah** in some of the standard historical works. But even these poems, let alone numerous other collections of the **Reeti** - poetry, await due attention; more so because the period of the **Reeti** - poetry is an important theme of debate among the Mughal historians and early modernists, and has been interpreted radically differently in recent years.

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The second half of the seventeenth century saw the zenith of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb had brought almost the entire sub-continent under the Mughal regime. In 1680s, he succeeded in destroying the independent Deccan Sultanates; by 1700s, the Maratha capital Satara, was also captured. The successful campaigns in the late 1670 s and 1680 s in Rajputana, after the death of Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur, against the Sisodia and Rathor

Rajputs, signified the remarkable resourcefulness of the Mughals.

But despite the geographical expansion, cracks and fissures had also begun to appear within the political system of the Empire. The Jats had been raising arms against the Empire since 1669 A.D.¹ The peasant uprisings gradually assumed the shape of more of a movement of the locality against the centre. The Marathas, who had carved out an independent territory for themselves, though subdued by Aurangzeb, had been at conflicting terms with the imperial power.² The need to maintain the constant campaigns had imposed financial strains on the imperial treasury.

The political strains included the constant civil war among the princes for the throne in the early eighteenth century.³ It involved the loss of financial as well as the human resources. Within a period of two

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1. Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol-II P-310-11; also see Satish Chandra, Parties And Political at the Mughal Court, Introduction.
 2. William Irvine, Later Mughals, Vol-II, P-158-161. For interpretations see, Satish Chandra, Parties and politics at the Mughal Court, Introduction. M.Alhar Ali, The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb.
 3. W.Irvine, Later Mughals, Vol-I, P-3-35; P-158-240. Also, Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, P-10-18, 82-85.

decades following the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire was shaken to its foundations.

William Irvine and Jadunath Sarkar believe a general deterioration in the personalities and characters of Aurangzeb's successors as the principal cause of the collapse of the Mughal power.⁴ The weak and feeble rulers found the pleasure in the company of flatterers. Under these circumstances, the nobility began to play all the tricks for asserting their position at court and factionalism and mutual rivalry among the nobles began to dominate the court politics. Religious bigotry of Aurangzeb has also been seen as a factor in inciting the "Hindu Reactions" in Mughal India.⁵ Such explanations are, however, no longer taken seriously by the historians of Mughal India.

The foremost among the modern scholars who challenged the validity of interpreting the Mughal decline in terms of individual failures and religious

4. Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of The Mughal Empire, Vol-I, P-4-9.

5. Idem, History of Aurangzeb, P-193 - 204.

policies were Satish Chandra and Irfan Habib. According to Satish Chandra, the failure of the Mughal government to act as mediator between the peasantry, the zamindars and the revenue officials of the Empire, had become too evident to be concealed in the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁶ The ineffective working of the imperial administrative system produced an acute financial crisis. The surplus funds of the Mughals were not sufficient to meet ~~out~~ the cost of administration, war expenditure and the cost of a standard living to the nobility. All the valuable devices, both administrative and financial could ^{not} help the Empire in solving the financial crisis. The influx of Deccani and Maratha nobles aggravated the problem of funds for allocation and the crisis in jagirdari system became inevitable. Thus, the Mughal inability to maintain the social balance, accompanied by the administrative crisis resulted in the decline of The Mughal Empire.⁷

The agrarian crisis has been taken to be the cause of the collapse of the Empire by Irfan Habib. The

6. Satish Chandra, Medieval India : Society, The Jagirdari Crisis And The Village, P-64.
7. Idem, Parties and Politics, Introduction. Also see, 'Jizyah and The State in India during the Seventeenth Century', Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol - XII, P-1-14.

Imperial policy of the Mughals was to set the revenue at the highest possible rates. The nobles, too, tended to yield the maximum from their jagirs even if ^{it ruined} ~~received~~ the revenue-paying capacity of the peasants for ever.⁸ The dissatisfied peasants, therefore, either took to flight or they refused to pay the revenue and raised arms against the imperial authority. It provided a serious blow to the economy during the late seventeenth century.

The crisis of jagirdari system has been explained in terms of the scarcity of paibaqi land.⁹ A considerable increase in the number of mansabdars was not followed by simultaneous increase in the Mughal income. The inflated assessment of the yield from a jagir was to cause loss of income to the nobles. They were thus not able to run the administration in an efficient way. The inability to collect the expected revenue from the jagirs led to the emergence of revenue farmers. The revenue-farmers or ijardars were required to pay a fixed amount to the rulers and they profited by collecting more than the estimated revenue from the peasantry. The ijara system¹⁰, in the process of

8. Irfan Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, P.317 - 51
9. M. Athar Ali, Nobility Under Aurnagzeb,
10. S.P.Gupta, The Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan, p - 22.

decline, has been seen as a major factor in the exploitation of the peasantry and thus the ruin of Mughal India.

The economic historians suggest that the Mughals during eighteenth century could not fulfil the essential conditions for a perfect production system which could sustain the stability of the Empire.¹¹ A mercantile economy, Sanjay Subrahmanyam says, passes through different stages in the process of transformation. When the flow of resources and commodities increases in the market, simultaneous changes in the legal and monetary system are called forth. The emergence of a developed money-market and credit system becomes inevitable for sustained economic growth. In India, during the period concerned, these features of transformation leading towards a modern economy did not appear. The Mughal Empire was not the only entity governing the production system. There were the nobles, the merchants and the local gentry taking active part in trading, therefore, the Empire could not implement the required changes effectively. The social system, the size of the market

11. Subrahmanyam (ed) Merchants, Markets and State in Early Modern India, P. 9-14
12. Tapan Raychaudhary, "Non-Agricultural Production in Mughal India" in The New Cambridge Economic History of India (ed) Tapan Raychaudhary and Irfan Habib, P-277.

and state of technology were additional factors to put restraints on the economic growth.¹²

In recent years, there has been a significant shift of emphasis in the study of the late medieval and early modern India, from the high imperial government and administration to the regional economy and local social context of power politics. The idea that the great "anarchy" or the breakdown of the law and order all over India were the hall - marks of the eighteenth century society, has been rendered obsolete. The plea is to study the history of the period in its own terms, independent of the prejudices of early British administrators who portrayed it as a bleak century to justify their intervention in the internal matters of the Indian states.

In the new perspective, the period has not been treated solely as a declining phase but also as an uprising of the inferior social groups in different parts of the Mughal Empire. The urge of the nobility for additional powers from centre to provincial officials, the frictions and factions within the nobility strengthened the tendencies towards provincial autonomy.

12. Tapan Raychaudhary, "Non-Agricultural Production in Mughal India" in The New Cambridge Economic History of India (ed) Tapan Raychaudhary and Irfan Habib, P - 277.

The governors of various provinces, in the course of time, acquired power to administer the province independently. They began to nominate their successors. The total revenue of the province was consumed within the region. The governors of these provinces enhanced their position after the Persian invasion.¹³

Many a features of the history of this period taken earlier as signs and symptoms of decay have thus turned into the symbols of the dynamism. The zamindar uprisings showed the strength of the locality, while the revenue - farmers appeared as a consolidated social group indicating of a highly monetized & commercial economy.¹⁴

The eighteenth century witnessed not the dissolution of the Mughal polity but the emergence of regional powers which encouraged growth and regeneration.¹⁵ The resurgent local kingdoms, the growing regional powers, the offshoots of the Mughal Empire and The European East India Companies during the period

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13. Muzaffar Alam, The Crisis of The Empire in Mughal North India, P. 59-70.
14. Muzaffar Alam, The Crisis of The Empire in Mughal North India, P. 40, Also, C.A. Bayly, The New Cambridge history of India, Vol-II, P-9.
15. Idem, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, Introduction

considerably influenced the trade. The politics and the war by increasing the social mobility had enlarged the non-agricultural employment. The ruling elites and the notables also began to participate in agriculture and trade. The massive local expenditure by elites on warfare and ostentatious life style broadened the local market and non-agricultural activities. The flow of coins and credit increased significantly. The incursion of the Persian invader in 1739 A.D. and that of the Afghans in 1759 A.D. have been believed to cause financial panic and agrarian disruption. But it has been suggested that they did not leave any permanent impact on the resources, on prices or on commerce. The political transformation during eighteenth century; by mobilising the resources like capital, labour and skills brought about progressive changes in the commercial and agrarian domains.¹⁶

The local and regional centres of political power might have had enough wealth as a result of the buoyant trade and mercantile activities. It is, however, stated that these courts and other centres of power continued to

16. Satish Chandra, Deuskar lecture, Centre for Studies in social Sciences, Calcutta. and
C.A. Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, Introduction.

enjoy all forms of luxuries and refinements which included Society life, arts, literature and Science.¹⁷ The architecture of the period has the pride of place. The Dig. palace and the Udaipur palace, which have beautifully been described by the Reeti poets, reflected astonishing greatness and elegance. In the literary field, the rulers patronized the poets both Urdu and Hindi. Encouragement of Science by Sawai Jai Singh showed the glory of the culture in India in the phase under discussion. The period has thus been portrayed as one of transition and transformation. The wealth of the society did not dry up; there was, however, an evident shift from Delhi to the different regional centres.

Most of these new works are based either on new sets of regional archival materials or on a more careful study and reexamination of the already used sources. Little attention seems to have been paid to assess or reassess the period in the light of literature. There are, however, some exceptions.¹⁸ Still a major part of the literature of the period namely the Hindi poetry in addition to the regional literature, remains totally neglected. A careful analysis of these literatures would certainly help us a great deal in appreciating better the course of social and cultural developments. The Reeti Kal poetry, unfortunately has also

17. Hermann Goetz, The crisis of Indian Civilization in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries, p-13-21

18. Ralph Russel and Khurshidul Islam, Three Mughal Poets. 'Eastern India in Early Eighteenth Century Christ', by Muzaffar Alam, The Economic and Social History Review, Vol. XXVIII, No.1 Jan-March 1991

not received due attention by the literary critics.

THE REETI KAL POETRY

The literary people have been indifferent to the poetry for many reasons. They feel that Reeti poets did not discuss or added to the already existing elements of Sanskrit poetics perhaps they found it appropriate not to oppose, discard or criticise the doctrines of Sanskrit. For this reason, their poetry did not reflect any new features that could merit to become a subject worth the study. Moreover, the critics believe that most of the Reeti poets did not have command over Sanskrit poetics, therefore, could not produce works of a good Standard. The poets remained limited to a given diction and the literature they produced was sterile and stereo-typed. The individual talent could not be exposed and hardly a few poets can be identified for their distinctly different styles. In addition, the language of the Reeti poets has also been criticised for imperfections and, more than that, for its deviations from the established grammatical principles. Further the Reeti poets are commonly regarded as Darbari Kavi for their association to the one ~~of~~ the other court. It is contended that the main purpose of

Specially the last section where he considers the perception & articulation of 18th century ~~christ~~ with particular reference to Shahr Ashop.

19. For literary criticism of Reeti poetry, see

(a) Bhagiraty Mishra, Hindi Reeti Sahitya, p-30-35

(b) Ram Chandra Shukla, Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas, p-161-67

these Reeti poets was to please their patrons by describing them or their court or by composing poems on the recommended themes and concepts. These patrons were not always aware of the literary accomplishments of the poetics and they wanted to listen to the poetry merely for the sake of pleasure. Reeti poetry has also been condemned for its descriptions of licentious themes. The critics consider it as being prurient, thus do not include it in the subject of literary discussions and discourse.

While much of the generally accepted evaluation of the Reeti poetry is not uncontestable, our aim is, by no means, to reassess its literary qualities. Our purpose is simply to highlight its significance as a source of history.

~~Continued~~

The period following Bhakti-Kal in Hindi literature is generally, known as Reeti-Kal and covers the two centuries between 1650 and 1850 A.D. The term Reeti implies one of the most propounded doctrines of Sanskrit poetics of the eighth and ninth centuries. Various definitions of the poetry of the period have been offered by a number of scholars. They reflect differing opinions about the essence of the poetry and emphasize one or the other aspect of Sanskrit poetics as the basis of Reeti - poetry. For this reason, an examination of the significant doctrines of Sanskrit poetics would not be out of place here.

Vamana is the foremost representative of the Reeti School propounding the Reeti doctrine of the poetry.²⁰ He asserted Reeti as the soul of the poetry. Reeti is defined as the special arrangement or combination of words in accordance with certain principles of grammar. Kaviraj in Sahitya-Darpan has accepted four kinds of Reeti, namely, Vaidarbhi, Godi, Panachali and lati which are distinguished on literary grounds.²¹ The earliest exponents of Rasa -

20. Vishweshwar, Kavya-Prakash, p-44.

21. Kaviraj, Sahitya-Darpan (ed) SatyaVrata Singh, p-658.

doctrine is Bharata who defined rasa as a distinguished component of the poetry.²² Rasa-theorists believed that the aesthetic pleasure is one but in poetry where senses are derived from sentences and sentences are split up into words and letters, this pleasurable feeling is distinguished as of eight sorts. Shringar-Rasa related to sex is one of them.²³ The poetry arouses certain basic permanent moods of mind (love, laughter, vigour and repugnance) and bring them to a state of pleasure. These aesthetic enjoyments are called rasa. The three components of Rasa are excitant (hero, heroine and the circumstances) the ensuants that include external manifestations such as gestures and postures; and licentious^u or vyabhicharibhav that creates the feeling of Shringar or love.²⁴ The poetry, in this form, becomes the sentences giving rasa.

The Alakar School of poetics led by Bhamha believed Alankara to be the most important part of the poetry.²⁵ The figures of speech that beautify the poetry are called Alankars. The number of Alankara as defined by the literary authorities like Mammat, Dandi and Rudrat has varied from

22. P.V.Kane, History of Sanskrit Poetics, p-10

23. Ibid, p-344

24. Ibid, p-352.

25. Ibid, p-97

time to time. Vakrokti doctrine emphasizes the special characteristics of poetry wherein the words used in common speech are selected for giving a different diction.²⁶ The striking combinations and relations of things get poetic expression which can not be understood by an ordinary man. The litterateurs have been treating this theory as an offshoot of Alankar School. According to dhwani theory, an implied meaning of the poetic verses has to be derived. The theory has been considered an extension of Rasa-theory.²⁷

It is visualized that these doctrines of Sanskrit poetics are not mutually exclusive but they are differentiated on account of the emphasis they lay on a given aspect. It was the inter-relation of these doctrines that the Hindi poetry of the period 1650-1850 A.D. received a different treatment by the scholars.²⁸ Mishra-Bandhu call it Alankrit-Kal for alankars or rhetorics as an indispensable part of the poetry were included in the poetry at great length. Vishwanath Prasad Mishra treated the period

26. Ibid, p-352.

27. Kaviraj, Sahitya Darpan (ed) Satyavrata Singh, p-279.

28. For different interpretations regarding Reeti-kal, see, Kishori Lal, Reeti Kaviyon ki Maulik Den p-6-13.

as Shringar-kal because a large number of poems were written on shringar-rasa, Bhagirath Mishra realized the simultaneous prevalence of Reeti-trend and Shringar-rasa both in the literature thus termed it as Reeti-shringar-kal. It was after Chintamani Tripathi composed three literary works based on Reeti- theory in 1650 A.D, that Hindi literature was overflooded by Reeti-epics to a great extent and the period came to be known as Reeti-kal. Whatever may be the interpretations., there is no denying the fact that the Reeti literature of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was drawn heavily on the Reeti doctrines of Sanskrit poetics of eighth and ninth centuries.

THE THEMES AND CONTENT OF REETI-POETRY

Love is one of the dominant themes of Reeti-literature. It involves classification of hero and heroine which is called Nayak-Nayika-Bhed, Heroes though not neglected are subsidiary to the more attractive themes of heroine. The heroine has been classified into eight categories by the Reeti-poets. First, she whose beloved is under her domination. Her good qualities and charms have kept her beloved one ever faithful to her and happy to be always in her presence and keeps her in subjection. Second, She who is yearning for her lover being alone. She knows no reasons which have kept him away and all kinds of thoughts cross her mind-whether the courtesan is bent on seizing his money. Crow is regarded as a good one for lover's safe return. Third, is the one waiting by the bedside. Fourth is the one who is offended by the conduct of her lover. Marks of unfaithfulness have outraged her feelings. Fifth, a woman who has gone abroad on a journey leaving her to pine. She will not be comforted and is depicted as distraught with grief. Sixth comes to keep her tryst with her lover but he fails. Seventh braves the dangers of night and the forest for visiting her lover at his house. lastly, the one whose lord is about to part from her because he is going on a long journey.

Apart from this classification, Reeti-poetry categorises the heroine as an inexperienced young girl who does not know the art of love and is in subdued & apprehensive mood at the impending experience of passing her first night with her lover; as an experienced lady; as one in whom love and modesty are equally balanced; the one who can control her resentment caused by her husband/lover's unfaithfulness; who can't control her resentment.

The classification of Hero is fairly extensive. He is classified as husband; the one who conorts with women of easy virtue and is well acquainted with their ways; who is false in his love and is heartless; who is shameless on his misconduct and the one who is false in his love yet is offended by his beloved's angry reactions to his false protestations. The hero and heroine interact with each other in their families and surroundings. Both the hero and heroine have their assistants or confidants. They have constant companions.

The Reeti poetry contains a variety of states of mind. Viraha is described as unhappy love caused by separation which may be because of hero's attraction towards

other heroine or unhappiness may be due to the heroine's love not being reciprocated. In egoistic state of mind, the heroine ignores her lover or ignores his messages. She is at last reconciled to him after much imploring on his part. Samyong i.e. union is the feeling arising out of the fulfilment of love resulting from the union of hero and heroine either directly or indirectly in dreams. longingness, ardent, desire, anxiety, sleeplessness, stupor, lamentation, unconsciousness are all states of mind forming the content of Reeti-poetry.

Besides all these aspects, the poetry describes ecstatically of the love of Radha and Krishna in which the love of the soul for God is reflected in personified Krishna. The poems as such may be regarded as an allegory of the soul striving to escape the allurements of the senses to find peace in mystical union with the God. The poetry, in this way, propagates the doctrine of passionate personal devotion towards an incarnate deity in the form of Krishna and absolute surrender of the self to him. Such erotic-mystic poetry characterised by emotional richness and delicacy was unique in the literary world with the exception of Sufi literature to some extent.

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Instead of looking at the Reeti poetry as prurient we should have rather a secular and more pragmatic look at it, a frankly appreciative and humanized attitude towards it. Studied from this viewpoint Reeti-poetry contains information about life and conditions of the common people living in villages to a large extent. And, obviously, even as we accept the reasons of some of the litterateurs' indifference, they do not minimize its importance as a history or as a source of history. Whatever may be judgement of the literary critics, it is difficult to deny even in its artificiality, baseness, that it reflects the culture and life pattern of its time in a great measure. Ironically, the poetry acquires added significance for the historians at least, precisely for the same reasons which caused its neglect in some literary circles.



The poetry being associated to darbar, darbari poets reflects the culture of the court and the courtiers. We would try to know what way the political authorities and political relations are described. The patrons were both local rajās and the Mughal kings. It is to be seen if there is any difference in the description of the Mughal king and the local raja. The poetry also contains the stories of past

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kings postulated as ideal rulers. It would enable us to make comparative study of the ideal and the real king.

The emphasis on non-classics in the Reeti-poetry reflects in a measure the aspirations of lower classes. The popularity and the spread of Reeti-kal poetry represents the upcoming classes. We know during this period the Mughal authority was challenged by the local rulers and that the support to these local rulers came principally from the local people of different levels, from the peasants and zamindars in the village and in the towns from the petty traders and artisans. It would be useful to review the poetry in this light.

Reeti-kal poetry has also been considered as simply a repetition of Reeti-theory of the eighth and ninth century, which was, in a way, a period of transition. It would be interesting to see how and why the Reeti tradition was revived in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which again represented an important phase of transition in Indian history.

It is believed that poetry and paintings go hand in hand. It seems that Pahari painters were considerably influenced by the Themes of love and eroticism and also by

the classification of the hero and heroine in the Reeti poetry. The subject matter of the paintings during eighteenth century was court and kings, religious and mythological concepts, popular folk themes and ethrological depictions*. The painters also borrowed the verses from Keshav Das's Rasik priya and presented them in their paintings. They were also influenced by Mati Ram's classification of heroine and picturised different types of heroines. The paintings based on Bihari-Satsai, a Reeti epic contains almost thirty verses of Bihari, picturised word by word. It can not be determined as to why and in what circumstances erotic themes in art and literature come to be represented.

*For this, see,

W.G. Archer, Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills....; Idem, Paintings of the Sikhs
B.N. Goswami, Painters at the Sikh Court Based on Twenty Documents.

29. Chintamani Vyas, Rasikpriya.

30. M. S. Randhawa, Kangra Paintings of the Bihari - Satsai.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE POETS CONSULTED

We have included seventeen poets in our study. We have no enough details about their lives, activities and associations. The little information that we could gather about them is based on Ram Chandra Shukl's Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas and on the prefaces to the poetic collections,

Bihari was born in Basua Govindpur near Gwalior around 1590 A.D. He spent his childhood in Bundelkhand. . He was patronized by Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber. He is believed to have lived till 1662 A.D. 'Bihari-Satsai' is his only work but it secured great fame for him.

Bhikhari Das was a native of Pratap Garh (Awadh) and a kayastha by caste. He has composed. He wrote more than eight poems, but we have taken note of Ras Saransh and Shring Nirnay only which have been published in Bhikhari Das Granthavali. He refers to Hindupati Singh, the brother of Raja Prithvipati Singh of Pratap Garh, as his patron. The period of his work has been suggested to have been C.1728-1750 A.D.

Bhushan is said to be the brother of Mati Ram who received great honour by Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand and the Maratha chief Shivaji. His poetry is full of verses on

bravery and courage of his patrons. Though his poetry reflects a sectarian bias in favour of his Hindu patrons, they can not be treated as merely exaggerated Accounts. Bhushan Granthavali includes Shivraj Bhushan, Shivha Bavani and Chhatrasal Dashak.

Dev belonged to Itawah and he was brahmin by caste. He composed more than twenty works. The poet did not stay permanently in the court of a single patron. His poetry does not suggest any reason for his life as a wanderer.

Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur, an eminent Mughal noble has composed poetry on philosophical concepts. His poems have been published under the title of Jaswant Singh Granthavali.

Keshav Das' work Keshav Das Granthavalil though composed little earlier has also been included in the study. He was associated to the court of Raja Ram Singh⁹ (Of Bundi) brother Indrajit Singh. He lived during c.1554-1616 A.D.

We do not have even little information about Kriparam's life. His work is among the foremost works of Reeti tradition. His verses have been collected in Kriparam Granthavali.

Man's RajVilas is an important work from historical viewpoint. He was patronized by Rana Raj Singh of Mewar. It provides significant information about the eighteenth century political conditions.

Mati Ram was a native of Tikwapur (dist.Kanpur). He lived in the court of Bhav Singh of Bundi during his life time. Mati Ram Granthavali contains three of his works named Ras Raj, Lalit Latam and Mati Ram Satsai.

Padmakar Bhatt (1752-1832 A.D.) is among the well known Reeti poets. He was a Brahmin and belonged to - Banda. His father was a great court poet associated with Raja Ragunath Rao of Nagpur. He lived in the court of None Arjun Sigh, a minister of a local Raja Guman Singh in Bundelkhand (and then joined Himmat Bahadur (Anup Giri) an army commander in the army of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah of Awadh. Raghunath Rao and Raja Pratap Singh of Jaipur were his patrons. He wrote Himmat Bahadur Virdawali, Pratap Singh Virdavali, Padmabharan, Jagat Vinod, Kali Pacheesi, Gangalohase, Prabodh Pachasa and Prakeernak and all are included in Padmakar Granthavali.

Abdurrahman Premi composed Nakh-Shikh. He was patronized by the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar.

Sayyid Ghulam Nabi Rasleen was a resident of Bilgram near Hardoi. The period assigned to his works is around 1740 A.D. Ras-Prabodh and Ang-Darpan have been collected in Rasleen-Granthavali. Nothing is known about his patron.

Shri Dhar Ojha, a native of Prayag wrote a poem describing the war between the Mughal Emperor Jahandar Shah and Farrukhsiyar. His association with any court has not been described. Ojha's poetry is not based on Reeti - tradition.

Som Nath, a brahmin by caste, was associated with the court of Pratap Singh, the son of the Jat Chief, Raja Badan Singh of Agra-Mathura region during the 1730's onwards. SomNath Granthavali is the collection of all his works which we have consulted.

Sudan was a native of Mathura. His patron was Raja SurajMal, the son of Raja Badan Singh of Agra-Mathura region. He composed Sujan Charitra which describes seven wars fought by Raja Suraj Mal against different local rulers and also against the Mughal nobles during 1744-1752 A.D.

Thakur Das was a poet in the court of Raja Parichhat of Jaitpur and also visited the courts of various other

rulers. He was born in Orchha in 1765 A.D. His verses have been published in a collection entitled Thakur Granthavali.

Vrind is another poet whose poetry does not belong to the tradition of Reeti. His poetry enumerates moral and ethical values. He was a native of Jodhpur and was for sometime associated with the court of Aurangzeb as a tutor to his son Prince Muhammad Azam Shah. Later, he joined Rana Raj Singh of Krishnagarh around 1703 A.D. We have consulted his Vrind-Satsai.

The manuscripts of their works were collected by Nagri Pracharini Sabha, Kashi and other institutions like Hindustani Academy, Allahabad. These manuscripts were then edited by different eminent scholars, like Vishwanath Prasad Mishra, Sudhakar Pandey, Bhagwandeem and Radhkrishandas together with some notes on the poets and their poetry. We have used these edited and printed versions with a hope that we would be able to examine the original manuscripts and collect much more details about Reeti kal poets, including the one we have consulted so far at a later stage.

PLAN OF STUDY

We have divided our study into four chapters, besides introduction and some concluding remarks. In the first chapter, we have tried to analyse the information about family and social relations. In the second, we have noticed

some details available about religion and rituals, while the third chapter would be devoted to the information about festivals, pastimes and leisure. In chapter four, we have examined the information of courts, kings, and their role in society.

In the chapter on family and women in society, various questions regarding the structures and size of the family have been discussed. Family as fundamental to the society was expected to be receptacle of its values. What were the consequences if a family overlooked these values? Whether the integrity of the society depended upon the stability of the family are some questions which we had in mind while analysing the relevant material. The complex domestic groups included many members. The reason for larger family were probably the rural economy and low mobility. While analysing the effects of family structure on sentiments, attitude and responses, we have tried to notice the feeling of affection or dislike towards the members of the household; the expression and demonstration of authority and submission; as well as the convictions as to what was wrong and right in the constitution of the family.

In a section in this chapter, Bhakti poet Tulsidasa's view that Indian women was an embodiment

of perfection; the integrity of her character was beyond reproach; her manners were strict; her demeanour was mild, gentle and affectionate, has been compared and contrasted with that contained in *Reeti* writings. We have also tried some comparisons with the views of Jayasi and Surdasa regarding women. It emerges that Indian women were expected to be good wives, good mothers and were liable to religious and domestic duties.

The woman was expected to hold the high standards of chastity, modesty, patience, sympathy, sweetness, grace, submissiveness, all considered as her accomplishments. Woman as Mother-in-law used to check all the household reforms and maintain the rituals and dictate the behaviour of daughters and daughters-in-law but as a wife she constantly struggled to win over the affection of her husband, bears him ever though he had illicit relations with other women. However, the living conditions in the family also her opportunity sometimes to have friends of her own choice though she lost her dignity and earned general indignance in such cases. Here, we would take note of relations within and outside the family, legitimate and illegitimate. The expressions of the feelings of jealousies, studied case in woman's behaviour gives us a chance to assess the tensions in the family. We have references to the wives of weavers, barbaras, goldsmith etc. and thus are somewhat in a position to

appreciate the place of woman in lower sections of the community as well. Here, Shringar dominated poetry enables us to examine many a dimensions of human relations about which we have few other records from this period.

We have also collected some information about prostitution, attitudes to it, and of course glimpses of it. The poetry reveals the violation of norms and ideals and how society let them pass unnoticed or rather took them virtually as parts of the norms. The description of the marital conditions and polygamy form a part of Reeti literature.

In the chapter on religion and rituals, we have noticed the popular beliefs and popular deities. It would be worth considering if the sectarian diversifications implied religious fanaticism, forbidding communion with the followers of other sets. Our poetry reflects the trends towards asceticism in the name of religion. A reference is made of the observance of ceremonies and rituals connected with religion. Despite the reflections of the condemnatory attitude of the people towards such religious rituals, we find religion during the period concerned was a matter of personal faith and not as source or agent of strife in the society. The social ethics and values preached by poet Vrind for a modest and comfort living also form a part of discussion.

In a brief chapter on festivals and pastimes we have evidence to show that the society gave sufficient time to leisure and gaiety, feasts and festivals for recreatory purposes. The monotony of life was mitigated by festive and sportive diversions of varied character. The religious amusements included celebration of various festivals. There were few festivals celebrated exclusively by women when they used to dress up nicely. Companionship between the young girls and boys, their playful activities and frolic relationship as a source of amusement was integral to the social life.

In the last chapter, we propose to enumerate some details about the courts, political authorities and their role in the society. Our poets, like so many other poets, project their patrons as munificent brave, glorious and endowed with many super-human qualities. These qualities they describe in all conditions whether their patron was a local raja or a Mughal king. The kings are described as handsome, benovelent, pleasing, strong and intelligent. They are depicted as the protector of religion. These are obviously the ideals and at first sight nothing seems to be significant in such descriptions. But it is noteworthy that while the ruler's duty is emphasized as the protector of religion, the religion is rarely specified and since

the reference is to the people, it could be assumed that protection of the religion of all the people of his domain, to the **Reeti** poets was king's duty. Again, when it comes to the problem of ensuring justice and balance in the society, the king's role is suggested to see to it that the members of different **Jatis**, **Varnas** and occupation maintain their duties well. This was the **dharma** of a king. On these lines we plan to analyse the descriptions of nobles and other officials in relation to the court and the people.

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CHAPTER - 1

THE FAMILY AND WOMEN IN SOCIETY.

THE FAMILY :

Indian ethical ideals have always insisted 'Grahastha' as fundamental of life in a society both for men and women. Family has been regarded as the chief agency of organised social being. Reeti-kal poetry like all other accounts show that the patriarchal type of family was preponderant among the North Indian communities. The families were large joint families, generally, comprising of father, mother, sons, daughters and daughter-in-law and grand children. The senior male member was the undisputed head and guardian of the big families. According to Bihari, it was the father who used to decide even the smaller affairs like giving grain to the beggars :

कन देव्यौ सौप्यो ससुर बहू थुरहथी जान । ।

The father-in-law appointed the daughter-in-law to give grains.

The younger members were bound to show respect and submission to their elders. They had to abide by the decisions being taken by their elders :

भले बुरे गुरुजन बचन कबहूँ न लोपत धीर । २

1. Bihari - Ratnakar, Verse - 295

Enduring persons never evade the decisions of their elders.

Various instances are available wherein we find the youngsters behaving respectfully in front of their gurujans or elders, Bihari refers to the use of certain gestures and postures by young couples in the family to communicate with each other in front of the elders :

लखि गुरुजन विच कमल सौ सीस पुमायौ स्याम । 3
हरि सनमुख करि आरसी हियें लगाइ बाम ।

Seeing her amongst the elderly people, he deliberately touched the lotus by his face; she kept the mirror-set-ring near her heart which reflected his picture.

We find similar descriptions in Mati Ram's poetry also where the presence of elderly people at home restricts the direct communication between the younger couple⁴. It seems to be no imposition but a sign of respect towards the elders. Another poet Dev also writes about the tradition :

बैठि बहू गुरु लोगनि में, लखि गए करिके कछु ओल्यो । 5

The wife was sitting among the elderly people, the husband saw her under some pretext.

The instances of such pretensions are nicely given by Rasleen⁶.

2. Vrind Satsai, Verse - 637
3. Bihari -- Ratnakar, Verse - 34
4. Mati Ram Granthavali, Verse - 129
5. Dev Granthavali, Verse - 209
6. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 225

An obvious reason for this attitude of obedience and submission, could at first instance be taken as the economic dependence of the youngsters on the elder members of the family. Agriculture being the main occupation the fortune of a family depended on hard work of all the family members. The peasant women were also depicted as working on farms :

फिरि फिरि बिलखी है लिखति, फिरि फिरि लेति उसासु ।⁸

साई । सिर - कच सेत लौ बीत्यो चुनती कपासु

Shr roams here and there in a displeased manner and breathes deep; the time has passed while plucking the cotton seeds.

The economic prosperity of the family is a product of combined efforts of the parents and the children both. Therefore, the agrarian parents inculcate in their children the attitude of submission, respect and obedience in order to ensure economic security. Since the ownership of land is inherited from the elders, the faithful obedience guarantees the inheritance of the family property. It is the behaviour of youngsters in their everyday life which determines the extent of their submission and respect towards elders. The communication of the younger couples in front of the elders was taken as an act of defiance :

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7. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 285
Mati Ram Granthavali, Verse-27. 327
Bihari-Ratnakar , Verse-135
8. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse - 138
and Bihari Das Granthavali, Verse- 96
Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 285

जेठ दुपहरी में बधु तजिं गुरूजन की लाज ।⁹
सीरे तहखाने गई सुनि सोए यदुरज ।

The daughter-in-law, in the hot afternoon of Jetha month, renouncing the shame of elders went to cold godown where her husband was sleeping.

Among the women in a family, it was the mother who enjoyed a distinct superior position in the family. It is not clear in Reeti-poetry whether the mother exercised any power in the selection of the bride for her sons, but there is no doubt about her authority to treat the bride according to her own wish. The daughters-in-law were expected to abide by the discipline imposed by their mother-in-law in the family:

नितु सासु का सासन मनि हिऐं हित सों अति सीलता को लहिए ।¹⁰

The daughter-in-law should solemnly follow the discipline imposed by the mother-in-law.

Against her mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law had no effective means of protest. Extended families were generally authoritarian institutions which expected unquestioned obedience from the subordinates therefore, the daughters-in-law were bound to accept their authority:

सासु बड़ी हैं कहौ सु कहौ, औरनि के कहा हौ मरि जाऊंगी ।¹¹

The mother-in-law is elder so she can say something; I will die if others say anything.

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9. Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 338 and also
Bhikhari Das Granthavali, Verse - 107
10. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 107
11. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 287

Also the priority of generation or age differentiation was an important factor in deciding one's superiority in a family. The mother-in-law could dictate the daughter-in-law not only in her capacity of mother-in-law but also as an elderly member of the family.

In the popular opinion, the mother-in-law's treatment of her daughter-in-law has been likely to be domineering. She has been considered to be harsh, vindictive and unjust.. It may be due to her sharp reaction to the entrance of the bride who would be sharing the son's affection. In Reeti poetry, too, we find instances where the mother-in-law had been depicted as fault-finding:

सासु उसुआसिनी उसास लै सकति हौ ।¹²

The mother-in-law is fault-finding. I can not even breathe freely.

Mati Ram also describes this relationship as conflicting and we find lack of understanding between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law:

राज तंत्र मंत्रादि हौ कछु नहिं जानति बीर ।¹³
सास ननद झूठहिं बकति वधू परम मति धीर ।

Oh! friend, I do not know any tricks and secret consultation's, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law tell lie and she is very enduring.

12. Bhikhari Das Granthavali, Shringar Nirnay, Verse -- 64

13. Kripa Ram Granthavali, Verse -- 285

The above versions reflect the tense and unhappy state of affairs between the two key figures in the family. How was then family intact if conflict between the two was its routine?

Despite their ambivalent attitude we have the reference to those mothers-in-law who had intense affection and positive thinking for their sons' wives. They used to take care of their daughters-in-law and showed concern about their health:

बहु होत क्यों दूबरी यौ जब बूझौ सास ।¹⁴

Why are you becoming thin the mother-in-law asked the daughter-in-law.

Reeti poetry does not provide us sufficient evidence to conclude the relationship in a definite way. Though we are not in a position to suggest that the relationship between the two was always cordial and there existed no conflict about the question of authority or of rights, it is reasonable to say that the mothers-in-law maintained amicable relationship with their daughters-in-law in many cases. They acted as the guides for them in performance of religious rites and rituals:

सासु ने बेलि सौ कह्यो अपने हिय के अभिलाषनि पूरति ।¹⁵
हे यह भावती आजु कौ नेगु अकेलिये पूजियौ गौरी की सूरति ।

The mother-in-law told the daughter-in-law that to fulfil the desires of her heart she should worship the image of Gauri; it is tradition for the day.

14. Mati Ram Granthavali, Verse - 115 (Ras Raj)

15. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 76

The mothers-in-law followed a sentimental approach towards their daughters-in-law. They used to take an account of their mood and were interested in knowing the cause of their worries and sadness:

और सबै हरषी फिरैं गावतिं भरी उछाह ।¹⁶
तूहीं, बहु बिलखी फिरै क्यों देवर के ब्याह ।

All other are delighted and they sing enthusiastically. It is only you seem to be displeased in the marriage of your brother-in-law.

It may, however, be contended that the mother-in-law as the senior most female member of the extended joint families enjoyed the power to control the household affairs. The younger women of the family worked under her supervision and directions. She had to act wisely as the pacemaker between the different members of the family so that the integrity and dignity of the family could be maintained. Barring a few references to the conflict and misunderstanding between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law, there is hardly any reflection of tyranny, harsh treatment or cruelty on the part of the mother-in-law. She is nowhere being described as causing suffering to the daughters-in-law. Like all the other elderly people in the family, she was to be respected and her instructions about the domestic affairs were to be followed by the daughters-in-law. So, it was not merely the economic

-16. Bihari-Ratnakar, verse - 602

factor but something more than it that decided the internal relations and cohesion of the family.

Family as a cohesive group did not include relatives living elsewhere. The brothers, wives and their children used to stay permanently under the guardianship of a head who usually happened to be the father. Frequent references to **jetha** (husband's elder brother) and **dewar** (husband's younger brother) and to their wives suggest the existence of all these members in the family:

देवरानी ननद सुवाइ एक ठौर दियो दीपक घटाय ।¹⁷

She made her sisters-in-law (husband's sister and his younger brother's wife) sleep in one corner and put off the lamp.

Submission, obedience and respect towards elderly people in the family must have acted as integrating factors in the complex family structure. Father-son and brother-brother relationship might have been based on mutual understanding thereby maintaining the fraternal solidarity. Still one should not ignore the potentialities of competitiveness among the brothers, many forces tend to break the joint family into separate parts, in particular after the death of the father. The quarrels among their wives about the children, about the question of authority and of property allocation and economic co-operation might have caused decentralisation in the family

17. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 95
and also Bihari-Ratnakar - 85, 246, 602
Thakur Granthavali, P - 65

in many cases. Reeti-poetry, however, does not highlight over any of such problems. Reeti-poets have depicted the instances of love affair of a woman in the family with her husband's brother¹⁸ but they do not go beyond simple descriptions of such relationship. We do not get even a faint impression if such indulgence ever caused differences in brother-brother relationship. It appears that Reeti idealised the existence of joint families, therefore they communicated the expression of affection and insisted on conformity, respect, submission and obedience which were indispensable tools of keeping all the family members under control. With a view of repressing the feelings of conflict and aggression among the people in the society, the poets perhaps avoided the descriptions of feuds, disputes and tensions.

The daughters remained in their parental home till they got married. After their marriage, they were supposed to live with their in-laws*. They were occasionally invited to stay in their parental home and were respectfully escorted by their brothers :

आयो भ्रात लिवाइबे निरखि उठि हरषाइ ।¹⁹

Seeing the brother who had come to take her along she felt overjoyed.

Their husband's also visited their (girls's) parental home sometimes. They were treated as honoured guests.

18. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse - 246,
Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 29

*Mati Ram Granthavali, 195, 261, 286, 288

19. Padmakar Granthavali, Padmabharan, Verse - 299

The daughters' husbands' long stay in the family was not appreciated. And if for some reasons he stayed there as a permanent member, he generally lost his dignity and respect :

आवत जात न जानियतु तेजहिं तजि सियरानु ।²⁰

घरहं जंवाई लौ घटयो खरौ पूस दिन भानु ॥

The moon during the month of Paush (December) has become cool and it is no more bright; therefore people do not bother about its rise and set. Its significance/respect has been reduced like that of the son-in-law.

A remarkable feature of the joint family was the existence of co-wives in a family. The idea that most of the households were polygamous is derived by the fact that every poet of the period concerned mentions the presence of many wives married to one man, without any objections raised by the family members. Polygamy seems to be generally acceptable. The second bride for a man seems to have been warmly received by the family :

सौतिन मुख निसि कमल भए पिय चख भए चकोर²¹

गुरूजन मन सारंग भए लख दुलही मुख ओर

The faces of the co-wives became like the lotus of the night; husband's eyes became partridge; the hearts were full of joys seeing the face of the bride.

20. Bihari Ratnakar Verse - 171

21. Rasteen Granthavali, Verse-98

The new bride was offered gifts by all the family members and the co-wife was also bound to the custom to welcome and give some gift :

मानहुँ मुख दिखरावनि दुलहिहि करि अनुराग ।²²

सासु सदन, मनु लैलनु, सौतिन दियो सुहाग ।

On the ceremony of seeing the bride, the mother-in-law, gave her the household, the husband gave his heart and the co-wives offered their husband to her with love)

One obvious reason for polygamous families seems to be the male domination. Men realised that polygamy gave them much greater power over their wives by refusing their favours to one or the other of them. Once a person had a second wife, he could control his wives by showing more affection for one or the other :

जीवौ तौ देखतै पाइ परौ अब सौतिहि के महले किन होइ ।²³

आज ते मान का नाम न लेऊँ करौ टहलै सहलै अति जोइ ।

I touch your feet and request you to go and see what is going on in the co-wife's apartment; I will not show my ego from today and serve him by heart.

Economic sustenance and affluence must have also encouraged the practice. Further, the first wife's failure to produce children also provide a pretext to the people to go polygamous :

22. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse-288

23. Bhikari Das Granthavali, ShringarNirnay, Verse-187

गुरुजन दूजे ब्याह कौ प्रतिदिन कहत रिसाई ।²⁴

पति की पति राखे बहु आपन बांझ कहाई ।

The elders suggest for second marriage everyday being displeased; the daughter-in-law maintaining the prestige of her husband is called barren.

Since the co-wives were all the contenders for their husband's favours both material and emotional, they always tended to be jealous of one another. Dissensions and rivalry among the co-wives had been a common theme of Reeti-poetry. The other co-wives felt jealous when the husband used to pay more attention towards any one of them.

नेह भरी बतियां करके नित सौतन की छतियां दहिबे करो ।²⁵

Talk sweetly to make the co-wife jealous.

Reasons for jealousy can easily be imagined. A wife could never accept a co-wife in her heart and therefore applied all her tact and energy to be her husband's favourite and darling. In the beginning she started with humble requests to her husband for not mixing up with the sautin.

मोहि दयौ, नेरौ भयौ, रहतु जु मिलि जिय साथ ।²⁶

सो मन बाधि न सौपिय पिय सौ तिहिं के हाथ ॥

You gave me, it became mine, it is mixed up with my heart, so do not give it to the co-wife.

24. Matiram Granthavali, (Satsai) Verse - 602

25. Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 140

26. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse - 83.

Arrival of the new wife implied obvious threat to the senior wife for the former enchanted and fascinated the husband :

पति विवाह कर दूसरी आली आँसू ।²⁷

ऊँची आँगन में बधू गहने चित्र को ठौन ॥

The husband has brought home a second wife; the enthusiastic bride was sitting like a picture in the courtyard.

A woman considered it a matter of pride when her husband showed her affection by giving her gifts like chain or cosmetics. The intended display of such gifts was sufficient enough to cause dissatisfaction among the other co-wives.

पीतम पठई बेदुली सो लिलार मकाई ।²⁸

सौतिन में बैठी तिया कुछ ऐंठी सी जाय ।

बिय सौतिन देखत दई अपने हिय तें लाल ।²⁹

फिरति सबनि में इह इही उहँ मरगजी माल ॥

The bindi (round-mark) sent by her husband she placed on her forehead; sitting among the co-wives the woman feels elevated. The husband gave her the garland of flowers from his neck in front of the second-wife. She roams here and there wearing the crushed garland.

The urge of competing wives to displace the others as centre of attraction required them to look attractive for which they used to dress up nicely and beautify themselves. Apart from the fact that the co-wives restored various methods in an attempt to gain first place with the husband, we find the instances of firm determination of maintaining her status:

27. Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 231

28. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 849 and 856

29. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse - 122 and 380,507

सीस फूल जेहि लाल को सौतिन करे बनाई ।³⁰

तेहि राखौगी आजु हीं, पायल माहिं लगाई

The husband whom the co-wife treats as a head ornament, I will keep him today near my anklet.

With descriptions of polygamous families our poetry thus highlights the problem of jealousy and competition among the co-wives. It is not clear from the available descriptions whether the husband considered it essential to take their wife's consent for bringing another wife but there is no doubt that the wives always disapproved polygamy in their heart. The jealousies and rivalries sometimes might have led to irreconcilable quarrels and brought trouble in the family. Moreover it cannot be ascertained if these tensions ever exploded into open accusations leading to divorce. It is perhaps for these reasons Mati Ram defined a co-wife as mischievous and evil-doer. (जानाति सौति अनौति है). The presence of co-wives in a family must have discouraged an ideally balanced and harmonious conjugal life.

THE CONJUGAL RELATIONS

The husband-wife relationship in the family was regulated by certain norms. Ideally a man and his wife were not allowed to talk to each other in front of the elder members of the family. Neither were they supposed to show affection and

30. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse - 315. also,
Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 886, 849 and 349-

and express their sentiments towards each other. Since women in the household were virtually always present, the younger couple might communicate at night :

परि हुती पिय पास तहि गई ससु बहु आई ।³¹

सटपटाइ सकुचाइ तिय भाजी भवन दुराइ ।

The lady was lying near her husband, just then the mother-in-law came in. The lady became restless and ran inside the room to hide herself.

There were limited opportunities for them to be alone together and they could meet rarely secretly during the day time. The couple had to take notice of the presence of the other members of the family.

नाहर सी ननदी निगोड़ी फिरै आहट कौ हट कोक ही के तुम्हें आए जौन अटके³²

पासऊ परोस दिवरानी औ जिठानी तेऊ जागती अहां की तहां गैल लोग भटके ।

चटके न पाटी पांव धरिए पलंग ऐसे हे हरि हरा के मेरी जेहर न खटके ।

The sister-in-law like a lioness, is in search of sounds and you are insisting upon sexual companionship; other sisters-in-law are also around and people are roaming here and there. Keep your foot slowly on the cot in a way that it does not produce cracking sounds and see to it that my anklets do not make any noise.

The, rationale for such restrictions and regulated congeniality apart, they certainly affected the intimacy

31. Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 171

32. Thakur Grantha Vali, p-65

between husband & wife. The emotional ties of husband-wife in such a family could not be strong since the relation between the two remained primarily physical and procreative. It was however, the urge for physical and bodily relationship that sustained a minimal affection between the two. The absence of emotional ties between the two to some extent might have also reinforced the conditions for the practice of polygamy. The long periods of suppression of marital bonds diverted the attention of the husband and wife in other directions and in order to fulfil their emotional and carnal needs, they maintained illicit relations either within the family or outside. Some details of it we will see below.

People were conscious about maintaining the social decorum and family and therefore had conviction as to what was wrong or right in the constitution of the family;

जो कुड़त कुल आपनी, ते पावत बहु खेद ।³³

Those who renounce their family/clan receive much grief

Wisdom comes to be the synonymous with family honour and surrender of the kul was looked down upon with indignance :

33. Padmakar Granthavali, Padmabharan Verse - 208

बड़े न लोपे लाजकुल लोपे नीच अधीर ।³⁴

Great people do not renounce social decorum and family honour while mean, impatient persons do.

Kul acquired its meaning through the need for affirming lineage cohesion., genealogical status and solidarity of the family based on kinship. The family being the smallest unit of the society, the stability of the society depended upon the stability and integrity of the family. Any member of the family who violate the traditions of the family faced dishonour and disgrace not only with in the family but in the society also :

बेरे कियो सिगरे ब्रजगाम सो जाके लिए ककुलकानि गवाई ।³⁵

जाके लिए घर बार हूँ भीतर रहे हँसि लाग लुगाई ।

I coated enmity with the entire Brajgaon and surrendered the status of my kul for him; people within and outside the family arelaughing at me.

The village panchayats intervened in the family matters whenever the dignity of a family was put at stake :

॥ पंच हसि है री, हौं तो पंचन ते बाहरी ॥³⁶

The family, in this way, being directly inserted into the society, is linked up to the state and nation. It maintains the order of social hierarchy while afforting to maintain its own social status. The degree of integration and desired harmony depended upon how far a kin group cared for the

34. Vrind Satsai, Verse - 220

35. Matirani Granthavali, Ras Raj, Verse - 140

36. Dev Ratnavali, P-92

criticism and social persecution which was to be practised idealistically in every day life :

लोगनि के अपवाद का डर करिए दिन रैन ।³⁷
रघुपति सीता परिहरी सुनत रजक के बैन ।

Fear the criticism of people every time as Raghupati renounced Sita as his wife hearing the comments of a washerman.

WOMEN AND SOCIETY

Clan identity, family honour and status and kinship system always structured women in such a way that they were placed under patriarchal protection and in subordinate position. The medieval attitude towards woman had been, in general, conditioned by her various relationships with man. As a wife, a mother, a sister and a daughter she was loved. At the same time she was subjected to certain controls, restrictions and prohibitions. Therefore, women's position in society must be viewed always in comparison with that of the men of their social group and time. Medieval Indian historical and literary sources of bhakti period seem to put women under patriarchal domination and entrust them certain duties towards households, husband, other family members, guests and servants. The concept of fidelity towards her husband was quite rigid. Though Reeti poets, accepted the superiority of the husband over the wife, in their poetry is also reflected the women's centrality and her creative and

active roll in the society. In Reeti poetry, the age-old ideology of Pativrata is represented adequately. A wife's prime duty was total devotion to her husband :

निज पति ही सौ प्रीत अति तन मन वचन बनाई ३८

She loves her husband with her body, soul, heart and speech.

To woman, her husband was like her god and her principal concern was to work for the welfare of all:

पति को परमेश्वर गने सबै हित धारि बाम । ३९

She was supposed to be modest like ocean, virtuous, intelligent, the best in service to her cohort among the co-wives, faithful to her husband and perfect in carrying out the household work. Simplicity and forgiveness were other qualities required of a woman. She was to be sweet in speech to prove a source of joy for the husband. She must love and obey her husband even if he was ill-disposed towards her*. Pativrata should be her ultimate goal to find place in her husband's heart :

38. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 63 and

*Padmakar Granthavali, Verse - 18. Tulsidasa also writes in a similar way about women. He also considers woman to act like a servant for her husband. जदपि जोषिता नहीं अधिकारी । मन, क्रम, वचन में दासी तुम्हारी ।

39. एकई धर्म एक ब्रत नेमा । कांय वचन मन पति पद प्रेमा ।
Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 66 and P - 67 also.

देव पतिव्रत पाटी पढ़ी न कढ़ी कबहूँ पिय के हिय में बैठी । 40

Dev says that she learnt the lesson of pativrata and never came out of her husband's heart.

In a joint household, utmost concern was to be towards her duties towards the members of the family.

The poets have frequently used the phrases "fear of gurunjan" or "shame of gurunjan". The word fear, in fact, implies a feeling of respect towards them. She was expected to render her services and obedience with humility and discipline. She had to cook for all in the family and carry out their needs. Padmakar considered it essential for a woman to serve all the members in the family of her husband :

है नहिं मायकौ मेरी भटू यह सासुरौ है सबकी साहिबी करौ ।⁴¹

It is not my material home but in-laws house; here I have to serve all.

Elsewhere he writes :

*For different qualities of women refer to Dev Granthavali, P-109, 135, 136; Som Nath Granthavali, P-63; Kriparam Granthavali, P-66, -67 and Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse - 18.

40. Dev Granthavali, P - 109

Jayasi, the author of Padmawat also believed that a woman will always be happy if she remains the beloved of her husband :

रहै जो पिय के आएस ओ बरते होइ खीन ।
सोई चांद अस निरमरि नरम नु होहिं मलीन ।
Nagmati, Suakhand Doha - 73, 8.

41. Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse - 140..

खान पान पीछू करति सोवति पिछले छोर । 42
प्राण पियारे ते प्रथम जागत भावती भोर ।

She eats last of all and sleeps after everybody sleeps; she gets up in the morning before her husband.

It is reassertion of Tulsidasa's metaphors about the role of women where he expected a woman to render her services to her husband and all other members of the family :

मातु पिता भ्राता हितकारी । मितप्रद सब सुनु राजकुमारी । 43
अमित दान भर्ता, बैदेही । अधम सो नारि जो सेव न तेहीं ।

The woman was to ^{serve} her husband in all situations. She must not renounce him even though he was a fool, licentious, old, chronic patient, dwarf, deaf, a rogue, liar, thief, ugly, handicapped, blind sinful, mean and furious :

मूरख लंपट बृद्ध और नित रोगनि मंडित 44
उर अंतर प्रीति बढ़ाए के रीति प्रतिब्रत की सजै ।

This sounds a mere **Reeti** - Version of Tulsi's idea. According to Tulsi, the woman who treats her husband with disrespect, even though he is disabled, dull, indigent and wrathful, shall face the divine fury and suffer from various torments in the hell (The abode of Yama) :

वृद्ध रोग बस जड़ धनहीना अंधा बधिर क्रोधी अति दीना 45
ऐसे पति का किय अपमाना । नारि पाव जमपुर दुख नाना ।

Pativrata required of her total fidelity; she should not even think of another man. A woman who deceived her

42. Ibid, Verse 19.

43. Ram Charitmanas (Aranyakand) 4/5 - 6

44. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 232

45. Ram Charitmanas (Aranyakand) 4/5 - 6

husband and loved a paramour is cast for the dreadful hell
fire :

पति बंचक परपति रति करई, रोख नरक कल्प सत परई ।⁴⁶

and

तिय जो परपुरुष रमे ठीक सौ नरकै जाई ।⁴⁷

Raurav Narak & Sau Narak mean the same as dreadful
hell.

Even as woman was assigned an inferior position she was
considered as complimentary to her husband, however :

पतिनी पति बिनु दीनु अति पति पतिनी बिनु मन्द ।⁴⁸

चन्द बिना ज्यौ चांदनी ज्यौ बिनु जामिनी चन्द ।

The wife is most wretched without her husband and
husband without wife is like the light without moon
and moon without night.

A woman had to secure all enjoyments and pleasures to
her husband and his family. The woman who failed in
performing these functions or the one who quarrelled over
certain issues, her loyalty towards her husband was doubted
and she was treated as a bad woman*:

46. Ramcharitmanas, (Aranyakand) 4/8

47. Som Nath Granthavali, P -- 232

48. Keshav Granthavali, 2 - 295 -- 10

Similar description is available in Jayasi's Padmawat
which suggest a woman never to loose her temper which
might casue something wrong to the husband.

तू रिसी भरी न देखसि आगू । रिसि महं काकर भएड सोहागू ।
Nagmati Suakhand -- 73, 3

रारि करै मनहारि बिसारि परै कुल गारि, कुनारि कहावे । 49

Woman who forgets elegance and quarrels brings abuses for her Kul and it called bad woman.

Woman are catagorised differently on the basis of their characters, which in turn were evaluated from their attitude and behaviour towards her husband and his family. An ideal woman was never to waver from her destined and assigned position of loyalty; she was never to find faults with her husband. She had to serve with devotion and dilligence even her wicked husband who caused grievous sufferings to her. Such a woman was the ideal woman, to be accorded a high place in the society :

पति अनहित हू करै तो तिय जू करै हित भूति । 50
सो उर आनो उत्तमा सकल सुखन सौं पूरि ।

A woman, who does good for her husband even if the husband is inimical, is the best one and gets all the comforts of life.

We find similar assessments of woman's personality in Bhikharidas, Padmakar, Mati Ram and Kriparam's poetry⁵¹. The ideal woman was to stick steadfast to servitude towards her husband even if she knew that he had extra-marital relations with other woman. It must have, of course,

49. Dev Granthavali, P - 135

50. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 105

51. Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse - 271,

Bhikari Das Granthavali, Ras Saransh 149 - 54

Mati Ram Granthavali - 228

required great patience and tolerance on part of the woman. In this way, such woman used to avoid conflicts and tensions in the family and maintained family's prestige and integrity. It is, perhaps, for this reason the society considered her to be the best and perhaps most venerated. In this hierarchy of status, next place was assigned to those women who responded in the same manner as the husband treated them. The attitude of reciprocity installed such women in the category of the middle ranged (*madhyama*) women :

हित अनहित जो करे तिय पति की रीत समान 52
ताहि मध्यमा नारि कहि बरनत निपट सुजान

A woman, who does good or bad according to the husband's conduct, is called *madhyama* by the wise people.

A very low place was accorded to a woman who was selfish, self-willed and unchaste. The woman who was indifferent to her sincere and loving husband and refused to serve him was believed to be the lowliest among women :

करे प्रीत अति पिय तऊ, तिय न करे हित रंच । 53
तासौ अधमा नायिका कहत कबिन के पंच ।

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52. Som Nath Granthavali, P-105 and also Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse - 274, Bhikari Das Granthavali, Ras saransh, Verse - 150, Mati Ram Granthavali Raj Raj, Verse - 229.
53. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 106, Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse-278 Bhikari Das Granthavali, Verse-153, Mati Ram Granthavali, Verse - 230

A woman who does not think of the well-being of her husband even if the husband loves her too much is called **adhama** by the council of poets.

Conjugal fidelity being a major manifestation of **pativrata**, determined the position of woman in society. Clearly the woman who indulged in extra-marital relations was a **kulata** :

पुरुष अनेकलु सो जो तिय राखति रति की चाह । 54
कुलटा ताहि बखा नहीं जे कबीन के नाह ।

A woman who wishes to cohabit with many men, is called **kulata** by the leaders of the poets.

Such a woman was seen with contempt and disgust and had to face indignity in the society. She was blamed and criticised for polluting the social environment :

लोकहु लाज लुटाई सकेनि के दौरि ढिठाई में पांच धन्यो हैं । 55
बाट का कोऊ लोग बचै सिगरो इनि गांव खराब करयो है ।

She has given up the social decorum, ran after making love and is becoming progressively independent; none on the passage has been left, she has spoiled the whole village.

And obviously the place for a woman who cohabits with many was hell in the life thereafter :

54. Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse - 108 and also see Som Nath Granthavali, P-180, Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 251, Mati Ram Granthavali, Rasraj, Verse - 79, Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 144.
55. Som Nath Granthavali, P-108

जन जन को रति सुख दिए नरक तिया को होय ।⁵⁶

A woman, who gave carnal pleasures to many people, goes to hell.

It is interesting to note here that the polygamous society which allowed men to express their insatiable sex appetite, sleeping even with a prostitute, regulated the life of its female members so religiously. It must however be noted that certainly the Reeti-poets set rules of decent living even for men.

In principle, love and sex relations were permitted only after marriage. Adultery in all cases was considered immoral, perverse and abhorrent. The husband too was to love only his wife and to even think of any other woman :

निज पतिनी सों प्रीत अति तन मन वचन बनाइ ।⁵⁷

पर तिय ओर न हेरिबो यह अनुकूल सुभाय ।

A man should love his wife by his body, heart and vows. The conformist husband does not look out.

He had to protect his wife and extend his support to her. He was allowed to have many wives but negligence in his duties and responsibilities towards his wife or wives was taken as deceitful conduct and his insincerity was looked upon with contempt. None the less, extra marital relations

56. Kriparam Granthavali, P - 146

57. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 113 and also
Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, P - 143.

among men were not uncommon and were acceded to unabashedly.

Such relations were in many cases, not kept secret even from the wives and the family :

छला परोसिनी हाथ तै, छलु करि लिया पिछानि । 58
पिपहि दिखायौ लखि बिलखि, रिस-सूचक मुसकानि ।

She recognised the ring in her neighbour's hand; showed it to her husband displeasingly and gave an envious smile.

In Mati Ram, Rasleen and Kriparam's poetry we come across details of instances of male adultery to the obvious torture of the unfortunate wives, the husbands have been depicted joining the family having spent the nights outside. However the conflict over such matters never assumed a critical form causing a separation between the wife and husband. There were woman who were offended by the conduct of their husband and the marks of unfaithfulness on their person, outraged them. In such cases the conflict was concluded by upbraiding the man with bitter words of biting sarcasm.

There was thus a wide gap between the preached principle and the actual practice. The details in our poetry here are perhaps hardly different from the ones available elsewhere even presumably, from the other period but what seems to be a striking feature of the Reeti-poetry is that herein are available also the portrayals of female

adultery in a manner which suggests a kind of expression of protest over the generally accepted and rampant matrimonial licentiousness :

अब का समझावती को समझै बदनामी के बीजन बोइ चुकी री 59
इतनोहुँ विचार करौ तो सखी यह लाज की साज तो घोर चुकी री
कबि ठाकुर नाम न या सबको करि प्रीति पतिव्रत खोइ चुकी री ।
नेकी बदी जो लिखी हुती भाल में होनी हुती सो होइ चुकी रही ।

What can you advise now I have sown the seeds of disrepute, think of it that I have washed away the shame; Thakur says that she has lost her pativrata by making love with a paramour; fame or disrepute whatever is destined for me that I have met with.

As the inevitable had happened the voiceless woman feared the members of her family. For, she was seen with disgust not only by the members of her family but also by the neighbours:

देवर की त्रासनि कलेवर कंपत है, न सास उसुआसिन उसास लै सकति हौं ।⁶⁰
बाहिर के घर के परोस नर नारिन के नैनन में कांटे सी सदा ही असकति हौं ।

Due to brother-in-law's fear my body trembles; the mother-in-law is fault finding so I can't even breathe; I always cower in the eyes of the people inside and outside the family.

Reprehension of these relations was not possible either due to the loss of family's honour in the society or due to the fear of dissolution of the family's integrity hence an attempt was always made to keep these affairs

59. Thakur Granthavali, p-89.

60. BhikhariDas Granthavali, Ras Saranh, Verse -- 94.

secret and not to disclose them in the society. Ironically the woman with all her deprivations, was to shoulder the burdan of keeping the social norms in order.

But the society's attitude towards women was discriminatory. The words chastity, loyalty, fidelity, adultery and family honour all carried different meanings in different contexts. They signified simply a power relation in favour of the male members of the society. The Reeti-poets otherwise "Vulgar"and uninhibited depictions of the female adultery thus also acquire a new meaning. The one sided devotion which to some extent was a form of slavery was not to be appreciated. Even as we accept woman in this position, there is atleast, a voice of protest against the socially legitimized patterns of cruelty. Woman violated the norms in sheer disgust. We do not find a single reference when a woman offender is shown by our poets having been treated harshly, for her perceived moral lapse. Never was she told to leave her matrimonial house against the charges of unchastity. It could be presumed that our poets tried to represent and react to cases of such offence sensitively with a covert message for appreciation of not only the events of offence but also of their reasons and context.

The Reeti-poets had the advantage of writing late in pre-modern time. If they inherited the ideas of Tulsi, they

also imbibed the teachings of many earlier radical masters. Surdasa assigned woman an equal status during medieval Bhakti Phase by giving them considerable freedom of movement. They were hardly deterred by their husbands or parents from meeting Krishna on the bank of river, even at night.⁶¹ Constituting to the economic life of the society by milking the cows, churning the curd, selling milk and butter in the streets, maintaining household affairs, they dominated the social and cultural life of the community.

Meerabai, too, protested over the status accorded to woman by breaking away from the family and the community. Her indifference to her husband and passion for Krishna was in a measure, the situation of adultery.⁶² In this way ignoring the claims of husband and the rejection of the family honour represented the rejection of the entire social order.

These individual expressions, however, cannot be taken to represent the society as a whole. But Reeti-poetry, in a measure, also represented a kind of protest & dissent.

61. Sursagara, Verse - 1798

सरद सुहाई आई रति-----ससि गोभंडित जमुना कूल ।
राधा खन बजायौ बेनु, सुनि सुनि धुनि गोपिनी उपज्यौ मैनु ।

62. Bhakt Mira, P-73

मैं गिरधर आगे नाचूँगी, नाच नाच प्रिय रसिक रिझाऊ, प्रेमी जन को जाँचूँगी ।
लोक लाज कुल की मरजादा ये मैं एक न राखूँगी ।

That the Reeti-poetry was not so totally devoid of idealism and philosophy is illustrated from the verses on the widow and widowhood. Widows have customarily been made dependent on the family by not permitting them the right of re-marrigage. Widowhood, during Reeti period, was atonement through personal austerity, piety and penance. She was expected to refrain from sensual pleasures as the companion of enjoyment had departed:

ओप भरी निज रूप छवि देखत दरपन मांह । 63
रोइ नाह को काम के हाथ गंवाई बाह ।

Seeing her beauty in the mirror, She wept for her husband.....

But we don't come across any verse referring to Sati or self-immolation by a woman after her husband's death. On the contrary the poets asked a meaningful question as to why a widow should discard her beautiful dresses and ornaments :

काह भयौ नथ लौ तजे सब सिंगार जो बाम । 64
तुव तन तजहिं न नेकहु मन हरिबे कौ काम ।

What happened if the woman renounced all the ornaments and cosmetics; her body has not yet exhasusted its ability to fascinate the men.

63. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 232

64. Ibid, Verse - 233.

It is thus being suggested that even if a widow renounced all the things that added to her beauty, it was in no way an expression of the austerity and penance. Therefore, she could be permitted to live like ordinary human beings.

WOMEN AND ECONOMY

Women had been playing a significant role in the household lineage. Their sphere has generally been defined in terms of domestic duties including child-bearing and child-rearing capacities. The advocates of women consider women's role in child-care and management of household affairs, as a threat to the higher personal development and independence of women. So far as we have been discussing woman's association with the domestic world acquired through marriage bond. Let us now analyse her role in public life and economy, if any.

It emerges that the peasant women and women of lower sections of the community contributed significantly to the economic activities of the society. The women were present in the fields; She worked at the time of harvesting:

साईं । सिर कच सेत लौं बीत्यों चुनति कपासु ।⁶⁵

The time passed quickly while plucking the cotton seeds.

65. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse-138 & 135. Also, Mati Ram Granthavali; RasRaj, Verse-67, 327. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 285.

ज्यौं कर त्यों चिकुटी चलत ज्यौं चिकुटी त्यों नारि । 66

As the hand moves so the spinning wheel; as the wheel moves so the neck.

The exact nature of this work must have varied from family to family but the social and economic value of her work must be recognized. Through their activities she made a significant contribution to the household income indirectly in terms of her unpaid labour and also directly through the money she earned in market. Our poetry abounds with the examples wherein women are involved in small scale market production and family occupation. The gold smith, kahar, grocer, washerman, dyer, rope-dancers and betel leaf sellers were helped by the female members of their families in their respective occupations. The wives of tailors, confectioners inn-keepers, gardeners and iron-smiths had their share in the trades of their husbands. They were seen even selling liquor in the market.

The Women, thus, contributed substantially to the economy. The nature and volume of the occupation and also their domestic duties must have been the determinants of the extent of her contribution. Their beauty, gestures and

66. Bhikhari-Ratnakar, Verse-647

67. Bhikari Das Granthavali, Ras Saransh, p-30 to 33.

Dev, Granthavali, p-92 to 99.

postures even as we take them as poetic exaggerations must have acted as advertising agents of their trade in a great measure, Still, women came to be identified in subordination of men like sunarin, the wife of a goldsmith or julahin, the wife of a weaver. The labour of these women went unnoticed, perhaps they were thought of utilising their leisure time in profitable way.

Whether the integration of these invisible workers in the productive relations and combination of their role as housewives and workers was, in reality an exploitation of women is a question which needs a careful analysis. Did they receive any benefits for their labour in the form of status power or prestige ?

The contemporary accounts of social history reveal a clear division of private and public life of women; between the space for men and space for women and also between the inner and outer apartments. This type of segregation of women was made possible by the institution of pardah popularly applied to veil. In medieval period various factors were responsible for the development of pardah as an institution. The seclusion however concerned the women of higher section of society.⁶⁸ When we discuss the peasant

68. Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan, K.M.

Ashraf , p- 171 to 175.

women and the women of common people or even lower sections, pardah or ghoonghat did not imply seclusion. The custom of ghoonghat has been described at great length by Reeti-poets⁶⁹ who were mostly referring to the common public. It appears that ghoonghat for an ordinary woman, was a means to mark respect for their elders and it did not imply seclusion. The woman communicated freely with man and enjoyed his company even in ghoongat :

पीठि दिए ही नैकु मुरि कर घूँघट पटु टारि ।⁷⁰
भरि गुलाल की मूठि सौँ गई मूठि सी भरि ।

A little he turned towards her, removed her veil and placed gulal on her face.

The meetings and exchange of dialogue near the bathing places like rivers & ponds, in the gardens and on the ways suggest that our women, unlike that of the higher sections, was not living in seclusion. It may be because the pardah was not possible in the living conditions and due to the size of the house of an ordinary man.

The figure of virahini and virah (separation) as a stali of mind was the dominating theme of Reeti poets. The basis of the virah was the absence or forgetfulness of the

69. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse-198,350,424.

Somnath Granthavali, p-183,227.

70. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse-350, also verse-424,16,12 and also Somnath Granthavali, p-183 and 210.

lover/husband or the departure of the husband for a distant place called bidesh or pardes. The descriptions of long separation between the husband and wife could be taken as the embodiment of an exquisite sufferings. Men were often in pardes even though the exact meaning of pardes is difficult to be discerned from the available descriptions. It is not clear whether term pardes was used for another village, town or a province or region but it is sure that departure for pardes implied a prolonged absence of the men from their families, Padmakar at one place identifies bidesh a place at distance of hundred days journey (सौ दिन का मारग -----)⁷¹ which implies that men had to stay, sometimes, for many months, away from their families. Mati Ram has also mentioned about their stay in Bidesh for many days.⁷² The reasons as to why people took pains of long journey and separations are not given. The only purpose of the visits to distant places seems to be earning a reasonably good livelihood :

वह प्यारो परदेसनि ते -----फेरि कब आवैगो सखी री धन लावौगो⁷³

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71. Padmakar Granthavali; Jagat Vinod, Verse - 252.
72. Mati Ram Granthavali, Verse - 226 and also 341
73. Som Nath Granthavali. p-101

The beginning of women's sufferings was marked by the intimation of their husband's departure :

गवन समै पिय के कहति यौ नैननि सौ तीय ।⁷⁴
रोवन के दिन बहुत है निरसि लेऊ खिनि पीय ।

The woman says by the expression of her eyes to the husband who is leaving that she has to cry from many days so you keep your depressed beloved in your eyes.

Postal communication was the only contact between the husband and wife and the subject matter of the letters written to each other always reflected the lack or inability of woman to overcome her separation from her husband :

पाती काती विरह की छाती रही लगाई ।⁷⁵

She embraced the letter of separation.

The woman became an agent of passion and always yearning for consummation. The loneliness at nights was intolerable. The was SomNath has presented the agony of the wife due to prolonged separation from her husband shows the extreme need of reorganising the family life in such a manner as not to cause undue inconvenience to any member.

74. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse-438.

75. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse- 164

The conjugal relations suffered the most and in some cases the need forced the woman to resort to certain means to overcome their sufferings :

करिए दुरि के उपचार कछु तब आप के सासु रिसाई तहीं ।⁷⁶

नाथ कहे सु इंकत में जाच सरोज के पात लगावे सरीरहि ।

If she resorts to some measure secretly the mother-in-law gets angry; she goes in a lonely place and touches her body by the leaves of lotus.

In many cases the women full of indispensable sexual desire and tormented by longing, used to find an alternative by associating herself with some relation-a paramour⁷⁷ Their sufferings were aggravated by the fear of her husband's indulgence with some other woman in bidesh.⁷⁸ Delay in receiving a letter from husband, generally led to suspicions and they lived in a state of confusion and tension till their husbands returned. The arrival of her husband was the occasion of extreme pleasure. Even though the sufferings of women due to long separation have been discussed in great details, nowhere we find any solution to the problem. Accompanying their husbands on the trips to pardesh

76. SomNath Granthavali, p- 99-100

77. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse - 617

78. Kriparan Granthavali, Verse-390

could be the probable solution but it was not put forth by anyone. It may be, simply, because the woman was placed in such a significant position in the joint family system that she could not be removed from their ^{place} _^ even on temporary basis. Her absence from the family coul affect the integrity and solidarity of the family. Such was the responsibility of the woman in the family in medieval social set up.

Chapter-II

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND SOCIAL VALUES

Religion and the value system were another important dimension of the late medieval life and culture on which our poetry furnishes fairly rich details. Clearly here too, our poets do not describe these details in the manner of a chronicler or a social historians straightway. We have asked first a few relevant questions and while reading their poetry we have realized that they provide enough material to help us reconstruct not only the popular beliefs and religious practices, but also the evidence of how the high religious philosophy percolated down to the level of the commoners. We will notice below the available information on faith, modes and aim of worship, the numerous religious cults, deities and rituals; the religious notions of the reality and illusion, the place of man in relation to divinity, the concepts of the polluted this worldliness and the beyond, and finally the Reeti pragmatic approach to the dominant social values.

POPULAR RELIGION AND RITUALS

During the fifteenth century, religion branched off mainly in two forms; Nirgunvada laying greater emphasis on the concept of absolute god and Sagunvada emphasizing the idea of humanized godhood. The Nirgun cult denounced ritualistic idol worship and propagated universal and common values, moral and ethical concepts. It witnessed and also

responded to those belonging to the lower strata of the society who have a desire for comprehending the fundamentals of faith. It openly challenged ritualism and caste discrimination^{and} represented a distinct departure from the conservative outlook of the past and marked religious fermentation and re-orientation.

Sagunvada also was propagated with individual ardour both by philosophers and poets. It stressed pomp of rituals and certain dogmas pertaining to religion. It was further divided into Rambhakti cult and Krishnabhakti cult. Rama was characterised as an incarnation of god and came to be treated as a perfect human being. He was a symbol of virtue and had a stern code of moral conduct and strict ethical standards. Krishna, on the other hand, was an ideal object of love due to affulgent beauty and charming grace. The relationship between him and his devotees was that of love. Sagunvada had borrowed many facets of the pauranic age and thus sustained the tradition. However, with the addition of progressive elements by inclusion of the concept of love, Saguna Bhakti continued to attract the popular mind. Religion, in both its Saguna and Nirguna form, was not confined to religious elite s alone but acquired popular form of faith and worship.

It has been suggested that Nirgunvada received distinct setback in the sixteenth century, though Kabirpanthis and Nanakpanthis continued. This, however, is to be accepted with some qualifications. The traditions of Nirgun Bhakti continued through our period. Reeti-poet Dev, like Kabir, condemned religious rituals. He writes that none could become the supreme by performing penance nor could one thus, conquer death :

को तप के सुराज भयो, जमराज के बन्धन कौन खोलायौ ।¹

Who became the Supreme by performing penance; who could conquer the death ?

To him, titanics, piligrimage, fast and vows seem hollow and ostentatious. All these rites and rituals are illusory if one's heart is not pure :

तीरथ खेत निकेत कहावे, 2
पूजन जाजन औ तप दान, अन्हान परिक्रम गान गनावौ ।
और किते ब्रत नेम उपास आरंभु के देव को दंभु दिखावे ।

हैं सिगरे परपंच के नाच जु पै मन में सुचि साँच न आवै ।³

The piligrimage is the fields and the house; worship sacrifice, penance donation, holy bath,

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1. Dev Ratnavali, p - 28.
 2. Ibid, p - 59.
 3. Ibid

circumambulation and singing songs; and starting so many vows and fasts is to show the hypocrisy to god. All these are different forms of ostentation if the heart is not pure and truthful.

He even expressed indignance towards the recitation of vedas and puranas for such ritualistic practices, according to him, were only a means of deceiving people if not accompanied by a sincere concern for truth:

गूढ ही बेद पुराननि बाँचि, लबारिन लोग भले चुरकायो ।⁴

Reading obscure vedas and puranas, ~~lears~~ deceiver people we find a reflection of nirgun bhakti in the versed of Mati Ram also :

बिषयानि तै निर्बेदबर, ग्यान, जोग, ब्रत, नेभ ।⁵
बिफल जानियो ये बिना प्रभु पग पंकज प्रेम ।

Indifference to worldly comforts, knowledge, penance, fasts and vows are futile without a true devotion to god.

To Bihari, telling the beads of a rosary and applying tilak on the forehead does not help :

जपमाला छापे तिलक सरै न एको काम ।⁶

4. Ibid, p - 28.

5. MatiRam Granthavali, RasRaj, Verse - 410.

6. Bikhari Ratnakar, Verse - 141

Dev saw god pervading everywhere and in everything and union with god was to be secured not by ritualistic worship but through meditation, contemplation and experience :

आप ही अपार पारावार प्रभु पूरि रह्यो ।⁷
पाइये प्रगट परमेशुर प्रतीति में ।

Omnipotence of the god according to nirgun version is also highlighted in the following verse :

मैं समुझायौ निरधार यह जग कांचौ कांच सा ।⁸
एकै रूप अपार प्रतिबिंबित लखियतु जहाँ ।

I have accurately understood that this world is like crude glass - it reflects the same figure wherever I look.

The nirgun cult thus still pointed to a straight path for acquiring spiritual bliss by the combination of reason and faith.

However, together with the nirgunwada the period also witnessed the diverse aspects of the sagunwad in full bloom. Our poets worshipping Krishna as a personal god borrowed the idea of the mode of devotion from Surdasa. They composed two kinds of verses : while some are full of prayful devotion,

7. Dev Ratnavali, p-98

8. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse -- 181

others overflow with sweet love and joyous feelings. The core of Vinay Bhakti based on a sense of utter humility, is the feeling of surville submission to the god :

कीने हूँ कोरि क जतन अब कहि काढ़े कौन ।⁹
मो तन मोहन रूप मिलि पानी में कौ लौनु ।

Who can now take it out even by crore attempts because my body has immersed into Krishna as salt is dissolved into water.

The sagun cult also, did not necessarily represent simple ritualistic devotion. Total absorption of the devotee's heart in god Krishna is a significant feature of bhakti. The devotees pray to god to seek blessings for themselves as they have taken refuge in him.

हरि कीजति बिनती यहै तुम सौ बार हजार ।¹⁰
जिहिं तिहिं भाति डरयो रहयो परयो रहौ दरबार ।

The devotee requested Hari several times to let him remain in his court in all the circumstances because he had been feeling scared for various reasons.

The devotee does not feel shy in telling the god that he is head over heels in sin and it is upto him to salvage him ;

9. Bhiari Ratnakar, Verse - 18

10. Ibid, verse - 241

कौन भाँति रहिहै बिरदु अब देखिहीं मुरारि । ११
बीघे मोसौ आइके गीघे गीघहि तारि ।

Oh God ! it is to be seen how you would rescue me. I am more sinful than the eagle whom you have delivered.

In Krishnaite cult devotion grounded in love had acquired a considerable status among the different modes of devotion. Reeti poetry is full of love pranks of Krishna-Radha and reflect to a great extent the passion other women also had for Krishna. It is interesting to note that the love relations were ~~not~~^{not} described as being superseñsuous but they sprang from the captivation beauty and his amorous bearing :

ए दई कछु ब्यौत जु देखें अदेखिन के दृग दागै । १२
जानै निसंक है मोहन को भरिये निज अंक कलंक न लागै ।

Oh God! do something so that people can not see her and she can embrace Krishna without any fear of being disgraced.

The common women's infatuation for Lord Krishna's beauty, their longing for a glimpse of him and restiveness in separation as it has been described, represent popular

11. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse - 31

12. Padmakar Granthavali. p-

devotion. It appears, sometimes that Reeti poetry deviated from ecstatical writing of the love of Radha and Krishna, in which the love of the soul for god, personified in Krishna. The divinity seems to have disappeared from Krishna's personality and love relations between him and Radha or any other woman ^{have become more} sensual rather than devotional. Still, if we regard the poetry as allegory, the passionate personal devotion, bhakti or faith towards an incarnate deity in the form of Krishna leads to an absolute surrender of the self and the soul finds peace in the union with him. Through exaltation in love is caused ^{by} the intimacy of such personal relationship, the devotee attains the highest state of absorption, which is a component of devotion towards god.

Rama is another humanized god worshipped widespread through the length and breadth of the regions of our poetry. Padmakar's Prabodh-Pachasa and Kali Pachisi and many other Reeti-collections contain verses of devotion to Rama. The poets emphasize the importance of the name and form of god. The effect of reciting his name is realized every time:

कायो गमायो सु ऐसे ही जीवन 13
हाय मैं राम कौ नाम न गायो ।
राम हि राम कहै कसना रसना तू भली

I wasted the whole life and did not sing Rama's name;
Oh tongue ! you say Ram every time-----

His name becomes more significant in Kaliyug and there is no other way except singing Rama's name. It is believed that a man is responsible for his own acts and provides ample scope to the devotee to correct himself :

है थिर मन्दिर में न रहयो गिरकन्दर में न तप्यो तप जाई ।¹⁴
राज रिझाए न कै कविता रघुराज कथा न जथामति गाई ।
यौं पछितात परयो पदमाकर कासौ कहौं निज मूरखताई ।
स्वारथहू न कियो परमारथ यो ही अकारथ बैस बिताई ।

He did not go to the temple neither he observed penance Neither he sang the songs nor did he narrate Rama's story, Now he repents for his foolish acts, He did not perform bhakti and spent the whole life in vain.

In this way, a devotee relates his miseries, sorrows and lapses to his own action thinking his devotion as incomplete and imperfect :

भोग में रोग बियोग संजोग में जोग में कायकलेस कमायो ।¹⁵
त्यौं पदमाकर बेद पुरान पढ़यो पढ़िकै बहु बाद बढ़ायौ ।
दौरयो दुरास में दास भयो कहूँ बिसराम का धाम न पायो ।
कायौ गमायौ सु

He enjoyed pleasures of life thus suffered disease and tensions; studied vedas and enhanced conflicts; Ran here and there but could not find a resting place; He wasted the whole life and did not sing Rama's name.

14. Ibid, Verse 605.

15. Padamakar Granthavali, Verse - 606

There is a class of devotees and the ordinary men who adore God from motives of selfishness and expect something from God. There is some desire or the other which the devotee wants to gratify, but that only in relation to God. There is a feeling of helpless and exclusive dependence on God :

अनुदिन राम राम राम रटि लाए मोहि दीन बंधु देखत ही केति बिपदानि में ।¹⁶
मेरवे गुन ऐगुन बिचारि कत पारियत कारी छीट बिमल विपतिहारी बानि में ।

God is considered to be an Almighty power on whom one can depend. Since a man is not free from desires, bhakti is Saklam bhakti or motivated devotion.

भूख लगे तब देत है भोजन प्यास लगे तो पियावन पाने ।¹⁷
त्यों पद्माकर पीर हरै को सुबीर बड़े बिरदेत बखाने ।

Sakam bhakti was also realized by the Krishnaite cult. Krishna, The God is combination of power & compassion therefore if he is pleased the devotee gets his blessings :

थोड़े ही गुन रीझते बिसराई वह बानि ।¹⁸
तुम्हें, कान्ह मनौ भए आज काल के दानि ।

and also

कब कौ टेरतु दीन रट होत न स्याम सहाई ।¹⁹
तुम्हें लागी जगत-गुरु, जग नाइक जग बाइ ।
कोउ कोरिक संग्रहौ कोउ लाख हजार
मो सम्पति जदुपति सदा बिपति बिदाउनहार

16. Bhikari Das Granthavali, Ras Saransh, Verse-282
17. Padmakar Granthavali, Prabodh Pachara, Verse-2
18. Bihari- Ratnakar, Verses 71 and 81

The God to make his path smooth by removing the sufferings and obstacles that come in his life.

Among other incarnated deities being worshipped by the people is Ganesh meaning the lord of Ganas or inferior deities. He is the God of wisdom and remover of obstacles hence he is invariably propitiated at the beginning of any important undertaking and is invoked at the commencement of books. In Reeti poetry we have number of instances where poets have dedicated the very first verse of their book to Ganesha's praise or at least they began with श्री गणेशाय नमः . He is represented as a short fat man with a protuberant belly and elephant -faced :

झमकतु बदन मतंग कुंभ उन्नंग अंग बर ।²⁰
बदन बलित भुंसुड कुंडलित सुडि सिद्धिदर ।

Devi or Goddess has been mentioned in the poetry under a variety of names with several of her peculiar characteristics:

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- * Mirza Abdurrahaman Premi Krit Nakh Shikha led, Iqbal Ahmed Hindustani Pracha Sabha, Bombay, 1972, Verse - 1
Somnath Granthavali p- 217, 835
Kriparam Granthavali p-318
20. Pardmakar Granthavali- Ganga behari Verse No. 56

सिंह वाहिनी सिद्धि चारि भुज आयुध मंडिनि । 21
जोगिनी मंडल संग चंड दानव दल खंडिनी ।
बहु बुद्धि वृद्धि बर दायनी मोहन सुर नर मुनि मननि ।
दूजै सहाय ससिनाथ कौ जय श्री सिंधुर मुख जननी ।

Riding on a tiger, perfect, four-armed, equipped with arms; attended by female ascetic friends she is the destroyer of demon Chand and his group, She increases the intelligence and blesses, she attracts the hearts of gods, human beings and ascetics; the creator of river Sindhu is the helper of Shashinath, the poet.

Reeti poetry refers to a great variety of names referring to her various forms, attributes and actions but these words are not generally, used accurately and distinctively and the word devi becomes a synonym of all. Her character is mild as well as fierce. She is known as Gauri, Parvati, Bhavani or Durga, Chandi and so on. Chandi indicates the victory of the goddess over asuras :

तू ही शुम्भ निशुम्भ को दंड देनी, महिषासुरे मर्दिनी देवी चंडी ।²²

You, only , have punished Shumbha and Nishumbha and killed Mahishasur , Oh! Goddess Chandi.
She removes all the miseries and poverty and makes people happy and affluent :

तू ही दुख दारिद्र की हारिनी है तू ही सुख सम्पति की कारिनी है ।²³

21. SomNath Granthavali, P-2

22. Ibid p-516

23. Ibid p-517

Padmakar Ganga Lahari poem contains verses on sacred river Ganges. It is believed to have been brought down from heaven by the prayers of Saint Bhagirath.

भूषित भगीरथ के रथ की सुपुन्य पथ ।²⁴
जन्हू तप जोग फल की फहर है ।

It followed the pious path of Bhagirath's chariot; it is the result of his penance and yoga.

Therefore it is called Bhagirathi.

It is represented to flow from the toe of Vishnu :

हरिपद पंकज प्रताप की नहर है ।²⁵

When it was being brought down to earth God Shiva in order to save the earth from the shock of her fall caught the river on his brow (बैठी सीस नंगा के) and then it descended from his brow into several streams .

जो न गंगाधार है हजार धार मिलती ²⁶

The wisdom of Ganges allowed sage Janhu* to perform the sacrificial rites; its descent did not disturb the saint :

भूपति भगीरथ के जस की जलूस कैधों प्रगटी तपस्या पूरी कैधी जन्हू जन की ²⁷

Personified as goddess, it is thought of being the most sacred thus propitiated by people.

24. Padmakar Ganga Lahari - Verse - 12

25. Ibid

26. Ibid Verse - 11

27. Ibid Verse - 25

* John Dowson ,p- 133

These factors, she is worshipped and her supremacy of divinity is asserted.*

Reference has been made to God Hari in the literature. It denotes a name which commonly designates Vishnu in universal form, and hence is also used for other gods whom we have been identifying as incarnated deities. He is presented as the creator of this world:

जगत् जनायौ जिहिं सकलु सो हरि जान्यौ नाहि 28

It is difficult to understand Hari who has created the whole world.

Narhari is another name of the universal god :

जमकारि मुँह तरहरि परयौ इहिं धरहरि चित्त लाऊँ । 29

विषय - तृषा परिहरि अजौ नरहरि के गुण गाऊँ ।

I am lying under the legs of death-elephant so renouncing all the desires I wish to praise God Narhari.

It is, thus, clear that Sagun Bhakti included so many gods like Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Ganga and many other goddesses. The modes of devotion, too, were not very strict and rigid and in some places, they are relaxed to an extent of simply reciting the name of god.

For detailed description of God Siva, refer to 'Mahadevji Ka Byahulau' in Som Nath Granthavali, Part-I, for above description - Som Nath Granthavali, P-321, 508-12, 613, 636, and Kriparam Granthavali, last verse. Padmakar Granthavali, Ganga Lahari - Verse - 17 and 48

28. Bihari - Ratnakar, Verse - 41

29. Ibid, Verse - 21

That the common people laid great emphasis on rituals comes out vividly in our poetry. We do not have strong evidence to determine the exact mode and extent of rituals connected with religion, people observed them for different purposes. People visited the holy places for pilgrimage :

सौपानि सदन तीस्थ करन, अहिल चले पति साथ । 30

Entrusting the house (to someone) she went for pilgrimage with her husband.

Taking bath in ^{the} Holy river was considered to be essential as per the scriptures. Taking food without bathing in ^{the} Ganges was taken to be against the laws of scriptures. Somnath comments ironically on the issue :

करि भोजन आनन्द सौ द्विज न्हाए पुनि गंग (शास्त्र विरुद्ध) 31

After taking the bath, the brahman took bath in the Ganges. (against the scripture)

In a number of verses, these are glimpses of the customs prevalent among woman. We know they ^{worshipped} Gauri for the fulfilment of their vows and desires :

हे यह भावती आजु कौ नेगु अकेलियै पूजियै गोरी की मूरति । 32

(It is the tradition for the day that you worship Gauri for the fulfilment of your wishes.

30. Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 149

31. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 168

32. Ibid -

Woman used to observe fasts on Ganesh-Chaturthi day and used to take food after offering water to the Moon :

दियौ अरघु नीचै चलौ संकट - भानु जाइ ।³³

We have offered water to the moon so come down and take food.

Goddess Parvati and Ganesha were worshipped ceremoniously on the occasion of Gangaur :

घौस गनगौर के गिरिजा - गुसाइन की 34

Begging is, however, seen as something, below the dignity of man. Social charity as a religious act ensured that the donor will not have to beg in his next birth :

घर - घर जाचक भीख हित कर ओड़त कुछ देई ।³⁵
यों धनिकन को बोध ही न दिए कौ फल येहि ।

The beggar goes door to door and begs with folded hands; he gives a message to the rich that it is the result of donating nothing.

Som Nath composed a long poem, titled ''Sangram Darpan'', giving the details of astrological practices. Before the commencement of any auspicious operation, one was to pray Gauri Shankar :

33. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse -

34. Padmakar Granthavali, Prakeernak, Verse - 81, 82

35. Ibid, Padmabharan, Verse - 92

शुभ कारज को महा-महा शुभ यह जीव स्वर जानि ।³⁶
गौरि शंकर को कथन सब सांचौ पहिचानि ।

In the beginning of an auspicious work, human being should consider reciting Gauri-Shankar's name as auspicious and truthful.

Troubles forecast on the basis of the astrological observations could be avoided by taking certain remedial measures prescribed by the astrologers:

अथ प्रहार निषारिणार्थं गूढ जोग कथनम् ।³⁷

I suggest the method to prevent an attack.

The poet reflects the widely held belief in the significance of planets and their impact on everyday routine. He believed that this was how one could ensure comfort and avoid hardships.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

The Reeti poetry, being largely popular in character, records generally the popular beliefs and religious practices, including many rituals in vogue among the subalterns. But the Reeti poets were not totally unaware of the high flown dimensions of the Hindu way of life. A number of Reeti compositions echoed Shankara's highly sophisticated and abstract delineations of Hindu philosophy.

36. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 847

37. Ibid, P - 53

An illustration of this, for instance, we find in Jaswant Singh's poetry. Beginning with Shankara's reasoning, Jaswant Singh writes that Brahman created this world and the individual soul, in its atomic size constitutes a part of Brahman :

बिस्व कौ कारन बिस्व कौ पोषक बिस्व रूप वहै जु कहवै ।³⁸

Brahman is the creator of this world and he only operates it.

The world is illusory and illusion has different forms, namely, water, fire, earth, air and sky. All these components are mixed together to produce the human body :

अब याकी उत्पत्ति कौ तौसों कहत बिचारि स्थूल देह उत्पत्ति ।³⁹

Therefore, the only truth is jeeva that is soul, which is a fragment of Brahman :

बिस्व रूप ए सकल तूँ मिथ्या ही करि देखि ।⁴⁰
एक आत्मा सत्य है निह चै करि कै लेखि ।

It is ignorance or **avidya** in jeeva which makes him take this world as a real and objective entity. He is entrapped in the bondage of this world :

जिन्हें अविद्या आबरन तिन्हें होत अज्ञान 41
तातै जग कौ साँचु करि लीनौ सुख सौँ मान ।

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38. Jaswant Singh Granthavali, Anubhar Prakash, Verses -- 125 to 132.
39. Ibid, Anand Vilas, Verse - 81
40. Ibid, Verse - 53
41. Ibid, Verse - 68

M

Motivated by karma, krodha, mada and lobha (lust anger, ego and greed) man performs different acts or karmas.

Due to influence of the past, present and future karma, a man bears miseries and pleasures :

करन होइ जैसे कछु तेसोई तन होइ तैसेई सुख दुख कौ भोग करैगो सोइ । 42
करम जू तीन प्रकार के एँ तू निहचे जानि, सचित अरू प्रारब्ध है कीयमाण लौ मानि ।

It is the main issue where Shankara deviates from other philosophical doctrines that he takes karma as opposed to knowledge. As the poet writes karma is passive and ignorance acts upon it :

करमनि कौ तू जानि जइ फलदाता ए नाहि ।⁴³
निहचै तूँ ए करम सब जइ ही करिके जानि ।

Maya or illusion is responsible for obscuring the essential unity of Jeeva & Brahman and for generating a consciousness of difference :

ईश्वर हूँ सौँ भिन्न करि माया जैसे जानि । 44

When a man gets knowledge, ignorance is removed. Wisdom destroys lust, anger, ego & greed thus, the desire to do good or bad acts is also destroyed.

42. Ibid Anand Vilas, verse - 131, 132

43. Ibid, Verse - 139

44. Ibid, Verse - 154

At this stage, all actions cease and jeeva attains complete enlightenment and realises the unity of jeeva and Brahman :

ईस्वर अरू या जीव सौँ एक पनौ क्यौँ होई ... 45
ज्ञान यहै जो एकता जीव ब्रह्म की होई

Now the jeeva gets the supreme spirit, consciousness and pleasure, thus becomes liberated and attains the goodhood.

It has been suggested by the scholars that Shankaracharya's philosophy failed to convince the commoners whose spiritual yearning could obtain satisfaction only by visualising the personified deity. To them was religion a matter of faith and not of reason. This is true only to an extent : some of the poets who retold the philosophy of Shankara, certainly, belonged to the royal families. Still, we are able to trace the reflections of *adwaitvada* or non-dualism in the verses of other poets as well :

मैं समुझ्यौ निरधार यह जग काँचो काँच सा, 47
एकै रूप अपार प्रतिबिंबित लखियतु जहाँ ।

I understood the doctrine that this world is like a glass which reflects the god (Brahman) alone..

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45. Jaswant Singh Granthavali, Anand Vilas, Verse - 112, 152.
46. Tulsidasa, His Mind and Art (ed) Nagendra P - 181
47. Bihari - Ratnakar, Verse - 181

THE COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The relations among the religious communities could not be deciphered as the poetry does not reflect such theme. It is difficult to comment upon social consciousness if it had been adjustable or antagonistic. Bhushan, however, seems to be sectarian through out his poetry. It can, probably, be assumed that there had been prevailing no fanaticism forbidding inter-communal relations. Som Nath refers to the participation of the Hindus in Muslim festivals with great enthusiasm and the Muslims enjoying Hindu festivities :

कंती अवनी कौ गुनवंत गाजी आजम खां, इंद्र मान ईद कौ विलास पसरत है ।⁴⁸
सोहे आज सरस सभा दसहरा मान, आजम खं पुरहुत सो प्रबीनो है ।

Virtuous Gazi Azam Khan is the charm of the earth and the splendour of Indra can be felt on the occasion of Id. The court is decorated on the occasion of Dussehra and Azam Khan looks like a wise man there.

It is in reference to the royal community, the perception of the common mass is also reflected in the following verse:

घर - घर तुरकनि, हिंदुनि देतिं असीस सराहि ।⁴⁹
पतिनु राखि चादर, चुरी तें राखी जयसाहि ।

Not only Hindu women but the Muslims as well praise Jai Singh for protecting their chadar and bangles.

48. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 831, 832

49. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse - 712

Bhushan's poetry assesses the antagonism among the Hindus and the Muslims to a great extent. His poetry suffers from the limitations of being influenced by the political rivalry between his patron Shivaji and the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. Still it can not be discarded on these grounds. There were other poets who were being patronised by the Hindu local kings but in their poetry there is little evidence of consciousness dividing the people exclusively on religious lines. But in Bhushan's poetry, there is an awareness of religious conflict along with the political one. He shows the growth of one religious faith to have caused set back to the other :

छा गई उदासी खासी मस्जिद मकबरन, मठ मंदिर कोटि रोसनी चढ़े लगी ।⁵⁰
माथन पै फेरि लगे चंदन चमकने, फेरि सिखा सूत्रन की महिमा बढ़न लगी ।

The mosque and tombs seem dejected as temples and maths have been illuminated; sandal has again started shining on the foreheads and rituals have again begun to dominate the life.

At another place he writes :

गोरा गनपति आप औरंग का ताप देखि, आपने मुकाम सब मारि गए दबकी ।⁵¹
कासी हू की कला गई मथुरा मसीत भई, सिवाजी न होते तो सुनति होती सबकी ।

50. Bhushan Granthavali, p - 226.

51 Ibid, p - 18.

Gauri and Ganapati had taken refuge in their places due to the fear of Aurangzeb; the glamour of Kashi had vanished and Mathura had become a mosque. Had Shivaji not been there, all would have vanished.

He depicts the antagonism between the two communities and conveys a feeling that under Aurangzeb's rule, all the temples in the cities and muhallas were demolished and that all the four varnas of the Hindus gave up their religion, started reading kalima and began to offer Namaz.

खोदि डारे देवी देव सहर मुहल्ला बांके 52
चारों वर्ण धर्म छोड़ि कलमा नमाज पढ़ें

Shivaji emerges as the protector of Hinduism and he restored all the rituals of the Hindu societies :

वेद राखे विदित पुरान राखे सार युत, राम नाम राख्यौ अति रसना सुघर में । 53
हिंदुअन की चोटी रोटी राखी है सिपाहिन में, कर्धेन में जनेऊ राख्यौ माला राखी गर में ।

He has protected Vedas and all known Puranas became meaningful; Rama's name was recited by the tongues; kept lock of hair on the head and livelihood of the soldiers; the sacred thread on the shoulders and rosary in the neck has also been protected.

Even if these versions can be understood as the exaggerated accounts in praise of the patron, it expresses the atmosphere of sharp contradiction among the two communities though it might be a product of the political rivalries.

52. Ibid, Shiva Bavani, Verse - 20.

53. Ibid, Verse - 51.

THE MAN IN RELATION TO GOD ; THE WORLD AND LIFE HEREAFTER

The gods in popular perceptions, as they are represented in our poetry, were almost fully humanized. Rama and Krishna, like ordinary human beings, are depicted as performing various activities. The supreme attainment of life the realization of god who is transcendently immanent in the Universe, becomes possible in popular life as Krishna or Rama in form of human beings are felt more close than the abstract and illusive reality. Also, the incarnation of god gives a meaning to the life of people. Man is governed by divinity and he always lives in a state of uncertainty. Some aspects of life, in such circumstances, seem to be meaningful while others the meaningless. If god is conceived to be a human being though with marks of divinity, the existence of such superhuman being gives meaning to the existence of common man because his communion with God becomes certain.

Krishna as an ordinary human being wandering in streets is engaged in frolic activities. Krishna's charming grace and beauty becomes the object of love and personal devotion. Surdasa, who portrayed Krishna as human god,

adorned him as god with abiding faith. He presented him as inaffable, eternal, infinite and unparalleled in guise of Krishna.

Despite Krishna's frolic and fun, he remained an object of covetable affection, elegant and sublime. With the passing of age, during Reeti - period, the supernatural element in the poetry started diminishing and Krishna, the humanised god, became a source of erotic pleasure for love-lorn damsels. Still, even as we suppose that the quintessential meaning of the incarnated deity with its fun and frolic was apprehended by a limited number of people, common people started taking interest in God incarnated in embellished form.

But while gods are portrayed humanised, reverberating with ordinary but intense human emotions and passions, man remained essentially of this very world. Communion with divinity was his ultimate goal. He was to strive to tread the path, passing through umpteen number of stages and stations to attain the transcendental bliss only to be one with the Real. All human efforts were to converge on a point which belonged to the world hereafter. Human soul's only pleasure was in the struggle for the salvation in the life beyond.

The main objective of devotion and worship was the communion of man with god. The Reeti poets also advocated the oft-repeated spiritual, panacea, namely to attain the mukti or moksha through union with the supreme. :

मोह दीजे मोषु ज्यौं अनेक अधमनु दियो ।⁵⁴

You liberate my soul as you have liberated many other ignorant people.

The path leading towards salvation was differently explained by different poets. Padmakar suggests the need of good company, asceticism, satisfaction knowledge for liberation :

सतसंग तै बैराग है तातें मन संतोष ।⁵⁵
संतोषहि तें ज्ञान है होत ज्ञान तें मोक्ष ।

Society of pious men frees men from wordly desires which created satisfaction in their heart, Satisfaction helps in securing knowledge and knowledge leads to liberation.

Deliverance was attained after the soul realized the godhood. Unity of the soul and the supreme was the ultimate end

54. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse - 261

55. Padmakar Granthavali, Padmabharan, Verse-171.

God Shiva is commonly presented as three-eyed, holding trisula or trident, carrying a damru and riding on a bull. He bears a symbol of River Ganges and wears a necklace of skulls called mund-mala. His garment is the skin of a tiger.

He is considered to be the lord of ghosts and goblins. In this character he haunts cemeteries and place of cremation attended by troops of imps and trampling on rebellious demons. He sometimes indulges in revelry and ~~and~~ dances furiously the dance called tandava. He is also known as panchanan (the five-faced).

. He is a great ascetic, in whom is centred the highest perfection of austere penance and abstract meditation by which he attains unlimited powers : (सिधि निधि शिवमुख चंद्र लखी) . He keeps snakes around and a serpent twine hangs around his neck, his neck is blue for having swallowed the deadly poison. He is a reproductive power. He is also known as a great destructive power and when his character is intensified he becomes Bhairava, the terrible destroyer. He is lauded as the lord of songs, the lord of sacrifice, is as brilliant as the Sun and grants prosperity. As restorer he is represented by his symbol of Linga combined with female organ. Under this character he represents sakti or female energy : (अधरंग बाम) * ~~For all~~

ज्ञान यही जो एकता जीव ब्रह्म की होई ।⁵⁶

This only, is the knowledge the soul and Brahman.

This conception of the ultimate aim of devotion and faith also resounded the Sufi beliefs and practices both at high levels and among the commoners in the streets. As the Sufi emphasized the purity of heart for the purpose, to Reeti poets too it was a pre-requisite for communion with the Reality :

तौ लगु या मन-सदन में हरि आवैं किहिं बाट ।⁵⁷
बिकट जटे जौ लगु निपटु खुटे न कपटु कपाट ।

God can come in this abode of heart through which passage (?) if the strong doors of fraud are not opened.)

God has been portrayed by Reeti-Poets, as the absolute and supreme power, as the sole creator of this universe. The mysterious process of life within and without the people take place due to him. God is all knowing, he is already aware of human needs. As the superpower, he governs and interferes in human affairs and provides the initiative for any action. Man cannot receive anything because of his importunity but everything is granted through his grace. Any attempt to thrust human needs and desires upon his attention is futile since the fate of every human soul is predestined.

56. Jaswant Singh Granthavali, Anand Vilas, p-112

57. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse-361.

Realizing the opaqueness of the barrier which blocks the light from the above man's position in relation to god has been described absolutely low and inferior. The Almighty is possessing all the powers and there is always a feeling of helplessness and exclusive dependence on God in man. He is always having some desire or the other which he wants to gratify only in relation to god. God is considered to be an Almighty power on whom any human being can depend. A man in this capacity is suggested not to feel depressed under severe strains of affliction :

दीरघ साँस न लेहु दुख सुख साई न भूलि ।⁵⁸
दई दई क्युँ करतु है । दई दई सु कुबूल ।

Do not sigh in distress and do not forget the pleasures God showered upon you. Why do you shout Oh God! OH God! Whatever the God has given you accept it

The God only decides the fate of people which is inscrutable and unalterable :

जथा जोग सब मिलत है जो बिधि लिख्यौ अंकुर ।⁵⁹
खल गुर भोग गवारनी रानी पान कपूमर ।

A person gets suitably whatever the fate had decided, A poor woman eats grains and raw sugar while a queen eats betal leafs and camphor.

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58. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse - 51
59. Vrind Satsai, Verse-704.

God determines the fate of the people who are under his subjection:

कहूँ जाहूँ नाहिन मितत जो बिधि लिख्यौ लिलार ।⁶⁰

Wherever a man goes, it is not possible to remove whatever has been written on his forehead by God.

The strenuous efforts prove to be futile if god's sentiments are directed against a person :

कहा होकय उद्यम किए जो प्रभु ही प्रतिकूल ।⁶¹

What happens by making efforts if God is against.

God is combination of compassion and kindness. He provides the means to livelihood. :

भूख लगै तो देत है भोजन प्यास लगै तो पियावन पाने ।⁶²

He gives food if you are hungry, gives water if you are thirsty.

Though God is the supreme force in Universe, man has the right to question or complain his action determining the destiny of individual :

60. Vrind Satsat, Verse -- 32 and also 33, 165,305,415
Also Padmakar Granthavali Prabodh Pachas, Verse-37.

61. Ibid, Verse - 33

62. Padmakar Granthavali, Prabodh Pachasa, Verse - 2

कब कौ टेस्तु दीन रट होत न स्याम सहाइ ।⁶³
तुमहूँ लागी जगत-गुरू जग-नाइक जग-बाइ ।

Since how long I have been calling you but Krishna you donot help me; It seems the worldly-wave has also affected.

It has this status of man against the supremacy of God that man follows the path of motivated bhakti. He seeks riddance from sufferings and thus worships God. Then a stage comes when he becomes truely and selflessly devoted to him and is freed from all the desires. At this stags he wishes to get liberated from the worldly desires :

पतवारी माला पकरि और न कछु उपाव⁶⁴
तरि संसार पयोधि कौ हरि नावैं कर नाउ ।

There is no other way to cross the world like ocean except holding the name of Hari as rudder and considering him as boat.

Padmakar feels that the man is mortal and the body is perishable therefore one should always try to get salvation :

....सॉस बस बोले मल - मॉस ही को गोलो है ।⁶⁵
कहै पदमाकर विचार छन भंगुर या पानी कोसो फेंन जेसे फलक फफोला है

If breathing stops, the body remains only a ball of dirt and flesh; Padmakar says thoughtfully that body perishes within records -- it is like bubbles of water.

63. Bihari-Ratnakar, V. No. 71

64. Bihari - Ratnakar, Verse - 391

65. Padmakar Granthavali, Prabodh Pachasa, Verse - 23

The intellectual God thus combined with the personal deity, the man's fate in all the cases was, however, only to strive for transcendality. He worshipped god, sought intimacy with his personal deity with the objective of securing liberation from the worldly existence. The belief that this world is something full of miseries and despair thus gets reinforced. People who realised the reality of this world wanted to depart from here as soon as possible and they made humble prayers to god who had capacity to deliver him from the pain of living here :

जेते तुम तारे तेते नभ में न तारे हैं 66
पतित कतारे भवासिंधु से उतारे हैं ।

You have delivered as many people as there are stars in the sky; you have liberated the degraded people from the worldly ocean .

Involvement in worldly political and economic callings should only be a passing phase; an unavoidable evil; a punishment for being born here; certainly never to be pursued beyond a limit. The ultimate is not humanity but much beyond.

THE SOCIAL VALUES AND ETHICS :

While man in relation to divinity in the Reeti poetry has been portrayed as a totally helpless creature, with no

control, whatsoever, over the course of the events around, full significance has also been attached to planned manouvres and calculated devices to live with comfort and honour in this very material world. There was no pure notion of vice and virtuosity. The path that leads straight to destination should be the most preferred one for the wise pragmatism not the idealism should guide the choice of the means. The message thus is not to take the phenomenon as predestined; efforts should be made with an objective of finding out the quick and sure way to success. The principle of liberation of soul and the salvation in the life hereafter were thus not incompatible with the practical and thisworldly concern for a modest comfort and pleasure in the Reeti philosophy.

Vrind makes a fervent plea to make all the possible efforts to get the best living in this world. His treatment of virtues and wisdom seems to be considerably rational. To him any act which secures pleasure is a virtue :

गुण ही तऊ मनाइये जो जीवन सुख भौन । 67

Consider those acts as virtue which bring pleasure in life.

He is not a revolutionary to condemn the significance of

67. Vrind Satsai, Verse - 78 and see 339 also.

virtues. He accepts that a person is respected for his virtues :

मान होत है गुननि तें, गुन बिन मान न होत ।⁶⁸

Still, the notion of virtue is somewhat different. In conformity with the common beliefs pertaining to truth he presents truthfulness as a cardinal virtue. It secures public faith and confidence for a person; people do not trust a liar :

जग परतीति बढ़ाइयै रहिए सॉचे होय । झूठे नर की साँचिहू साखि न मानै कोय ।⁶⁹

Expand the public faith by being truthful. Nobody believes the liar even if he speaks the truth.

However, he does not consider it a ''sin'' to tell a lie and allows his audience to speak lies in certain circumstances (though unspecified) within a limit :

झूठहू .ऐसौ बोलिए सॉच बराबर होय ।⁷⁰

also :

झूठ बिना फीकी लगै अधिक झूठ भौन⁷¹
झूठ तितौ ही बोलिए ज्यों आटे में लौन

Life is dull without a lie and extreme falsehood brings sufferings; tell that much lie as salt is added to flour.

68. Ibid, Verse - 78

69. Ibid, Verse - 78

69. Ibid, Verse - 576

70. Ibid, 379

71. Ibid, Verse - 402

According to Tulsidas's perception, selfishness gives rise to infatuation and thus evil is born of it. Selfishness is vice and charity is virtue. Vrind does not pronounce value judgements but he seems to have legitimized a self-centred attitude :

स्वार्थ के सब ही सगे बिन स्वार्थ कोउ नहीं ।⁷²
जैसे पंछी सरस तरु निरस भए उड़ जाती ।

All relations are born of selfishness and no relation is free from self-interest; the birds leave a pond when it is dried up.

Selfishness, thus, was rather vice nor virtue but a practical and unavoidable need.

Vrind also approves of greed to a certain extent :

लालचहूँ ऐसो भलौ जासैं पूरे आस ⁷³

Only such temptations which can be fulfilled are good.

No doubt he attaches greater importance to devotion towards god and renunciation of worldly desires

हरि-रस परि हरि विषय - रस संग्रह करत अयान⁷⁴

he justifies all those act which enable one to lead a smooth and happy life. Even a good act which begets miseries and discomfiture, is advised to be disregarded :

72. Ibid, Verse - 108 and also 99, 144, 152

73. Ibid, Verse - 65

74. Ibid, Verse - 68

करिए सुख को होत दुख यह कहु कौन सयान ।⁷⁵
वा सोने को जारिए जासैं टूटे कान ।

Intelligent people do not suggest any action which causes misery in place of joy; Burn that gold which tears your ear.

He suggests people to take a thoughtful action which suits them :

जो जेहि भावे सो भली गुण को कछु न बिचारि ।⁷⁶

An act which suits a person is good without the consideration of its virtue.

He advises to tread on only those paths which ensure a comfortable livelihood. He justifies even prostitution on these grounds :

जासैं निबहे जीविका करिए सो अभ्यास ।⁷⁷
वेस्या पालै सील तौ कैसे पूरे आस ।

Follow a practice which earns livelihood; if a prostitute cares for morality, she will not be able to fulfil her needs.

He stresses the need of an action taken well in time :

दीवो अवसर को भलो जासैं सुघरे काम ।⁷⁸
खेती सूखे बरसिबो घन को कौने काम ।

A lamp lit in time mends the work; the rains that come after the crops have dried up are of no use.

75. Ibid, Verse - 36

76. Ibid, Verse - 67

77. Ibid, Verse 70

78. Ibid, Verse - 18

He seems to be extremely realistic while he speaks as an opportunist :

बनती देख बनाइये परन न दीजै खोट ।⁷⁹
जेसी चलै बयार तब तैसी दीजै ओट ।

Exploit the opportunity which comes across and do not let it go waste; extend protection according to the wind.

The efforts made after the opportunity has been missed is all waste :

ओसर बीते जतन को करिबौ नहिं अभिराम ।⁸⁰
जेसे पानी बह गए सेत बन्ध किहिं काम ।

Do not make efforts after you miss an opportunity; of what use is to construct a dam after the water has flown out.

He suggests to praise even a wicked person if it is needed :

बड़ी बड़ाई नीच कौ दीजै अपने काम ।⁸¹
खरहु को बोलत पथिक कहत विनायक नाम ।

Praise a wicked person to serve your purpose; a traveller calls a donkey Ganesha - the god.

Further, he writes :

सुंदर थान छोड़िए जाँ लौ होय न और ।⁸²
पिछलौ पाँव उठाइये देखि धरन कौ ठौर ।

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79. Ibid, Verse - 23
80. Ibid, Verse - 444
81. Ibid, Verse - 462
82. Ibid, Verse - 314

Do not leave a beautiful place till you find another one; lift your foot only when you get a place to keep it.

He realizes the need to be governed by the reason :

कारज सोई सुघरिहै जो करिए सम भाय ।⁸³
अति बरषै बिना जो करिसन कुम्भलाय ।

Reasonably executed work is performed successfully; with too much rains and without rains the crop is destroyed.

One should not depend exclusively on fate and should try to over come the difficulties with vigorous efforts :

परी बिपति तें छूटिए करिए जोर उपाय ।⁸⁴
कैसे निकसे जतन बिन परी भौर में नाव ।

Get rid of a trouble by taking strong measures; how can a boat be taken out of a whirlpool without efforts.

The poet preaches the need to be strong because weak people are generally oppressed by the strong, therefore, one should always try to gain strength :

सबै सहाय सबल के कोउ न निबल सहाय ।⁸⁵
पवन जगावत आग को दीपक देत बुझाय ।

All help the strong and no one helps the weak ; Wind blows up the fire and extinguishes the lamp.

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83. Ibid, Verse - 374
84. Ibid, Verse - 360
85. Ibid, Verse - 56

He does not, however, imply a strong and stout physique but strength and magnificance :

सबल न पुष्ट सरीर कौ सबल तेज युत होय ।⁸⁶

Short of scheming, the poet thus emerges to be a great pragmatist, with strong pleas to make all possible efforts to live a pleasant life. His advices are to exploit every opportunity, even to use the resources of the wicked. He is not a fatalist. He believes that a person should not be content with what he has secured, believing in predestined fate but should ever be ready to struggle to move up :

बहुत निबल मिलि बलि करें जु चाहे सो होय ।⁸⁷

तिनकन की रसरी करी करी निबन्धन सोम ।

Many weak people when united can do whatever they wish; the straws turned into a rope can fasten anything.

Another similar message is being conveyed elsewhere as follows :

बहुतन को न बिरोधिये निबल जानि बलवान ।⁸⁸

मिलि भाखिं जाहिं पिपीलिका नागहि नग के मान ।

A strong person should not oppose too many weak people; small red ants when united eat up an old elephant.

86. Ibid, Verse - 319

87. Ibid, Verse - 158

88. Ibid, Verse - 157

The preaching and emphasis on these values, generally, detested, at least, in principle, among the elites, by a poet who was not so high in the existing social hierarchy, possibly, hints at the aspirations of the relatively lower but rapidly upcoming social classes. The high moral values, the audience of Vrind would calculate, were simply a ploy in the hands of the established elites to maintain their uncontested hegemony in the society. The so-called ethics camouflaged this ignominious means which lay behind to keep up their otherwise immorally gained high status. The message in Vrind's poetry was, obviously, not revolutionary nor was he a radical and philosopher poet in proper sense of term. But an element of detest and indignance over the dominant value system could not be missed out. The poet warned his audience against the danger of taking the things in their absolute and unchanging meanings. He aimed at equipping them in his poetry to cope with the prevailing situation effectively. He was certainly not for throwing overboard all norms and scruples just to achieve a modest comfort in this world.

CHAPTER - III

FESTIVALS AND PASTIMES

There was a great variety of popular amusements which mitigated the monotony of life. These festive diversions included religious festivals, indoor -- outdoor games and marriage celebrations. The frolic activities of the youth can also be considered as delightful and enthusiastic source of amusement to the society. Visits to the prostitution centres for the recreative purpose, with some reservations, can also be treated as an amusement.

Among the festivals to which Reeti-poetry refers, is **Holi**. The great sport of the occasion consists in sprinkling gulal over each other :

लोग-लुगाइन होरी लगाइ, मिलामिली चारु न मेटत ही बन्यौ ।¹

People placed gulal at each other and embraced each other.

The young girls and boys engaged in this sport-with great enthusiasm got the opportunity to mix-up more freely under the pretext :

फाग के भीगे अभीरन तें गहि गोबिंद लै गई भीतर गोरी ।²
भाइ करी मन की पदमाकर ऊपर नाई अबीर की झोरी ।

The girl called Govind from among the cowherd boys and escorted him inside; she poured the packet of red powder over him and fulfilled her wishes.

1. Dev Ratnavali, P - 32

2. Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse - 464

Since celebration of this festival is described in relation to public, and also that it was played in the streets as well, it can presumably, be suggested that people of all castes and classes irrespective of their status, jointly participated in the festival celebration. It generated a feeling of merry-making in the hearts of lovers :

ठान्यो परिहास उर होरी की उमंग में 3
रंगी सब रंग में निहारी अंग अंग प्यारी मंद मुस्क्याई के रंगयौ है प्रेम रंग में

His heart was exulted on the Holi day so he decided to joke with her; she was drenched in colours and he grinned seeing her beauty.

The festival of Diwali is also mentioned as a popular festival. The feelings of joy were reflected in illumination of the houses and other places. The whole place looked like a flood of illumination :

जगर मगर दिसा दीपन सों कर रखी ।⁴

All the directions have been illuminated by the lamps

Dussehra was another festival observed by the people with great joy :

सोमनाथ बरनत दसहरा सुप्रसन्न है 5

Som Nath describes Dussehra happily

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3. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 109 - 110
 4. Ibid, P - 832
 5. Ibid.

Reference has also been made to **Rakhi** festival. Tying a thread on a man's wrist ensured protection to the female tier :

दुप्रदसुता की लाज राखी महाराज तुम, ऐसी यह राखी मैं तिहारे हाथ राखी है ।⁶

You protected Draupadi, keeping that in mind I have tied this **Rakhi** on your wrist.

Among the festivals observed by women exclusively. **Gangaur** was celebrated ceremoniously :

घौस गनगौर के सु गिरिजा गुसाइन की छाई उदैपुर में बधाई ठौर ठौर है ।⁷

On the day of Gangaur, people are praising Goddess Parvati at every place in Udaipur.

Teej festival also had its significance for women. On this day, they used to dress-up nicely by wearing new clothes and Ornaments :

तीज-परब सौतिन सजे भूषण बसन सरीर ।⁸

On the day of Teej festival, all the co-wives dressed nicely and wore Ornaments.

Among the Muslim festivals, we have information about Id celebrations by the royal people. Farrukhsiyar, while proceeding towards Agra from Patna to meet Jahandar Shah's

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6. Padmakar Granthavali, Prakeernak, Verse - 83
 7. Ibid, Verse - 81
 8. Bihari - Ratnakar, Verse - 315
 9. Jang Nama, P - 16

forces, did not forget to celebrate Id. He broke his march at Banaras for this purpose :

उत्तरि बनारस ईद करि 9

Apart from celebrating these festivals, common people enjoyed certain outdoor games. 'Hide and Seek' generally referred as Chor - Mihichani by poets was a popular game played by young boys and girls :

दोउ चोर मिहीचवी खेलत न उषात ।¹⁰

Their desire to play 'hide and seek' is never satiated.

To go on river banks and ponds for taking bath in groups was also pleasure giving :

जलबिहार पिय प्यारि को देखति क्यों न सहेलि ।¹¹
लै चुभकि तजि एक तिय करत एक सौं केलि ।

The friend saw her enjoying in water; she plunged into water and played with other woman.

Kite-flying also formed a part of amusement to the people in the society :

उड़ति गुड़ी लखि ललन की अँगना अँगना माहिं ।¹²

The lady enjoyed by seeing her son flying a kite in the Courtyard.

Gambling, too, formed a part of recreational activities :

10. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse - 530

11. Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat-Vinod, Verse - 77

12. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse - 373

खेलै मिलि जूवा पैज पूरे दाव पावहि ।¹³

Gambling was not perceived to be a wise game :

जूवा खेलै होतु है सब सुख सम्पति को नास ।¹⁴
राज-काज नल ते दूरयो पांडव कियो बनवास ।

All the pleasure and property is destroyed by gambling/Nala was deprived of his regime and Pandavs were sent for exile.

People saw the gamblers with a feeling of contempt :

चोर जुआरी सों भले याते करत न प्रीति ।¹⁵

The thieves are better than a gambler; one should not associate with gamblers.

There were, however, ethics attached to the game but its significance as a source of amusements can not be denied.

Similar to gambling was the game of **chaupar**. It was a game of chance :

ज्यौं चौपर के खेल में पाँसो पड़े सु दाव ।¹⁶

In the game of **chaupar**, dice decides the game.

Among the various acrobatic shows as described in historical writings, we have the reference only of the acrobat who climbed up a pole and performed various tricks :

भरत पेट नट निरत कै डरत न करत उपाय ।¹⁷

धरत बरत पै पाँय अरु परत बरत लपटाय ।

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13. Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat-Vinod, Verse - 319
 14. Vrind Satsai, Verse - 600
 15. Ibid, Verse - 339
 16. Ibid, 289
 17. Ibid, Verse - 289

The acrobat earns his livelihood by engaging himself in the work without fear; he keeps his foot on the pole and clings around it.

also : जैसे नट दृढ़ दृष्टि करि धरत बरत पर पाँय ।¹⁸

The acrobat, keeping his vision firm keeps his foot on the pole.

These verses signify acrobatic show as a source of amusement for the public and also as a means of livelihood to a particular section of the community. It involved risk and practice as well.

There were other amusements as taming of birds like pigeon :

ऊँचै चितै सराहियतु गिरह कबूतर लेतु ।¹⁹

He/She appreciates the pigeon who is flying and taking sommersault.

The relationship between the lovers and their playful and frolic activities can be considered as pleasure-giving in everyday life. The appreciation of a girl's beauty seured pleasure for the people :

चौसठ कला बिलासजुत बदन कलानिधि पेखि²⁰
दुतिया की देखे कला को दुति याकी देख ।

Seeing the beautiful ocean of sixty four arts (The heroine), who likes to see the moon.

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18. Ibid, Verse - 563
19. Bihari - Ratnakar, Verse - 374
20. Mati Ram Granthavali, Verse - 36

Woman also delighted in dressing up to attract the man of her choice :

साजे मोहन मोह को 21

She dressed up to attract Mohan.

The obvious place for the lovers to enjoy the company of each other were :

सूने सदन, सखी सदन, बन बाटिका समेत..... बहुत संजोग संकेत ।²²

Lonely house, friend's house, forests and gardens were the the meeting -- points.

Agricultural farms were another such sought - after resorts for the young :

खेत तिहारे धान को यौं बूझत मुस्क्याइ ।²³
यहौ हमारो पिय कहौ सघन ज्वार दरसाइ ।

Smilingly she enquired about her beloved's rice farm; and showed the dense millet farms that belonged to her.

The harvested fields thus caused agony to the daughter of a peasant and she was happy when the fields were covered with crop :

सूखी सुता पटेल की सूखी ऊखनि पेखि ।²⁴
अब फूली फूली फिरै फूलि अरहरि देखि ।

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21. Bihari-Ratnakar, Verse -- 48
22. Bhikhari Das Granthavali, Ras Saransh, Verse -- 228
23. Mati Ram Granthavali, Rasraj, verse - 327
24. Mati Ram Granthavali, Rasraj, Verse - 67

The daughter of the peasant feels displeased seeing the sugarcane ready for reap; now she is overjoyed seeing the flourishing pulses.

Among the royal and affluent communities, the sports were rather an expensive affair. Bihari refers to a game chaugan or polo which was an entertainment of the rich people. Shikar or chase was exciting and stimulating. Pratap Singh, the son of Jat-ruler Badan Singh used to go for hunting riding on a horse carrying bow and arrow :

खेलन चलत सिकार जबै परताप सिंह बर ।²⁵
चढ़ि कै तरल तुरंग बान कोदंड धारि कर ।

Unfortunately, we do not have details of the recreational activities of the higher sections of society. However, the existence of poets singers in Rana Raj Singh's court suggests that they cherished poetry, singing and dancing :

विविध वृंद वारांगना 26
मागध चारन भट्ट कवि, गायन गन गंधर्व
नट विट बटुक सुगल्ह नर, सभा संपूरि स्मृद्धि ।

There are many prostitutes; expert servants, Bhatt poets and love - song singers; the acrobat boys are there and the court is prosperous.

All these people who were patronized by the king must have provided entertainment to the king and his courtiers.

25. Som Nath Granthavali, P - 222

26. Raj Vilas, P - 44

It is important, here, to be noted the prostitutes did not entertain the rich and royal people alone but prostitution has been a recognized social evil since ancient period and the prostitutes like Vasantsena (Mrichhakatikam by Bhas) received great honour for their talents and accomplishments. It was not a matter of great disrepute for a person to visit the house of public woman for the purpose of pleasure and entertainment.

It was also a universally admitted institutions during Reeti-kal. It is unfortunately, not known whether there were particular 'licensed' places where a number of postitutes were kept. The reasons why girls were admitted to this profession and why people used to visit their places are not clearly defined. However, a prostitute was known as Ganika or Barbadhu in the society. If we restrict to literal translations of these terms, there must have been some difference in the activities of the two because ganika implies courtesan while barbadhu is a simple prostitute existing in bazars. But in Reeti poetry, such distinctions are not reflected and both the terms seem to be all the were same. Mati Ram defines ganika as :

धन दे जाके संग में रमें पुरुष सब कोई । 27
ग्रन्थ को मत देखिके गनिका जानहु सोइ ।

27. Mati Ram Granthavali - Rasraj, Verse - 94

Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse - 123

The literary works tell ganika a woman, with whom any man can cohabit paying her money.

Barbadhu has simultaneously been defined as :

प्रेम न काहूँ सो तनक, धन ही सौ अति प्रीत ।²⁸
तन मन बचन निल्लजता बार बधू की रीत ।

She does not love any one except wealth; she is shameless by her body heart & speech.

Thus **ganika&barbadhu** both entertained frolic relations with people in exchange of money and wealth.

Prostitution was an organisation where some carried on their business independently while others were kept in subordination. Those who were considered to be superior among all the prostitutes realised their position and managed their profession themselves according to their wish :

सिगरी बार बधून में प्रभुता लहै जो बाम ।²⁹
अपनी इच्छा सो रमै ताहि सुतंत्रा नाम ।

The one, who is superior most among all prostitutions meets people according to her wish, is called **Sutantra**.

The others had to work either under their mother or under some elderly person :

28. Som Nath Granthavali, P -- 80

29. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 313

बार बिलासिनी होइ जो जननी के अधीन ।³⁰
के गुरजन सासन रमै सो जननी आधीन ।

It can not be asserted from the available information if there prostitutes used to perform dances and attend the ceremonies of the royal people for the purpose of providing recreation and amusements. The only revelation is that man came to them to satisfy their carnal appetite and the prostitute earned money in return :

दे धन अति रति सुख रसिक चलयो निसा के अंत ।³¹
कह्यो लपटि उठि सेज तै कब ऐह्यौ फिरि कंत ।

The admirer enjoyed after paying and left when the night was over; she asked him when he would come again.

It also appears that apart from libidinous people those addicted to alchohal also visited the centres of prostitutions :

बार बधून के नित फिरै मदे पियन की चाह ।³²

It appears that prostitution was an insult to the honour in which the women were held by our poets. They were looked down with contempt. They earned money applying all the tricks and association with them was taken as a religious and moral offence :

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30. Resleen Granthavali, Verse - 315
31. Kirparam Granthavali, Verse - 193
32. Rasleen Granthavali, Verse - 552

कोटि कपट करे धन हरे लाज सहित कुलकर्म ।³³
याकी संगति जो करे तजे धर्म को वर्म ।

Through duplicity she earned money and gave up shame and family honour. The one who associates with her leaves the religion.

She was seen with enmity and treated as sautin of the entire woman community:

सौति भई सब नारिन की, सिगरे नर मोहि, हिये मनो पैठी ।³⁴

She became the rival of all women as she attracted all men and sat in their hearts.

It may, on these grounds, be described as deterioration and degradation of the profession in comparison to the earlier traditions of prostitution. Still, the quest for money of a prostitute can be legitimized within the circumstances of late seventeenth and eighteenth century. In the period of transition, to strengthen one's position either economically, politically or socially was necessary. A prostitute, as a fragment of the society, attached undue significance to wealth. What is more significant here is that the prostitutes, still offered carnal pleasures as a marketable commodity and they were largely utilised source of entertainment.

33. Kriparam Granthavali, Verse - 191

34. Dev Granthavali, P - 95

CHAPTER IVTHE KING , THE NOBLES AND THE POLITICAL RELATIONS

Polity was one of the different facets of the society that formed the themes of our poets. Some works like JangName of Shri Dhar Ojha, Sujan Charitra of Sudan and Himmat Bahadur Virdavali of Padmakar are almost exclusively devoted to the details of politics and wars while in others political relations and politics have been described in diverse social and cultural contexts. The notion and perception of the king and royalty are among the notable features of such details. We will notice how our poets viewed and presented a king and will also try to compare it with some of the earlier medieval theories and concepts. Other important details relate to the Mughal factional and contestary politics, the relation between the local rulers and the Empire and the internal conflicts and tensions within the local chieftains. Much of these details corroborate those available in the conventional and better utilized sources. But the Reeti poetry sometimes, also contains substantial information on subjects which have been little noticed in the known Persian Chronicles.

Perception of the King

The popular view presented the king as an embodiment of all the conceivable accomplishments. He possessed the marks of divinity and represented the god on the earth. He was

compared with dignitaries of Hindu mythology and religion. Mati Ram has described Bhavsingh, the king of Bundi and the son of Chhatrasal (1649-1713A.D.), as follows :

*बिक्रम म बिक्रम¹ धरमसुत² धरन में धुंधमार³ धीर में धनेसवारों⁴ धन में मतिराम कहत प्रियव्रत⁵ प्रताप में, प्रबल बल प्रथु⁶ पारथहि⁷ वारों पन में सत्रुसाल रैयाराव भावसिंह आजु मही के महीप सब वारों तेरे तन में ।

Vikramaditya is dedicated for Bhav Singh's strength, Yudhishtara for his virtues, Kuber for his wealth, Dhundhumar in patience; MatiRam says that he dedicates Priyabrata in splendour, Prithu in power, all the kings of the earth are dedicated for Bhav Singh, the son of Chhatrasal.

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- * MatiRam Granthavali, p-309
1. Bikram or Vikramaditya : A celebrated Hindu king who reigned at Ujjaini during 1 B.C.; the great hero known for commencing Samvat Era- Hindu Mythology and Religion, John Dowson, p-356-57.
 2. Dharamsut - Yudhishtara, the eldest among the five Pandu princes in Mahabharata, Mythologically son of Dharama, the God of Justice.
Ibid, p 39 and 378.
 3. Dhundhumar : A prince of Solar race mentioned in Vishnu Puran who attacked and killed the goat demon Dhundhu so got the title of Dhundhu mar. Ibid p-173
 4. Dhanish : The lord of wealth; known as the keeper of all earthly treasures Ibid p - 173-174.
 5. Priyabrata : One of the two sons of Brahma and Sata-Rupa or also may be a son of manu-Swaymbhuva, Ibid-p-224.
 6. Prithu-Son of Vena, was called the first king of the earth and from him the earth received the name Prithvi
Ibid p-242

SomNath also wrote in a similar way about the same King.

*सरद चंद सम सील, धर्मकरि धर्म धुरंधर ।
कृद्ध रुद्र⁸ परभान साहिबी सहस पुरंदर⁹
इमि भाव सिंह भूपा हुव अति उदार चित ज्यो करन¹⁰
अरु भीषम । सो जो विक्रमी सनु संघरन सघरन

BhavSingh is as modest as full moon, justful like Yudhishtara aggressive like Rudra, his grandeur is like that of Purandar; kind like karna; he is as brave as Bhishma and is destroyer of enemy.

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7. Parth : a son of kunti, generally known as Arjun.
 8. Rudra : a howler or roarer - terrible, applied to God Siva, Ibid-p 269
 9. Purandar : meaning Indra or Vishnu, Bhargav Hindi-English Dictionary 1969 -p693
 10. Karan : Karna, son of by Surya before her marriage to pandu. Ibid p-150
 11. Bhish : Son of king Shantanu by Goddess Ganga, Ibid p-53

* SomNath Granthavali , p-822.

Bhushan saw different qualities in his patron,
Shivaji, the Maratha Chief;

सुंदरता गुरुता प्रभुता भनि भूषण होत हैं आदर जामें*
सज्जनता औ दयालूता दीनता कोमल झरकें परजा में
दान कृपानहु को करिबो करिबो अभै दीनन को बरजामें ।
साहस सों रन टेक बिबेक इते सुन एक सिवाजी सरजा में ।

Elegance, eminence, sovereignty and respect are embodied in him, gentility, generous, humility, softness towards his subjects are seen in him; he is charitable and empowered to protect the poor. He is courageous in war and has wisdom, Shivaji is endowed with so many qualities.

Poet Man writes for Jagat Singh of Udaipur :

हे हिन्दु कुल आदीत रन सह अभंग अजीत ।**
कालकि जिन केदार सब हिन्दु सिर श्रंगार
द्वितिवंत जिन्ह दरबार दिन दिनहिं दय दयकार ।
पुहवी प्रजा प्रतिपाल देख्यो सें दीन दयाल ।

The king is the Sun of Hindu-dynasty; he is invulnerable and unsubdued in the battle-field. As high as mountains he is the head ornament of Hindus.

Brilliant people present in his court; he is the of his subjects and resembles the God.

* Bhushan Granthavali; Verse-117 (Shivraj Bhushan).

** Raj Vilas; P-41.

About Rao Surjan Singh, Matiram maintains the following opinion :

एक धर्म गृहरवंभ जंभरिपु¹² रूप अविनि पर,
एक बुद्धि गंभीर धीर वीराधिबीर बर,
एक ओज अवतार सकल सरनागत रच्छक
एक जासु करबाल निखिल खल कुल कहँ तच्छक,
मतिराम एक दातानिभनि जग जस अमल प्रट्टियु
चहुवान बंस अवतंस इमि एक राव सुरजन भयौ ।

Rao Surjan Singh of Charhan dynasty is the protector of the religion, enemy of devils like Jambha on this earth; intelligent, solemn, patient, brave, representative of God and protector of all the fugitives. His sword destroys wicked people. He has appeared as the great donor in this world.

Raja Badan Singh¹³ of Braja region has also been attributed certain qualities by the poet :

नीति-निबाह सौ निरंतर प्रणीति जाके, रचक न बैन परपंचहि लहत है
ऐसौ ब्रजमंडल बदनसिंह महाराज, जाकौ जस उज्ज्वल दिवंगतानि कहत है ।

Raja Badan Singh likes systematic execution of the policies and does not have a little ostentation. His glory is spread all over the world.

Kunwar Pratap Singh, the son of Raja Badan Singh, has also seen assigned the similar qualities :

-
12. **JAMBHA** - Among several demons, one who fought against the Gods and was slain by Indra, so Jambha Ripu implied for Indra, (John Dowson, P-132).
13. **Raja Badan Singh** - who established himself in Agra - Mathura region - W.Irvine, Later Mughals, P-120 to 123.

* दानकरि विक्रम, सुरेस सनमान करि ज्ञान करि सिंधुर बदन अवेरेखिए ।
सत्यकरि धरम धुरंधर
नंद बदेनष कौ कुंवर प्रतापिसिंह दुख दल दरन को करन सी देखिए ।

He is an excellent donor, worships God, intelligent, looks like Ganesha. He is truthful and justful. The son of Badanesh, Kunwar Pratap Singh is the destroyer of worries and seems to be like Karna.

Raja Suraj Mal, the successor of Raja Badan Singh, imbibed eight qualities and fourteen ruling traits :

**
देस समय कौ ज्ञान औ दृढ़ता निरधारौ ।
सहि सकिषौ सब कपर और बिज्ञता बिचारौ ।
चतुराई अरू तेज मंत्र तत्वहि ठहरावन ।
उचित बोलिबौ बचन औग विक्रम सरसावन
अरू गुनिबौसामर्थ. और कौ कृत न बिसारिबौ
रक्षै सरनागतै ने सत्रु कौ तेजन दरिबौ
अति चंचलता और चर्तुदास गुन ये कहिए
हैं राजन को उचित भली बिधि उर में धरियै,

A king should have perfect knowledge of the time and place, inventeracy, patience, wisdom, wit, glory, advice, sight, speech, heroic strength, knowledge of own potential, thankfulness, protection of fugitives, suppression of the enemies and activeness.

Rao Bahadur Singh was expected by his subjects to think reasonably and act thoughtfully commensurate with the tradition of kingship :

* Som Nath Granthavali; P-816.

** Ibid : P-822.

नृप की सुरीति लखि देस काल निज बुद्धि हाल । *
पुनि बलु बिचारि करिय सुरारि अरु साम दाम है भेद काम ।

The king should execute his policies deliberately in the light of all the circumstances by using conciliatory method, tacts and force.

Padmakar attributes innumerable qualities to Himmat Bahadur:

:

हिम्मत बहादुर¹⁴ भूप है सुभ सम्भु रूप अनूप है ।
दिल दान वीर दयाल है अरि वर निकर को काल है ।
सुख साहिबी अमरेस है भुव भार धर भुजंगेस है ।
मनु भोज देत महेस है गुन ज्ञान वात गनेस है ।

The king Himmat Bahadur is another God Shiva; He is a great donor, generous and destroyer of enemies; Infinite pleasure prevails in the kingdom. He is the God on earth; he is virtuous and learned.

* Sujan Charitra, p-115

14. Anup Giri Gosain alias Himmat Bahadur, the adopted son of Rajendra Giri Gosain, an army commander in Safdar Jung's force. Himmat Bahadur was admitted to Nawab Shujaudaula's Army; Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire Vol.III p-189-90.

Bihari writes about Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber:

रहति न रन जय सहि मुख लखि, लाखनु की फौज ।¹⁵
जाँचि निराखरऊ चलै लै लाखनु की मौज ।

Seeing the face of JaiSahi, the military contingent in lakhs can not stay; He is so generous that even illiterates get huge amount of donations from him.

the references mentioned above relate to late seventeenth and eighteenth century rulers. The power of Raja was perceived to have emanated from the Supreme Being. He was imagined to possess , sometimes, the eternal qualities drawn from the divinities. There is no reference to the constitutional restraints but moral restraints required a king to maintain modesty and composure, justice and sound policy. All these attributes were of a king in the capacity of his being a ruler, irrespetive of his creed or religion. Of many Reeti poets being patronized by the Hindu Rajput or Jat ruler, generously described their patrons, there is at least, one earlier Reeti poet to have mentioned the Mughal Emperor Jahangir in the following glowing terms :

15. Bihari Ratnakar, Verse - 80.

नल¹⁷ सो जगत दानी साँचो हरिचन्द्र¹⁸ जू सो पृथु सो परम पुरुषारथनि लेखिये ।¹⁶
बलि¹⁹ सो बिबेकी जु दधीचि²⁰ ऐसो धीर धरू साधू अम्बरीष²¹ जू सो उर अबरेखिये ।
भृगुपति²² जू सो सूर हनुमंत²³ जू सो जसी केसोराय विक्रम से साहसी बिसैजिये ।
साहिन को साह जहाँगीर साहि धर-धाता कीनौ दूसरौ विधाता ऐसौ देखिये ।

The king Jahangir is munificent like Nala, veracious like HarishChandra, toilsome like Prithu, judicious like Bali, enduring like Dadhichi, virtuous like Ambarish, brave like Brighupati, glorious like Hanumant, valiant like Vikramaditya and he appears to be another god.

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16. Keshav Granthavali, III Jahangir Jas Chandrika, p-632.
17. Nāla-king of Nishada and husband of Damyanti in Mahabharata; Hindu Mythology and Religion, John Dowson, p-215.
18. Bali-A good and virtuous daitya king, who through his devotion and penance humbled the Gods and extended his authority over the three world. Ibid, p-42.
19. Dadhichi - A vedic Rishi, Ibid, p-75.
20. Ambarisha - A king of Ayodhya, twenty-eighth in descent from Ikshwaku. Ibid, p-12
21. Bhrigupati - A sage, generally known as Parasuram in Ramayana, Ibid , p-54.
22. Hanumant - A celebrated monkey chief, son of Pawan assisted Rama against Ravana, Ibid, p-116.

It is also significant to note that we do not see any difference in the description of the Mughal king and the local rajas. Shri Dhar Ojha's verses convey the same impression of the Mughal Emperor as SomNath's description of Pratap Singh, the son of Badan Singh, the Jat ruler. The words and phrases used for the Mughal Emperor Jahangir resemble the metaphors describing Bhav Singh of Bundi. The divine personalities with whom the kings are compared are also the same even a Muslim king was being compared with a Hindu Deity.

The king, thus, was to be endowed with accomplishments including courage, patience, kindness, invulnerability and justfulness. He had to be a destroyer of enemies, great warrior, soft, gentle, generous, wise brilliant, solemn protector of fugitives, truthful and inveterate. Indeed, the Reeti , concept of royalty is hardly different from the earlier medieval views.

To Abul Fazl, for instance, the king has to be wise and judicious, capable of understanding the spirit of his age. He presents the king as "a crowned one who, inspite of so much majesty and glory, keeps himself at the court of eternal and is strenuous in administration of justice."

23. Akbar Nama, Vol.III , p-122

24. Ibid Vol.II, p-426.

From the king originated stability and order. If royalty did not exist, the problems would never subside and mankind as lawless creatures would face destruction; the world would lose its prosperity. An ideal ruler's object is to remove oppression and provide everything which is good. He inculcates in his subjects unity, chastity, justice, polite manners, truthfulness and sincerity. Again, like the Reeti poets, Abdul Fazl projects royalty as something emanating from God and royalty is a light from the Sun which illuminates the earth. He is an embodiment of divinity - "these doings are of grace and not manufactured. They are fortunes and not contrivance." He shows paternal love towards his subjects; he is broad-minded and has a "large heart." Abul Fazl, however, emphasized the royalty as a "light" and the divinity as its greatest sources. What is more significant that Abdul Fazl's king's urge is to be dominated by reason and he is always in search of the truth and justice.

To another medieval political theorist and historian, Ziauddin Barni, a major test of the king was to keep the inhabitants of his kingdom on the path of religious law. The

25. Ain-i-Akbari, Vol.I, p-2

26. Akbar Nama Vol.III p-140

* For all these qualities refer to Ain-i-Akbari Vol I, p-3

Reeti perception of the king as the protector of religion echoes this view. Further to Barni, correct determination in the enterprises of government and firmness in the management of affairs are the characteristics of a good king.²⁷ A king should formulate and execute his policies carefully keeping in view the likelihood of their success and failure. The great quality of king is that he realizes the value of his time. If he finds anyone in need he fixes up the amount of assistance to be given to him. He engages himself in religious practices. A king sees to it that the truth is established at centre.^{28*} It does not imply that a perfect king would succeed in removing falsehood totally from his regime but truth defines the capacity of the people, at least, to differentiate between the good and bad.

Barni suggests kingship of will incompatible with misrule, injustice, weakness of will and villainy of character. The king should have the feeling of mercy but at the same time he should be feared.*

Tulsidas, too, attributed almost the same ideal personal qualities to a good ruler :

27. The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate (Tr. of

Fatwa-i- Jahandir) Mohd.Habib, p-3

28. Ibid, p-41,43,44

* The terrorism as revealed by Barni is also revealed by Reeti poet Vrind : रहै प्रजा घन यत्न सों जहँ बाँकी तरवार

धरम धुरधर नीति निधाना, तेज प्रताप सील बलवाना ।²⁹

(A king is proficient in religion, high-policy maker, elegant, glorius noble and strong).

Moreover he suggests the king to follow the policies based on appeasement, suppression, punishment and creation of dissensions among the enemy. (साम, दाम, अरु, दंड विभेदा । नृप उर बसहिं नाथ कह भेदा ।)³⁰

There was thus nothing radically new in our poets portrayal of a king. There was no change in the notion of a ruler; nor was there any awareness of any political organization other than the monarchy. The person of the king was still the centre of all social activities. Reeti poetry represented in a sense, a continuity and a plea for preservation and promotion of the erstwhile political tradition, even if some of them may have represented a low profile of the Mughal Emperor. This "orthodoxy" of the plea for a conservative position is better illustrated in their view of social order and justice :

जाति गोत बहुवंश युक्त बसत अठारह वर्ण ।³¹
निय निय कर्म सबे निपुन सघन सुबास सुवर्ण ।
असन बसन बसु बासु पशु जान दान सनमान ।
वाहन भोग सुरूप भल भाषा भूषण गान ।

29. Ramcharit Manas, Bal Kanda, 153/3

30. Ibid, Uttarakand, 26/1-2

31. RajVilas, p-45

People hailing from different caste, race and lineage altogether constitute eighteen races; all are expert in their duties and thus make their race elegant. People have good place to live, cattle, secured life, charity and respect; they have conveyance; they speak good and embellished language.

Further,

बहु निज बसंतु निजु धर्म संतु छत्री सरौड पुनि गहें मेड 32
अरू बनिक जाति निज द्यौस रात्रि, जुत धर्म खयाल उर में दयाल ।
अरू धर्म सील कायस्थ डील बहु जाति और लहि बसी डौर
आश्रम जु चारि निज धर्म धारि बिहरें अभीत अति ही बिनीत

Many Brahmans live there who are busy in their religious acts; Kshatriyas and Saronds remain within their limits; there is the merchant class which is also busy in religious thoughts and is kind at heart Kayasthas are also engaged in their work; there are various races staying who dwell fearlessly following the Varnashram system.

Justice in this form was regarded as the foremost virtue of the royalty. The king as the supreme authority was an advocate and promoter of justice. To Barni, justice was the balance in which the king weighed the actions of people as good or bad. It distinguished the right and wrong conduct. Justice prevented people from becoming tyrant and controlled the oppression in the name of religion. It secured to the people of themselves to their art,

profession, means of livelihood and religious practices.³³

In Abdul Fazl's notion, too, a king should administer justice to all friends and foes, known and unknown and the rich and the poor. Reeti poetry, does not, seemingly describe the concept of justice. Still, the decisions of the king were thought of being justful in a way that they were proposed for the welfare of the subjects. The society perceived the king justful to an extent that whatever he did could be understood as just :

यहै बात सब ही कहैं राजा करै सो न्याय ।³⁵

All say it that whatever the king does is justice.

In connection to the justice, Abul Fazl suggested a theory of punishment aiming to correct the offenders and for the promotion of good and happiness of the people. Reeti poet Vrind also maintains the similar views:

जिहिं जैसो अपराध तिहिं तैसो दण्ड बरवानि ।³⁶

Punish according to the crime.

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33. The Political Theory of Delhi Sultanate,
(Tr. of Fatwa-i-Jahandari) Mohd. Habib, p-16 & 17.
34. Religious and Intellectual History of Muslims in Akbar's Reign, Rizvi, p-363.
35. Virind Satsai, Verse-289
36. Ibid, Verse-533

Justice, which was to be guaranteed by the king, could be ensured only if he maintained an aura and awe, which in turn, depend on a royal life style :

गढ़ में प्रकास नृप के अवास । बंगला उतंग कलसनि सुढंग ।³⁷
तिनके मझार, गद्दी उदार, कंचन लसाई जिनमें सुभाइ ।
प्रतिद्वार द्वार तोरन विहार, आगै वितान अति जोतवान ।
झालरि अनूप, रबि किरन रूप

The king resides in illuminated fort; high and elevated. places are decorated with cupolas. His throne is gold plated and every door is embellished with festoons. Canopy is very beautiful and hangings are attractive -----.

The inner apartments were also decorated with expensive equipments :

गुलगुली गिलमै गलीचा है गुनीजन है चाँदनी है चिके है चिराकन की माला है ।³⁸
कहै पदमाकर त्यौ गजक गिजा हैक सजी हैं सेजै सुराही है सुरा है अरू प्याला है ।

There are soft woollen carpets over which white cloth is spread; curtains of bamboo sticks; nice food-gajak, gija; decorated bedrooms; wine pots and wine cups are there in the residence of royal people.

37. Somnath Granthavali, p 819-20

38. Padmakar Granthavali, Jagat Vinod, Verse-391

At another place, in a specific context, the poet has nicely described the mode of living of Rana Raj Singh :

प्रवर विकट पुर चहु परिधि पर्वतभय प्राकार ।
को शीशावलि सोहै प्रबल बुरज प्राकार ।
खंभ सु प्रबल कपाट युत, प्रौढ़ि पौरि प्रतिहार, चहु दिसि बाग सु बाटिका
पल्ल षचित सम भूमि बहु प्रबल ऊंच प्रासाद
गोष जोरि सोवन कलस वदत गगन संवाद । राज लोक सुरलोक सम
There is a main boundary surrounding the palace;
ramparts are like mountains. The big towers are
mounted by glasses; big doors are supported by
pillars and strong doorkeepers keep a watch; there
are gardens all around which cover the land with
leaves. High building is decorated with gold plates
and high cupolas speak of the sky. Raj Singh's world
is like heaven.

These lines highlighted more than the splendour the measures taken for the ruler's personal safety. The palace was built in such a way that it protected the king from any direct or sudden impingement on his life. Significantly, Barni in the first advice to the king suggested him to take practical steps for his safety.⁴⁰

39. RajVilas, p-43

40. The Political Theory of Delhi Sultanate (Tr.of
Fatawai-Jahanda) Mohd. Habib, p-1.

THE POLITICAL RELATIONS AND THE NOBLES

Late Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw considerable political changes in medieval North India. The Mughal Empire rapidly disintegrated leading to progressive developments in different regions and at different levels of political hierarchy. Civil war among the princes of royal blood was a notable feature of the period. The nobles were engaged in various types of conflicts and an atmosphere of factionalism prevailed at the Mughal court. The stresses on the empire included the Jat uprisings, the breach with Rathors and Sisodia Rajputs and the growing power of Marathas. R helas were also at conflicting terms with the empire. It is significant that the local powers were not only fighting and resisting against the Mughal authority, internal dissensions and frictions in the local and regional groups had also prevailed. The entire period was a period of chaos and the quest for power had dominated the politics.

Like many other literary sources of the period, the Reeti poetry, too resounds sensitively the existing political situation. It is difficult to suggest that our

poets had a detached view of the developments at the Mughal court. Still, in their response and reactions, perhaps, we get a clearly second impression to enable us to appreciate better. The civil wars of 1657-58 and of the early 18th century, for instance, are explained solely in terms of the individual ambitions :

अभिलाषी इक बात के तिनमें होय विरोध । 41
काज राज के राज सुत लरत भिरत करि क्रोध ।

Ambition for the same thing creates dissensions among the people; the royal princes fight furiously for the regime.

Poet Man summarises the civil war among the sons of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in which Aurangzeb emerged to be successful:

दिल्लीस साह औरंग दिट्ठ रूक्केव पिता रघहि बइट्ठ 42
विश्वास देइ तिन हने बन्धु . अ असु दुष्ट उर रघ अन्धु ।
निय गोत सकल करिके निकन्द सुलतान भयो छल बल सु छंद ।

41 Vrind Satsai, Verse 81

42. Raj Vilas, P-149

The king of Delhi, Aurangzeb is very impudent who terminated his father through an edict; he killed his brothers taking them in confidence and he is cruel being blinded by the lust for the regime : destroying his race he has become the Emperor.

Aurangzeb tried his best to preclude the possibility of another war of succession among his sons. He proposed to divide the empire among his sons. The early eighteenth century however witnessed more than one accession crisis. We have a long poem entitled JangNama with details of civil war following the death of Aurangzeb's successor Bahadur Shah I (1707-12) :

छाड़ि देह सुर लोक को गए बहादुर साह ।⁴³

After death, Bahadur Shah went to heaven.)

Jahandar Shah became the Emperor killing the three claimants to the throne, namely, Rafi-us-Shan, Jahan Shah and Azim-ush-Shan :

43. Jang Nama, P-1.

रन मारि तीनों पादशाहहिं पादशाहति में लई ।⁴⁴

Killing all the three kings I have taken the kingship. Here, the term "three kings" is used for Jahandar Shah's three brothers named above who were all killed in the wars by Jahandar Shah. Prince Azim-ush-shan's son Farrukhsiyar raised the forces against the Emperor Jahandar Shah in the east, latter was determined to defend his position :

मेरे भुजा बल शाहि जादन सो न जौन लई गई ।⁴⁵
तरवार के बल फौज के बल हिन्द की प्रभुता भई ।
सुलतान भो दिल्ली बहकाइ ल्याए और को ।

Which the princess could not take due to the strength of my arms; I attained the supreme power in mind by the dint of my sword and armed forces; he wants to become the king of Delhi by mobilising different people.

Clearly, a large section of the people (official and armed forces) who mattered had not accepted Jahandar Shah as the Emperor and thus was Prince Farrukhsiyar able to bring them together against him. The nobility had played a significant role in the expansion and consolidation of the Mughal Empire. In view of the crippled centre's control over the provinces, the nobles generally desired to strengthen their position at the court. They supported the claims of the one or the other contestant princes keeping their gains in mind. The support of Zulfiqar Khan, a dominant noble

44. Ibid, p-30

45. Ibid,

during eighteenth century had played a decisive role in gaining victory for Jahandar Shah over his brothers :

जुल्फिकार खाँ फोरि सब मिले मौजदिहि जाई ।⁴⁶
मौजदीन सिर छत्र धरि कुतबा कुटिल पढ़ाय ।

Zulfiqar Khan taking all men to his side met Muizuddin; Muizuddin kept the umbrella over his head and Khutba was read in his name.

Mir Jumla , another noble at the Imperial Court sent the information of the proceedings secretly to Farrukhsiyar, who was then in Patna :

तब वीर जुमला बीर अरज लिख्यो सुपुत्र उदार ।⁴⁷
सैद राजे खान कीनो प्राग सूबेदार ।

The brave Mir Jumla informed him that Jahandar Shah had appointed sayyid Raji Khan the governor of Allahabad.

Sayyid brothers supported the cause of Farrukhsiyar as Abdullah Khan was deprived of the opportunity by Jahandar Shah. Rahi Khan sent his deputy Abdul Ghaffar against Abdullah Khan for he was aiming at the governorship of Allahabad :

वह चलयो हिरौल आगे साजि सैद अबुल गफार⁴⁸

Well equipped with his army Sayyid Abdul Ghaffar proceeded.

46. Ibid, p-28

47. Ibid, p-2

48. Ibid, p-2

The nobles were mobilised by the contestant princes by the offer of higher mansabs in lieu of their support. Farrukhsiyar, in order to gain victory against Jahandar Shah, granted a mansab of four thousand to the faujdar of Karra-Manikpar, Chhabele Ram :

करे निकट महर्षाँ मिल्यो आइ छबीले राम ।⁴⁹
चारि हजारि राज पद तिनको भयो सलाम ।

Chhabele Ram met him, his designation became four thousand mansabs.

Ali Asghar Khan also joined Farrukhsiyar expecting high mansabs :

अलीय असगर खान जू मिल्यो आनि हथग्राम ।⁵⁰
चो हजारि मनसब लियो खान जमाँ खाँ नाम ।

Ali Asghar Khan met in Hathgaon; He was given a mansab of four thousand and tittle of Khan-zaman-khan was conferred upon him.

The mutual rivalry among the nobles has also been reflected in the poetry :

49. Ibid, p-17

50. Ibid,

इख्तयार कोकलतास खॉ अरू जुल्फिकार खॉ लियो ।⁵¹
दोउ रहे बर बीर योधा बैर आपुस में कियो ।

The two great warriors Kokaltash khan and Zulfiqar Khan developed enmity for each other.

The feeling of self-preservation thus drove the nobles to engage themselves in selfish conduct. The factions did not only prevail during early eighteenth century but tended to control the parties and politics even in mid-eighteenth century. The nobles Safdar Jung, the wazir exhibited open hostility towards Asaf Jha's grand son, who was appointed the Mir Bakshi in 1752 A.D. The friction between them increased and assumed the form of conflict with two ethnic groups, namely, Iranis and Turanis arrayed largely on two opposing lines. The Mir Bakshi with the support of Turani nobles succeeded in getting Irani Safdar Jung expelled from Delhi :

तुरानी मिलि साहि से यॉ बैर बढ़ाया ।⁵²
ईरानी मनसूर को पुर तै कढ़वाया ।

Turani sided with the Emperor, aggravated the tensions and secured Irani Mansoor's expulsion from Delhi.

51. Jang Nama P.28

52. Sujan Charitra P-145.

Safdar responded to this honour by rising into rebellion against the emperor. He enthroned a lad calling him the grandson of Kam Baksh, the son of Aurangzeb; in his name he raised the banner of revolt. He invited Suraj Mal, the Ja ruler to plunder Delhi.

अब लेऊ ईट करि देउ ईट सौ दिल्ली सहर हम तुमहिं दियो ।⁵³

I have given Delhi City to you, now you plunder it.

The internal weakness and factionalism which may be taken as one of the causes of disruption of the Empire, thus, gets adequate space in our poetry. What is of particular interest is some new information about (a) the stages of certain political allignments, as the one between Mir Jumla and Farrukhsiyar; (b) early career of some of the nobles like Ali Asghar Khan, who rose to power in Farrukhsiyar's reign and after and (c) the reasons why a faction, like the one of Saiyyid Brothers, took a given stand.

The political relations and the Local Chiefs :

The central authority was further weakened by the revolts of local despots who were trying to assert their power against the Mughal Empire. This had a bearing on the Mughal Centre's relations with local elements. Here also we

can add usefully to our existing knowledge from the material available in the Reeti poetry. The exact nature and reasons about the conflict between the Rathors and Sisodias can not be discerned from the available information. It is undoubted that in the 16 70's the relations between the Mughal King Aurangzeb and Rana Raj Singh of Mewar were not smooth. The Rathors also adopted a hostile attitude towards the Emperor and considered him a devil (जिन नाम मलेच्छ पिशाच जनौ).⁵⁴

The reasons which provoked the Emperor against Rana include the protection given to Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur's infant by Rathors :

रखैं हम राठौर सुत्थ जसवंत राय सुत ।⁵⁵

We will keep Jaswant Rai's son in our protection.

Rana's refusal to pay tribute to the Empire was another reason :

जा ऐसी यवनेस सौ जंपहु दो कर जोरि ।⁵⁶

किंपि न दें राठौर कर कैसी लख करोरि ।

Go and tell Aurangzeb with folded hands that we will not pay a single penny as tax; lakhs and crores are too much.

54. Raj Vilas, p-107

55. Ibid p-156

56. Ibid, p-160

These verses are historically proved; the poetry and the historical writings both inform that a farman was sent to Rana of Chittor, called upon him to pay the jaziya. But there is sharp difference in the two writings about Rana Raj Singh's attitude towards the Emperor. The historical writings suggest that Rana felt himself incapable of resistance thus paid the tribute; he also denied the extension of his support to J Sawant Singh's son.⁵⁷ Observing Rana's rebellious attitude after some time, the Emperor mobilised forces towards Udiapur. Rana evacuated the city and fled to high hills and attacked the Imperial camps coming down surprisingly.

The poetry, on the contrary, suggests Rana's adamant and uncompromising attitude towards the Emperor. We have already referred to Rana's refusal for the payment of any tax and release of the infant Ajit Singh. Nowhere we get the idea of his flight to the mountains. Rather the poet mentions in high esteem the bravery of Rana. He refers to a tough battle fought between Rana's forces and the Mughal army.⁵⁸ These differences can be interpreted as the poet's exaggerating descriptions in order to praise his patrons. He

57. History of Aurangzeb, Vol. III Jadunath Sarkar, p-340-42. and history of Mughals Vol II (Tr. of Muntakhabul -Lubab of Khafi Khan) p-22-26

58. Raj Vilas, p- 184-205.

could not reflect the events bringing dishonour to the patron, therefore, he presented Rana Raj Singh as the hero who was firm in his resolve and a great warrior who did not escape. It is, however, common in both the descriptions that Rathors and Sisodias were not at good terms and that the authority was defied by both of them.

So far about the Mughal Centre and its links with the locality, our poetry helps us a good deal in getting the details of the conditions obtaining in different parts of the Empire, among the different power mongers. One such instance is the information on the nature of relationship between the nawab of Awadh and the Bangash Afghans of Farrukhabad. The Bangash Afghans had acquired a significant territory and their power posed a threat to the ruler of Awadh in the neighbourhood. Safdr Jung thus had to raise an army to check his expansion. The poem begins with the death of Nawal Rai, Safdar Jung's subordinate, in this battle against Afghans. The death of Nawal Rai provoked Safdar Jung and he secured the Emperor's permission to set out against the Afghans :

नवलराय मार्यौ गयौ करि पठान सों युद्ध 59
सुनि वजीर मनसूर कै तन उपज्यौ अति कुब्ध
तुरत अहमद साहि सों अरज करि यह जाइ ।

To ensure his victory over the Pathans he secured the support of the Jats and Marathas :

एक ओर मल्लार दल दूजै सिंह सुजान ।⁶⁰

On one side were Mathar's group and Sujan Singh.

Here, the important factor to be noted is that the Afghans had emerged so powerful that they posed a danger to the Mughal Empire. Also, the Imperial army was no longer strong enough to face the challenges of Aghans and the local rulers were called upon in lieu of monetary and territorial gains :

कुछ खरच की नाहिं ढील तुम लाओ पैदल फील ।⁶¹

Irrespective of the expenses, you bring elephants and soldiers.

also,

तीन भाग भुविकरी एक मनसूरहि दीनी, एक दई मलार एक अपनी करि लीनी⁶²

The conquered territory was divided into three parts One was given too Marathas, one to Mansoor and one was retained for himself.

59. Sujan Charitra, p-54

60. Ibid, p-92

61. Ibid, p-54

62. Ibid, p-95

Since most of our poets thrived at the local courts, their projection of the events is clearly different from the one available in the persian chronicles. This comes out vividly from the details of the disputed over certain jagirs between the Jat chief Suraj Mal and the imperial Bakshi Salabat Khan. The poet writes that the conflict, in this case, was precipitated by the Imperial Bakshi and not by the local ruler :

दिल्लीपति बकसी इहिं देखहिं आवत तुमसौं करन कलेस ।⁶³

The Bakshi of the ruler of Delhi is coming to this territory to fight with you.

The Bakshi is portrayed as being blinded by his power and prestige who wanted to subdue the Jat ruler. Here, the question of assertion of power and authority by a local despot gets virtually no mention. But from the internal details we have some idea of the complexity of the problem:

साह अहम्मद ने मुझे अपना करि माना, तखत आगरा, मथुरा हिडौल⁶⁴
बकसी की जागीर दे बकसी में ठान्या, इन में ते जे मुझे तरैं तहँ करि मोथाना ।
दो करोरि दै साहि नु सो भी सुनु जाना, असद खान सिरकार का चाकर क्युँ भाना ।

63. Ibid, p-37

64. Ibid, p-40.

The Emperor Muhammad Shah has accepted me as his servant and given the seat of Agra, Mathura, Hindol----- He has given me the jagir of Bakshi; whatever the region Surajmal had acquired, he should return to him. I also urged upon him to pay two crores to the Emperor. Why did he kill the government servant Asad Khan ?

The amount was to be given to the Emperor as compensation for the misappropriation of the income of the seized areas, SurajMal, the powerful local ruler, obviously, refused to resopnd to Salabat Khan's entreaties. Salabat khan finding himself unable to continue the war for a longer period had to sue for peace and agreed to accept whatwver Surajmal co-uld offer :

ज्यौ बनै त्यौ तू लाउ करिहौ बड़ा उमराव ।⁶⁵

You bring whatever you could, I will make you great officer.

But the situation was not so straight. As we examine further details, we realize that here the case was of the locality's assertion of its power against Delhi, seen as an outsider. Both Salabat khan and Surajmal had long been involved in a local dispute, in a bid to establish their respective hegemony. Earlier, Fateh Ali of Chandos-Khurja region was attacked by Asad Khan of Kol. Fateh Ali requested Surajmal to protect him, with an additional plea that Asad

Khan, after conquering Chandos - Khurja might also proceed towards Suraj Mal's territory :

चण्डौस-खुर्जा हाथ करि तब पाइ आगे देइगा ।⁶⁶
इस वास्ते तुमसे अरज करि ओर की जाति है बली ।
अब हाथ उस पै रक्खिये तो जंग लेहि फतेह अली ।

Suraj Mal along with his nobles and army surrounded Chandos

:

चारि ओर चण्डौस के चारि तीनि द्वे कोस ।⁶⁷
चार पौ सिरदारन दये डेरा निज निज रोष ।

All around Chandos uptil four, three and two kos the nobles encamped in their anger.

Asad Khan's soldiers suggested him to wait for a day or two and collect more zamindars to his side. They told him to wait till their camp was attacked by Suraj Mal's forces :

और कीजे इकट्ठे जिमीदार भी जे तुम्हें चाहते⁶⁸
आप डेरा करो एक कै दो दिना जंग कोउ करै किये बिना ।

Asad Khan told his people that Fateh Ali and Suraj Mal's army had seized their camp. If they were expecting more contingent to come, it was not possible. The seize of their camp would lead to rise in prices. In these circumstances, life would be no better than death :

66 Ibid, p-51

67. Ibid, p-10

68. Ibid, p-13

फतेह अली सूरज के लोगों ने इस जीने से मरना वना लड़ना ही बनि आवै ।⁶⁹

Surajmal killed Asad khan in the battle and thus protected Fateh Ali. He sent him to Kol and himself came back.

This particular episode, about which there is nothing in the known Persian Chronicles, not only provides insight into the nature of the chaos at local level; it enables us to understand why and how an emerging, ambitious and dominant regional chief endeavours to hegemonize, to the maximum possible limit, the area in the neighbourhood as well.

The political alignments in the eighteenth century confusion significantly cut across the religious and sectarian affiliations. Our poets, almost all Hindus, definitely showed, sometimes, prejudices in favour of a local ruler against the Delhi king, but nowhere the opposition and the hostilities are explained in terms of the diverse creeds of the opponents. If on the one hand Muslim Asad Khan managed to secure the sentiments of the Mughal Salabat Khan, the Jat Suraj Mal, on the other responded, without any prior condition to the other Muslim Fateh Ali Khan's appeal for help . Again Nawal Rai, died fighting against the Afghans for the Nawab of Awadh, while the Nawab, yet again was supported both by the Marathas and the Jats in his endeavour to avenge Nawal's death against the Afghans.

Such was the political culture of the time, spread over the entire sub-continent. In 1743, following the death of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, Ishwari Singh came to the power in Jaipur, but his brother, Madho Singh revolted and he had the backing of Marathas :

सुरपुर को जैसिंह गए बीते बहुत दिनान हुतौ भूप आमेर कौ ईसुर सिंह अजान ⁷⁰
तासों दाक्खिन के दलनु रोपी आन सुजंग, माधोसिंह लै संग दियौ देस में दग

On the other hand, Ishwari Sing sought the support of SurajMal. In a battle that followed both Marathas and SurajMal's forces ranged against each other, contrary to their stand in the case of Awadh when they both fought together against a common foe. The battle was concluded by signing a deed through which Ishwari Singh agreed to pay his brother Madho Singh two paragana :

तब मल्लार है सुद्ध कूरम सों एको कियो 71
दोउ परगने लै दिए ईसुर सों मल्लार ।

Again while it is true that a major issue in the eighteenth century politics and battle lines was the centre, represented by the Mughal Emperor and his nobles; and the locality, represented by the regional chieftains and the zamindars, an unqualified generalization would be uncalled for. The Jat peasants and zamindars had been in the forefront

70. Ibid, p-25

71. Ibid, p-35

of resistance against the Mughals since the late seventeenth century. But interestingly, in the eighteenth century their foremost chief's position was, to say, the least :

करत चाकरी साह की हम पायौ यह देस, ताहि उजारत आप क्यों तुमको कह्यौ संदेस ।⁷²
जो कुछ तुम्हें दिलीस ने कह्यौ ताहि कहि देउ । तामाफिक हमसै अवे आप चाकरी लेउ ।

I have got this territory by serving the Emperor; why do you destroy it ? Whatever the king of Delhi has told, you tell me; and take our services accordingly. In one case, Surajmal asked Bakshi Salabat Khan to admit his son Jawahar Singh to the imperial army which was accepted by Salabat Khan ;

त्यों सूरज की कही करी सलाबति खान ⁷³
लाना सिंह जवाहरै लीनौ वेगि बुलाई । सब सेना वाकौ दर्ई

Salabat Khan did as Suraj said; he called Jawahar Singh and gave him his army.

In another case, Safdar Jung directed SurajMal at one place to kill some Rao Bahadur in compliance with an imperial order;

हुकुम साहि कौ यही है तुमको सिंह सुजान, राव बहादुर कौ ताखत करनो जान ।⁷⁴

The conflicts between the Empire in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century were in the main, over taxation and imperial exactions. So long as the Empire was strong enough to extract effectively the Jats offered resistance. But by 1740's when they had established their power in the

72. Ibid, p-40

73. Ibid, p-52

74. Ibid, p-98

region, they stopped or at least, delayed the payments to the centre; they stopped raising the arms against the Empire. The impression of deferred payments has been reflected in case of Rana Raj Singh and Suraj Mal. It was, therefore, not the matter of challenging the authority of the Empire but of the assertion of its power both politically and economically in its own region. The plunder of Delhi, at the instigation of Safdar Jung, may also be interpreted as the lust for money because Suraj Mal, by plundering Delhi calculated only monetary gains :

देस - देस तजि लच्छमी दिल्ली कियो निवास ।⁷⁵
अति अधर्म अति लूट मिस चली करन ब्रजवास

Wealth leaving all the regions dwelled in Delhi, seeing injustice, it is going to Braja for stay.

It is after Suraj Mal had plundered Delhi that the Marathas insisted their claims to share the booty with the Jats :

अब के सूरज मल्ल नै लूटी दिल्ली खूब ।⁷⁶
दो करोड़ क्या बहुत है लिखी भेज तुम खूब ।

Surajmal has scked Delhi very nicely; two crores is not a big amount to be paid.

75. Ibid, p-163

76. Ibid p-206.

The jat envoy offered four lakhs but the results of these negotiations can not be discerned as the description is discontinued in the poem, for unspecified reasons.

Himmat Bahadur Viradavali is another poem of the period which depicts the conflict between the local elites. It is a description of a war fought between Himmat Bahadur and None Arjun Singh :

गज्जत अजैयगढ़ के निकट सब एक एक से विकट ⁷⁷
दल साजि यों अर्जुन बली सजि खड़ो भो रन की थली ।
बर नृप अनूप गिरि भूप जब सुभट सेन सज्जत भयऊ ।

All stronger than one another roar near Ajai Garh;
Arjun Singh stood in the battle field. Anup Giri was
also present along with his forces.

Both the sides fought fiercely :

समर प्रबल दल दिग्ध उमडिय दुंदुभि धुनि दिग मंडल मंडिय । ⁷⁸

Fierces battle was fought; the drums echoed in all
the directions.

Anup Giri fought face to face with brave Arjun Singh and
succeeded in killing him at least :

77. Padmakar Granthavali, Himmat Bahadur Viradavali, p-8

78. Ibid, p-9.

तब नृप अनूप गिरि सुभट सिंधु तिरि अर्जुन सों भिड़ खड़ो रही ।⁷⁸
पटक्यौ गज पर तें उमड़ि उभरि तें अरि सिर धड़ से काट लियो ।

The poem does^{not} inform us about the early history of Himmat Bahadur and None Arjun Songh; nor does it give any causes of the war. Jadunath Sarkar, however, refers to Anup Giri Gosain as the adopted son of Rajendra Giri Gosain - an army commander in Safdar Jung's forces. He was given the title of Himmat Bahadur by Nawab Shujaudaula for whom he rendered military services. None arun Singh was the minister of Raja Guman Singh of Banda in Bundelkhand. Further, this source also throws no light on the issue of war.

Another historian who has written on gosains of the 18th century is Bernard Cohn also, except defining the Gosains and their role in the society, does not unveil the matter. Gosains were the Sh³ivaite devotees, in medieval period, some of whom were priests, wandering medicants and others served as the mercenaries in the armies of the princes and the chiefs during eighteenth century. The bulk of Gosains active role in North India during the period were of Giri section. They acted in Bengal as tax farmers money lenders and traders. A brahmin could only be adopted and admitted to this sect.

It is possible that Anup Giri or Himmat Bahadur, in accordance with the Giri tradition of the period must have fought for any of the princes or chiefs in the region.

A pers^u~~al~~ of the details noticed in this chapter clearly shows how rich we could be in our assessment of the political culture and the political alignments of the late Mughal times if we consider their formulations available in the Reeti - poetry together with the details drawn from the other sources of the period.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is too early for us at this stage to arrive at any definite conclusions. In the light of the details noticed above, however, it is not improper to sum up our analysis with some tentative generalizations.

Our poetry contains the detailed information to suggest the predominance of joint family system in North Indian communities. The senior male member, generally the fathers, dictated the actions of all the family members. The complex family as a co-resident group, included the father, mother, sons, daughters-in-law, co-wives, their children and daughters. There were certain established norms to be followed by all the members. Family as the smallest unit was fundamental to society. It was expected to be receptacle of its values. Whenever a family or a family member of the family overlooked these values, it the encountered social persecution and criticism. The mutual economic dependence was an important factor in maintaining the integrity and solidarity of the family. We discussed the relationship among different members of the family. The poetic diction however, did not reflect any chaos and confusions within a family^{for} the need of an integrated family which ensured the stability and balance in the society.

We analysed the attitude of society towards women as reflected in our poetry against the backdrop of some

earlier literary descriptions. Ideologically, women were always placed in subordinate position in relation to men. They had to fulfil the responsibilities towards the household. They were expected to serve and satisfy all the members in the family for which a number of traits were attributed to them. They had to prove their devotion towards their husbands by all means. The concept of fidelity was more rigid for them. They had to maintain the family honour and social decorum. However, the sphere of their activities, at some levels in the society at least, ^{was} ~~not~~ restricted to the households alone; the women joined their husbands and took active part in the economy as well.

It is significant to note that despite the discriminating attitude of the society towards women and conservative notion of ideal womanhood, Reeti poetry enlists numerous instances wherein the women had been assigned a crucial and central position in the society. While the polygamous society allowed men to express and fulfil their carnal desires in several ways and regulated the life of the women, the descriptions of adultery committed by women were no exceptions. The poetry suggests that extra-marital relations of women in some cases, were inevitable if not structured in the existing social organization. And the family and the society even though

condemned them in principle, had to bear with it. Even if we take these descriptions as mere poetic expressions, in a way, resound unfettered indignance over the servile and damned position of women; with a kind of protest against the socially legitimized male mechanism of injustice and cruelty.

The detailed and uninhibited descriptions of human body and of the intimate human relationships, besides signifying the unusual warmth and sensuality of the Reeti poetry, represent the contrast between the high and the elite life style and its expression on the one hand and subaltern and culture and popular language and media on the other. They might signified, perhaps, a detestful reaction against the elite form of expression. The body language, then, would, simply not be to satisfy the carnal desires of the audience but also to suggest that the established norms were often actually violated, together with the professed adherence to them outwardly.

The society, during late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was preoccupied with dominance of different religious beliefs. The Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti, the worship of incarnated deities and various other philosophical doctrines were preached at the same time with great vigour. Religion was not confined to the religious elites alone but it was brought down to every house of the commoners, possibly because the religion, during the

period, had become more flexible. It included liberal modes of devotion and people worshipped the deity of their own faith either ceremoniously or in some other ways.

The abstract philosophical doctrines existed side by side with the popular rituals and superstitious practices,

The Shankaracharya's concept of non-dualism was delineated systematically which described the world as an unreal entity. The realization of Brahman, the ultimate reality, was the only truth. The communion with god was in all the main objective of the devotee. God was the supreme and absolute power who granted everything to the human beings. Man in relation to god was presented as totally helpless who depended for all his action on the mercy of God.

He could attain salvation only when the god desired so. The man always made humble requests and offered prayers to the almighty for getting deliverance from the worldly desires. The devotee wished to leave this world as the earliest possible because the world was full of pains and miseries. This reflected the common belief in the life beyond this world.

Religion, thus, assumed multifarious forms, though its fundamental principles remained common and

unchangeable.. The relationship between different communities were not indicative of striking contradictions with the exception of Bhushan's versions. The religious beliefs rested on individual faith and surrender of the self.

In some quarters at least, the social values received a more rational treatment during the period. The high moral values were detested by a Reeti poet Vrind. He suggested, as a pragmatist, different ways to cope with the prevailing situation, even if these ways deviated from the dominant value system. He emphasized the values which secured a modest comfortable living.

From the few notices on pastimes and festivals, we could perhaps, be not very far from the target if we suggest that the culture grows out of a total way of life which can not be expected to be uniform. The society was divided into two groups, namely, the elites and the commoners; both were amphibious and bi-cultural. People realized the significance of recreation and amusement in their life and thus occasionally took part in the ritualised collective rejoicing. The sportive and playful activities of the commoners were seen in sharp contrast to those of the elites or higher classes. The court festivals were the same and they took place at the same time of

popular festivals but the celebrations at courts were more elaborate and formal involving much more expenditure. There are not striking instances of interaction between the elite and popular traditions. It is also not clear if the rich and the poor, the nobles and commoners attended same gatherings on particular occasions. Still, it can presumably be suggested that the elites maintained contact with the popular festivities through the poetic delineations. The commoners and the notables both secured carnal pleasures in their association with the prostitutes the difference being that the elites patronized them in their court and the commoners visited the centres of prostitution.

It is not possible, at this stage, to suggest whether there was a great regional variety in the festivals and festivities. It needs more specific and magisterial formulations later - if there were any linguistic or political barriers for cultural diffusions in different regions.

The notion of a king in Reeti poetry is in accordance with medieval traditions. The king exercised unlimited powers without any constitutional restraints. The divinity was the source of his power and the royalty, a ray emanated from the God. He was portrayed as a perfect human being endowed with all conceivable accomplishments.

He possessed all the qualities of the Hindu deities. The religion of the king did not affect his position. In general, the poets used almost the same words whether they described a Mughal Emperor or a local chief.

The foremost task of the king was to maintain balance in the society, to minimize the threats of eruption ^{and} ~~of~~ conflicts. It was his duty to see that the people of different castes and communities lived undisturbed, with their respective social and cultural practices.

The political relations and the political alignments cut across the religious and sectarian ~~and~~ affiliations. The rulers did clash with each other but it was certainly not because of their diverse creeds. The attitude of the localities towards the centre was determined by their fiscal relations - appropriation of taxes by the locality always created dispute between the two.

The frictions in the ruling class were not, simply, an extension of the problems of the entrenched position of its dominant members, but included lower officials and local chiefs as well. The conflicts within the locality reflected the ambitions of dominant local chiefs to ^h hegemonize maximum area in their neighbourhood. The conflicts at every level in the heirarchy was an expression

of the individual ambitions of the political dignitaries.

We also noticed a sharp decline in the control of the centre over various officials at local and regional levels, but the Mughal king was accepted as the sole sovereign and the source of legitimate power.

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