

HISTORICAL SIKH SHRINES OF WOMEN AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN SIKHISM

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work which is being presented in the dissertation entitled "**HISTORICAL SIKH SHRINES OF WOMEN AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN SIKHISM**" in Fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Faculty of Arts, is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the period from 2016 to 2019 under the Supervision of Dr. Daljit Kaur Gill.

The matter embodied in this dissertation has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other University.

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This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of my knowledge.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Punjab is the land of five rivers. The mighty five rivers flow through the holy land of this great state. Many pioneers had taken birth to this mighty land of Punjab. Guru Nanak Dev was one of those pioneers of Sikh religion that took birth to Punjab. He was the founder of Sikh religion. When Guru Nanak Dev was born the world was divided into various religious, social and political aspects. The caste system was at peak at that time. There were four castes during that time. The four castes were *Brahmins*, *Khatri*, *Vaishya* and *Shudras*. The situation of *Shudras* and women was very critical at that time. They were ill-treated by other castes. They were kept away from all the religious rights. The Hindus and Muslims were the leading religions at that time. They used to dominate all other religions in all other aspects. Hindus used to call Muslims *Males* and Muslims used to call Hindus *Kafir* and hence in these ways they used to degrade the status of each other and spread hatred. There was no a single person that would spread positivity and give message of truth to the world. There was no one to save the world from these political, social and religious evils. The world desperately needed a person that would give the message of love, peace and harmony to the world. At that time to teach the world, a lesson of truth Guru Nanak Dev was born. It was the need of the hour and the desperate calls of the suffering people that were heard by the God almighty and hence Guru Nanak Dev was sent to the world. It was due to Guru Nanak Dev that the illiteracy was removed from the world. It was due to his efforts that array of hope and positivity each home. All the homes became a site of spirituality where the name of God was taken on regular basis. Guru Nanak Dev also taught the lesson of truth to all the four directions.

Guru Nanak Dev took many initiatives to bring positivity and strength in the world. The first of such initiatives were the setup of *Sangat*. This became an important part of *Dharamsala*. Along with this *Langar Sanstha* to have a great value. Such type of institutes played a vital role in any religion. These were the representative of basic principles and the implementation of any religion. It is duty of a person to bring the religious principles into practice. At the same time a person plays a vital role as implementing the basic principles of the religion into practice. The basic principles are of no use if they are not implementing. Also if the implementation of basic principle goes wrong is diversion Of the main role, it can lead to disastrous results. Hence the understanding and

implementation of the principles needed to be done with at most care and to be handled with care. The center point of *Gurdwara* and the management committee insured the upliftment of Sikh culture, politics, culture and society. For this *Sangat*, *Langar*, *Masand* at Shri Akal Takht Sahib, *Gurbani*, Khalsa Panth found their existence. These found the basic principles of setting the Sikhism a strong organization. It was the thinking of Guru Nanak Dev that brought a revolutionary religious thinking in the people. Also at the spiritual level organizations like *Sangat* and *Pangat* helped in spreading principles like *Simran*, *Kirat* and *Vand Shakan*. Hence in this way a society where all were treated equal to setup and this was the base of their spiritual thinking. It was this thinking that found a great base of the Sikh religion and lead to great implementation of founding principles of later stage. It was due to Guru Nanak Dev that a strong base of Sikh religion was setup. The later *Gurus* followed the basic principles set up by Guru Nanak Dev and hence the Sikhism became one of the best religions of the world that promotes harmony, peace and equal rights for everyone irrespective of cast, creed and color.

In the *Bani* of Shri Guru Granth Sahib *Sangat*, *Sadh Sangat* and *Sat Sangat*, all these words commonly have the same meaning which is *pehle loka di Sangat* meaning an association that is the gathering of noble and innocent people. The word *Sangat* is used in place of all these three words. The institution of the *Gurdwaras* is based on the model of *Sangat*. It is *Sangat* that drives the day to day function of the *Gurdwara*. *Sangat* protects the society from total male domination over women and other aspects of the society. *Sangat* is important or the presence of *Gurmat* and *Gursugat*¹.

Sangat is a living link between the *Gurbani* and the *Gurdwara*. According to the *Bani* in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Guru himself is present in the *Sangat*. It is in the *Sangat* that the Guru enlightens the soul of the Sikhs. In the *Sangat*, the Sikhs feel joined with their Guru. The presence of the Guru is felt in the *Sangat*. It is said that *Akal Purakh* resides in the *Sangat*. The gathering of the *GurSikhs* is known as *Sangat*. Bhai Gurdas said that one is a Sikh, the gathering of two Sikhs is known as *Sangat* and if five Sikhs get together then they are the form of God. In *Gurmat*, it is said that Guru, *visve Sangat iki visve* Meaning that the status of the *Sangat* is considered to be even higher than the Guru.

¹Kahn Singh Nabha, *Guru Shabad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Patiala Bhasha Vibag Punjab, 1960, PP-146

The institution of *Dharmshalas* and *Pangat* were both derived from *Sangat*. *Sangat* and *Pangat* are both inseparable principles. *Pangat* has been derived from the Sanskrit word *pankti* that means a line, row or a group. The meaning of *pankti* is *Guru Ka Langar*. *Pangat* means sitting in a row to eat *Langar*. So *Pangat* and *Sangat* are related to each other since the time of Guru Nanak Dev both in percept as well as in practice. Wherever there was a *Sangat* there also was a *Langar*, as these *Sangats* were not merely places of worship but also wayside refectories which gave food and shelter to indigent wayfarers. Guru Nanak Dev introduced the concepts of *Kirat Karo*, *Vand Chako* and *Naam japo*. *Kirat Karo* means to earn a living through hard work and to earn by one's physical and mental effort while accepting both pains and pleasures as God's gifts and blessings. One is to stay truthful at all times and fear none but the eternal super soul. *Vand Chako* refers to sharing and consuming together. One must be part of a community that is pursuing flawless objective values set out by the Sikh Gurus and every Sikh has to contribute in whatever way possible to the common community pool. This spirit of sharing and giving is an important message from Guru Nanak Dev. Along with *kirat Karo* and *Vand Chako*, Guru Nanak Dev also taught this followers to take the name of God incorporating the concepts of *Naam Japo*. *Naam Japo* refers to the meditation, vocal singing of hymns from the *Guru Granth Sahib* or contemplating the various names of God (or qualities of God), especially the chanting of the word *Wahe Guru*, which means wonderful lord representing the formless being, the creator of all the forms and the being omnipresent in all forms².

The people in the *Sangat* sit together in the form of *Pangat* without any discrimination. There is no discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, color etc. in *Sangat* and *Pangat*. In the *Sangat* and *Pangat* there is no such division into the basis of upper and lower class. Every individual comes to the *Sangat* to learn from the knowledge of the Guru. Without any bias, the person eats the *Langar* which was prepared for one kitchen same for all. In *Sangat* the person listens to the teachings of the Guru, so enlightening his mind where as in *Pangat*, a person can feed his empty stomach. In this way, the foundation of *Sangat*, *Pangat* and *Dharmshalas* were established by Guru

²Gurbaj Singh, *Sikh Dharm Adian*, Johra, Patiala, 2015, PP, 28

Nanak Dev. Guru Nanak Dev was once given 20rp by his father. But with thesetwenty rupees Guru Nanak Dev fed poor and needy people. So in thisway Guru Nanak Dev starting the *Pangat pratha*. There is no discrimination amongst the people in the Sikh community. The *Brahman*, *Vaush*, *Khatiri* and *Shudar* all are treated to be equal in the *Sangat*³.

The concept of *Sangat* was started during the time of Guru Nanak Dev which was continued and enhanced during the time of the Gurus that succeeded Guru Nanak Dev. During his missionary journeyacrossthe globe, GuruNanak Devestablished *Dharmshalas* in many different places. The followerswould gatherinthese *Dharmshalas* not only to listen to the *katha kirtan* of the *Dhur ki Bani* but also to listen tothe teachings of Guru Nanak Dev .The establishment and growth of *Sangat* and *Dharmshalas* complimented each other. Wherever Guru Nanak Dev went, people would gather in the form of *Sangat* to listen to him. In these gatherings, Guru Nanak Dev encouraged the people to form religious centers as well as *Dharm sala*⁴.

During the time of Guru Sahib, a lot of centers and *Dharmshalas* were setup at different places. It was important to maintain them at that time. A large number of centers and *Dharmshalas* were setup under the guidance of GuruSahibin the 16th century. Other than Kartarpur, these centers included those at Khadoor Sahib, Goindwal, Ramdaspur, Tarantarn, Hargobindpura etc. All these centers had been setup under the guidance of Guru Sahib ⁵.The management of these centers was in the hand of the local *Sangat*. Guru Sahib him self appointed the head of thesecenters. The head of these centers themselves was *Gurmukh*.The head acted as alink between the *Sangat* and Guru Sahib. Guru Nanak Dev appointed many such leaders. Amongst them Bhai Lalo was first to be appointed. They played an important role tolinkthe membersof the *Sangat* amongst themselves and also with the Guru. Guru Nanak Dev has not only established these *Sangats*within the country but also in other countries such as Afghanistan, Dhaka, Sri Lanka, and Bangladeshetc⁶.

These *Sangat* based centers played an important role in the expansion of the Sikhism. The establishment of the *Sangat* took place in the era of Guru Nanak Dev.

³*Ibid* PP -29

⁴Gurdev Singh Sangha, *Gurdwara Sankalap Ate Sanstha*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar PP 94

⁵H.S Soch and Madan Jit Kaur, *Guru Nanak, Ideals and Institutions*, GuruNanak Dev University Amritsar, 1998, PP-183

⁶*Ibid* PP-184

This system was further developed during the time of the other Gurus. On the Vaisakhi of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh transformed *Sangat* into *Panth Khalsa*. From the starting, *Sangathas* always been given respect and it's considered to be the most important institution of Sikhism⁷.

Even after Guru Nanak Dev, the succeeding Gurus felt it was important to maintain the relation between the Guru and the *Sangat*. So, Guru Angad Dev opened *Dharmshalas* as *paathshaalas* and various activity centres such as *akharhes*. Guru Angad Dev emphasized that social and physical development of a person was as important as the religious aspect. Guru would teach the *Sangat* about the *Gurumukhi* language in the *paathshaalas*. So that the people could easily understand Guru Nanak Dev Bani which had been written in the *Gurumukhi* script. The arrangement of different sports would be held in the *akharas*. This was to ensure that people remained fit and healthy. Guru Angad Dev established Khadoor Sahib as the capital city for the Sikh community. Guru Angad Dev gave the responsibility for *Langar* to his wife *Mata khivi*. By doing so Guru Angad Dev showed for the first in India that women just as men could also take the responsibility of the society as well as that of the religion. The *kheer* prepared by *Mata khivi* in *Langar* was famous. Both Guru Angad Dev and *Mata khivi* provided the *Sangat* with knowledge about the lord, first by Guru through his teachings and then by *Bibi* during *Langar*⁸.

Sikhism had spread not only in Punjab but also to other parts of the country during the time of Guru Amar Das. So due to this it wasn't possible for Guru Amar Das himself to be in touch with the *Sangat* throughout the nation. So Guru Amar Das divided all the Sikh *Sangat* into 22 *manjis*.⁹ These twenty two devoted *Gur Sikhs*, all noble, devoted men and women (called *Sangatia and Masands*) were appointed by Guru Amar Das to spread Guru Nanak Dev's message, provide spiritual guidance and keep the *Sangat* (congregation) in touch with Guru Nanak Dev's message. Each *Man* (the dioceses) was also responsible for the offerings of each *Sangat* (the *dasvand*).

By doing so the Sikhs now had *Dharamsalas* in their local areas. This was a

⁷Teja Singh, *Sikhism: First Ideals and Institutions*, Shiromni Gurdwara Parbandak Committee, 1984, PP-26

⁸Gurbaj Singh, *Sikh Dharm Adian*, Johra, Patiala, 2015, PP 30

⁹Indu Bhushan Benerjee, *Khalse Di Utpati*, Patiala, Punjabi University, 1976, PP-129

bigstep toward the unification of the members of the Sikh community¹⁰.

Guru Amar das started the new aspect of the *Sangat and Pangat Pratha* which was *pehle Pangat phir Sangat*. This helped to strengthen the *Sangat and Pangat pratha*. When *Mugal Badshah Akbar* came to visit Guru Amar das, he has first to eat *Langar* while sitting in the *Pangat* before he could meet the Guru. Akbar was very impressed by this *pratha* of Guru Amar Das. Akbar proposed to give jagir for the *Langar* pratha to Guru Amar Das¹¹.

The different centers of the *Sangat* and the *Dharmshalas* that had been established in the various parts of the country were joined as to form an influential organization. The *Man* system of the *Dharmshalas* and *Sangat pratha* were further divided into 54 small centers which were known as *pidhe*. This was done to cope with the increased influence of the Sikhism through out the nation. Experienced and trust worthy Sikh men and women be appointed as the heads of the Sikh *Man* and *pidhe*. Their job was to preach about Sikhism in their centers and also to manage the donations given by the Sikh devotees of the Guru and as well as to maintain the accounts of the day today expenses and *Langar* in their centers. This established the Sikh religion as an independent one and also played an important role to distinguish the Sikhs from the Muslims and Hindus¹².

A new center was set up by Guru Ram Das that was *Guru Kachak* in Amritsar. In this new center Guru established 52 different communities. Without any discrimination, Guru permitted all the fifty two different communities to be a part of his *Sangat*. Guru appointed the *Masands* for the Development of these centers of the *Sangat*. The job of these *Masands* was to collect the donations given by the devotees of the *Mandar* and the *pidhedar* which were later handed over to the Guru¹³.

Just as these *Masands* too was appointed by the Guru himself. They were appointed to their capabilities. Their job was to collect the *daswands* which were given by the followers of the Guru and they also had the responsibility to preach about Sikhism in their respective centers¹⁴.

¹⁰*Ibid*, PP - 130

¹¹Gurbaj Singh *Sikh Dharm Adian*, Johra, Patiala, 2015, PP-31

¹²Sukhdial Singh, *Punjab da Ithihas*, Patiala, Punjabi University, 2000, PP- 87

¹³*Ibid* PP- 88

¹⁴ Gurdev Singh Sangha *Gurdwara Sankalap Ate Sanstha* Singh Brothers, 2011 Amritsar PP -98

Guru Arjan Dev started the *daswand pratha* for the development of *Sangat* and *Pangat*. *Daswand* is 10/ percent of the earning of a Sikh which according to Guru should be donated to the *Gurdwara*. This amount could be directly given to the *Gurdwara* or through the *Masand*. The donations given were to be used to meet the expenses of the *Guru Ghar*. There were two ways to pay this *daswand*. The first being that the Sikhs could happily give this amount of the *Masand* who would later deliver it to the *Gurdwara* at least once a year. The *Masand* would normally deliver to Guru on the Occasion of *diwali* or *Vaisakhi*. The second was that the people could directly deliver it to the Guru¹⁵.

The construction of Shri Harmandir Sahib was completed on 1604. Along with this, the compilation of Guru Granth Sahib was also completed. Guru Arjan Dev decided to inaugurate Shri Guru Granth Sahib in Harmandir Sahib. With this, Harmandir Sahib became center for Sikhs. Just as the day to day management of the *Dharmshalas* in Kartarpur was under the guidance of Guru Nanak Dev. The management of Harmandir Sahib was under the guidance of Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Sahib appointed Baba Budha as the first servant of Shri Harmandir Sahib. It was during the time of the sixth Guru that the name of *Dharamsala* was changed to *Gurdwara*. The *Sangat* were given a new concept of *miri-piri* by Guru Hargobind. Guru joined politics with religion. With this the construction of the *Akal Takhat* was also started which was to be constructed opposite to Harmandir Sahib. This was to be known as the center of the Sikh rule by the *Sangat*¹⁶.

The *Sangat* would gather in Shri Harmandir Sahib to listen to the preaching of the Guru Sahib. Guru used to hold a *Darbar* at the *Akal Takhat* where the problems of the common people were listened and solved by the Guru. Defense and military training was also given here by the Guru Sahib. Guru himself had two words one named *miri* and the second one was *piri*. So in this way the *Sangat* took the form of both saints and that of soldiers¹⁷.

Sikhism spread to different parts of the country at a very risk of the time of Guru Har Rai. Guru inspected the quality of food that was being provided for the *Sangat* by

¹⁵Narinder Kaur Bhatia *Parmukh Sikh Sanstha* Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar, 2005 PP – 123,125

¹⁶Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha *Guru Shabad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Patiala, Bhasha Vibag Punjab, 1960, PP-36

¹⁷Gurdev Singh Sangha *Gurdwara Sankalap Ate Sanstha*, Singh Brothers, 2011 Amritsar, PP - 108

asking the Sikhs how they were serving the *Sangat*. On this, one Guru Sikh answered that at first he served the *Sangat* before feeding himself. The second answered that at first he prepares the *Langar* for the *Sangat* then he served it to them. The third said that he first washes the feet of the *Sangat* then he serves them with *Langar*. After which Guru asked what would happen when a person came to eat *Langar* at such a time when there was no food, on answering this, the Sikhs told the Guru that such a person would have to leave with disappointed. He would have to wait till the morning in order to have *Langar*. On hearing this Guru ordered that anyone that comes to eat *Langar* at any time should not be left disappointed and should be provided with *Langar*. In this way Guru ordered that *Langar* should go on for twenty four hours a day. Guru Har Rai also ordered to open a medicine store for the *Sangat*. In this medical store free medicine was provided with all the members of the *Sangat*¹⁸.

Gurmat is a term which may in its essential sense be taken to be synonymous with Sikhism itself. *Gur* means wisdom and *mat* means belief. Generally *Gurmat's* theology includes teachings of Sikh *Bhagats* and Sikh Gurus which is incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib* the aim of *Gurmat* is to impart honesty in a person and to prepare him for the worldly struggles *Gurmat* was started by Guru Nanak Dev and it is present till date.

Guru Harkrishan took over the command of the Sikh community at a very young age though still was able to keep people united to the *Guru Ghar*. Raja Jai Singh invited Guru to meet him in Delhi. So accepting this invitation, Guru went to Delhi and stayed at Raja Jai Singh's castle. During his stay there, the *Sangat* of Delhi came to visit him. Guru Tegh Bahadur established a new center of the *Sangat* at Anandpur Sahib. However during that time, the *Masands* started keeping the donations that were made by the followers with themselves. By sacrificing his life, Guru Tegh Bahadur proved that whenever the *Sangat* is facing some difficulty that the Guru would stand for them. So by sacrificing his life Guru Tegh Bahadur served to protect the rights of the *Sangat*. Hence there is no discrimination in the *Sangat* based on religion¹⁹.

Before the death of Guru Gobind Singh, he ensured to that, there would be no Guru after him and instead he said that the next Guru would be *Guru Granth Sahib* that is the holy book for the Sikhs. The *Masand* system too had already been ended by Guru Gobind Singh before. The main reasons for the end of the *Masand* system were because

¹⁸Singh, *Sikh Dharm Adian*, Johra, Patiala, 2015, PP-33

¹⁹*Ibid*, PP-34

the *Masands* had diverted from their role. So Guru Gobind Singh ended the *Masand Partha*. Hence made the relation between the Sikhs and the Gurdwara *direct* that is *Guru Jugat kini khalsa*. By establishing the *Khalsa Panth*, Guru Gobind Singh ended the middle man system of the *Masands*, making the connection between the Guru and Sikhs direct²⁰.

According to Guru Nanak Dev, *Sangat* is not just a gathering of people but it is where people gather so that they can enhance various qualities. The *Sangat* should be such that where a person can learn and enhance himself. Doing so imparting qualities which would help him excel in his life. Along with this Guru started the *Langar pratha* which encouraged the lower class of the society. In *Langar* people are provided with free food. There is no discrimination in this *Sangat* as well as *Langar* on any. At first one to eat *Langar* alongside others only then one could listen to the teachings of the Guru. *Dharmshalas* were setup at different places which worked on the basis of these two *prathas*²¹.

Guru Nanak Dev inspected the conditions of the world with great depth. He felt that people were in the darkness and need to be enlightened by showing them the religious path. While some were busy worshipping different *Devis* and *Devtas*, some worshipping *madhia*, *masanas*, looking for God in *kabra* and others were also indifferent to misconceptions. So Guru Nanak Dev took upon the mission of showing these people the true path²².

Guru Nanak Sahib made the *Gurdwaras* the center of his mission. The *Gurdwaras* were made as centers of preaching. He established the first *Gurdwara* and *dharmshala* at Kartarpur and started giving his teachings there. After this Guru Nanak Dev established *Gurdwaras* as centers of preaching about *Gurmat* which Gobind Singh made in the form of *khande di paul* and named as *khalsa*. It is believed that Guru Nanak Dev started the *Gurdwara* system during his missionary journeys. These journeys are also known to be called *udasis* in history. During these journeys Guru Nanak Dev went towards the south that is to Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, in the east towards Assam, Orissa and Bangladesh, in the west towards Makka and Madhina and in the north he went deep inside the mountains of the Himalayas. People would gather to listen to the teachings

²⁰Bhai Kahn Singh *Guru Shabad Ratnakar Mahankosh* Patiala Bhasha Vibag Punjab, 1960, PP- 144

²¹Gurbaj Singh *Sikh Dharm Adian*, Johra, Patiala, 2015, PP-37

²²Pyara Singh Padam, *Gurughar*, Kala Mandir, Ludhiana, 1997 PP- 205

of Guru Nanak Dev during his stays at various places. These gatherings were given the name of *Sangat* or *Sat Sangat*. These places then became the centers of preaching about *Gurmat*. At that time the places of gatherings if these *Sangat* was known to be *Dharmshalas* which was later known to be *Gurdwaras*²³.

Guru Nanak Dev appointed a head of every *Dharmshala* who was responsible for the maintenance of the *Dharmshalas* and was also held accountable for preaching about the religion. At that time towards the north of Punjab Bhai Lalo and in the south west Shek Sajan were given these responsibilities. The others were Bhai Gopal Das in Banaras, Baba Budan Shah in Kiratpur, Salas Rai in Patna and Raja Shiv Nath in Sri Lanka²⁴.

Gurdwara is made up of two words *Guru* and *dwara* which means the place where the Guru resides²⁵. In the Sikh religion as the word of God is given the status of Guru, due to this *Gurdwara* is that place where the Guru Granth Sahib is kept. In every *Gurdwara* there is one *divan hall* where the Guru Granth Sahib is kept. The gathering of people i.e. the *Sat Sangat* gathered in the *divan hall* to recite the name of God and learn from the lessons. It is here that the *Katha* and the *Kirtan* is done. Alongside the religious discussions various discussions i.e. those of politics, social and the day to day life problems of a people are also discussed in these *Satsangs*.

A *Gurdwara* can be identified with some distance by a tall flag hanging on a pole that bears the *Nishan sahib*, the Sikh flag. Guru Sahib made Kartarpur the centre of preaching about *Gurmat*. Hence to listen to the teachings of Guru Sahib a lot of Hindus, Muslims, *Jogis* and *Sanyasies* would travel long distances. They would gather without any discrimination of any kind. During his stay at Kartarpur, Guru Nanak Dev started living like the common people. Guru Nanak Dev started farming and he would also lend a hand in the daily household jobs. The *Sangat* used to gather during the evening times and Guru used to preach to the followers by *Katha* and *Kirtan*. The path of *Japji Sahib* would be done in the morning. The *dharmshala* was open to the *Sangat* the whole day, where they would

²³Dharam Singh, *Guru Granth Sahib: Guru Eternal for the Sikhs*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2005, PP-11

²⁴Teja Singh, *The Gurdwara Reform movement and the Sikh*, Awakening, Shrimoni Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee, Amritsar 1984, PP-6

²⁵Gurmukh Singh, *Historical Sikh Shrines*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2000, PP- 43

come any time and were also gives *Langar* to eat. This is why the first Gurdwara is said to have been set up at Kartarpur Sahib²⁶.

Guru Angad Dev started living in Khadur Sahib. In this way the second centre for Sikhism are said to have been Khadur Sahib. Just like in Kartarpur, in this place too the *Sangat* used to gather and the service of *Langar* and *Sangat* was done throughout the day as well as the night by Mata khivi. However during the time of Shri Amar Das Shri Goindwal was made as the centre of the *parchar*. So the onset of Sikhism was a huge set back to the *Jaat - Paatpartha*. The fourth Guru of the Sikhs Guru Ram Das established Guru *Kachak* in Amritsar. After Kartarpur, Khadur Sahib and Goindwal Sahib Amritsar was the fourth center of the Sikhs. The establishment and the progress of this new centre of the Sikhs was under the guidance of the Guru himself. The *Castism* diminished during the time of Guru Arjun Dev hence the people from the communities of many different castes settled in this city.²⁷

In the era of Guru Arjan Dev the Sikhs were evolving into the grounds of both religious and social aspects, to form a new independent and strong community. Many religious had been set up at different places by the Sikhs. The beliefs of the Sikhs were different from those of the other traditional beliefs. Guru Arjan Sahib inaugurated the foundation stone of Shri Harimandar Sahib, led by a Muslim saint, Hajrat Mia Mir of Lahore on the first Magh, 30th December, 1588. Inaugurating Harmandir Sahib alongside a Muslim was an evolutionary step. This was symbols for the unification of the whole mankind. So Shri Harmandir Sahib is considered to be the common house of the whole mankind. The low platform bows a seed of humbleness amongst all the followers. It also has four doors that are in the four directions i.e. North, South, East and West. These doors are open to all, that is it is not only a central religious place for the Sikhs but is also a symbol of human brotherhood and equality, everybody irrespective of caste, creed, colour or race can seek spiritual solace and religious fulfilment without any hindrance, it also represents the distinct

²⁶ Sangat Singh, *Ihtihās Sikh*, New Delhi, 1999, PP- 23

²⁷ Harbhans Singh, *Sada Virsa*, Navyoung, New Delhi, 1997, PP- 43

identity, glory and heritage of the Sikhs²⁸.

Guru Arjan Sahib installed *Adi Granth* at Harmandir Sahib in 1604. Baba Budha was the first person to be appointed as the *Granthi* in Shri Harmandir Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev. He was the first person to be appointed to take care of the services at Harmandir Sahib. This was an important step taken to join the Sikhs with their Guru. With that the Sikhs community eliminated the ideology of *Jaat - Paat*, *Uch- Nich*, *Chua-Chout* etc. They adopted the philosophy of *Adi Granth Sahib* which had the ideology of *Sarab San*, *San Valta*, and *Brabri*. The Sikhs believed in universal brotherhood. During the era of Guru Arjan Sahib the new started concepts of the *Man* system, the *Masand* system and that of the *daswand pratha* helped establish a different and independent image of the Sikhs within the society. The ideas that were being preached about the stage of the *Gurdwaras* were neither liked by the *Brahmans* nor the *Muls*. So due to this a lot of *Molvi and Brahman*s felt jealous of the *Gurkhar* and the teachings of the Guru. Acting to this jealousy Guru Arjan Dev was sacrificed on the 30th of May, 1606 in a brutal way. This was not only the first sacrifice for the Sikh community but was also the first sacrifice to be witnessed throughout the whole nation²⁹.

Throughout the life of Guru Hargobind Sahib the *Gurdwara* had become the centre of the activities of the Sikh community. It was during this era that the *dharma salas* were given the name of *Gurdwara*. Through the *Gurdwaras* and the centres Guru Sahib imparted self-respect, self-confidence, independence and a feeling of pride amongst the Sikhs. This was like a starting of a new life for the Sikhs. This was the beginning of the formation of new religion. Guru Hargobind established the *Kirtpur*. So Guru Har Rai Sahib and Guru Harkrishan Sahib stay at *Kirtpur* for quite some time. However they also travelled throughout Punjab and its neighbouring areas to preach about Sikhism. Where ever Guru Sahib went a new *Sangat* would be formed. The next Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib also established a new *nagar* which was named *Anandpur Sahib* which also acted as a centre for Guru Gobind Singh's Governance³⁰.

These castles that had been established during the time of Guru Gobind

²⁸ *Ibid*, PP- 44

²⁹ Gurdev Singh Sangha, *Gurdwara Sankalp Ate Sanstha*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2011, PP- 43

³⁰ *Ibid*, PP-47

Singh are still present today in the form of *Gurdwara* as today. The Sikhs were also trained on how to fight the enemy i.e. on combat techniques and on how to use weapons during the time of Shri Guru Gobind Singh. He ensured that necessary measures were taken to ensure the protection for *Shri Anandpur Sahib* and the *Khalsa Panth*. So for this purpose five castles were made in the city of Anandpur Sahib. They included the *Killa Kesghadh*, *Killa Lohgarh*, *Killa Fatehgarh*, *Killa Nandgarh* and *Killa Holgarh*. Today *Gurdwaras* are in the places of these castles³¹.

So in this way *Gurdwara* is the centre of the political, religious and social activities of the life of the Sikhs. The life of every Sikh is related to the *Gurdwara*. Talking about the multidimensional functions of a *Gurdwara*, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha says that *Gurdwara* acts as a school for learners, as a medical store for the needy and sick, kitchen for the hungry, a centre to support feminism and a place to rest for travellers³².

Gurdwara acts as a symbol for the confidence and pride in the Sikhs. It is evident in history that before attacking on the Sikh community, the enemy soldiers first attack on the *Gurdwara* in order to damage the confidence and belief of the Sikhs. Hence it can be said that when the *Gurdwara* is damaged the Sikh is also damaged. The Sikh goes to the *Gurdwara* to get blessings from the Guru before taking on an action. The *Gurdwara* acts as the house of the Guru. Coming here the Sikh engages in *satsang* which means through *katha* and *kirtan*, he joins his soul with the Guru. In the Sikh religion it is emphasized to go to the *Gurdwara* in order to listen, read and understand the *Bani* because the purpose of one's life is understood through the *Bani* of the Guru. This is why it is important to understand this message and live your life accordingly. So in this way the ultimate position is given to the Guru in the Sikh religion.

The word Guru is derived from the *Sanskrit* language. It is made from the words *sri dhat*. The meaning of this vital word *sri dhat* is to teach. The meaning of this is the one that finishes the darkness of illiteracy and showers the

³¹*Ibid*, PP - 48

³²Kahn Singh Nabha, *Guru Shabad Ratnakar, Mahankosh*, Patiala Bhasha Vibag, Punjab, 1960 PP, 416-417

light of knowledge. According to Bhai Kahn Singh, in the religions present in India, a person who eliminates illiteracy by his knowledge is known as Guru³³. This can be a teacher or a person that teaches about a particular skill. In the Sikh religion the honor of being a Guru is only given to the ten Gurus. It is further given to the holy book of the Sikhs that is *Guru Granth Sahib*. Other than this no one can be given the title of Guru regardless of how much knowledge³⁴.

In other words it can be said that the *Bani* and teaching of embraced in Shri Guru Granth Sahib is Godly knowledge and is the *Bani* of the *Akal Purak*. This *Bani* has been given to us by the Sikh Gurus and the great leaders of the Sikh religion and this *bani* was written by them at such a time when their soul was in touch with the Lord. During this state the experience that these Gurus had has been described by the use of words with the *bani*. The Sikhs go to the *Gurdwara* to understand the teaching by these Gurus through *Guru Granth Sahib*. So that, they can practically impart this knowledge in the various aspects of their lives, those being in their social, political and religious aspects of their lives. It is with the help of this knowledge that a person can become his best self. *Naam Japna, Simran Karna, Sevak Karna, Katha Kirtan, Sun-na, Langar, Sangat, Pangat*, etc are the steps according to *Gurmat* to achieve this. Doing so a person can achieve the state of *param padh* during his lifetime. One can be honest and can show the way for *sachyar marg*. The Sikh goes to the *Gurdwara* to understand the true meaning of his life³⁵. The Sikhs are prohibited from making any person or any other Granth as their Guru, other than the ten Gurus and *Guru Granth Sahib*. The only Gurus of the Sikhs are the ten Gurus and *Guru Granth Sahib*. Every Sikh has to follow *Gurumanyo Granth* which has been proposed by the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. According to *Gurumanyo Granth* given by Guru Gobind Singh, every Sikh has to follow *Guru Granth Sahib* in his individual as well as social activities. According to *Guru Sahib*, the Sikhs i.e. the *Khalsa Panth* that is following the word of *Guru Granth Sahib* is Guru. In the end in Sikh decisions are taken collectively³⁶.

³³ *Ibid*, PP - 415

³⁴ Dharm Singh, *Guru Granth Sahib : Guru Eternal for the Sikhs*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1999 PP - 15

³⁵ *Ibid*, PP - 140

³⁶ Gurdev Singh Sangha, *Gurdwara Sankalop Athe Sanstha*, Sikh Brothers, Amritsar, 2011, PP - 27

Guru Granth Sahib is kept in every *Gurdwara*, and the teachings in this *bani* are followed. Without the knowledge provided by the Guru a person gets engulfed in the evils of *kam*, *krodh*, *lobh*, *moh* and *ahankar*. *Kaam* refers to lust, it is one of the greatest evils that tempts people away from God it makes an individual weak-willed and unreliable. *Krodh* which means anger is important to be controlled. A person overcome by *Krodh* loses his balance of mind and becomes incapable of thinking properly. *Krodh* means anger and hatred and has no place in any religious practice. *Lobh* means greed, a strong desire to possess what rightfully belongs to others. It makes an individual selfish and self centred. It distracts a person from his religious as well as social duties. A person can become blind with greed if an effort to control the desire for unlimited possession is not met. *Moh* refers to the strong attachment that an individual has to worldly possession and relationship. It blurs the perspective of human mind and makes him narrow minded. It deviates a person from his moral and social responsibilities and leads him towards a path of sin. *Ahankar* means false pride arising out of one's possessions, material wealth, intelligence or powers. It gives an individual a feeling that he is superior to others and therefore they are at a lower level than him. It leads to jealousy and causes a feeling of enmity and restlessness amongst people. Hence one becomes egoistic and starts on the path of self-destruction. He will be deprived of the knowledge of Guru and hence will live in darkness. Just as in order to travel across a river one needs a boat in the same way to go through life one needs the knowledge of the true Guru. When a person goes to the *Gurdwara* and engages in the *Sangat* to listen to the teaching in *gurbani*, hence understanding them and using the teaching in his own life, only then he will understand the true light of the teaching of the Guru. In this way one's soul gets joined with the Guru. So a person can end his materialistic desires. Just going to the *Gurdwara* to pay due respect to the Guru and listen to the teaching of the *bani* in true words cannot be the definition of going to the *Gurdwara*. In this way neither is just opening of the Shri Guru Granth Sahib considered to be the *Parkash* of Guru Granth Sahib. The true meaning and purpose of going to the *Gurdwara* means to understand the true meanings of the lesson that are in the

Gurbani and hence imparting them in one's own life³⁷.

Even before Guru Nanak Dev came to this universe, there was no shortage of religions throughout the world especially in India. There were various religions as well as religious places. People from different religions had set up their religion places at various different places. Every religion community had set up *mandirs (temples)*, *masitas (mosques)* and *girje (churches)* according to their requirement and population. However at these religious places only people from that particular religion were allowed to go to those places for example only Hindus could go to temples. Nevertheless there was also a community in India which was not permitted to enter to any of these religious places. These people were known as *ashoth* in the society which means untouchables. Some religions didn't even permit the *ashoths* to engage in prayers. With the establishment of *Gurdwaras*, Guru Sahib gave the whole humanity a religious place that was open to all i.e. a *sarab sanja ghar* where people from different religions, caste, country, community and colour could come and would not have to face any discrimination. At the *Gurdwara* everyone is welcome to pray and share his problems with others.³⁸ No barriers of caste, creed or colour affect the basic proceedings and protocols of *Gurdwara*.

The *bani* that is preached in the *Gurdwara* i.e. the *bani Guru Granth Sahib Dhur-ki-Bani* is not the property of any community, religion or country. The *Sangat* in the *Gurdwara* comprises of people from different religions and castes. The concepts of *pangat* and *Langar* also apply to all without any discrimination i.e. anyone can come and eat food in *Langar*. Traditionally *Gurdwaras* are known as the religious place of the Sikh, but the teachings given here are for the benefit of the whole mankind. The aim of the Sikh religion is to make a person humble, honest and *Gurmukh* through *seva*, *simran* and philanthropy. This is a common religion for the whole mankind. The main philosophies of the Sikh religion are to take the name of God and to do philanthropic works³⁹.

³⁷ *Ibid*, PP - 29

³⁸ Pyara Singh Padam, *Gurughar*, Kala Mandhir Patiala, 1997, PP - 198

³⁹ Gurdev Singh Sangha, *Gurdwara Sankalp Ate Sanstha*, Sikh Brothers, Amritsar, 2011, PP - 37

The importance of *Gurdwaras* in Sikh religion is immense. They act as the centres of sharing the teachings of the Guru, the place for prayers, centres for religious teachings, social centres and centres of teaching and discussion on religious and social matters. People from different castes, communities and Sikhs sit together in the form of *Sangat* and have the privilege of gaining from the knowledge of *Gurmukhi*. *Langar* is an important part of every *Gurdwara*, in *Langar* every person who comes to the *Gurdwara* is given free food without any discrimination. In *Langar* all the *Sangat* sit together in the form of *pangat*. Even during *Langar* there is no evil of discrimination and *shua-shut*. The followers of the *Gurghar* donate the materials for the preparation for the *Langar*. It is also considered a good practice to do *seva* in the *Gurdwara* i.e. to play a role in preparing the *Langar* or during serving, which the Sikhs do happily. People gather in the *Gurdwaras* during both the happy and sorrow times of their lives i.e. either during wedding, birth of child or at the moment of death of a member of the family. In reality the *Gurdwara* acts as school for the students, a place for universal knowledge for those who are the curious, medicine store for the sick, a kitchen for the hungry and a place to rest for the travellers⁴⁰. It can be said that *Gurdwaras* are the place of practice of the Sikh religion. *Gurdwaras* are an important part of the Sikh religion.

The *Gurdwaras* have been considered as the centers for the development of Sikh brotherhood and fraternity ever since the start of the Sikh religion. Guru Sahib had named the gathering of people as *Sangat* that has a meaning of a place for sitting together and promotion of brotherhood for the Sikhs. In these gatherings the Sikhs not only discussed on religious matters but also on various social and political topics. They also discussed the day to day life problems and also planned programs for the benefit to the whole mankind.

The Sikh Gurus especially the sixth and the Tenth Gurus of the Sikhs encouraged the Sikhs *Sangat* in the *Gurdwaras* to fight against the torture of the Mughal emperors. It was in the *Gurdwaras* that the Sikhs were trained in combat and fight to face the enemy armies. When necessary it was here that the

⁴⁰Kashmir Singh, *Law of religions, Institution Sikh Gurdwara*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1991, PP - 97

Sikhs would be prepared for the religious wars *dharmayudh*⁴¹.

The Sikh religion was a religion that was and still is considered open to all and aims for the benefit of all. If it was called a revolutionary religion *yough paltau jagat dharm* then it would not be considered as wrong. This is because Sikh religion was against the already prevailing superstitions in the society. It was also against the discrimination in the society on the grounds of gender and caste. Sikh religion also promotes the independence of the people of other countries. It supports the religious, social and political freedom of every community. Without any discrimination people from different castes, communities or countries are welcome in the Sikh religion. It also sends a message of peace and love amongst the people of different religions. From all the religions present in this world, Sikhism is one such religion that prays for the well beings of the whole humanity at least two times a day in the *Gurdwarasi*, i.e. during the *ardas*⁴².

Guru Nanak Dev ended the injustice and the exploitation of a certain section of people in the society through his *bani*. He also challenged the actions of the leaders that were against the welfare of the society. The aim of Guru Nanak Dev was to form a new community. He did not like the current status of the society which lacked morals and in which people were under various superstitions. The struggle that Guru Sahib had to undergo so as to form a new community and a new rule cannot be compared to any other community or kingdom of that time. The ideologies and views of this religion were different from the others. The hierarchy system which was presenting the other communities was the son got the rule of the kingdom after the father was not followed in the Sikh religion.

Guru Nanak Dev took the revolutionary step to promote the equality between the men and women. The first observation of equality between both the genders can be seen in the *bani* of Guru Nanak Dev. Women played an important role in preaching and spreading Sikhism and hence

⁴¹Teja Singh, *Sikhism: Ideals and Institution*, Shiromni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, 1984
PP - 11

⁴²*Ibid*, PP - 13

comprised the *Masands*. Guru Gobind Singh honored women by giving them the name of *Khande Di Paul* making them equal to men in every aspect of life. Mai Bhago made history by taking part in the battle over Muktsar ⁴³.

The *Gurdwaras* with in the country as well as abroad are a source of pride in the Sikhs. *Sikhs Gurus, sevaks and the sevdhar of the Gurughar* played an important role in these *Gurdwaras*. Sikh women also comprise of the mand too have played their part. It is due to the service and sacrifice done by the Sikh women, that various *Gurdwaras* have been given their name. The line of the *ardas* of the Sikhs *jinasingha singhnia ne dharmheth sis ditek* proves that the status of women in the Sikh community is at parity with the males. It is important to remember here that Guru Nanak dev not only spread awareness about social brotherhood and the social evils but also enhanced the status of women in the society. He represented women as *sulakhni* in his *bani*. So in his *bani* he stated that women have thirty two qualities those being *sundarta, swatchta, lajha, chaturai, vidya, pati pagti seva, dya, sta, udarta, gmabhirta, udam, survirta, ragh kavya, chitar oshadya, rasoi, sion di kala, pron di vidya, ghar di vastua da paryog karna, bajurga da mann, ghar aye prohnia da sanmaan and santan da palna*⁴⁴. Only a being with such qualities can attain God.

⁴³Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*. Singh, Brothers, Amritsar, 1991, PP- 33

⁴⁴Bhai Kahan Singh, *Gurshabad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Bhasha Vibagh, Punjab, Patiala, 1960, PP- 625

Chapter-2

Contribution of Sikh women in The Sikh history

The principles of the Sikhism state that a women has the same soul as a man and she has an equal right to cultivate their spirituality. Women can participate in all religious, social, culture activities. Throughout history, one can observe that women are brave and while reading the *sastras* one can come to the conclusion that women are powerful. However, in my experience women are a symbol of motherhood. Women have the quality to adopt to any situation, in spite of this, the society in various cultures throughout history has been unjust to this section of the society. However, the Guru Sahibs in the Sikh religion has given the women their deserved respect. In order to ensure that there is an equal status for women, the Gurus made no distinction between a man and a women in matters of initiation, instruction and participation in *sangat* and *pangat* (eating together). The founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak Dev said a woman keeps the race going on and that no one should consider women cursed and condemned because it is a women who gives birth to leaders and king. Guru Gobind Singh instructed the *Khalsa* to not get associate with those who sin against the women and the Guru was totally against the objectification of women. Guru Gobind Singh gave the surname of Kaur (The status of princess) to those women who were baptized into the *Khalsa*. Therefore, the women hold a great position in the Sikh religion. This can be proved by the following quote said by Guru Nanak Dev:

\ *So kyo manda ahkheay, jitt jameh Rajan*

Women have been playing their part in uplifting the society and their families either in the form of mother or daughter. We do not find much detail about the contribution of the Sikh women in the Sikh history i.e. even though there is a mention of the sacrifices made by the *Singhs* and *Singhnia* in the *ardas*, there is no detailed description of their sacrifices. Nevertheless, many mothers, sister and daughters have contributed to the Sikh religion due to which women hold an important position in the Sikh community. Women have been pioneers in various aspects in the Sikh religion for example the first person to see Guru Nanak Dev was Dolta Dayi, Bebe Nanki was the first Sikh, Mai Virayi was the first women advisor of the Guru, Bibi Roop Kaur was the first historian to compile the teachings of the Guru, Mai Bhago was the first

general and Mata khivi was the first *seva panthni*. Amongst these women was Bibi Bhani who was blessed with the honor of keeping the *Gurta gadi* in her family because of her service to the Guru Sahib. Mata Gujri was amongst the first martyrs to the Sikh religion.¹

After reading the Sikh history, one cannot comprehend that women are considered lower and unrespectable in the Sikh religion. It is due to the sacrifices made by these Sikh women that the women of today's generation can live their lives with pride. Other than this, the other Sikh women like the wives of the Guru Sahibs, Mata Mansa Devi, Mata Ganga, Mata Sundri, Sahib Deva and Mata Kolah who was the daughter of a Muslim Qazi have contributed immensely to the Sikh religion. It is due to the sacrifices made by these women that the status of women is considered utmost in the Sikh religion.²

The first people to see Guru Nanak Dev were Dayi Dolta. Hence she is considered to be blessed as she got the honor of being the first person to see this great personality. Other than this, women are considered to be blessed as they give birth to kings, warriors and saints. In the Sikh history, Mata Tripta was that blessed woman that gave birth to the first Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak Dev. For this reason, Mata Tripta's eternal mark in the history on the Sikh religion. Hence, Mata Tripta is considered to be one of the greatest mothers of the world.³

Bebe Nanki was the sister of Guru Nanak Dev. Other than this, she was the first woman to see the godly presence of God in him Guru Nanak Dev and hence became the first Sikh. Bebe Nanki is an important religious figure in the Sikh religion. Bebe Nanki is considered to be the first follower of Guru Nanak Dev. Bebe Nanki was totally devoted to Guru Nanak Dev.

Bebe Nanki was the eldest daughter of Mata Tripta and Mehta Kalu. Hence, she was the elder sister of Guru Nanak Dev. However, she not only acted as the sister of Guru Nanak Dev but also acted as an advisor and a companion that supported Guru Nanak Dev through the tough periods. Due to this reason, Bebe Nanki holds a great position in the Sikh religion.⁴

Bebe Nanki was the first person to treat Guru Nanak Dev like a

¹ Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh brother, Amritsar, 1991, pp-12

² Karpal Singh Badungar, *Charan Gobind Marg Sohava*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2018, pp-62

³ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Ihtihastik Sikh Nariya*, Garden Market, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 2003, pp-135

⁴ Mahinder Kaur Gill, *Eminent Sikh Women*, Himala Publisher New Delhi, 2003, pp-44

saint. She had complete faith in the spiritual of Guru Nanak Dev. She also tried to convince her parents that Guru Nanak Dev was a *fakir*. She always tried to protect Guru Nanak Dev from the scolding from their father upon any mistake done by Guru Sahib. Guru Nanak Dev chose to live a household life upon the advisor of Bebe Nanki .

Jai ram also gave a lot of respect to Bebe Nanki because she was the sister of Guru Nanak Dev. Even, her in-laws had a lot of admiration for her because of being the sister of Guru Nanak Dev. This is evident from the fact that one day they said to her that she was blessed to be the sister of Guru Nanak Dev and they considered themselves to be blessed too because of having a relation to Guru Nanak Dev .⁵

Bebe Nanki had a lot of love for his brother, Guru Nanak Dev . She was the one that vouched for him to get a job of the *Modikahna*. She took care of the wife and children of Guru Nanak Dev during the journeys of Guru Nanak Dev . The reason why Guru Nanak Dev took money from his sister to make the *rabab* was to remind himself of his sister while Bhai Mardhana played the *rabab* during his journey. Bebe Nanki played a major role in the establishment of the program of *kirtan* in the Sikh religion. *Kirtan* is an important part of the Sikh religion today. Bebe Nanki advised Guru Nanak Dev to express his teachings in the form of melodies. Hence, kirtan has been performed in the form of melodies and chanting from that time. Even today, kirtan is considered to be of the utmost importance in the *Guru ghar*. Along with this, Guru Nanak Dev made it a compulsion to form the *bani* in the form of *rag*. Due to which the whole *bani* have been written in the form of *rags*.⁶

Bebe Nanki was cremated by Guru Nanak Dev himself. Bhai Jairam also died on the third day after the death of Bebe Nanki. He too was cremated by Guru Nanak Dev. The ashes of both of them was laid off together in the kali Bein. Just as the Kali Bein acted as a symbol of brotherhood between the Hindus and the Sikhs i.e. '*nah koi Hindu nah Musalman*', it also became a symbol of the love between brother and sister and husband and wife.

It is an interesting fact that Guru Nanak Dev used the love between the brother and his sister to explain the relation between the soul and the body. Guru Nanak Dev said that when the brotherly form of

⁵ Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1991, pp-49

⁶ Harbhajan Singh Hami, *Vilakhan Surop Bibi Nanki*, Metab Singh, New Book Company, Jalandhar, 1991, pp-50

soul lives the body, it leaves the sister (body) burnt. Bebe Nanki was the first woman to accept the religion of Guru Nanak Dev. She was the first person to adopt the Sikh teachings. Hence, she is considered to be amongst the best sisters of the world.⁷

Mata Sulakhni was given the honor of being the first *mahal* of the Sikhs religion. She was the wife of Guru Nanak Dev. She stood like a wall of Guru Nanak Dev throughout her life. Although, there is not much mentioned about Mata Sulakhni in the history of the Sikh religion, nevertheless we still have the knowledge about her nation, personality and contribution to the Sikh religion. Being the wife of Guru Nanak Dev, she supported Guru Sahib in all his actions and journey. She stood by Guru Nanak Dev in his journeys and works. She spent most of her life in serving Guru Nanak Dev and the Sikh religion.⁸

When Guru Nanak Dev pursued his journey to spread the teachings of Sikhism, the wife of Guru Nanak Dev, Mata Sulakhni stayed in Sultanpur for about twelve years. She was not only the wife of Guru Nanak Dev but also his devotee. She continued to provide her service in the *langar* started by Guru Nanak Dev. She was known to possess the qualities of being patient and obedient. After Sultanpur, she came to live with her parents in Batala. However, when Guru Nanak Dev came to Kartarpur, Mata Sulakhni went there and resided with Guru Sahib. She stayed in Kartarpur for the rest of her life. She helped in preaching about the mission of Guru Sahib while she was living in Kartarpur.

So, in this way Mata Sulakhni did not act as an obstruction in Guru Nanak Dev's mission. It is evident from the Sikh history that she was a great contributor in the mission of Guru Nanak Dev. Hence she holds an important position in the Sikh religion.⁹

The formation of relatives of one's life starts upon one's birth. Amongst the first relationships formed is that of the mother who gives birth to the child and the second is that of the father who teaches the child how to walk while holding the hand. The other relations include that of an uncle that brings joy, the maternal aunt that is just another

⁷ Kesar Singh Multani, *Jivan Charitar Bibi Nanki*, Guru Nanak Mission Book Society, Ludhiana, 1989, pp-45

⁸ Kirpal Singh, *Bibi Sulakhni*, Mamta Parkashan Bazar, Ferozpur, 2001, pp-20

⁹ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Ihtihasic Sikh Nariya*, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 2003, pp-30

form of the mother and paternal aunt also holds an important relation with the child. In the same way, Mai Virayi was the paternal aunt of Guru Angad Dev .¹⁰

Mai Virayi was just as a sister of Bhai Feru Mal. She was also known as Biibi Virayi. She was the only sister of seven brothers. It is due to this reason that she was also known as '*sathprayior virayi*'. She was a very cheerful person. Guru Nanak Dev came to Mai Virayi's village during his first journey (*udasi*). Upon meeting Mai Virayi, Guru Nanak Dev told her that he would stay at her place for quite some. Guru Nanak Dev stayed true to his word i.e. he stayed at Mai Virayi's place for a long time in the form of Guru Angad Dev . However, Guru told her not to tell this to anyone else. Mai Virayi complied with the orders for Guru Sahib and did not tell this to anyone. She served Guru Sahib by providing him with food and shelter. Mai Virayi was an obedient, intelligent and cheerful women. When Baba Budha and five other Sikhs came to Mai Virayi's home looking for Guru Sahib, she did not tell them about him. However, Guru Arjan Dev came out after listening to the *kirtan* performed by Baba Budha . It was Mai Virayi who proposed Guru Angad Dev to marry Mata khivi . The ladle that was used to make the *langar* was also given to Mata khivi by Mai Virayi. Mai Virayi along with Mata khivi continued to serve as *langar* until the end of their lives.¹¹

Although there are many names in the list of the *seva panthis* and *sevadhars* in the Sikh religion, the name of Mata khivi is considered to be at the utmost position. Mata khivi was the first to be the personification of *seva*. Due to her *seva*, her name has not only been cemented in the Sikh history but has also been included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Mata khivi was the wife of Guru Angad Dev . It is important to take note of the activities undertaken by Mata khivi as the wife of Guru Angad Dev .She was one of the few women that have been written about in the Sikh religion. The contribution of Mata khivi to the Sikh religion can be comprehended from her work in the *langar partha* started by Guru Nanak Dev .Mata khivi was just as kind as her husband was i.e. Guru Angad Dev provided *langar* to the *sangat* that had come to listen to the teachings and Mata khivi would take care of the responsibility for the conduct of the *langar*. Mata khivi took care of the

¹⁰ Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh Brothers, Bajar My Seva, Amritsar, 1991, pp-71

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp-76

needs of the needy. The members of the *sangat* were provided with food in the *langar*. Those who were tired and frustrated who get a sensation of peace after eating Mata khivi's *langar*.¹²

The husband of Mata khivi, Bhai Lehna would go on the pilgrimage of the Devi every year. Bhai Jodh once visited Bhai Lehna's village. So, as Bhai Jodh was travelling across Bhai Lehna's home one morning chanting the prayers of Guru Nanak Dev, Bhai Lehna stopped him and asked whose *bani* he was reciting. Bhai Jodh answered that this was Guru Nanak Dev's *bani* that resided in Kartarpur. So, Bhai Lehna went to Kartarpur to see Guru Nanak Dev. Bhai Lehna served Guru Nanak Dev and came and went to Khadoor Sahib. When Bhai Lehna told Mata khivi about Guru Nanak Dev, she asked Bhai Lehna to allow her to visit Guru Sahib. So, after seeing the *seva* done by Mata Sulakhni, Mata khivi also came to Khadoor Sahib.¹³

After Bhai Lehna attained the *Gurta gaddi*, Mata khivi took care of the responsibility for providing *langar* to the *sangat* that would come to meet the Guru Sahib. So, in this way, Mata khivi became the chief of the management of the *langar*. Hence, Mata khivi became well known for her *seva*. After the death of Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das became the third Guru of the Sikhs. The two sons of Guru Angad Dev, Dattu and Dasu were not contented with this decision as they considered it their right to get the *Gurgaddi*. Upon this, Mata khivi suggested them to accept their faith and follow the order of the Guru Sahib. Although Dattu agreed to her mother's advice, Dattu was not satisfied, so he went to Goindwal and insulted Guru Amar Das. When Mata khivi came to know of this she herself went to Goindwal to ask for forgiveness from Guru Amar Das for her son's mistakes. Historians have written that Mata khivi's *seva* had a huge role to play in the attainment of the *Gurtagaddi* by Guru Angad Dev.¹⁴

After Guru Angad Dev attained the *Gurgaddi*, Mata khivi was aware of the fact that this was the first time that someone had become the leader of the religion after Guru Nanak Dev. This was the first time the rule of the Sikh religion had shifted in the Sikh religion. Mata khivi

¹² Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1991, pp-20

¹³ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Ihtihastik Sikh Nariya*, Personal Book Shop, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 2003, pp-31

¹⁴ Parkash Singh, *The Sikh Gurus and the temple of Bareilly*, Dharam Parkash Committee, Amritsar, 2009, pp-36

imparted good morals in her children. Bibi Amro was a living example of this fact. It has been written in the Sikh history that Mata khivi was the personification of worship (*ve bhagti apna sareer dhar Guru Pita ghar Jami hove*). Bibi Amro learnt about the prayers of the *gurbani* from her mother, Mata khivi . The in-laws of Bibi Amro lived in the Basarke village. Guru Amar Das was also born in this village. Bibi Amro was married to the son of the youngest brother of Guru Amar Das .Bibi Amro had the habit of waking up early in the morning to chant the *shabads* of the *Gurbani*. Guru Amar Das became the third Guru of the Sikhs after being influenced by listening to the *bani* from her.¹⁵

Mata khivi was that lucky woman who got the honor of seeing and listening the teachings of the first five Gurus of the Sikh religion i.e. from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Angad Dev . The husband of Mata khivi , Guru Angad Dev died in 1553. However, Mata khivi lived for another 30 years. After the death of her husband, she devoted her life the *seva* of the *Gurughar* and praying. Her lifestyle is an example to the women of the whole. She most of her life in nam- *simran* and *seva*. Mata khivi emphasized on the importance of the *langar pratha* to such an extent that it has become an indispensable part of the Sikh religion and Gurdwaras throughout the world. This *langar* today acts as a source of food for the poor, travelers and the *sangat* of the *Gurughar*.¹⁶

It is said that the light from a firefly is sufficient in darkness, in the same way Bibi Amro showed the righteous path to Bhai Amar Das while reciting the *bani* of Guru Nanak Dev . Bibi Amro was the daughter of Guru Angad Dev and Mata khivi .

Bibi Amro was married to the son of Bhai Manak Chand and Bibi Bhago, Jasoo of the Basserke village. Jasoo was the nephew of Guru Amar Das . Bhai Amar Das went to visit Guru Angad Dev after listening to the *bani* from Bibi Amro . Later he was blessed with the honor of

nimaniya de Mann tenitaniya de tann te niyotea di ott

So, in this way it can be said that Bibi Amro was the first female preacher of the Sikh religion. Bibi Amro was a very religious person. She was the pride in her family as well as her in-laws. She was a religious women, obedient wife and the pride of her parents. Every house should be blessed with such a daughter who not only increases the

¹⁵ Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh Brothers, , Amritsar, 1991, pp-28

¹⁶ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Ihtihastik Sikh Nariya*, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 2003, pp-43

pride of her father and her in-laws but also strive for uplifting the society and the religion.¹⁷

Many women including the wives of the Guru Sahibs played important roles in the propagation of the ideologies of the religion. Amongst these women, Bibi Bhani holds an important position because of her *seva*, *simran* and sacrifice that she made for the religion. Bibi Bhani was that lucky woman whose family had direct relations to the Gurus of the Sikh religion. Bibi Bhani had the honor of being the daughter of the third Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Amar Das, the wife of the fourth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Ram Das, the mother of the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Arjan Dev and the grandmother of the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind Sahib. A woman has to perform the roles being a daughter, wife, mother and grandmother throughout the course of her life. Bibi Bhani was also the great-grandmother of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the great-great-grandmother of the tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh. Throughout history, one can observe that the next seven successors after the Sodhi Sultan, Guru Ram Das have been from the same family. Bibi Bhani was the eldest woman in this family.¹⁸

Bibi Bhani was blessed by Guru Amar Das because of her selfless service. She played an important role in the formation of the Sikh historical literature. Bibi Bhani was married to the fourth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Ram Das. She gave birth to the fifth guru of the Sikhs, Guru Arjan Dev who went on to be a great warrior who fought against the repression and oppression in the society. He went on to be the first martyr to the Sikh religion. Bibi Bhani stayed calm upon getting the news of the martyrdom of her son, she believed it to be his destiny. Her life story is unique and is a source of inspiration.¹⁹

Bibi Bhani got the honor of serving her father, Guru Amar Das. One such example of this was when Bibi Bhani was bathing her father, one of her toes came under the stool by she did not show any sign of pain so as not to break the attention of her father. When Guru Amar Das came to know of this, he blessed Bibi Bhani saying that the successors of the *Gurgaddi* would belong from her family.²⁰

¹⁷ Gobind Singh, Nirmal Udasi, *Ihtihās Vich Khalsa*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1991, pp-92

¹⁸ Giani Tirlok Singh, *Ihtihāsik Novel Bibi Bhani*, Bhai Chattur Singh, van Singh, Amritsar

¹⁹ Satvir Singh, *Puratan Ihtihāsik Jiviniā*, Mihiragate, Jalandhar, 1980, pp-47

²⁰ Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1991, pp-97

Bibi Bhani had a lot of qualities. She was a very patient, obedient, intelligent and beautiful woman. She is also known as *sumatshila* in the history of the Sikh religion. Other than this, Bibi Bhani also contributed a lot in the *langar pratha*. The administration of the *langar pratha* was improved the time of Guru Amar Das. It was made a compulsion for the Sikh *sanats* to first eat *langar* in the *panghat* and then listen to the teachings from the Guru. This order was applicable to both the rich and the poor. So, when the Mughal Badshah, Akbar came to visit the Guru Sahib, he first had to eat the *langar* in the *panghat* before he could visit Guru Amar Das. Badshah Akbar was so impressed by this program that he gave 500 bigas of land to Bibi Bhani.²¹

Bibi Bhani also offered a lot of support to her daughter-in-law after the death of her son. She also made sure that her grandson, Guru Hargobind received the best form of education. The responsibility for weapon training (*sastarvidya*) was given to Baba Budha. Bibi Bhani's memory will be everlasting the minds of the members of the Sikh community. She acts as a source of inspiration for the Sikhs of today's generation. Bibi Bhani was blessed to have got the opportunity to serve her father i.e. Guru Amar Das. It was due to this *seva* that Guru blessed her by keeping the *Gurgaddi* in her family.²²

Bibi Bhani also played an important role in the establishment of the Adhi Granth i.e. by giving her advice to Guru Arjan Dev. Other than this, Guru Arjan Dev ordered for the construction of many places under the advice of Bibi Bhani. Hence it can be said that Bibi Bhani is one of the most important Sikh women in the history of the religion because of her various qualities. In the end she was blessed to be a daughter, wife, mother, sister, mother-in law, daughter-in law, grandmother, great grandmother and great-great grandmother.²³

Mata Ganga was blessed with the honor of being the wife of the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, Shri Guru Arjan Dev. The name of Mata Ganga will last forever in the Sikh religion because of her achievements and qualities. She was that blessed woman that gave birth to the pioneer of *Miri-Piri*, Guru Hargobind Sahib. She was a very calm, religious and intelligent woman. It was her advice to form the Sikhs saint-warriors to fight against the crimes in the society. She was just as pure as her name

²¹ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Ihtisak Sikh Nariya*, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 2003, pp-52

²² Rajinder Kaur, *Mahan Sikh Istriya*, Guru Gobind Singh Avenue, Jalandhar, 2014, pp-35

²³ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Ihtisak Sikh Nariya*, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 2003, pp-60

as she worked for the benefit of the masses.²⁴

At the time of the death of Guru Arjan Dev, Hargobind was of a very young age while her mother-in-law was very old and could not bear the loss of her son. Mata Ganga not only supported her mother-in-law and son but also guided and led the Sikh *sangat* through this tough situation. She made it sure to train her son, Hargobind in the *shashtarvidya*. Hence by giving the *Miri-Piri* words to Guru Hargobind Sahib, she gave the indication to the Sikh *sangat* that the Sikhs would not only pray but would also fight against crimes and their enemies. With this, people started donating weapons and horses to Guru Sahib. Mata Ganga was leading all these activities with the help and advice of Baba Budha who had served six Gurus as their *sevak*. Mata Ganga had anticipated the need of the society at that time. She stood behind her son in every battle. So, in this way she was the pioneer of the ideology of *Miri-Piri* and also played an important role in the creation of the *Akal-Takht Sahib*. Hence, in her memory the Gurdwara Gangasar has been constructed. She acts as an inspiration to the mothers of today's generation. She taught the Sikhs how to stand the test of time, how to find the solutions of problems and the importance of honesty.²⁵

Mata Damodari was the wife of Guru Hargobind Sahib . She also gave birth to Bibi Biro. Mata Damodari was the first *mahalof* Guru Hargobind Sahib . However, after her death, Guru Hargobind Sahib married Mata Nanki who gave birth to the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Teghh Bahadur. She was just as a mother to the children of Mata Damodari . Guru Teghh Bahadur had a lot of love for her mother, Mata Nanki . He bought a land on the hills of the Shivaliks in the Makohke village and dedicated it to his mother. He named the village Chak Nanki. So, in this way Mata Nanki was the first mother whose son had named a village after her. Later, this area got famous by name Anandpur Sahib.²⁶

However Mata Nanki had to go through a lot of adverse situations, one of which occurred when she received the dead body of her son, Guru Teghh Bahadur in Anandpur Sahib. She handled this situation with great bravery and calmness and led the Sikhs sangats to the place of the

²⁴ *Ibid* pp-61

²⁵ Giani Tirlok Singh, *Bibi Ganga*, Amrit Pustak Bhandar, Amritsar, pp-113-114

²⁶ Rajinder Kaur, *Mahan Sikh Istri*, Guru Gobind Singh Avenue, Jalandhar, 2014, pp-46

cremation. She accepted the death of her son as the fate as written by God. Hence, in this way MataNanki has given a message to all the mother, daughter and sisters of today's generation that one has to make a lot of sacrifices for one's family and has to let go of ambitions. In doing so one cannot be afraid of any situation.²⁷

Other than the Sikh women, many Muslims also hold great positions in the Sikh religion. One of which was Bibi Kolah who was famous as the daughter of a Qazi. She was the daughter of Rustam Khan who was a Muslim. She was highly influenced by the bravery of Guru Hargobind Sahib, so she became his Sikh. It was due to this reason she supported Guru Hargobind Sahib. So, a Gurdwara was made in her memory in Amritsar named Gurdwara Kaulsar. She is known to have been a great *sevika*.²⁸

Bibi Biro was one of the bravest women in the Sikh history. She played an important role in the history of the Sikh religion of the 17th century. She was the daughter of the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind Sahib. She was the only sister amongst her five brothers. She was married to the son of Dharme Khatri, Sadhu. Later, she gave birth to five sons named Gulab Chand, Mal, Ganga Ram, Mohri and Chand. All her sons went on to become great warriors.²⁹

Bibi Biro was the elder sister of Guru Teghh Bahadur and the paternal aunt of the tenth guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh. There are mainly two events of Bibi Biro's life that have been written about her in the history of the Sikh community. The first being the event of her marriage and the second being that of her five sons fighting the battle over Bhanghani in the army of Guru Gobind Singh. Two of her sons were killed in this battle. Bibi Biro was a graceful and influential woman. She was a very calm and intelligent woman. She had gained the knowledge of *shashtarvidya* from her father. Throughout her life she was an example to the women of Punjab.³⁰

She is the first Sikh woman in the history of Punjab and the Sikh religion who not only lived by the ideologies of *bhagti* and *Shakti*, imparted by her father Guru Hargobind but also imparted such bravery in her sons that they fought to protect their religion and community in

²⁷ Ibid, pp-47

²⁸ Kashmir Singh Bains, *Sikh Gurua Da Sankepti Itihas*, Hosiarpur, 1991, pp-135

²⁹ Mahinder Kaur Gill, *Guru Nari van Vivhar*, Arshi Publishers, New Delhi, 2003. Pp-306

³⁰ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Itihasik Sikh Nariya*, Chandni Chowk, Delhi, 2003, pp-169

the army of Guru Gobind Singh . Her sons sacrificed their lives fighting in these battles for the sake of the religion. Bibi Biro lived through the periods of five Guru Sahib. Her family was related to the Gurughar. However, due to the wars with the Mughals, she continuously had to shift her residence from Amritsar to Mula, Kartarpur and Jhabal. Hence, it is due to this reason that Bibi Biro is considered as the first *virnari* in the history of the Sikhs. Therefore, she holds an important position in the Sikh history. Other than this, Bibi Biro was a living example of the ideologies of the Sikhs, She contributed a lot to various aspects in shaping the history of Punjab.³¹

Mata Gujri was the first women martyr to the history of the Sikh religion. At the time she sacrificed her life, she was eighty years old. Mata Gujri was born of Bhai Lal Chand and Mata Bishnu Kaur in Kartarpur. She was the daughter-in-law of the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Arjan Dev, wife of the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur , the mother of the tenth Guru of the Sikh, Guru Gobind Singh and the grandmother of the martyr sons of Guru Gobind Singh . She spent the last moments of her life with her two younger grandsons. The children that are blessed to have had grandmothers like Bibi Gujri , influential fathers like Guru Gobind Singh and martyr grandfathers' and great-great grandfathers' history behind them are bound to be brave and courageous naturally, such children have the honor of being called 'Baba ' from their childhood.³²

Mata Gujri spent most of her time of praying for the tough moments of her life. She was the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur who spent nine years of his life meditating. While he was doing so, Mata Gujri served him. Mata Gujri gave birth to Guru Gobind Singh in 1666 that later went on to be known as *sarbansdani*, Later, Guru Gobind Singh became the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. Mata Gujri spent her most of her life in the service of the Sikh religion. Another testing moment that took place in Bibi Gujri 's life occurred when Bhai Jeta brought the dead body of Guru Tegh Bahadur to Anandpur Sahib. Although this was a very emotional moment, Mata Gujri handled it very patiently and calmly. She prayed to God asking for him to provide with the opportunity to sacrifice her life for the sake of her religion just as her

³¹ Mahinder Kaur Gill, *Guru Nari Jivan Vivhar*, Arshi Publishers, New Delhi, 2003. Pp-313

³² Rajinder Kaur, *Mahan Sikh Istri*, Guru Gobind Singh Avenue, Jalandhar, 2014, pp-55

husband, Guru Teghh Bhahdur did. Mata Gujri's prayer was fulfilled later in her life.³³

MataGujri 's family separated from each other during the attack of Anandpur Sahib. She was left with her younger grandsons at that time. Hence, she went to shelter in the house of Gangu Brahmin. Unfortunately, Gangu betrayed them and handed over Mata Gujri and her grandsons to the Mughals. With this, Mata Gujri was imprisoned in the *Thanda Burj*. She was imprisoned in the month of *poh* i.e. in the winters. She and her grandchildren had nothing to keep them through the cold nights. However, she did not surrender and kept on reminding her grandchildren of the sacrifices made by their ancestors. She continuously reminded the sahibzaades that their Grandfather and Great-grandfather had both sacrificed their own lives in order to strengthen the ideas of Guru Nanak Dev. Hence, by doing so she imparted bravery in her grandchildren who later when on to show their bravery in the courts of the Mughals. All those that were present in the Mughal courts were astonished by the answers to these children. This was the toughest moment for Mata Gujri after the death of her husband. However, she stayed brave throughout this test time. Just as the history of the sacrifice made by Guru Teghh Bahadur played a huge role in the success of Guru Gobind Singh, in the same way the teachings given by Mata Gujri played an important part in imparting bravery in the *chotte sahibzaade* that sacrificed their lives for the sake of their religion at a very young age. The teachings given by MataGujri included having faith and courage while fighting crime and respecting and protecting women. When Mata Gujri heard the news of the sacrifice made by her grandsons, the *chotte sahibzaade*, she ended her life too. Hence, the message of Mata Gujri to all the grandmother was that the grandmother should not only love their grandchildren but should also impart bravery in them and teach them about the sacrifice made by their forefathers, so that the next generations are capable of safeguarding their religion. Hence, the faith, confidence and bravery of MataGujri is an inspiration for all.³⁴

Matato get the honor of being the first wife of Guru Gobind Singh and the mother of three *sahibzaade*. She was born of Harjas in Lahore. She was a very beautiful and obedient women. Mata to still be a child

³³ GianiTirlok Singh, Bibi Gujri , Bhai Juwahr Singh Kirpal Singh, Bazar My Seva Amritsar, 1965, pp-16

³⁴ Rajinder Kaur, *Mahan Sikh Istria*, Guru Gobind Singh Avenue, Jalandhar, 2014, pp-57

when her father went to visit Guru Sahib. His father asked Guru Teghh Bahadur for the marriage to his daughter. MataGujri accepted this proposal. Bhai Harjas requests Guru Sahib to bring the *janjto* Lahore. However, during that period the conditions of Lahore were not favorable. So, Guru Sahib did not consider it right to go to Lahore. Instead, Guru Sahib laid the foundation of the Lahore village at a distance of seven miles from Anandpur Sahib. Hence, the marriage took place at this village. Today, this place is known by the name *Guru Ka Lahore*.³⁵

After her marriage, Matato stayed at Anandpur Sahib. Bibi got the honor of being treated as a queen while she was living in the *Gurughar*. However, she also got the opportunity to gain knowledge from the two mothers, MataGujri who was the mother of Guru Gobind Singh and Bibi Nanki who was the mother of Guru Tegh Bahadur . It was due to this that Matato become the symbol of *simran*, kindness and humanism. Guru Gobind Singh was given the *Gurgaddi* in 1675. With this, Mata became the Mata of the *Gurughar*. Mata spent most of her time either in the service of the *Gurughar* or in praying. She had developed a habit of servicing the elderly and the *sadhsanghat*. Later she gave birth to a son who was named Jujhar. She then gave birth to two more sons which later went on to be known as *Sahibzaada* Jorawar Singh and *Sahibzaada* Fateh Singh.³⁶

While the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh was preparing *amrit* for the baptizing ceremony of the Sikh, Matato added *patase* to the *amrit*. Guru Gobind Singh was very pleased by this. So, this is how this custom was started. This is one of Mata to contribution to the Sikh religion. These *patase* are a symbol of purity, humbleness and patience amongst the Sikh community. Mata passed away in 1700 A.D.³⁷

In the Sikh history, Matato be known as the *mehal* wife) of the tenth Guru of the Sikh, Guru Gobind Singh. Other than this, she is also known as the mother of the *chotte sahibzaade*, who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their religion at a very small age. The bravery shown by them during their martyrdom is known throughout the world. Sacrificing their lives at such a young age not only shows how brave, determined

³⁵ GianiGian Singh, *TavarikhKhalsa*, DiirectorBashaVibag, Punjab, 2007, pp-584

³⁶ Kirpal Singh, *CharanGobind Marg Sohava*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2018, pp-44

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp-45

and rigid they were but also showed that their mother was a brave, selfless and strong women. Although, not much has been mentioned about her in the history of the Sikh religion but from the sacrifice made by her young children, it can be said that she was a very religious and selfless person whose contributions to the religion cannot be neglected. Hence, it can be said that she gave birth to such brave warriors that weren't afraid to give up their lives for the protection of their and religion and community.³⁸

The contribution made by MataSundri in maintaining the unity and fraternity of the Sikh community is a very praiseworthy. She was a humble, intelligent, kind, selfless and a strong leader. She made a large number of contributions to the Sikh religion, some of which were; eliminating the internal conflicts with in the Sikh community, reestablishing the unity and fraternity within the members of the Sikh society, promoting *Gurmat* education amongst the Sikhs and influencing the Sikhs to stand strong in through the tough times etc. Mata Sundri performed all these tasks with great success.³⁹

Mata Sundri followed her husband, Guru Gobind Singh's advice to live a serene life. She stayed calm at the news of the death of the *chotte sahibzaade* and MataGujri .Mata Sundri was known to be of a very composed and obedient personality. She influenced and encouraged the Sikhs to follow the ideologies and path shown by the Guru Sahib. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Sundri started her efforts to make the Sikhs able on the grounds of literacy. She knew of the importance of education in a person's life. She herself had the enthusiasm to learn throughout her life. Hence, she played an important role in maintaining the curiosity that had been development in the minds of the Sikh by Guru. For this purpose Mata Sundri sent Bhai Mani Singh to Amritsar to establish educational institutions. s.⁴⁰

Literature plays an important role in development of curiosity in the religious, social and political aspects. The *Dasam Granthis* present in the *Khalsa Panth* today only because of the interest and enthusiasm for Mata Sundri towards education. Mata Sundri encouraged Bhai Mani Singh to compile the *bani* of Shri Guru Gobind Singh which later went on to be known as the *Dasam Granth*. One Mata Sundri's greatest

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp-49

³⁹ Charan Singh, *Satikaryog Sikh Bibia*, ShrimatiPyar Kaur, Amritsar, 2001, pp-82

⁴⁰ Paramvir Singh, *Bibi SundriSangarashAtteSakshiat*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2012, pp-183

contribution to the Sikh religion was that she successfully maintained the unity amongst the members of the Sikh religion. The rivalry between the *Tatt Khalsa* and the *Bandi Khalsa* is well known in the *Khalsa Panth*. The rivalry divided the Sikh community into two parts. This conflict led to the beginning of the *Pra Maru Jang* i.e. the war against the brothers. When Mata came to know of this, she took influential steps and ended this conflict by the help of Bhai Mani Singh.

After the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Sundri started living in Delhi. Nevertheless, she continued her efforts into the propagation of the Sikh religion. Instead of complying with the orders for the Government, Mata Sundri continued her work to unite the Sikh of the nation. Mata Sundri had a lot of qualities, some of which included; patient, honesty and benevolence. She influenced all those that came to visit her. Mata Sundri's *hukamname* teach the Sikhs to stay united.⁴¹

Mata Sundri gave birth to a son that was named Baba Ajit Singh was martyred in the battle of Chamkaur. Mata Sundri stayed calm when she got the news of the sacrifice made by her son. She stayed strong in this difficult moment and believed it to be destiny. She continued serving the Sikh religion. Mata Sundri continuously made efforts to promote and continue the works and customs started by Guru Gobind Singh. She continued preaching and spreading about the teachings of the Sikh religion till her last breath. Mata Sundri's life is an inspiration to all the Sikh women of today's generation. From the above description of Mata Sundri, we can say that she stayed strong through the difficult moments of her life. She showed the Sikh society how to stay strong to the religion in spite of the social and political difficulties.⁴²

Mata Sahib Deva was the third wife (*mehal*) of Guru Gobind Singh. Her mother's name was Jas Devi. She was a very calm and composed woman. She is also known as '*Kuara Dhola*' in the Sikh history. Mata Sahib Deva was a very kind woman. She was one of the rare women who lived a '*bhramcharya*' life even after marriage. She served wholeheartedly served Mata Gujri. Mata Gujri loved Mata Sundri Kaur just as a daughter. After the death of Mata, she took care of her children; Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Jorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh. There are seldom any cases of the world where we get to see the kind of

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp-184,185

⁴² Surjit Singh Panchi, *Bibi Sundri*, Bhai Chattur Singh Jivan Singh, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2011

love that Mata Sahib Deva had for her step-children. She wholeheartedly served her husband, Guru Gobind Singh.⁴³

Once, Mata Sahib got the urge of being a mother, so even though she knew that Shri Guru Gobind Singh was living a '*bharmcharya*' life, she asked Guru Sahib for a child.⁴⁴

Shri Guru Gobind Singh answered saying, that her request was genuine and that Waheguru will bless her with a child. He added on saying that she would be the mother of the *Khalsa Panth*. Guru Gobind Singh said that her child would be indecipherable and immortal. Therefore making her the first mother in the world whose family would never come to an end. Hence, Guru Gobind Singh said that from that day onwards Mata Sahib Deva would be considered as the mother of the *Amar Khalsa*. Hence, this is how Mata Sundri Kaur got the honor of being the mother of the Khalsa. Mata Sundri Kaur continued to serve the *Khalsa Panth* till the end of her life.⁴⁵

No person has been given this kind of for the Sikh history. Even today, while baptizing the new Sikhs, they are considered to be the children of the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sundri Kaur without any discrimination. After parting from her family, she accompanied Bibi Sundri to Delhi. She stayed calm during these tough times and continued to serve the Sikh community. She was Just as a sister to Mata Sundri. Other than this, she gave many *hukamanamas* while she was in Delhi. Mata Sundri was born in the Rohtas Nagar of the district of Jhelum. It was due to her that this place got the honor of being known as *Dhan Potohar*. She is the only women that have been given the honor of being the mother of a community. The sacrifice, *seva* (service), *simran*, (devotion), patience and generosity of Mata Sahib is not only an inspiration to the Sikh women but to the women of the whole world.⁴⁶

Mai Bhago's memory is indelible amongst the members of the Sikh community. She joined Guru Gobind Singh in the battle dressed as a man. She bravely fought the Mughals from the frontline. Despite being severely injured, she continued to fight bravely. She is a great example of a brave warrior. Mai Bhago had utmost faith in the Gurughar. She is

⁴³ Giani Hari Singh, *Mata Sundri Kaur*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1999, pp-20

⁴⁴ Kirpal Singh, *Charan Gobind Marg Sohava*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2018, pp-71

⁴⁵ Giani Jujhar Singh, *Mata Sundri Kaur*, Chattur Singh, Jivan Singh, Amritsar, 2008, pp-64

⁴⁶ Kirpal Singh, *Charan Gobind Marg Sohava*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2018, pp-79

the first women warrior to have been mentioned in the Sikh history. She had an interest in training how to use weapons from her childhood. Hence, she was brave from her childhood. She got baptized in 1699 A.D. along with her husband by Guru Gobind Singh. After being baptized by drinking the *amrit*, she got the name Bhag Kaur. During the battle over Anandpur, some Sikhs of the villages of the Majha region of Punjab deserted Guru Gobind Singh and left the battle fields. When these forty Sikhs came back home, they were confronted by Mai Bhago and some other Sikh women. These women led by Mai Bhago rallied these Sikhs soldiers.⁴⁷

So, this was the first time that the Sikh had emerged victorious from the command of a woman. These forty Sikh soldiers sacrificed their lives in this battle and got the honor of being the *Chali Mukte*. This place is today known as *Tuti Gandhi De Muktsar Sahib*. The memory of Mai Bhago continued to have an influence on the Sikh history for century and kept encouraging the Sikhs to sacrifice their lives for the religion. It was due to her influence that the Sikhs mothers stayed strong while the Mughals were murdering their small children, cutting them in to pieces and garlanding them on them. Therefore, it can be said that Mai Bhago was a symbol of selflessness and sacrifice. She played a part in maintaining the unity of the Sikhs. The bravery of Mai Bhago serves as an inspiration to the mothers and daughters of today's generation. If the women of today's generation get inspired from Mai Bhago and understand the importance of self-protection then they can end the injustice towards them in the society.⁴⁸

Hence, it can be said that the contribution to the Sikh women in the history of the religion is of immense importance and cannot be neglected. They protected and helped in the development of the Khalsa Panth in various ways. These women are known for their service, patience, bravery and sacrifice that they made for the religion. So, it can be said that they played a vital role in the propagation of the Sikh Panth. The memory of these Sikh women will act as a source of inspiration for the generations' to come.

Bibi Rajni is known to have been a *Guru sevikain* the Sikh

⁴⁷ Shingara Singh, *IhithasikBirtantPind- Jhahal ate Mai Bhago*, ShrimoniGurdwaraParbandhak Committee PindJhabal,- Amritsar, 2005, pp-4

⁴⁸ Nihal Singh Ras, *Mai Bhago*, Bhai Chattur Singh Jivan Singh, Amritsar, 2010, pp-32

history. She was the youngest daughter of the Raja Duni Chand who was a businessman in village. She had a lot of devotion to the *Gurughar*. She considered the *Waheguruto* be the creator of the universe. However, her father, Raja Duni Chand was an egoist and hence considered himself to be above all the people. Bibi Rajni was against the ego of her father. It was due to this reason that her father married her off to a diseased person. She accepted her fate and continued to believe in the *Waheguru*. It was due to her devotion and patience that she later went on to be a queen. Her husband was also healed of his disease after bathing in the Guru Ram Das Sarovar. So, in this way Bibi Rajni was successful in defeating the ego of her father by her devotion, confidence and patience.

Chapter-3

The Sikh Shrines of Sikh women and their importance

The *Gurdwaras* hold a position of great importance and respect in the lives of the Sikhs because they are considered to be the place of the Gurus. There are many *Gurdwaras* related to the Gurus of the Sikh religion. Along with these *Gurdwaras*, there are many *Gurdwaras* that have been named after many Sikh women due to their contributions for the Sikh religion. Bebe Nanki was the elder sister of Guru Nanak Dev and was the first woman to have been mentioned in the Sikh history who served the Sikh religion. Bebe Nanki has a very special place in the Sikh history as she played an important role in the spreading of Sikhism.

There is a *Dhramshala* that has been made in Sultanpur in the memory of Bebe Nanki. Sultanpur Lodhi is a small city in the Kapurthala district of Punjab. It is located between the Sutlej and Beas rivers in Punjab. Guru Nanak Dev spent fourteen years of his life in this city. This city was established by a general of Muhammad Ghazni, Sultan Khan Lodhi in the eleventh century. This city was later named Sultanpur Lodhi during the reign of Sikandar Lodhi. It was strategically an important city at that time. This city was also acted as the center of education for the Mughals. The sons of Shah Jahan, Dara and Aurangzeb got their education from a university that was located in this city. Later the Sikhs gained control of this city. After the Sikhs gained control of this city it became an important location economically.¹

The *Dhramshala* of Bebe Nanki has been constructed at the former residence of Bebe Nanki. Guru Nanak Dev also spent most of his life here. This place is located in the region of the Shimbe Sikhs. There is an ancient well in that is present in this *Dhramshala* which acts as a source of water for the visitors even today. Other than this, there is a *tandur* (earthen oven) of that time which works even today and is used for cooking food for the visitors.

¹ Joginder Singh Sahi, *Sikh Sheries in India and abroad*, The common ward, Faridabad, India, 1978, pp-28

Hence no one lives this *Dharamshala* hungry. This *Dharamshala* has been dedicated to the service provided by Bebe Nanki to the Sikh religion.²

Mata khivi is another important woman in the Sikh history. She is considered to be the personification of service. She was born in 1503 to father, Devi Chand Khatri and mother, Karan Devi in a small town called Sanghar. Her father was a trader and shopkeeper. She was born to a highly religious family. Hence, these qualities were imparted in her from a very young age. Mata khivi created a loving and pleasant atmosphere with people whom she came in contact with. Later, Mata khivi was married to Bhai Lehna who was a resident of Khadoor Sahib. She gave birth to two sons and two daughters. Dasu was the eldest son who was born in 1524. Bibi Amro was born in 1532, followed by Bibi Anokhi in 1535 and son Datu who was born in 1537. She got inspired from Mata Sulakhni when she went to visit Guru Nanak Dev .So, she started serving the *sanats* in Khadoor Sahib. So, she started a large *langar* program, when her husband, Bhai Lehna became Guru Angad Dev .The *langar* program that was started by her at that time still continues today. Hence, there is a huge *langar* hall in Khadoor Sahib in the name of Mata Khivi . This *langar* continues throughout the whole day. This *langar* hall also serves the purpose to remind the Sikhs of the service that Mata khivi did for the Sikh religion. This *langar* hall is present in the *Gurdwara* of the second Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Angad Dev. Mata Khivi served the Sikh *sanats* that came in this *Gurdwaras* till her last breath. She provided them with *langar*. Her memorial has also been made at this place.³

Other than the Sikh women, there is a *Gurdwara* that has been dedicated to the service provided by the daughter of Muslim and is named *Gurdwara* Kaulsar. This woman was the daughter of Shahi Qa Rustam Khan, who was a resident of Amritsar. She was a pupil of Sufi Sant, Sai Miyamir. She gained

² Giani Thakur Singh, *Gurdware Di Darshan Vidhi*, Bhai Chattur Singh van Singh, Amritsar, 2005, pp-20

³ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Ihtihastik Sikh Naria*, Personal Book Shop, Delhi, 2003, pp-36

interest in the *Gurughar* and the Gurbani while she was in the *sangat* of Sai Miyamir. When her father found out about this, he threatened to kill her. At that time, Miyamir gave her a place in the *Gurughar*. Seeing her interest and belief in the *Gurughar* despite being a Muslim, he made a *sarovar* in her name near Baba Atal. She continued her service for the *Gurughar* throughout her life. This *sarovar* has been made in the holy city, Amritsar. This *sarovar* was made during the period of Guru Hargobind Sahib. Later a *Gurdwara* was constructed at this place in 1990 due to the efforts of the Sikh *sanats* of Amritsar and the Shiromni Committee. This *Gurdwara* has been constructed along the Kaulsar *sarovar* near Baba Atal. In the beginning, there was a route through Baba Atal to reach the Kaulsar *Gurdwara* but now another route has been made through the *Atta mandi*.⁴ The Khadooe *sarovar* is three hundred and eighty foot long and one hundred and fifty foot wide at the bottom while it is four hundred foot long and one hundred and seventy two foot wide on the top. However, this *sarovar* is eleven foot deep. The water is filled in this *sarovar* from the North Western direction while it is drained from the South East and Western direction.⁵

Another important woman in the history of the Sikhs was Bibi Biro. She was a very brave woman. She was born in 1615 A.D. to Guru Hargobind. Her mother's name was Damodari. She was married to the son of Dharme Khatri, Sadhu. She gave birth to five sons who later sacrificed their lives fighting in the army of Guru Sahib. Bibi Biro herself was also a strong woman. *Gurdwara Chabal* has been made in her memory. This *Gurdwara* has been made as a memory of Bibi Biro's marriage. This *Gurdwara* is also known as *Gurdwara Lavanh Sahib*.

Jhabal is a well-known city of the Malwa region of Punjab. This place is of historical relevance to the Sikhs. It was a large center for preaching and

⁴ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Sadhe Jithas Gurdham*, Bhai Chattur Singh Jivan Singh, Amritsar, 2012, pp-21

⁵ Joginder Singh Sahi, *Sikh Shires in India and abroad*, the common ward, Faridabad, India, 1978, pp-18

propagation of the Sikhism during the time of Guru Arjan Dev. Other than this, Guru Hargobind Sahib also married her daughter, Bibi Biro in Jhabal. Hence, the *Gurdwara* Lavanh Sahib has been constructed in this memory. This *Gurdwara* has been providing service to the Sikhs for the past three centuries.⁶

The story of the wedding of Bibi Biro is very interest. In the beginning, her marriage was arranged to be held in Amritsar. But due to the war between the Sikhs and the Mughals, they had to shift the wedding to Jhabal. Hence, the wife of Guru Sahib, Mata Damodhari sent this message to the son of Dharme Raj. So, according to the orders of Guru Sahib the preparations to make the sweets for the wedding began. However, during this a large number of people came in the form of *Sangatto* see Guru Sahib. Hence, when Guru Sahib found out that the *sangat* had not eaten food in the morning and the *langar* had not been prepared yet, he ordered to distribute the sweets of the wedding to the *Sangat*. Upon this, when the Sikhs went to get the sweet, Mata Damodhari said that these sweets were to be provided to the wedding guests first and then to the *sanats*. So, when the Sikhs came to Guru Sahib, Guru unconsciously told the *Sangat* that these sweets would be eaten by the Turks. This later on proved to be true as when the Shah Jahan became the Mughal Badshah, he engaged in a battle with Guru Sahib. This battle took place in Amritsar. Hence, when the Mughals attacked on Amritsar, they also had the packets of the sweets. It was due to this reason, Guru Sahib had to shift the wedding of her daughter Bibi Biro to Jhabal. Later a *Gurdwara* was constructed at this place which was named as *Gurdwara* Bibi Biro or *Gurdwara* Lavanh Sahib. This *Gurdwara* is now under the maintenance of Shromani *Gurdwara* Parbandhak Committee. This *Gurdwara* has a beautiful and unique design. This *Gurdwara* comprises of 12 acres of land and 17 shops in Chabal. Hence, this *Gurdwara* is of great

⁶ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Sadhe Ihtihastik Gurdham*, Bhai Chattur Singh van Singh, Amritsar, 2012, pp-67

relevance in the Sikh religion.⁷

Another important woman in the Sikh history was Bibi Amro. She influenced her in laws to follow and serve the Sikh religion. She was born in 1522 in Khadoor Sahib to father, Guru Angad Dev and Mother, Mata Khivi. Later, she was married to the son of Manak Chand, Jasoo who was a resident of Basarke Gillan. Jasoo was the nephew of Guru Amar Das. Bibi Amro had the habit of praying the *bani* of Guru Nanak Dev every day in the morning. So after listening to the *bani* of Guru Nanak Dev from Bibi Amro, Bhai Amar Das went to meet Guru Angad Dev and became his disciple.⁸

Bibi Amro served the Sikh religion from her young age. Due to which a *Gurdwara* has been constructed in Amritsar in her memory named *Gurdwara Angitah Sahib* in Basarke Gillan at Amritsar. This *Gurdwara* is near Sann Sahib. There are three historical *Gurdwaras* in this Village. This *Gurdwara* has been dedicated to the service of Bibi Amro to the Sikh religion. Hence, this *Gurdwara* is of great important in the Basarke village. Bibi Amro is known to have been an honest and obedient daughter and wife.⁹

Mata Ganga was another woman who got the honors to serve the *Gurughar*. Mata Ganga was born to father, Krishan Chand Khatri and mother, Dhanwanti in the Mau village. Later, she was married to Guru Arjan Dev who was the son of Bibi Bhani and Guru Ram Das. She was known to be a very patient person. She did not express any remorse despite of having no children, accepting it to be her fate. However, she gave birth to Guru Hargobind Sahib in 1595 who later went on to become a brave warrior. She did not give up her faith after the sacrifice of her husband. She kept on supporting her son, Guru Hargobind Sahib and continued to serve the Sikh religion throughout her life. Towards the end of her life she went to Bakala where she later died. So a historical *Gurdwara* named Baba Bakala has been constructed on the banks of

⁷ Jasvir Singh Bhalla, *Ihtihāsik Gurdwārā Ik Sarvekhan*, Manpreet Parkashan, Delhi, 2001, pp-60

⁸ *Ibid* pp-52

⁹ Giani Gurdit Singh, *Gurdham Didar*, Dharam Parchar Committee Chandigarh, 1988, pp-50

the Beas River at a distance of 2 K.M. from the Beas Nagar in the direction of Amritsar. This historical place is located at a distance of 1 K.M. from the Rawaiya mandi. This place is related to two Guru Sahibs and two important women of the Sikh religion. This place was visited by the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind Sahib and the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur . Other than this, some important Sikhs women also visited this area, two of which were Mata Ganga and Mata Nanki.¹⁰

Mata Ganga was the mother of Guru Hargobind Sahib. She resided in Baba Bakala in the house of a Sikh during her last days. She later died in the same area. She was also cremated there. So, a small *dhera* was constructed in her memory. Later, this *dhera* was replaced by a *Gurdwara*.¹¹

Other than this, there is another *Gurdwara* at distance 5 mile from Sarhali Kala in the South East direction. This *Gurdwara* is named *Gurdwara Chola Sahib* and is present in the Bheni village. This historical place was visited by the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Arjan Dev stayed at this place for some days with his family. He was also accompanied by Mata Ganga. The *sanats* of this village provided their services to Guru Sahib. Impressed by the food provided by the *sanats*, Guru Sahib blessed the food calling it *cholah*. It is due to this reason that the name of the Bheni Sahib *Gurdwara* became *Gurdwara Chola Sahib*. There is another *Gurdwara* in this region which has been constructed at the place where Mata Ganga stayed.¹²

There is another *Gurdwara* which has been constructed in the memory of Mata Ganga in Kartarpur, Jalandhar. The name of this *Gurdwara* is Gangsar. This *Gurdwara* has been dedicated to the sacrifice Mata Ganga made for the Sikh religion.¹³

Mata Damodari was wife of Guru Hargobind Sahib. She was born in

¹⁰ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Sadhe Itihasic Gurdham*, Bhai Chattur Singh van Singh, Amritsar, 2012, pp-6

¹¹ Ibid, pp-63

¹² Giani Gurdit Singh, *Gurdham Didar, Dharam Parchar* Committee Chnadigarh, 1988, pp-49

¹³ Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1991, pp-125

1596 in the house of Bhai Naraine Das in the Dhala village. She was married to Guru Hargobind Sahib at the age of nine. She was a very intellectual woman. She supported and served the Sikh community upon the death of Guru Sahib. She also helped Mata Ganga who was the mother of Guru Hargobind Sahib. Her sister, Mai Gamo was married in Daroli to Sai Das. They were both the Sikhs of Guru Hargobind Sahib. Guru Hargobind Sahib drank the Sheetal Jal from Bhai Roop Chand when he came to this region. Baba Gurdita was also born in this village. It is in the memory of his birth, that the Damdama Sahib *Gurdwara* has been constructed here.

The *Guru Granth Sahib* which was stolen by Nand Chand from the *udhasi sadhas* is also present in this village. Other than this, there is a well which was dug made by Guru Hargobind Sahib. Mata Damodhari died in this village. Today, a Girls College has been constructed in the memory of Mata Damodhari.¹⁴

The *Gurdwara* of Mata Damodhari is located in the North of the Daroli village near the *Vadha darbar*. Along with this, the memorial of Mata Damodhari has been made at the place where she was cremated. The responsibility of maintaining this place was given to Bhai Ram Singh who was also a *mahant* in the *Darbar*. Other than this, there is also a well present in this area which was made by Guru Hargobind Sahib which is also known as '*Guru Da Kuh*'.¹⁵

Bibi Bhani was a very obedient daughter who served her father. She requested Guru Arjan Sahib to select the successors of the *Gurtagadhi* be from their family. She was born on the 19th of February, 1535 in the Basarke village. The name of her father was Guru Amar Das and her mother was Mansa Devi. She was blessed with honor of being the daughter of Guru Amar Das and wife of Guru Ram Das. It is evident from her life that the respect and status given to

¹⁴ Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Guru Sahbad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Patiala, Punjab, 1960, pp-550

¹⁵ Giani Gurdit Singh, *Gurdham Didar*, Dharam Parchar Committee Chnadigarh, 1988, pp-137

the women in the Sikh religion is the most amongst all the religions of the world. She was not only respected because she was the wife and daughter of a Guru but because of the fact that she was an honest and selfless woman. She was married to Guru Ram Das because of her dedication towards serving the Sikh religion. It was due to her service that Guru Sahib agreed to choose his successor from within the family of the Guru. She served the Sikh religion her entire life i.e. in the *langar*. After the death of Guru Ram Das. Bibi Bani went to Taran Tarn and where she served the Sikh community until her last breath. She died on the 9th of April, 1598 at Tarn Tarn. A well was dug in her memory by Guru Arjan Dev which became to be known as ‘*Bibi Bhani da kuh*’. She served the Sikh religion her whole life. Hence, this well reminds the Sikhs of the service provided by her to the religion. This well functions even today acting as a source of water for the visitors.¹⁶

Mai Virayi was the aunt of Guru Angad Dev. She was the sister of Pheru Mal. She was the only sister amongst her seven brother. It was due to this reason that she was also known as ‘*sath prayi*’. She was a very patient and intelligent woman. She was known to have good morals. Being the only daughter in the family she was loved by all her brothers and father. She was married to Chaudhary Mehme in 1504. Mai Virayi was a very obedient person. She did a lot of service in the *Gurghar* of Guru Angad Dev .It was Mai Virayi who proposed Guru Angad Dev to marry Mata Khivi .She spent most her days with Mata Khivi serving *langar* to the *sanats*.¹⁷

The ladle which was given to Mata Khivi by Guru Angad Dev through Mai Virayi is still present today and is being used in preparing *langar*. Mai Virayi died in Khadoor Sahib while listening to the *bani* from Guru Angad Dev .Upon this, Baba Budha proposed to cremate her near some sanddunes located at Saghar near Khadoor Sahib. Guru Angad Dev approved this

¹⁶ Giani Bhajan Singh, *Sadhe Itihasic Gurdham*, Bhai Chattur Singh van Singh, Amritsar, 2012, pp-43

¹⁷ Simran Kaur, *Parsidh Sikh Bibia*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1991, pp-72

Proposal and hence a *Dharmshala* was opened at this place and *langar* was also started. Other than this, Guru Anagd Dev also order to dig a well in the memory of Mai Virayi in that area. This well is present even today and acts as a memory of Mai Virayi.¹⁸

There have been many generals in the Sikh religion throughout its history. One eminent name amongst them is that of Mai Bhago. She was of the Dhillon caste and was born in 1645A.D. She was a resident of the Jhabal village of the Amritsar district. She was the daughter of the brother of Bhai Pheroo Shah who was a Sikh of Guru Arjan Dev.

She was the sister of four brothers and hence she was called Bhaga Vali, which later changed to Bhag Kaur. Bibi Bhago was then married to Bhai Nidan Singh Vadench of the Bhatti.

When she got the news that many Sikhs soldiers had deserted Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Anandpur, she rallied them and went to the battle field herself. Other than this Mai Bhago also participated in the battle of Muktsar.

She got injured in this battle. So, she went to the Achal Nagar in Nandher accompanied by Guru Sahib. She spent her last breath in this area. Hence, a *bunga* has been constructed in that area in her memory which serves the purpose of reminding the Sikhs of her sacrifices for the Sikh religion.¹⁹

The *Gurdwara* Jhabal has been constructed in the memory of Mai Bhago in the Taran Tarn district. This *Gurdwara* was constructed by Sant Baba Khadhak Singh with the local *sanat* of the area. The administration of this *Gurdwara* is now in the hands of the local committee. Jathedhar Chanan Singh is the main *sevadhar* of this *Gurdwara*. Chaudhary Abol Khair was a well-known *sardar* in the Jhabal village. He was from the Sultani origin. Bibi Bhag Kaur was born in his house who later went on to be one of the great Sikh

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp-79

¹⁹ Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, *Guru Sahbad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Patiala, Punjab, 1960, pp-912

women. It is due to her bravery that her name is considered to be amongst the most important individuals of the Sikh religion. Hence, there is a *Gurdwara* in Chabal which has been dedicated to her and reminds the Sikhs of her sacrifice for the religion.²⁰

Mata Gujri was the mother of Guru Gobind Singh. She was the first martyr of the Sikh religion. She sacrificed her whole family for the Sikh religion. Mata Gujri was born to Lal Chand and Bishan Kaur at Kartarpur near Jaandhar (Dhoaba) in 1619. She was married to Guru Teghh Bahadur in 1634. She gave birth to a son, Gobind Rai who later on became Guru Gobind Singh. She is related to the family who has had the honor of being martyrs. She parted from her family in the battle of Sirsa. She was accompanied by the two *chotte sahibzadee* at that time. Their household servant took them to his home in Morinda. He later betrayed them and handed them over to the Mughals in Sirhind. So, she was imprisoned in the *Thande Burjin* Sirhind. She died after the sacrifice of the *chotte sahibzadee*. A Gurdwara has been made in that place in her memory named Gurdwara *Thanda Burj*.

Ferozshah Tuglak shifted the control and administration of the city of Sirhind from the Samane to Parganeh. This was a large and prosperous region under the rule of the Mughals. It was in this city that Vazir Khan killed the *chotte sahibzadee* of Guru Gobind Singh i.e. Fateh Singh and Joravar Singh. Later Banda Singh Bahadur killed Vazir Khan and conquered Sirhind. After gaining control of the area, he ordered for the constructions of Gurdwaras in the memory of Mata Gujri and the *chotte sahibzadee*. This city is also known as '*Gurmadi*' amongst the Gursikhs. This region come under the district of Patiala today. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh renovated the Gurdwara of Bibi Gujri in 1944. Then upon the orders of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, Sardar Hardial Singh Harika constructed two stories of the *Gurdwara Joti Sarup*. So,

²⁰ Jasvir Singh Bhalla, *Ihtihasek Gurdware Ik Sarvekhan*, Manpreet Parkashan, Delhi, 2001, pp-61

in this way these elegant *Gurdwaras* are present in the city of Sirhind today.²¹

Other than Sirhind, Mata Gujri and the *chotte sahibzadee* were kept in the Morinda village of Ambala in the Ropar district. Mata Gujri and the *chotte sahibzadee* lived in the house of Brahmin Gangu while they were here. Today, there is a *Gurdwara* at that place. The *sahibzadees* were caught from Sahedhi and brought here. This *Gurdwara* was made under 16 *biggas* of land and contains a garden which was set up Raja Bhup of Ropar. Later, the Maharaja added all this area under the Lahore district which came in the hands of the British after the English established their rule in Punjab. These *Gurdwaras* act as the symbols of the bravery and patience of Mata Gujri.²²

Mata the wife of Guru Gobind Singh .She was born to Bhai Harjas Vasi of Lahore. She was a very obedient daughter. Bhai asked for the blessing of Guru Tegh Bahadur to wed Guru Gobind Singh with his daughter, Bibi to. Guru Tegh Bahadur accepted his proposal. Hence a *Gurdwara* has been made in the memory of her marriage named ‘Guru Ka Lahore’. This *Gurdwara* is present in the Bilaspur district of Himanchal Pradesh. It is a distance of 12 K.M. from Anandpur Sahib in the Northern direction. Guru Gobind Singh was married in this place. Bhai Harjas who was a Khatri and a resident of Lahore arranged the *mangni* of Mata to with Guru Gobind Sahib in 1673. He proposed to bring the *janj* to Lahore. Guru Sahib did not consider it right to go to Lahore due to the condition of that time. So, Guru Sahib ordered the Sikhs to establish the city Guru Ka Lahore near the Basantgarh village. So Bhai Harjas and his relative came to this area. With this the marriage between Guru Gobind Singh and Bibi to took place on the 21st of June, 1677. This region is at a distance of 42 K.m towards the East from the railway station of Gadhshankar. Three *Gurdwaras* have been constructed in this region. These *Gurdwaras* are a

²¹ Harpreet Singh Naj, *Sirhind toh Fatehgarh tak*, Bibi Gujri College, Fatehgarh Sahib, 2013, pp-1216

²² Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha ,*Guru Sahbad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Patiala, Punjab, 1960, pp-999

symbol of the marriage of Matato and Guru Gobind Singh.²³

Mata to stay at Agampur with Guru Gobind Singh. She later died in this region in 1700 A.D. She was cremated by Guru Gobind Singh. There is a peepal tree of that time which is still present today at that place. This place is at a distance of 1.5 miles Anandpur Sahib in the Eastern direction of Anandpur Sahib. Bhai Udey Singh started a *jagir* of a hundred rupees to this *Gurdwara* which is got from the Chapalchidi village of the Ambala district. Other than this, there is another *jagir* which is got from the Kamedha village of Anandpur. This *jagir* was started during the Sikh rule.²⁴

The sacrifice and service done by these women for the sake of the religion has shown the right path to the Sikh women. These Sikh women played a part in imparting enthusiasm amongst the Sikh *sangat* taking part in the struggles started by the Guru Sahibs. Out of these women one was MataSundiri. She was born in 1666 to Bhai Ram Sharan at Lahore. However, some historians believe that she was born in Bajwadha in Hoshiarpur. She was later married to Guru Gobind Singh on the 5th of April, 1684. She gave birth to one son named At Singh. After leaving Anandpur Sahib a huge event took place in her life in 1704 i.e. she parted from her family on the Banks of the Sirsa River. She headed towards Delhi with Mata Sundri Kaur and Bhai Mani Singh. Later, she went to Damdama Sahib (Talwadi Sabo). After the martyrdom of her son, she adopted a boy in Behragh but he was arrested for murder. Then she went to Delhi accompanied by Guru Sahib.²⁵

While residing in Delhi, Mata Sundri bravely led and served the Sikhs *sanats*. She stayed in Delhi till her last breath. She died in 1747 in Delhi. A *Gurdwara* has been constructed here in her memory. This *Gurdwara* is located near the J.P hospital and the Galav Urdu Academy, New Delhi. It has been

²³ Kirpal Singh, *Charan Gobind Marg Sohava* Singh Brother Amritsar, 2018, PP-36

²⁴ Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Guru Sahbad Ratnakar Mahankosh*, Patiala, Punjab, 1960, pp-43

²⁵ Surjeet Singh Panchi, *Guru Dasmesh Mehal, Bhai Chattrur Singh Jivan Singh*, Amritsar, 2011, pp-39

constructed at that place where Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib leaved until the end of their lives. In the beginning Mata Sahib and Mata Sundri lived with the Sikhs in Delhi but after her adopted son, At Singh was killed, the two Mata went to Mathura for some time. They came back after two years and stayed at a place which was known as *haveli Mata Sundiri ki*'. A *Gurdwara* was later constructed at this place which is named as '*Gurdwara Mata Sundri*'. Mata Sundri led the Khalsa Panth until the end of her life.²⁶

Other than this, Bhajwadha is an historical place. Mata Sundri was born here. Hence, a *Gurdwara* has been constructed in this area in her memory. The responsibility of the management and *seva* of this *Gurdwara* was in the hands of a woman of the Murgai family in the village of Mata Sundri Kaur. She was known by the locals as Bibi Bhagtni. She continued to serve the *Gurdwara* till the age of 125 years. She handed the responsibilities of this *Gurdwara* to Baba Harbhajan Singh who was the leader of the *Nahing Singhs* before dying. This place is known as Mata Sundri Kaur which keeps the memory of the sacrifices and struggles done by Mata Sundri Kaur for the Sikh religion alive. She act as an inspiration for the women to fight against the crimes and evils in the society.²⁷

Mata Sahib Kaur holds a unique position amongst the prominent women of the Sikh religion. Mata Sahib Kaur hold the honor of being the thirteenth *mehal*. She is also known as *Kuara Dhola* in the Sikh history. There are seldom any women throughout the world who have led a life like she did. The name of Mata Sundri Kaur's father was Bhai Rama and mother who was a resident of Rohtas Jhelum and mother was Jas Devi. They were both the followers of the Sikh religion. Mata Sundri Kaur was born in 1681. Later, she went to Delhi with Guru Sahib. Guru Gobind Singh further progressed to Nander which is in Hajur Sahib. Guru Sahib stayed here for a long time. Mata

²⁶ Joginder Singh Sahi, *Sikh Series in India and abroad*, Faridabad, India, 1978, pp-64

²⁷ Dr. Paramvir Singh, *Bibi Sundhiri Sangharash ate Sakhshiat*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2012, pp-169

Sahib also accompanied Guru Sahib in this journey. Later she returned to Delhi as suggested by Guru Gobind Singh. Before she parted Guru Sahib, Guru gave her five weapons which are still present in Delhi today. Today, a *Gurdwara* has been made in the memory of Mata Sahib in Nander i.e. at the place where Mata Sahib resided. This *Gurdwara* is 12 K.M. from the Hira gate and the Sachkand Sahib.²⁸

Other than this there is a *Gurdwara* at the birth place of Mata Sundri Kaur in Jhelum. This *Gurdwara* is present inside the fort. The birth place of Mata is inside the Sadhar gate the fort towards the Abadi. There is a small dome amongst the houses inside the Abadi, this is the birth place of Mata Sahib . This place is kept locked. This dome was renovated by Maharaja Rant Singh i.e. a new dome was constructed after the demolishing the old one. However, the condition of this dome is continuously deteriorating.²⁹

The *Gurdwaras* of Mata Sundari and Mata Sundri Kaur are located in Talwandi Sabo of the Batinda district. Guru Gobind Singh reached Talwandi after the battle of Muktsar. He was warmly welcomed by the *hakam* of the area, Bhai Dhala. As Guru Sahib stayed at this place, it became to be known as ‘Damdama Sahib’. This is also the fifth *takhat* of the Sikhs. Mata Sundri Kaur and Mata Sahib Kaur also stayed in this place after coming from Delhi. So, in their memory *Gurdwara* Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib has been constructed here. The first building of this *Gurdwara* was constructed by Sant Jwala Singh Harkowal. Baba Harbans Singh and Baba Karnail Singh also contributed in the construction of this *Gurdwara*. This *Gurdwara* today is under the administration of the Shiromni *Gurdwara* Parbhandhak Committee, Amritsar.³⁰

Mata Sundri Kaur and Mata Sundri spent the last years of their lives in Delhi. Mata Sundri Kaur died in Delhi in 1727 A.D. She was cremated on the

²⁸ Surinder Singh Johar, *The Sikh Gurus and their series*, Vivek Publishing Company, Delhi, 1976, pp-302

²⁹ Iqbal Kumar, *Pakistan vich Sikha de ihtihastik pavitar astan*, Punjabi Tavarik Board, Lahore-1, pp-292

³⁰ Paramvir Singh, *Bibi Sundri sangharash ate saksat*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2012, pp-170

banks of the River Yamuna. The Bala Sahib *Gurdwara* was constructed near the memorial of Mata Sundri Kaur. This *Gurdwara* was constructed in the memory of the eighth Guru of the Sikh, Guru Harkrishan. The memorial of Mata Sundri Kaur is also known as 'Angitah Mata Sundri Kaur'. The memorial of Mata Sundri is in a separate room and is surrounded by a verandha. A fair conducted in the memory of Guru Harkrishan. This fair is known as the Jodd mela. Hence, the *Gurdwara* of Mata Sundri Kaur act as a symbol to represent the contribution made by her for the Sikh religion and the *Khalsa Panth*.³¹

Many various *Gurdwaras* have been constructed at the places where the Sikh Gurus and the some religious prominent women went or at the places which hold some historical relevance in regard to the Sikh religion. These efforts of the Sikh *sanats* have played a huge role in the construction of these *Gurdwaras*. These *Gurdwaras* are a symbol of the respect that the Sikh *sanats* have for their Gurus and the people who sacrifices for the sake of the religion. These *Gurdwaras* still function today due to the efforts of the Sikh *sanats*. The various programs of the *Gurdwaras* include *langar*, *panghat*, *sanat* and *kirtan*. *Gurdwaras* play an important role in the life and society of the Sikhs. They act the pillars of Sikhism. With the help of the *Gurdwaras*, we can keep the faith of the Sikhs for centuries. During the times of the Guru Sahibs, the administration and management of the *Gurdwaras* was in the hands of the Guru Sahib himself and the *Sikh sevaks* appointed by him. Some of the eminent Sikhs *sevadhas* were Baba Budha, Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Mani Singh and Baba Deep Singh. During the periods of the Mughal and Pathan rules, many *Gurdwaras* were damaged and destroyed. However to maintain the respect of the *Gurdwaras*, many Sikhs sacrificed their lives. Despite these tough periods, the Sikhs kept their faith in the religion and the *Gurdwaras*. Along with the Sikh *sevaks*, many Sikh women also sacrificed their lives for

³¹ Patvant Singh, *Gurdwaras*, Himalayan Book, New Delhi, 1999, pp-112

the sake of the religion due to which they have left their mark in the history of the Sikh religion. Many have been built dedicated to their bravery and courage. The Sikh women of today's generation can learn for the sacrifices made by these women and hence can lead their lives by following the paths and ideologies that they followed. So, these women act as an inspiration to the women of today's generation to play their part in the formation of a noble society.

Gurdwara Dukh Bhajni Beri has been built in the memory of Bibi Rajni. This *Gurdwara* has been built in the *parkarma* of Shri Darbar Sahib. Guru Ram Das gave the honors of laying the foundation of the *sarovar* of Darbar Sahib at this place in 1577. So, in this way the excavation work of this *sarovar* began. Other than this, there is a story related to this *sarovar*. A businessman of the Bhatti region named Duni Chand married her daughter to a man sickened with leprosy. This was because Bibi Rajni was a religious person. She brought her husband to Chak Ramdas. When the husband of Bibi Rajni bathed in the place of the Dukh Bhajni wali Beri, he got cured of his disease. Later, Guru made a *sarovar* in this place. Along with this, the name of Amritsar was driven from this *Amrit wala sarovar*. A *Gurdwara* was also constructed along this tree which reminds the Sikhs of the belief Bibi Rajni had in Guru Sahib. This *Gurdwara* was given a land of twenty four rupees by Maharaja Nabha.³²

³² Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Guru Shabad Ratnakar mahankosh*, Patiala, Punjab, 1960, PP-543

CONCLUSION

The foundation for the Sikh religion in India was built by the first Guru of the Sikhs that was Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Nanak Dev emphasised that all human beings should be in touch with religion and hence with God. Before the birth of Guru Nanak Dev. The society was divided into different four castes. There were mainly four castes are the Brahmans, the *Khatris*, the *Vaishhs* and the *Shudarhs*. Out of these four castes, the *Shudarh* was considered as a low caste. During at that period the conditions of women were also equally bad. They too were considered lower ranks in comparison to the males. Inequality and social injustice prevailed in the society on the basis of caste and gender. So due to this Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Nanak Dev believed that there is only one creator of the universe God. According to Guru Nanak Dev both the religions in the country at that time that is Hindus and Muslims had the same God but was worshipped in different forms and names. He believed that both Hindus and Muslims were the same. At the same time the conditions of women were bad as well as their status was considered to be lower in the society with parity to that of their male counter parts. So Guru Nanak Dev stood to promote the equality and respect of women in the society. He aimed at elevating the status of women. Guru Nanak Dev considered both men and women to be equal. Guru Nanak Dev believed that women should be respected. According to Guru Nanak women are the ones who give birth to common person as well as Kings, so they should be respected. Woman can participate in all religions, culture, social, secular activities including lead religious congregations, take part in the *Akand Path*, perform *kirtan* and also work as a *Granthi*. Sikhism was the first major relisia in the world

which to imply that woman are equal to man. Due to the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev, women have a high rank and a higher status in the Sikh community.

Guru Nanak Dev started the *Sangat pratha*. According to the *Sangat pratha* people from all the different religions would sit together and learn from the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. At a time of so many caste based differences

Sangat pratha was a big step as here people from different castes and religions were supposed to sit together if they wanted to listen to the Guru's teaching. So this acted as a step towards eliminating caste based discrimination that presided amongst the people. The gathering of people sitting together to listen the Guru was still known as *Sangat*. This is considered to be the most important pillar of the Sikh religion. So the Sikh religion is incomplete without the *Sat Sangat*. The gathering of follower of the Guru in the Sikh religion is known as *Sat Sangat*. In this gathering that people come together to recite the name of God. *Sat Sangat* is that place where people take the name of God. *Sat Sangat* is formed when people from different castes and both genders get together and recite the name of God with any restrictions and discriminations based on gender or caste.

Sat Sangat was started by Guru Nanak Dev .As the Sikh religion progressed under the different Gurus that succeeded Guru Nanak Dev this tradition of *Sat Sangat* continued and it is still followed in the present. Hence it was followed during the time of other Gurus also. It was suggested by Guru Nanak Dev that Sikhs should get together in the *Sat Sangat* so as to take the name of God. While sitting in a *Sat Sangat* one can recite one's prayers of God and can feel a sense of peace of mind. A person can feel as if his soul has become pure. The way of living of a human beings depends upon his other way of thinking that being positive or negative. So *Sat Sangat* provided a source of positive thoughts hence improving the quality of lives of the followers. So there is a role of *Sanat* in the life of a human being. The ability of a person to work increases when he works together with other people in the form of a community. In a person's social life, a common gathering can not only improve him in various ways but can

also motivate him or her to achieve more. So *Sangat* heals the soul of a person.

The meaning of *Sanat* is gathering. This is the reason why the gathering of the people who were the followers of the Guru was known as *Sanat*. According to Bhai Gurdas one Sikh is a Sikh, a gathering of two Sikhs is *Sanat* where as a

Gathering of five Sikhs or more take the form of God. The name of God is recited in the *Sangat* where the Guru also shares his wisdom with his followers. Guru Nanak Dev travelled across the globe to spread the message of the Lord. Bhai Mardana travelled alongside Guru Nanak Dev in his journey to spread the name of the Lord. Bhai Mardana played the *nabbab* while Guru Nanak Dev chanted the prayers. The *Sangat* was bestowed upon with the wisdom of Guru Nanak Dev in the *kirtan* and they were also provided food in the *Langar*. So the people would be satisfied. Guru Nanak Dev showed people the path to God. People gathered in large numbers where *Guru Nanak Dev travelled to, so as to listen to join the Sangat and listen to the Guru himself.*

With the help of *Sangat*, the *dharamshala* and *Pangat* were also formed. There is a relation between *Sangat* and *Pangat*. As people sit in proper ways to eat *Langar* so the word *Pangat* has been taken over *Sangat*. The teachings of Guru Nanak Dev mainly comprised of three practical things which were *kirat karo*, *naam japna* and *vand chakko*. The meaning of *Kirtan karo* is to work hard so as to earn a living through honesty, without any exploitation of another being or Whereas according to Guru Nanak Dev the meaning of *naam japna* is to meditate and recite God's name, so as to control the five weaknesses of the human personality. Finally the meaning of *vand chakko* is to share with others what one has and also to help those with less and are in need of help. There is no discrimination on the basis of caste, gender etc in *Sangat* as well as in *Pangat*. People sitting in a *Sangat* are not differentiated either as rich or poor but are treated to be as of the same value. Due to this, the people who were considered to be of low caste and low standards were treated to be at par with the upper class

of the society. People in the *Sangat* come to take the blessing of Guru. Holy food (*Langar*) is made in one kitchen and is provided to everyone free of any cost. The main idea behind the concept of *Langar* is community dining with the aim to promote equality amongst people, a feeling of brotherhood and to encourage sharing. So Guru Nanak Dev inculcated a common mode of worship and a common social institute by laying the foundation of *Sangat* and *Pangat*. *Sangat*

Means" association". It is getting together of noble and good people. *Sangat* has the freedom to discuss secular matters presiding in the community, it is its spiritual core which imparts to it the status and authority it commands in the Sikh system. Guru Nanak Dev said that *Sat Sangat* is where the divine name alone is cherished. a member of the *Sangat*, that is every Sikh as well as those who want to listen to the knowledge of the Guru is known as *bhai* meaning brother, signifying one of holy living. The *Sangat* also brought together men not only in spiritual pursuit but also in worldly affairs. So as forging a community of people with a common purpose as well as of action based on mutual equality and brotherhood. Though *Sangat* were spread over widely separated localities, they were part of a single entity owing loyalty to the word of GuruNanak Dev . *Sangat* were thus the Sikh community in formation. *Pangat* literally means a same row. It stands for people sitting and eating together in the same row that is in the *Guru-ka-langer*. The *Langar* or free kitchen was started by the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev .It was designed to uphold the principle of equality amongst all the people of the world regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status. In the addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of *Langar* expresses the ethics of sharing, community, inclusiveness and oneness of all humankind. Since their beginning by Guru Nanak Dev ,*Sanga tand Pangat* have been an indispensable part of the Sikh religion, both in percept as well as in practice. The *Sangat* gatherings were not merely places of worship but also way side refectories which gave food and shelter to indigent wayfarers. When a Sikh joins the *Sangat*, he or she comes in contact with noble people. He feels a great change within himself or herself. Mutual gathering and understanding shelpsa person in removing his egoism and other

eccentricities. He learns to work in a cooperative and democratic setup and by doing so his sense of selfishness vanishes. Once Guru Nanak Dev was given twenty rupees by his father, so as he saw poor people sitting hungry, he bought food with all the money he had and distributed the food amongst all the hungry poor Sadhas. Any person can come in the *Pangat* and feed his stomach by eating *Langar* for free as all the people in the *Sangat* are treated as equal. The upper castes that is the *Brahmans*, *Khatris* and the *Vaishhs* are treated at par with the *Shudars* in the *Sangat*. *Sangat* and *Pangat* were some of the indispensable principles which were bestowed by Guru Nanak Dev upon his followers.

Guru Nanak Dev taught the *Sangat* that was present in the *Dharmshala* to recite the name of God at least two times a day i.e. during the morning and the evening hours. He asked them to recite their prayers which included *Jap*, *Sodhar* and *Arti*. Guru Nanak Dev made Kartarpur as the main centre for the gathering of the *Sangat*. This was the place where Guru Nanak Dev established his first *Dharmshalas*. The aim of Guru Nanak Dev was to write and collect the different teachings so as to form the *Bani*. Guru Nanak Dev wanted to form a new society for the people. Guru Angad Dev established the *Dharmshalas* in Khadoor Sahib for the expansion of Sikh religion. Whereas Guru Amar Das established a *Dharamsala* in Goindwal Sahib. Guru Ram Das established a *Dharamsala* in Amritsar again to promote the Sikh religion. The *Dharamsalas* were known as *Gurudwaras* during the time of Guru Hargobind Singh. The word *Gurudwara* is split into two words: *Gur* or Guru referring to Guru Granthh Sahib i.e. the holy book of the Sikhs *Gurbani Wahe Guru* and the word *duwara* means door of the house. The meaning

of *Gurudwara* is known as the place where the Guru resides. A person from any religion or caste is allowed to enter the *Gurudwara*. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is the compilation of all the teachings of the Gurus and is all the worthy of the respect from the Sikhs. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is also given the position of a Guru. So the *Gurudwara* was to be made as the place where the holy book of the Sikhs the *Guru Granth Sahib* was to be kept. It is also the place where the teachings of the *Bani* are preached.

The *Bani* in *Guru Granth Sahib* given the knowledge and teachings of the Guru. The purpose of the *Bani* and the teaching of the Guru was to solve the dilemma of the human mind and lead them to a righteous path. The aim was to make the people *Gurmukh* which means the followers of God and to lead them towards a path of truth and honesty. Without the knowledge provided by the Guru, the people would fall in the wrong path and would be engulfed by the evils of *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar*. According to *Guru Nanak Dev* these are the major five weaknesses of human personality at variance with its spiritual essence and known as Thieves because they steal the person's common sense. Amongst the five weaknesses the first is *Kaam* which means lust. The second one is *Krodh* which means rage, then *Lobh* which means greed, *Moh* which means attachment and *Ahankar* that means conceit. *Kaam* refers to lust, it is one of the greatest evils that tempts people away from God it makes an individual weak-willed and unreliable. *Krodh* which means anger is important to be controlled. A person overcome by *Krodh* loses his balance of mind and becomes incapable of thinking properly. *Krodh* means anger and hatred and has no place in any religious practice. *Lobh* means greed, a strong desire to possess what

rightfully belongs to others. It makes an individual selfish and self centred. It distracts a person from his religious as well as social duties. A person can become blind with greed if an effort to control the desire for unlimited possession is not met. *Moh* refers to the strong attachment that an individual has to worldly possession and relationship. It blurs the perspective of human mind and makes him narrow minded. It deviates a person from his moral and social responsibilities and leads him towards a path of sin. *Ahankar* means false pride arising out of one's possessions, material wealth, intelligence or powers. It gives an individual a feeling that he is superior to others and therefore they are at a lower level than him. It leads to jealousy and causes a feeling of enmity and restlessness amongst people.

Without the knowledge of provided in the *Gurbani* a person is caught within these five weaknesses i.e. *Kam, Krodh, Lobh, Moh and Ahankar* and hence moves towards a dark and self-destructive path. By the help of the knowledge that a person receives in the *Gurudwara*, he or she can keep himself away from the above five evils. A person throughout his life time in this world should be fulfilling his family and social responsibilities. But according to the *Gurbani* the main aim of coming in to this life form is to achieve *mukhti* that is to achieve the purpose of freeing the soul from this humanly form.

The establishment of the *Gurudwaras* go back in history alongside the establishment of the Sikh religion. The *Gurudwara* is not only a religious place for the Sikh but has also acted as a centre for the leaders to share their word throughout different phases in the Sikh history.

The Sikh religion had an influence on the people of the society. Sikhism had a positive impact on the lives of its followers. The *Gurudwara* is an important part of the lives of the Sikhs. A person is welcome here disregarding whether he is from any religion, caste or gender. He or she is welcome here during both the happy and sorrow times of his or her life. The *Gurudwara* also plays an important role in the improvement of the society. It has always been a part of the religious, social and political aspects of the lives of the Sikhs. The knowledge of the *Gurbani* is shared in the *Gurudwara* by the preachers. By the help of this knowledge a Sikh can nurture understanding of the world doing so improving and purifying his mind and soul. Free food is also served in the *Gurudwaras* in the name of *Langar* which is available for the common people as well as the poor and needy. So the *Gurudwara* is not only a place for the people to learn the word of the Lord but also helps and takes care of the needy and the people who cannot afford to buy food. The *Gurudwara* encourages an attitude of *chardi kala* to the Sikh which means a having a positive, bouyant and optimistic attitude towards life and the future itself. The *Gurudwara* teaches people to live in peace and harmony with each other. This attitude of *chardi kala* encourages one to allow one to sail through the upsand downs of life by keeping faith in God that no harm will be caused to the individual. To join and help others in their hour of need is a part of the *chardi kala* spirit. *Gurudwara* being an important part in the lives of the Sikhs, a Sikh is connected to the *Gurudwara* from birth to death.

Gurudwara is an important part of the Sikh religion. As the name suggests *Gurudwara* is the home of the Guru. People from all religions, faiths as well as those who do not have faith in the Sikh

religion, are also welcome in the *Gurudwaras*. As a *Gurudwara* is fixed in its position at a particular time. The *Gurudwaras* are affected by history and have also been an important part of the history. The *Gurudwara* is affected by and also has an effect on the society. There was also a time in the history of the Sikhs when the *Masands* and the *Mahants* of the *Gurudwara* started keeping the donations and the *rashan* that were provided to the *Gurudwara* by the Devotees of the Guru to themselves.

The *Man Pratha* was established by the third Guru, Guru Amar Das. The main reason for this was that by that time the as the population of the Sikh society had increased by a great amount and so it was difficult for Guru Amar Das to reach to all the Sikh people and provide his teachings to them. The word *Man* refers to a low wooden cot on which the *Sikh Sangatia* would sit and teach *Sikhi* to the *Sangat*, while chanting *kirtan and Shabads*. There after Guru Amar Das introduced the *Masand* system. In the *Masand* system, the *Masands* known as the local community leaders provided the teachings of the Guru and Sikhism to the *Sangat*. These *Masands* also forwarded the material and donations for the *Langar* made by the people to the Guru. So in this way with the help of the *Masands* the Sikh religion spread to different regions. But during the time of the Guru Gobind Singh these *Masands* started becoming greedy. They started betrayed the institution of the *Gurudwara* as well as their Guru. They would keep whatever was given by the Devotes to the *Gurudwara* with themselves. So Guru Gobind Singh abolished the *Masand* system. After abolishing the *Masand* system Guru Gobind Singh provided the foundation of *Khalsa Panth*.

The *Masands* were not the only ones who were responsible for

promote the teachings of the Sikh religion to people. There was another group of people known as the *Sevaks*, which comes from the word *Sevaw* which means service, so the *Sevaks* were the servants of the Guru Sikh. They also included Sikh daughters, Sikh women who played an important part in promoting the Sikh religion. It was due to these missionaries that there are many *Gurudwaras* all around the world. The *Gurudwaras* also help us remember the sacrifices done by *Sevaks*, *Masands* as well as the Sikh women and daughters to promote Sikhism.

The Guru promoted equality amongst the men and women in the society. Guru Nanak Dev was the first to take such a step of promoting equality amongst the two genders. Women were also among those who promoted Sikhism and were also amongst the *Masands*. Due to this the stature of the women in the society was given a boost and also the position of the women in the households was considered to be at par with that of the males. It is important to be noted here, that Guru Nanak Dev was the first religious leader to spread awareness amongst the people about the importance of equality and fraternity amongst the people of the society. He was also against the social injustice in the society in the name of caste. According to Guru Nanak Dev there are some qualities in women which cannot be described in words

At the time of Guru Nanak Dev, the position of women in the society was considered to be very low in comparison to that of the men and they were not given their deserved respect. So Guru Nanak Dev proclaimed the equality of men and women. Guru Nanak Dev said that it is a woman who keeps the family race going in future generations, and that women should neither be considered as cursed nor should be

condemned. Instead they should be embraced. Guru Nanak Dev also said that it is from a woman that a man is born. Guru Nanak Dev said that woman not only give birth to ordinary man but also to Saints and Kings. It is also stated in history that a nurse Dolta Bhai and Guru Nanak Dev 'sister BebeNanki were the first ones to recognize Guru Nanak Dev's spiritual eminence. Hence they were amongst the first ones to become his Devotee. Guru Nanak Dev's mother Mata Tripta provided good morals and antiques to her child Guru Nanak Dev during *Mata Khiv* continued the system of *Sangat* and *Pangat* which was started by Guru Nanak Dev's, in Khadoor Sahib. At Khadoor Sahib *Langar* was provided to the poor and needy.

Guru Amar Das's wife Mata Mansa Devi suggested that there should be *Pangat* first then *Sangat*, and hence made enacted this concept in the *Gurudwara*. According to this concept the great Akbar first had to first sit alongside other common people in the *Panghat* and eat *Langar* with them, only after that he was allowed to meet Guru Amar Das. The daughter of Guru Amar Das. Guru Amar Das's daughter *Bibi Bhani* supported her father in every aspect. She was then married to the Sodhi Sultan Guru Ram Das whom she again supported. *Mata Ganga* helped Guru Arjan Dev in making the *Bani*. She also played a part in the establishment of *Shri Darbar Sahib (Harmandir Sahib)*. September 1 of 1604 was the first *Parkash Utsav* of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. On the death of Guru Arjan Dev *Mata Ganga* took the responsibility of taking care of Guru Hargobind Sahib. Wearing the two religious swords *Miri and Piri* she supported the Guru in the establishment of *Shri Akal Takt*. The wife of the 6th Guru *Mata Nanaki* also played an important role.

Guru Har Rai Sahib on becoming the seven Guru, took

Mata Nanki and her son *Guru Tegh Bahadar* to *Baba Bakala*. During his time in *Baba Bakala*, *Guru Har Rai* devoted most for his time in worship. In the mean while *Mata Gujri* took care of both the *Guru Har Rai* and *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. She also took the responsibility of *Sangat* and *Pangat*. After the death of *Mata Gujri's* husband, *Guru Tegh Bahadar*, *Mata Gujri* took care of his son *Gobind Rai*. During the difficult time for the Sikhs, *Mata Gujri* had to take her grandsons out of *Anandpur Sahib* due to the war near *Sarsa* river. *Gangu Brahman* who initially helped *Mata Gujri* in escaping got greedy and so betrayed *Mata Gujri* by telling *Aurangzeb* about their whereabouts. *Mata Gujri* told her grandsons to stay strong to their religion and prepared them to sacrifice their life for their religion. This is the reason why the sons of *Guru Gobind Singh* sacrificed their lives at a very young age and created history.

The sacrifice of the four *Sahibzades* at a very young age gives inspiration to all Sikh mothers, grandmothers. *Bibi Gujri* too sacrificed her life in *Thanda Burj* and so created history by becoming the first Indian woman to sacrifice her life. On the 30th of March, 1699 in the holy place of *Shri Anandpur Sahib* *Guru Gobind Singh* prepared *Khande da Pahul*. In this *Mata Jeeto* also help *Guru Gobind Singh* as while preparing *Khande da Pahul* she added *patase* to the *pavitarjal* as a symbol of imparting humbleness, truthfulness and kindness. In the establishment of the *Khalsa Panth* both men and women played their part. In this way all them others, sisters and daughters contributed towards the establishment of the *Khalsa Panth*. *Guru Gobind Singh* died during his stay at *Nander*. Upon the death of *Guru Gobind Singh*, *Mata Sundiri* and *Mata Sahib Kaur* took care of all the responsibilities of the *Khalsa Panth* with great bravely and humbleness.

There is no doubt that taking care of the responsibility of the Guru *Panth*, Guru Granth, Guru *Maryada* and Gurughar during this difficult time was a very difficult task. This difficult task was taken upon by Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur. They supported each other in this difficult time and were able to do with the blessings and knowledge of the Guru.

At such a difficult time, it was not easy to maintain the progress of the *Khalsa Panth* as before. With the growing powers of the enemy states it was not easy to keep the *Khalsa Panth* strong on the political as well as religious grounds. However both Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur performed this task with intellect. Even the great leaders of the world have a difficulty in maintaining the valour, unity and unrest in their community during testing times. Even very large kingdom had been broken in the past during demanding times as such. At such arduous time Mai Bhago stood up to become the first woman general of the Sikh community. She was the first woman general who bravely fought with the enemies, hence elevated the esteem of the Sikh community. Some of the Sikhs who had gone to Anandpur Sahib to fight for Guru Gobind Singh, had deserted him under adverse conditions. On getting this news Mai Bhago criticized them. Hence on her aunt's these Sikhs were ashamed of their betrayal. Mai Bhago rallied the deserters, and persuaded them to go to the battle field that they had deserted. So it was only due to the personality of Mai Bhago that these forty Sikh soldiers agreed to fight. Mai Bhago herself also travelled with them to the battle in the false appearance of a man. All forty of the Sikhs who came to themselves in the battle were killed in the fight and were given the honour of being called as *Chali Mukte*. The name of the battle field

i.e. Khidrana was renamed as Mukhtsar in the honour of the forty Sikh soldiers who had sacrificed their lives in the battle field. Every female can gain inspiration from Mai Bhago and end her dependence on anyone. She can also get the courage to openly criticize any injustice that she may have undergone.

Other than that, in the Sikh history there are many women who have done incredible things. Women have also played an important role in promoting Sikhism and have helped in promoting the Sikh religion. It was a very difficult time for the Sikh women during the Mir Mannu period but they did not give up even when their children were killed in front of them. This showed that women showed strength by sacrificing themselves as well as their children for the sake of their religion. This is why these women are given the honour of being *Singhnias* in the *Ardas* for their sacrifices for the religion.

Various *Gurudwaras* are run after the name and memory of the Sikh women who sacrificed themselves for the sake of their Religion. These women served the religion with self sacrifice and selflessness. One such example is that free food i.e. *Langar* is served to people in the name of Mata Khiwi in *Gurudwara Khandoor Sahib*. Other than that there are famous statues and monuments made in the memory of various Sikh women such as Bebe Nanki, *Mata Gujri*, *Mata Sundri Kaur*, *Bibi Kaoula*, *Mata Sundri*, *Bibi Bhani* for their sacrifices for the religion. This proves the importance of women in the Sikh religion. The Guru has described a woman as the greatest and has placed them at a high rank. Even today, man and woman are treated as equal in the Sikh religion. Sikh women have played a glorious part in Sikh history. Women are also considered as the backbone of the history of the Sikhs. Man and woman are two sides of the same coin.

the human race. Man takes birth from a woman and woman is born of a man. This system is interrelating and inter-dependent. A man can never feel secure and complete in life without a woman. The success of a man depends upon the love and support of the woman who shares her life with him and vice versa. The *Gurudwaras* made in the name of these Sikh woman also inspires mothers and daughters of this generation and motivate them to help others and live an honest life. So that the woman and daughters of this generation can themselves become an example for the next generations. The Sikh woman have played a glorious part in the Sikh history and have proven themselves equal in service, devotion, sacrifice and bravery with the men. The example of their moral, dignity, services and self sacrifice are and will remain a source of inspiration upcoming Sikh generations. This is why it is important for us to know the history of the Sikhs and the sacrifices that both men and women gave for the sake of the religion.

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HISTORICAL SIKH SHRINES OF WOMEN AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN SIKHISM

A
THESIS

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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
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CONCLUSION

The foundation for the Sikh religion in India was built by the first Guru of the Sikhs that was Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Nanak Dev emphasised that all human beings should be in touch with religion and hence with God. Before the birth of Guru Nanak Dev. The society was divided into different four castes. There were mainly four castes are the Brahmans, the *Khatris*, the *Vaishhs* and the *Shudarhs*. Out of these four castes, the *Shudarh* was considered as a low caste. During at that period the conditions of women were also equally bad. They too were considered lower ranks in comparison to the males. Inequality and social injustice prevailed in the society on the basis of caste and gender. So due to this Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Nanak Dev believed that there is only one creator of the universe God. According to Guru Nanak Dev both the religions in the country at that time that is Hindus and Muslims had the same God but was worshipped in different forms and names. He believed that both Hindus and Muslims were the same. At the same time the conditions of women were bad as well as their status was considered to be lower in the society with parity to that of their male counter parts. So Guru Nanak Dev stood to promote the equality and respect of women in the society. He aimed at elevating the status of women. Guru Nanak Dev considered both men and women to be equal. Guru Nanak Dev believed that women should be respected. According to Guru Nanak women are the ones who give birth to common person as well as Kings, so they should be respected. Woman can participate in all religions, culture, social, secular activities including lead religious congregations, take part in the *Akand Path*, perform *kirtan* and also work as a *Granthi*. Sikhism was the first major relisia in the world which to imply that woman are equal to man. Due to the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev, women have a high rank and a higher status in the Sikh community.

Guru Nanak Dev started the *Sangat pratha*. According to the *Sangat pratha* people from all the different religions would sit together and learn from the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. At a time of so many caste based differences *Sangat pratha* was a big step as here people from different castes and religions were supposed to sit together if they wanted to listen to the Guru's teaching. So this acted as a step towards eliminating caste based discrimination that presided amongst the people. The gathering of people sitting together to listen the Guru was still known as *Sangat*. This is considered to be the most important pillar of the Sikh religion. So the Sikh religion is incomplete without the *Sat Sangat*. The gathering of follower of the Guru in the Sikh religion is known as

Sat Sangat. In this gathering that people come together to recite the name of God. *Sat Sangat* is that place where people take the name of God. *Sat Sangat* is formed when people from different castes and both genders get together and recite the name of God with any restrictions and discriminations based on gender or caste.

Sat Sangat was started by Guru Nanak Dev. As the Sikh religion progressed under the different Gurus that succeeded Guru Nanak Dev this tradition of *Sat Sangat* continued and it is still followed in the present. Hence it was followed during the time of other Gurus also. It was suggested by Guru Nanak Dev that Sikhs should get together in the *Sat Sangat* so as to take the name of God. While sitting in a *Sat Sangat* one can recite one's prayers of God and can feel a sense of peace of mind. A person can feel as if his soul has become pure. The way of living of a human being depends upon his other way of thinking that being positive or negative. So *Sat Sangat* provided a source of positive thoughts hence improving the quality of lives of the followers. So there is a role of *Sanat* in the life of a human being. The ability of a person to work increases when he works together with other people in the form of a community. In a person's social life, a common gathering can not only improve him in various ways but can also motivate him or her to achieve more. So *Sangat* heals the soul of a person.

The meaning of *Sanat* is gathering. This is the reason why the gathering of the people who were the followers of the Guru was known as *Sanat*. According to Bhai Gurdas one Sikh is a Sikh, a gathering of two Sikhs is *Sanat* where as a gathering of five Sikhs or more take the form of God. The name of God is recited in the *Sangat* where the Guru also shares his wisdom with his followers. Guru Nanak Dev travelled across the globe to spread the message of the Lord. Bhai Mardana travelled alongside Guru Nanak Dev in his journey to spread the name of the Lord. Bhai Mardana played the *nabbab* while Guru Nanak Dev chanted the prayers. The *Sangat* was bestowed upon with the wisdom of Guru Nanak Dev in the *kirtan* and they were also provided food in the *Langar*. So the people would be satisfied. Guru Nanak Dev showed people the path to God. People gathered in large numbers where *Guru Nanak Dev* travelled to, so as to listen to join the *Sangat* and listen to the *Guru* himself.

With the help of *Sangat*, the *dharamshala* and *Pangat* were also formed. There is a relation between *Sangat* and *Pangat*. As people sit in proper ways to eat *Langar* so the word *Pangat* has been taken over *Sangat*. The teachings of Guru Nanak Dev mainly comprised of three practical things which were *kirt karo*, *naam japna* and *vand chakko*. The meaning of *Kirtan karo* is to work hard so as to earn a living through honesty, without any exploitation

of another being or Whereas according to Guru Nanak Dev the meaning of *naam japna* is to meditate and recite God's name, so as to control the five weaknesses of the human personality. Finally the meaning of *vand chakko* is to share with others what one has and also to help those with less and are in need of help. There is no discrimination on the basis of caste, gender etc in *Sangat* as well as in *Pangat*. People sitting in a *Sangat* are not differentiated either as rich or poor but are treated to be as of the same value. Due to this, the people who were considered to be of low caste and low standards were treated to be at par with the upper class of the society. People in the *Sangat* come to take the blessing of Guru. Holy food (*Langar*) is made in one kitchen and is provided to everyone free of any cost. The main idea behind the concept of *Langar* is community dining with the aim to promote equality amongst people, a feeling of brotherhood and to encourage sharing. So Guru Nanak Dev inculcated a common mode of worship and a common social institute by laying the foundation of *Sangat* and *Pangat*. *Sangat*

Means "association". It is getting together of noble and good people. *Sangat* has the freedom to discuss secular matters presiding in the community, it is its spiritual core which imparts to it the status and authority it commands in the Sikh system. Guru Nanak Dev said that *Sat Sangat* is where the divine name alone is cherished. A member of the *Sangat*, that is every Sikh as well as those who want to listen to the knowledge of the Guru is known as *bhai* meaning brother, signifying one of holy living. The *Sangat* also brought together men not only in spiritual pursuit but also in worldly affairs. So as forging a community of people with a common purpose as well as of action based on mutual equality and brotherhood. Though *Sangat* were spread over widely separated localities, they were part of a single entity owing loyalty to the word of Guru Nanak Dev. *Sangat* were thus the Sikh community in formation. *Pangat* literally means a same row. It stands for people sitting and eating together in the same row that is in the *Guru-ka-langer*. The *Langar* or free kitchen was started by the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev. It was designed to uphold the principle of equality amongst all the people of the world regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status. In addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of *Langar* expresses the ethics of sharing, community, inclusiveness and oneness of all humankind. Since their beginning by Guru Nanak Dev, *Sangat* and *Pangat* have been an indispensable part of the Sikh religion, both in percept as well as in practice. The *Sangat* gatherings were not merely places of worship but also way side refectories which gave food and shelter to indigent wayfarers. When a Sikh joins the *Sangat*, he or she comes in contact with noble people. He feels a great change within himself or herself. Mutual gathering and understanding helps a person in removing his

egoism and other eccentricities. He learns to work in a cooperative and democratic setup and by doing so his sense of selfishness vanishes. Once Guru Nanak Dev was given twenty rupees by his father, so as he saw poor people sitting hungry, he bought food with all the money he had and distributed the food amongst all the hungry poor Sadhas. Any person can come in the *Pangat* and feed his stomach by eating *Langar* for free as all the people in the *Sangat* are treated as equal. The upper castes that is the *Brahmans*, *Khatri*s and the *Vaish*s are treated at par with the *Shudra*s in the *Sangat*. *Sangat* and *Pangat* were some of the indispensable principles which were bestowed by Guru Nanak Dev upon his followers.

Guru Nanak Dev taught the *Sangat* that was present in the *Dharmshala* to recite the name of God at least two times a day i.e. during the morning and the evening hours. He asked them to recite their prayers which included *Jap*, *Sodhar* and *Arti*. Guru Nanak Dev made Kartarpur as the main centre for the gathering of the *Sangat*. This was the place where Guru Nanak Dev established his first *Dharmshalas*. The aim of Guru Nanak Dev was to write and collect the different teachings so as to form the *Bani*. Guru Nanak Dev wanted to form a new society for the people. Guru Angad Dev established the *Dharmshalas* in Khadoor Sahib for the expansion of Sikh religion. Whereas Guru Amar Das established a *Dharamsala* in Goindwal Sahib. Guru Ram Das established a *Dharamsala* in Amritsar again to promote the Sikh religion. The *Dharamsalas* were known as *Gurudwaras* during the time of Guru Hargobind Singh. The word *Gurudwara* is split into two words: *Gur* or *Guru* referring to *Guru Granth Sahib* i.e. the holy book of the Sikhs *Gurbani* *Wahe Guru* and the word *duwara* means door of the house. The meaning of *Gurudwara* is known as the place where the Guru resides. A person from any religion or caste is allowed to enter the *Gurudwara*. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is the compilation of all the teachings of the Gurus and is all the worthy of the respect from the Sikhs. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is also given the position of a Guru. So the *Gurudwara* was to be made as the place where the holy book of the Sikhs the *Guru Granth Sahib* was to be kept. It is also the place where the teachings of the *Bani* are preached.

The *Bani* in *Guru Granth Sahib* given the knowledge and teachings of the Guru. The purpose of the *Bani* and the teaching of the Guru was to solve the dilemma of the human mind and lead them to a righteous path. The aim was to make the people *Gurmukh* which means the followers of God and to lead them towards a path of truth and honesty. Without the knowledge provided by the Guru, the people would fall in the wrong path and would be engulfed by the evils of *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar*. According to Guru Nanak Dev these are the

major five weaknesses of human personality at variance with its spiritual essence and known as Thieves because they steal the person's common sense. Amongst the five weaknesses the first is *Kaam* which means lust. The second one is *Krodh* which means rage, then *Lobh* which means greed, *Moh* which means attachment and *Ahankar* that means conceit. *Kaam* refers to lust, it is one of the greatest evils that tempts people away from God it makes an individual weak-willed and unreliable. *Krodh* which means anger is important to be controlled. A person overcome by *Krodh* loses his balance of mind and becomes incapable of thinking properly. *Krodh* means anger and hatred and has no place in any religious practice. *Lobh* means greed, a strong desire to possess what rightfully belongs to others. It makes an individual selfish and self centred. It distracts a person from his religious as well as social duties. A person can become blind with greed if an effort to control the desire for unlimited possession is not met. *Moh* refers to the strong attachment that an individual has to worldly possession and relationship. It blurs the perspective of human mind and makes him narrow minded. It deviates a person from his moral and social responsibilities and leads him towards a path of sin. *Ahankar* means false pride arising out of one's possessions, material wealth, intelligence or powers. It gives an individual a feeling that he is superior to others and therefore they are at a lower level than him. It leads to jealousy and causes a feeling of enmity and restlessness amongst people.

Without the knowledge of provided in the *Gurbani* a person is caught within these five weaknesses i.e. *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar* and hence moves towards a dark and self-destructive path. By the help of the knowledge that a person receives in the *Gurudwara*, he or she can keep himself away from the above five evils. A person throughout his life time in this world should be fulfilling his family and social responsibilities. But according to the *Gurbani* the main aim of coming in to this life form is to achieve *mukhti* that is to achieve the purpose of freeing the soul from this humanly form.

The establishment of the *Gurudwaras* go back in history alongside the establishment of the Sikh religion. The *Gurudwara* is not only a religious place for the Sikh but has also acted as a centre for the leaders to share their word throughout different phases in the Sikh history.

The Sikh religion had an influence on the people of the society. Sikhism had a positive impact on the lives of its followers. The *Gurudwara* is an important part of the lives of the Sikhs. A person is welcome here disregarding whether he is from any religion, caste or gender. He or she is welcome here during both the happy and sorrow times of his or her life. The *Gurudwara* also plays an important role in the improvement of the society. It

has always been a part of the religious, social and political aspects of the lives of the Sikhs. The knowledge of the *Gurbani* is shared in the *Gurudwara* by the preachers. By the help of this knowledge a Sikh can nurture understanding of the world doing so improving and purifying his mind and soul. Free food is also served in the *Gurudwaras* in the name of *Langar* which is available for the common people as well as the poor and needy. So the *Gurudwara* is not only a place for the people to learn the word of the Lord but also helps and takes care of the needy and the people who cannot afford to buy food. The *Gurudwara* encourages an attitude of *chardi kala* to the Sikh which means a having a positive, bouyant and optimistic attitude towards life and the future itself. The *Gurudwara* teaches people to live in peace and harmony with each other. This attitude of *chardi kala* encourages one to allow one to sail through the upsand downs of life by keeping faith in God that no harm will be caused to the individual. To join and help others in their hour of need is a part of the *chardi kala* spirit. *Gurudwara* being an important part in the lives of the Sikhs, a Sikh is connected to the *Gurudwara* from birth to death.

Gurudwara is an important part of the Sikh religion. As the name suggests *Gurudwara* is the home of the Guru. People from all religions, faiths as well as those who do not have faith in the Sikh religion, are also welcome in the *Gurudwaras*. As a *Gurudwara* is fixed in its position at a particular time. The *Gurudwaras* are affected by history and have also been an important part of the history. The *Gurudwara* is affected by and also has an effect on the society. There was also a time in the history of the Sikhs when the *Masands* and the *Mahants* of the *Gurudwara* started keeping the donations and the *rashan* that were provided to the *Gurudwara* by the Devotees of the Guru to themselves.

The *Man Pratha* was established by the third Guru, Guru Amar Das. The main reason for this was that by that time the as the population of the Sikh society had increased by a great amount and so it was difficult for Guru Amar Das to reach to all the Sikh people and provide his teachings to them. The word *Man* refers to a low wooden cot on which the *Sikh Sangatia* would sit and teach *Sikhi* to the *Sangat*, while chanting *kirtan* and *Shabads*. There after Guru Amar Das introduced the *Masand* system. In the *Masand* system, the *Masands* known as the local community leaders provided the teachings of the Guru and Sikhism to the *Sangat*. These *Masands* also forwarded the material and donations for the *Langar* made by the people to the Guru. So in this way with the help of the *Masands* the Sikh religion spread to different regions. But during the time of the Guru Gobind Singh these *Masands* started becoming greedy. They started betrayed the institution of the *Gurudwara* as well as their

Guru. They would keep whatever was given by the Devotes to the *Gurudwara* with themselves. So Guru Gobind Singh abolished the *Masand* system. After abolishing the *Masand* system Guru Gobind Singh provided the foundation of *Khalsa Panth*.

The *Masands* were not the only ones who were responsible for promote the teachings of the Sikh religion to people. There was a another group of people known as the *Sevaks*, which comes from the word *Sevaw* hich means service, so the *Sevaks* where the servants of the Guru Sikh. They also included Sikhdaughters, Sikh women who played an important part in promoting the Sikh religion. It was due to these missionaries that there are many *Gurudwaras* all around the world. The *Gurudwaras* also help us remember the sacrifices done by *Sevaks*, *Masands* as well as the Sikh women and daughters to promote Sikhism.

The Guru promoted equality amongst the men and women in the society. Guru Nanak Dev was the first to take Such a step of promoting equality amongst thet wo genders. Women were also among those who promoted Sikhism and were also amongst the *Masands*. Due to this the stature of the women in the society was given a boost and also the position of the women in the households was considered to be at par with that of the males. It is important to be noted here, that Guru Nanak Dev was the first religious leader to spread awareness amongst the people about the importance of equality and fraternity amongst the people of the society. He was also against the social injustice in the society in the name of caste. According to Guru Nanak Dev there are seem less qualities in women which cannot be described in words

At the time of Guru Nanak Dev ,the position of women in the society was considered to be very low in comparison to that of the men and they were not given their deserved respect. So Guru Nanak Dev proclaimed the equality of men and women. Guru Nanak Dev said that it isa woman who keeps the family race going in future generations, and that women should neither be considered as a cursed nor should be condemned. Instead they should be embraced. Guru Nanak Dev also said that it is from a woman that a man is born. Guru Nanak Dev said that woman not only give birth to ordinary man but also to Saints and Kings. It is also stated in history that a nurse Dolta Bhai and Guru Nanak Dev 'sister BebeNanki were the first ones to recognize Guru Nanak Dev'spiritual eminence. Hence they were amongst the first ones to become his Devotee. Guru Nanak Dev'smother MataTripta provided good morals and antiques to her child Guru Nanak Devduring *Mata khivi*continued the system of *Sangat* and *Pangat* which was started by GuruNanak Dev's, in Khadoor Sahib. At Khadoor Sahib *Langar* was provided to the poor and needy.

Guru Amar Das's wife Mata Mansa Devi suggested that there should be *Pangat* first then *Sangat*, and hence made enacted this concept in the *Gurudwara*. According to this concept the great Akbar first had to first sit alongside other common people in the *Panghat* and eat *Langar* with them, only after that he was allowed to meet Guru Amar Das. The daughter of Guru Amar Das. Guru Amar Das's daughter *Bibi Bhani* supported her father in every aspect. She was then married to the Sodhi Sultan Guru Ram Das whom she again supported. *Mata Ganga* helped Guru Arjan Dev in making the *Bani*. She also played a part in the establishment of *Shri Darbar Sahib (Harmandir Sahib)*. September 1 of 1604 was the first *Parkash Utsav* of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. On the death of Guru Arjan Dev *Mata Ganga* took the responsibility of taking care of Guru Hargobind Sahib. Wearing the two religious swords *Miri and Piri* she supported the Guru in the establishment of *Shri Akal Takt*. The wife of the 6th Guru *Mata Nanaki* also played an important role.

Guru Har Rai Sahib on becoming the seven Guru, took *Mata Nanaki* and her son Guru Tegh Bahadar to Baba Bakala. During his time in Baba Bakala, Guru Har Rai devoted most of his time in worship. In the mean while *Mata Gujri* took care of both the Guru Har Rai and Guru Tegh Bahadur. She also took the responsibility of *Sangat* and *Pangat*. After the death of *Mata Gujri's* husband, Guru Tegh Bahadar, *Mata Gujri* took care of his son Gobind Rai. During the difficult time for the Sikhs, *Mata Gujri* had to take her grandsons out of Anandpur Sahib due to the war near Sarsa river. Gangu Brahman who initially helped *Mata Gujri* in escaping got greedy and so betrayed *Mata Gujri* by telling Aurangzeb about their whereabouts. *Mata Gujri* told her grandsons to stay strong to their religion and prepared them to sacrifice their life for their religion. This is the reason why the sons of Guru Gobind Singh sacrificed their lives at a very young age and created history.

The sacrifice of the four *Sahibzades* at a very young age gives inspiration to all Sikh mothers, grandmothers. *Bibi Gujri* too sacrificed her life in Thanda Burj and so created history by becoming the first Indian woman to sacrifice her life. On the 30th of March, 1699 in the holy place of *Shri Anandpur Sahib* Guru Gobind Singh prepared *Khanda da Pahul*. In this *Mata Jeeto* also helped Guru Gobind Singh as while preparing *Khanda da Pahul* she added *patase* to the *pavitarjal* as a symbol of imparting humbleness, truthfulness and kindness. In the establishment of the *Khalsa Panth* both men and women played their part. In this way all them others, sisters and daughters contributed towards the establishment of the *Khalsa Panth*. Guru Gobind Singh died during his stay at Nander. Upon the death of Guru Gobind Singh, *Mata Sundiri* and *Mata Sahib*

Kaur took care of all the responsibilities of the *Khalsa Panth* with great bravery and humbleness.

There is no doubt that taking care of the responsibility of the *Guru Panth*, *Guru Granth*, *Guru Maryada* and *Gurughar* during this difficult time was a very difficult task. This difficult task was taken upon by Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur. They supported each other in this difficult time and were able to do with the blessings and knowledge of the Guru.

At such a difficult time, it was not easy to maintain the progress of the *Khalsa Panth* as before. With the growing powers of the enemy states it was not easy to keep the *Khalsa Panth* strong on the political as well as religious grounds. However both Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur performed this task with intellect. Even the great leaders of the world have a difficulty in maintaining the valour, unity and unrest in their community during testing times. Even very large kingdom had been broken in the past during demanding times as such. At such arduous time Mai Bhago stood up to become the first woman general of the Sikh community. She was the first woman general who bravely fought with the enemies, hence elevated the esteem of the Sikh community. Some of the Sikhs who had gone to Anandpur Sahib to fight for Guru Gobind Singh, had deserted him under adverse conditions. On getting this news Mai Bhago criticized them. Hence on her aunt's side these Sikhs were ashamed of their betrayal. Mai Bhago rallied the deserters, and persuaded them to go to the battle field that they had deserted. So it was only due to the personality of Mai Bhago that these forty Sikh soldiers agreed to fight. Mai Bhago herself also travelled with them to the battle in the false appearance of a man. All forty of the Sikhs who came to themselves in the battle were killed in the fight and were given the honour of being called as *Chali Mukte*. The name of the battle field i.e. Khidrana was renamed as Mukhtsar in the honour of the forty Sikh soldiers who had sacrificed their lives in the battle field. Every female can gain inspiration from Mai Bhago and end her dependence on anyone. She can also get the courage to openly criticize any in justice that she may have undergone.

Other than that, in the Sikh history there are many women who have done incredible things. Women have also played an important role in promoting Sikhism and have helped in promoting the Sikh religion. It was a very difficult time for the Sikh women during the Mir Mannu period but they did not give up even when their children were killed in front of them. This showed that women showed strength by sacrificing themselves as well as their children for the sake

of their religion. This is why these women are given the honour of being *Singhnia* in the *Ardas* for their sacrifices for the religion.

Various *Gurudwaras* are run after the name and memory of the Sikh women who sacrificed themselves for the sake of their Religion. These women served the religion with self sacrifice and selflessness. One such example is that free food i.e. *Langar* is served to people in the name of Mata Khiwi in *Gurudwara* Khandoor Sahib. Other than that there are famous statues and monuments made in the memory of various Sikh women such as Bebe Nanki, *MataGujri*, *Mata Sundri Kaur*, *Bibi Kaoula*, *MataSundri*, *Bibi Bhani* for their sacrifices for the religion. This proves the importance of women in the Sikh religion. The Guru has described a woman as the greatest and has placed them at a high rank. Even today, man and woman are treated as equal in the Sikh religion. Sikh women have played a glorious part in Sikh history. Women are also considered as the backbone of the history of the Sikhs. Man and woman are two sides of the same coin in the human race. Man takes birth from a woman and woman is born of a man. This system is interrelating and inter-dependent. A man can never feel secure and complete in life without a woman. The success of a man depends upon the love and support of the woman who shares her life with him and vice versa. The *Gurudwaras* made in the name of these Sikh women also inspire mothers and daughters of this generation and motivate them to help others and live an honest life. So that the women and daughters of this generation can themselves become an example for the next generations. The Sikh women have played a glorious part in the Sikh history and have proven themselves equal in service, devotion, sacrifice and bravery with the men. The example of their moral, dignity, services and self sacrifice are and will remain a source of inspiration for upcoming Sikh generations. This is why it is important for us to know the history of the Sikhs and the sacrifices that both men and women gave for the sake of the religion.

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PREFACE

Religious organization has an important role in any charge the font. 'Gurudwara ' is one of the important institutions of a religion. The daily life the Sikhs are an integral part of the life. The Gurdwara is called **Dharamshala in the time of Guru Hargobind Singh**. It is started by Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Nanak Dev established first **Dharmshala's** in Kartarpur . Gurudwara is still a part of the community. The Sikh Gurus had played an important role in the religion. The women in Sikh tradition played a very important by keeping their main role in mind, Gurdwaras are built on their names. We also remember Sikhs Women in our daily prayers. The Sikhs Women is first to take precedence over all her works. Inspiration from their sacrifice, we embraced women because the women that are mothers and sisters won the battles and create the history. The first Sikh woman was Bebe Nanki, Who first adopted the Sikhism and made a lot of contribution to the langer system. The first martyr woman was Mata Gujri Who gave the birth to Guru Gobind. Mata Sundari had contributed a lot to Sikhism. Sikh history has recorded the role of women, portraying them as equals to men I service ,devotion, sacrifice, and bravery. Guru Nanak Dev has given a great place to women, and said,

So kio mandha Akhiea jiss janmehi raajaan .

According to Guru Granth Sahib, women and girls are to the men and shared the equal status.

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Scope

This correspondence is from the 15th century to the 18th century. This area is very large when Guru Nanak Dev was born in 15th century then the economic and social condition of society was very poor. He laid the foundation of sikhisms to end the **Pretense**. Established a **Dharmasala** to end the discrimination of caste where **Sikhism** was preached and in **Langar** and **sangat** everyone sat down together to eat **Langar** sitting in the sangat and listening to the Gurus instructions. Women's misery was very poor in the society. *Sati, pratha ,Pardha, pratha* and child marriages were existed in the society. These **Dharmasalas** had made a very important contribution to the carination of these, so that all the Sikh women in the history of Sikhism to be born. Bebe Nanki, Mata Khivi, Bibi Bhani, Bibi Amiro contributed a lot in Sikh religion. Apart from these Mai Bhago was said to be the first General in Sikh history and Mata Gujri was the first martyr women also known as Mata Gujari, was the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of Sikhism, and the mother of Guru Gobind Singh , the tenth Guru of Sikhism.

Need of study

In history, we read that the women are very brave she is going to make herself fit for every aspect. The women's condition was not good in ancient time but with the passage of time many changes occur in the society. The situation of the women is still very bad, she is considered as a foot shoe. She is considered to be a victim of social evil in the home. As the right practice method prevents child's misery towards child marriage and female feticide, Baba Nanak gave a very high position to the women i

In Sikhism today we need to read our Sikh history in which he was a great teacher .Today Sikhs are obligated to treat women as equals, and gender discrimination in Sikh society has no religious basis. However, gender equality has been difficult to achieve in practice due to heavy social, cultural, and caste-related pressure. Though equality of women has always been a major attribute of Sikhism and a great number of women have made significant contributions, it is important to note that it is still a work in progress.

Objective:-

- See the historical significance of Sikh women.
- Let them bring forth the religion that has got place in the religion.
- Describing the Gurudwara, By keep their importance in view.
- In the today's context, respecting the moral significance of the person in accordance with the Sikh faith, and telling the importance of it.

Plan of work and Methodology

This research is based on Primary and secondary resources Like History Science Department Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. Sikh Reference Library Amritsar, Guru Ramdass Library Amritsar, Central Library Patiala, Punjabi University, Panjab University Chandigarh, Public Library, Bathinda.

CHAPTERIZATION:-

Historical Background:-

In the first chapter, have been established by observing the division of society through Guru Nanak, let's look at the **Dharamshala** of that time which is now called Gurdwaras Sahib. In this we discuss the establishment of the **langer system** Guru Nanak gave women equal rights as men. Also read about those women that had contributed a lot to the Sikh religion and society. Due to their martyrdom, five Gurdwaras has been established. Today they are example of the bravest women. These women were Bebe Nanki, Mai Bhago, Mata Gujri, Mata Sundari, and Mata Sahib Kaur.

Contribution of Sikh women in Sikh history: - In the second chapter discussed the place of Sikh women in the history. Seeing in the bravery, service sentiment, contentment, moderation and modesty of Sikh women. Guru has given them a high place in Sikh religion. The first Sikh women in the Sikh history were Bebe Nanki. Mata Khivi was the wife of Guru Angad Dev. On her name today **Langar** is running in Khadur. If you talk about the first general, then she was Mai Bhago. That created the new history. Mata Gujri was the first martyr women also known as Mata Gujari, was the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru of Sikhism, and the mother of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru of Sikhism

The Sikh Shrines of women

In the history shrines of Sikh women talk about the Gurdwaras in the memories of them the contribution to Sikh women. In these Gurdwaras, Guru Granth Sahib placed as guru for Sikhs. Khadur Sahib Gurdwara built in the memory of Bibi Khivi. In the memory of Bibi Kaulan, Gurdwara Sahib, the Kaulsar, is established. Mai Bhago's bravery symbol is in her memory in Jhabal, Gurdwara Sahib. Fatehgarh Sahib has a tower in memory of Mata Gujari's. Apart from this, Gurdwaras were established in Delhi and on other places in memory of Mata Sundari, Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Jito. These Gurdwaras remind us the memories and works of our great women of Sikhism.

Conclusion - We came at the conclusion that Guru Nanak had laid the foundation of **Sikhism** to remove the evils from society. In this, Guru had set up a Gurdwara and caused a division of society to violate. Because at that time society was surrounded by many castes. By Establishing a lot of the **Dharmshalas**, Guruji started the **Langar** and **Pangat system**. Society opposed to women and oppression. Sikhism gave the status to them equal to men. As a result, great women were born in Sikhism. The Sikh religion that is filled with the feeling of service, sacrifice and contentment. Their sacrifice is an example to us. Today, can take the inspiration to their sacrifices for furnishing the condition of women in today's society. Because the women whether its mothers, sisters and, wives all creates the society.