

Comparative Analysis of the *Panchal Pandita* and the *Punjabi Bhain* from a Gender Perspective

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The modernizing reform movements in colonial Punjab, most notably, the Arya Samaj among the Hindus and the Singh Sabhas among the Sikhs, were the first to take up the challenge of 'reforming' their women and inculcating the new roles expected of them through education. The educational initiatives of the two movements culminated in the establishment of two influential institutions for girls' education in north India - Kanya Maha Vidyalaya at Jalandhar and Sikh Kanya Maha Vidyalaya at Ferozepur. This paper analyses their periodicals, respectively the *Panchal Pandita* (1898-1911) and the *Punjabi Bhain* (1907-1912), from the perspective of their male and female contributors, their dominant concerns and the underlying assumptions and values regarding the relative position and role of women in society. Recording the self expression of the reforming males as well as the women who were the objects of reform, these journals afford insights not only into the contemporary social realities and changing social attitudes, but also suggest that the nature of change desired by the male and female writers was different in significant respects.

This paper takes up the case study of the two early twentieth century periodicals issued by the Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, Jalandhar and the Sikh Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, Ferozepur, respectively the *Panchal Pandita* and the *Punjabi Bhain*.¹ These journals offer valuable insights not only into the contemporary social realities, and the concerns of the reformers associated with the Arya Samaj and Singh Sabha movements, but also into the changing social attitudes. This paper attempts to deconstruct the writings in the *Panchal Pandita* (1898-1911) and the *Punjabi Bhain* (1907-1912) from the perspective of their male and female contributors, looking for their dominant concerns and the underlying assumptions and values. Other questions that this essay seeks to answer are: Was there a shift in emphases with time? What were the similarities and contrasts in the concerns revealed in the two periodicals? What bearing did these have on the women's condition and their relative position in society?

The first decade of the twentieth century is the time period of the study which coincided with significant changes taking place in the Punjabi society. People were becoming aware also of the inspiring developments outside the region and the country. This paper, therefore, begins with reference to the context, which is followed by its three main sections: the *Panchal Pandita* is

taken up in the first section; the *Punjabi Bhain* in the second; and a comparative analysis of the two journals is attempted in the third. To the extent possible, an effort has been made to keep the writings of the men and women contributors distinct.

The Context

The British annexation of the Punjab in 1849 was a watershed in its history, resulting in major political, administrative, economic and social transformation of the region. The inception of colonialism in the region coincided with a renewed vigour in the activities of the Christian missionaries who went about their evangelical program with great enthusiasm.² The close cooperation between the missionaries and the administrators helped the missions undertake a wide range of activities which had a deep impact on the society. The colonial administrators' disapproval of several of its socio-religious practices, especially the pathetic condition of women, was reinforced by the Christian missionaries who used educational and philanthropic institutions for spreading Christianity. This resulted in the rise of modernizing reform movements among the Punjabis; most notably, the Arya Samaj among the Hindus; the Singh Sabhas among the Sikhs; and the Anjumans and, to a limited extent, Ahmadiyahs among the Punjabi Muslims.³ This situation of cultural contact also saw other movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Dev Samaj, and the Sanatan Dharm emerging in colonial Punjab and contributing towards the reform efforts.⁴ The periodicals under discussion were published by the two leading educational institutions under the aegis of two major reformist movements of the region - the Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabha.

Although founded at Bombay on 10 April 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the Arya Samaj soon acquired the character of a regional movement. The Lahore Arya Samaj was established in 1877 and by the time of his death in 1883, thirty five Samajes had come up in towns and cities of the region, spreading his version of purified or Vedic Hinduism, and reinforcing his message and ideology through their activities. In 1886, the DAV Trust and Managing Society was founded and the first DAV school was established in Lahore. The Arya Samaj got split in 1893 into the militant 'Gurukul' wing and the 'College' party of the moderates who held control of the DAV Society. Both the wings of the Samaj focused on educational activities; simpler ceremonies for marriage, birth and death; remarriage of 'virgin' widows; orphan and famine relief; reconversion and purification of the low castes; and spread of Vedic education and knowledge. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, an Arya system of Anglo-Vedic education was in place from primary to college level, geared largely to the needs of the urban middle class Hindus. However, higher education for women was favoured only by the 'Gurukul' party.⁵

The Singh Sabha as the most important acculturative movement among the Sikhs also emerged around this time. The Singh Sabha of Amritsar was founded in 1873, the one at Lahore was founded in 1879, and more *sabhas*

followed. In due course, the Khalsa Diwans, followed by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, came up to coordinate their activities. Their declared objective was to restore Sikhism to its pristine purity, to promote Punjabi language, to publish books on Sikh religion and history and to promote modern education among the Sikhs. Majority of the Sabhas were attracted to the radical ideology of social and religious change propagated by the leaders of the Lahore Sabha, which also received the patronage of the Maharaja of Nabha and Sir Attar Singh of Bhadaur. The Singh Sabhas supported a large number of schools for boys and girls to impart Anglo-Sikh system of education which was regarded as an important means for introducing the desired change. In 1908, the annual Sikh Educational Conference was started to take stock of the development of education and literacy among the Sikhs.⁶

The Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabha among the Hindus and Sikhs respectively were the first to take up the challenge of 'reforming' their women for communitarian uplift and to meet the criticism of the colonial masters. The Punjabi women, in fact, were the site on which social reform was hinged, and the status of women was seen as an important indicator for respectability and upward social mobility. Education was seen as an important means by which the agenda of reform was to be initiated and the new roles expected of women to be promoted. Apart from founding schools and colleges for boys and girls, the Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabha set up their own printing presses to produce educational text books as well as literature that would project their ideology in the competitive social scenario. Books, newspapers, magazines and tracts were published in increasing numbers. The educational initiatives of the Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabha movements culminated in the successful establishment of two influential institutions for girls' education in north India - Kanya Maha Vidyalaya at Jalandhar and Sikh Kanya Maha Vidyalaya at Ferozepur. Both these institutions came to be regarded as pioneers in higher education for women in the Punjab, and the literature published by them took their message into many homes and helped to mould many young minds and lives. Recently, some of these writings have been used in studies of gender relations in the Punjab.⁷ A detailed and comparative analysis of the two periodicals, however, is probably being attempted for the first time.

The Panchal Pandita

The Kanya Maha Vidyalaya (KMV) was established at Jalandhar on 14 June 1896 by the efforts of Lala Devraj who belonged to the 'Gurukul' wing of the Arya Samaj. He was a key figure in the establishment of the Jalandhar Arya Samaj. As the Samaj grew he distanced himself from it and immersed in activities related with women's issues and the KMV. He faced hostility both from within and without, but kept the KMV above controversy, provincialism and communalism. Devraj died in 1935 at the age of 75 years. He treated the women's education as his mission and produced literature that catered to the 'needs of educated ladies and young girls'. The *Panchal Pandita* was launched in November 1897 by his efforts, and under his guidance it reached out to the

educated women of north India. Till April 1901, the magazine consisted of 16 pages in Hindi and 4 pages in English. From April 1901 onwards it was issued in Hindi language only. Savitri Devi, a widowed student who later became the Principal of the KMV in 1913, became its sub-editor from January 1903 onwards. According to Satyadev Vidyalkar, the biographer of Lala Devraj, this was the first magazine published in Hindi in the Punjab, which aimed at ameliorating the position of women, and Savitri Devi was the first woman editor of this region.⁸

The *Panchal Pandita* carried articles written by both men and women, albeit with different emphases and nuances. Each issue of the journal began with a prayer and contained moral notes, wise sayings, editor's message, and news from different parts of India and abroad, in addition to stories, poems, character sketches, articles and essays. It invited articles from its female readers and often advertised essay competitions on thought provoking topics which got a good response. The male contributors were generally men associated with the management of the KMV, its teachers as well as members of the local Arya Samaj. The maximum contributions were made by Lala Devraj himself, followed by Savitri Devi.

The Male Contributors

Referring to the status of women, Lala Devraj laments in a song that women of India are being treated like animals (*pashusam*), and seeks God's intervention to bring them out of their fallen state (*patit avastha*). Such prayers abound in the *Panchal Pandita*. At one place, Devraj writes: 'O God! ameliorate the condition of our fallen race!' (*dubi hui jati*). He recalls India's glorious past when women were respected as teachers, scholars and preachers, and is upset that they are being referred to as Shudras in the contemporary society and are degraded and treated like foot-wear (*paon ki jutti*).⁹ In his view, the reason for the fallen state of women is ignorance and lack of education. He agrees with a contributor that three evils – 'lack of education, unjustified shyness, and inappropriate subordination' – are responsible for transforming the status of the Indian women 'from a human being to that of an animal'.¹⁰

Devraj blames women for lack of self respect (*nij-samman*) and for allowing themselves to be ridiculed and humiliated in society. He feels that their biggest fault is that they think they have no capability or ability to achieve success in life.¹¹ Badri Das, a lawyer by profession and the joint editor of the *Panchal Pandita* for its English section till April 1901, echoes a similar sentiment earlier on by writing that, 'the tendency of self depreciation in women weakens their attempts to enlighten themselves. It is highly necessary that these imaginary disparaging ideas be totally banished from the minds of men as well as women'.¹² Devraj reacts to a remark by a 'learned man' (*vidwan*) that men were crying hoarse over lack of rights and equality of treatment under the British but they themselves deny equal rights to their women.¹³ In Devraj's view, it is not only men but women themselves who are responsible for this situation. Women are lazy and do not wish to come out of

their fallen state, or work for their rights, or support the cause taken up by those who wish to ameliorate their condition.¹⁴

Women are accused of upholding many undesirable customs and rituals like performance of *shradh* (a ritual for propitiating the ancestors by offering food and water to Brahmans), *syapa* (collective ritual mourning), child marriage, and singing of obscene songs on marriages and festivals which are disapproved of by respectable people.¹⁵ He chides women for bathing shamelessly at village ponds and lakes. He quotes Mai Bhagwati, the founder of the first school for girls in Haryana in Hoshiarpur district, that, 'the foreigners consider the Indian men as weaklings and foolish and laugh at the absurd conditions of our foolish women folk'.¹⁶

The practice of *parda* (veil) is regarded as a major source of the women's weakness. Devraj thinks that they have got so used to the veil that they resist giving it up: 'Those who have got used to living in darkness feel upset with the rays of the sunshine. They do not even wish for sunrise'. Badri Das agrees that these 'denizens of abject darkness' cannot appreciate the boons of liberty.¹⁷ Devraj goes on to compare such women with an injured animal which attacks the person who bandages its wound. He concludes his piece on a note of resignation: 'The women's body, mind and souls have become weak...they do not have the strength to think and cannot discriminate between the right and wrong'.¹⁸ Highlighting the disadvantages of *parda*, Devraj relates the story of a friend who had listed his wife also as an item of his luggage while traveling by train. On being questioned, he retorted: 'Are our women not like material objects? Because of their foolishness we have to worry about them too like a bag of clothes'. Ironically, points out Devraj, women keep *parda* from their relatives, but not while dealing with the low caste men like barbers and washer men and while roaming around in fairs and markets. Devraj makes a strong case against *parda*, and maintains that 'modesty lies in the eyes'.¹⁹ Vishva Nath Sharma, a teacher at the KMV, regards perpetuation of the evil custom of *parda* as a major hurdle in the way of women's uplift for which they themselves are responsible.²⁰

Lala Devraj nevertheless prescribes a dress code for covering the women's body in five layers so that all parts of the body, except hands, feet and face are covered. He also cautions women against wearing *saris* of a very fine material, probably because it clings to the body. A woman's dress and security appear to be related.²¹ Rather, remaining busy in their house work alone could keep them secure. Elsewhere, Devraj advises the girls not to look for outside protection; the *chowkidar* can only protect the building, whereas 'pure mind, righteous conduct, and your religion alone can be your protector'.²²

Women themselves are blamed for being the perpetrators of women's subjugation. Girl children are not allowed to play with toys. A school going girl is supposed to be seen only with her books in her spare time and if she does not go to school she has to carry her younger siblings the whole day long. Daughters and daughters-in-law are advised by the elderly women of the house to sit with their heads bent down to look coy and docile. Devraj feels sorry that

the women themselves are harming the health and posture of these young girls.²³

Devraj focuses on the pitfalls of keeping women illiterate and ignorant. Many stories of the women who were duped and sexually exploited while traveling are cited to emphasize the need for education.²⁴ He quotes a learned person who says that fewer men die in wars than the number of children who die every year due to the ignorance and foolishness of their mothers.²⁵ In fact, the male writers are of the view that no real progress is possible without educating women. As early as March 1898, Lala Badri Das writes that, 'however hard may men unassisted by their compeers try to improve themselves, their efforts must meet with failure if they do not raise their better halves'.²⁶ An illiterate wife can make life hell for her husband. Pandit Devi Dyal writes, 'a foolish wife and a clever husband will spend their days and nights fighting with each other' (*patni murakh pati chatur; kate din raat jhagrey mein*).²⁷

The education of women is seen as the panacea for the pathetic condition of society and Devraj underlines this in many articles. This sentiment is well expressed in a poem reproduced by Devraj:

Women! Who too long have lain, bound by tyrant custom's chain;
Forward now and boldly gain knowledge and be free.²⁸

Devraj highlights the obstacles in the way of women's education, namely lack of general support; shortage of finances, books, infrastructure, and good teachers; unwillingness of parents; and the ignorance and indifference of the women themselves.²⁹ He is highly impressed by the progress of women's education in the Bombay region, and attributes it to the absence of *parda*, generosity of the people there, longer exposure of women to modern education, and because the people in that region respect their women more, for their women are worthy of respect.³⁰

Devraj talks about the role and duties of an educated woman. She is the pivot of a happy home and the key to the country's progress. He expects educated women to be the torch bearers and lead their fallen sisters out of the darkness of ignorance. It is a debt that they have to repay, and a responsibility that they have to discharge. An educated woman who fails in her duty to spread literacy is like a 'fool and an evil soul' who has a cure for the others' suffering but is keeping it to herself.³¹ At the same time, the aim of education is viewed as making good wives, good mothers and good *pracharikas* (preachers). Working outside the home is generally not advisable, though a few years ago Devraj did write that in dire financial circumstances earning a living was better than asking the children to beg.³²

By and large, promotion of the *pativrata* ideology, extolling a chaste and loyal wife, was the focus of the reformers. Queen Victoria who *died* on 22 January 1901 is hailed as an ideal wife, an ideal mother and a virtuous widow.³³ Vishva Nath Sharma in his article 'Pativrata Dharm' writes that 'there is no religious duty better than service to the husband'.³⁴ The expected role of a wife and an indirect reference to the dancing girls (*tawaiifs*) comes out when

Devraj makes a strong recommendation for including music in women's education. Not only would it soothe the tired nerves of the husband but also prevent him from going astray or committing a sin: 'If the (sacred) Ganga is flowing in your own home, then why go outside?' (*jab ghar mein hi Ganga behti hai, toh bahar kyon jayen*).³⁵

The presence of a very large number of widows in the Punjab also caught the attention of the contributors.³⁶ The Bhagwati Widow Relief Fund was floated by the Managing Committee of the KMV to sponsor their education. However, no widow could avail this scholarship unless her good health and character was certified by two male members of the Arya Samaj.³⁷ In February 1911, Devraj writes about a widow who wanted to go back home as she could not bear hardships in the institution run for the widows by the KMV. He reprimands her that she is getting all the facilities like going out in fresh air, food, studies and medical care and is still behaving like an ungrateful person, who on being pricked by a thorn forgets all the bounties and comforts that the garden has bestowed upon her.³⁸ Significantly, male writers in the *Panchal Pandita* do not advocate widow remarriage as fervently as education for widows. The widow is advised to pray to God to help her lead a life of chastity and serve humanity.³⁹ Referring to the resolutions passed by the Khukrainis (a group of eight subcastes of the Khatris) in the Jhelum district, supporting widow remarriage, Devraj feels that a better alternative would have been to focus on their education.⁴⁰ Education for the widow is seen as an important tool that can keep her occupied as well as serve the community. Widows were seen as the only category of women who could meet the shortage of teachers and preachers.⁴¹

The obsession with the male child is also reflected in the medical tips and songs written for children in the *Panchal Pandita*. Phoolchand, *Koshadhyaksha* (treasurer) from Malwa – in Central India, gives medical tips for the growing children, repeatedly using the word 'balak' (male child) throughout his article.⁴² Interestingly, even lullabys (*loris*) written for infants do not use gender neutral words. They address the child as 'lal' (a boy), 'mera pyara' (a dear boy), or 'ved padhega tu' (you [he] will read the Vedas).⁴³ It is as if the girl child was not fortunate enough to be soothed by such endearments, or unconsciously, a different kind of life was visualized for her.

Women's Writings

The tone of the women's writings is forthright and positive, reflecting the determination and the will power to improve their lives. The contributors included some teachers, a number of the present and former students of the KMV, and the women who were the regular readers of the magazine.

The contributors find education, motherland and the progress of the country interrelated. Saraswati, a student, maintains that the country is going towards its doom because very little care is given to women's education. Since a child's initial learning is from its mother, an illiterate mother cannot make a strong nation.⁴⁴ Giving the example of the Boers (who fought two wars

recently against the British) who could not be vanquished due to their bravery, Durgavati writes that 'the traits of a race are those that are inherited from its mothers'.⁴⁵ Savitri Devi offers a prayer to God to 'help our fallen race (*patit jati*) to rise; bring us back to life by giving us the milk of knowledge'. She stresses the importance of education for women and states that the learned men have rightly said that a country's destiny is in the hands of its women.⁴⁶ Rambai, a student of Daulat Ram Arya Kanya Pathshala, Bannu laments that the female half of the Aryan race (*jati*) is weak and withered. An educated mother is like a philosopher's stone (*paras pathar*) which can transform iron into gold. Rambai concludes by saying, that the daughters' education is the only means for social progress, and advises her sisters to tear the cloak of darkness and work for their own uplift.⁴⁷

The educated girls were becoming sensitive about the general preference for sons in society. Lal Devi, a student writing on 'Striyon par Samajik Anyayay' (social injustice against women), is perturbed that people take no interest in educating their daughters though they do not mind even incurring debt for their son's education. She is saddened that the birth of a girl child is not welcome and condolence letters are actually sent to the homes where girls are born.⁴⁸ Rambai agrees that the birth of a boy calls for celebrations and the mother gets respectful attention, but the birth of a girl results in eerie silence and the mother is cursed for this misfortune. The boy is fondly called 'makhan' (butter) and 'chand' (moon) but the girl is cursed as a shaven head (*sir munni*) or burnt head (*sir sarhi*), both of which are symptomatic of misfortune to the family.⁴⁹

An essay competition floated in the *Panchal Pandita* in 1901 on the theme, 'Whether you would like to be reborn as a man or a woman', elicited interesting responses from the women readers, reflecting growing feelings of despair as well as confidence. Gurdevi wants to be reborn as a man so that she might fulfill her dreams and desires. Daulat Bai wishes to be born as a man because of her present inability to satisfy her aspirations due to the drudgery of domestic work and responsibilities. On the contrary, Savitri Devi wishes to be reborn as a woman as they are mentally and emotionally stronger than men. Gulab Devi also wishes to be reborn as a woman because women have more grit and determination and are more patient and calm when faced with difficult situations. Her statement, that 'I want to be reborn as a woman, so that the birth of men does not cease' (*mein stri ban na chahti hun ki purush utpati band na ho jave*), probably is as much a taunt to the male psyche as an expression of a growing sense of women's self-worth.⁵⁰

In fact, an increasingly confident note becomes evident in some writings. Gulab Devi writes, 'Women are no less hard-working than men, neither are they less energetic, industrious, knowledgeable and strong. ...If they would have got education like the men, God knows what they could have achieved'.⁵¹ Savitri Devi does not agree with those who feel that women do not have brains for inventions which supposedly are the domain of men only. She strongly deprecates such assumptions and maintains that, 'the intellect given by God to men is similar to that given to women'. She writes that God has given the same

faculties to men and women and believes that, 'women can also achieve great feats, but men are not allowing them to do so'.⁵² In an inspiring article entitled, 'Hamara Jivan Hamare Hath Mein Hai', Savitri Devi emphasizes that women can achieve all that they wish to do.⁵³ We hear of three women, Bibi Bhagyadevi, Bibi Aati and Bibi Laldevi, working as honorary teachers in Mai Bhagwati Putri Pathshala in 1901!⁵⁴

While reporting on the celebrations of Bhagwati Putri Pathshala in Hariana in the Punjab, Durga Devi reacts to the remark by a speaker in a conference in Jammu, that the men could not bring about reform because of women's resistance to it: 'our beards are tied to our women's plaits' (*hamari dhadian auraton ki chhotiaon se bandhi huin hain*). Durga Devi strongly disapproves of such logic and writes that instead of waiting for the initiatives of men, the women themselves are now getting ready to work for the cause of women's uplift.⁵⁵ For creating more such women, their appearances as well as attitudes and conduct needed to be reformed. Savitri Devi is against inscribing tattoos and advises women not to wear heavy ear rings as they disfigure the ear lobes, disturb sleep and impair hearing. She asks women to shun *parda* and maintains that it is not a part of our heritage. She states that a woman's *parda* is her own good conduct (*nij sundar achar*). She asks women not to gossip or believe in ghosts and spirits and advises them to shun singing of obscene songs and useless rituals like *syapa* (ritual mourning).⁵⁶ Durgadevi draws the attention of the readers to the customs prevalent in Amritsar and the other cities in which it is the norm to mourn for the dead for four to five years, wear white clothes, beat their chests on festivals and refrain from cooking sweet delicacies. The writer wonders what purpose does this masochistic approach serve. Elsewhere, Mai Bhagwati criticizes the custom of mourning in which women beat their bare chests in front of the men folk who ridicule them. It goes on for many days and another death perpetuates the cycle and this is how women finish their life spans.⁵⁷ In a later contribution, Sumna, a student of the KMV, ponders why women go through a tough ritual like *syapa*. She feels that perhaps it is an escape from their dull routine and an excuse to go out. She suggests that women should instead organize solemn religious gatherings where they meet to have a change.⁵⁸

Elsewhere, Savitri Devi condemns child marriage as a major impediment in social progress. Vidyavati and Gulab Devi advocate no marriage before the age of 16 for girls and 25 for boys, and elaborate on the ills of child marriage. Writing from Pathankot, Vidyavati warns against early marriage and advises women to get education which would not only add grace and dignity to them, such women with mature body and mind could happily beget ten sons after marriage!⁵⁹ Apparently, such ideas had begun to have effect. A few years later, a young student of the KMV in a letter complains about her family having fixed her wedding without consulting her to which she objects strongly as she wants to study further and thinks that the decision for marriage should be left to the girl and the boy alone. She questions the assumption that a life without marriage and household is meaningless (*grihasthi key bina kya manushyta ka jivan nirarthak hai?*)⁶⁰

Logically, for a worthwhile life, the new woman did not necessarily have to get married. In an earlier article entitled 'Indriyadaman', Savitri Devi prescribes disciplined conduct and a rightful way of life for both women and men for a meaningful existence. A prescriptive code for desirable conduct is not for women alone. She advises balance between the material and spiritual domains and keeping the mind and senses busy in fruitful work.⁶¹ In her article 'Avivahitava', Savitri Devi makes a strong case for the women remaining single by choice. She begs to differ from those who ridicule such an idea, for unmarried people have a lot more to offer to society than those whose domestic chores and responsibilities come in the way.⁶²

The problem of widowhood also is approached somewhat differently by the women contributors. In 'Vaidhavya Dharma', Savitri Devi advises widows to conquer their desires, and instead of running after *sadhus* (renunciates) concentrate on getting education and serving humanity. She disagrees with those men who feel that widow remarriage is the only solution to the widow's problem and without it the widows cannot come out of their sorrowful existence or are not capable of leading a chaste life. She feels that such men are doing a great disservice to women by ridiculing them for the so-called fickle-mindedness and dishonourable conduct. God has blessed women with moral courage to preserve their chastity, and they are not weak. Women are endowed with skills to overcome the trials of their poverty stricken lives, and engage in noble acts to lead virtuous lives, and if men stop exploiting women, then all will be well (*purush unhey dushit karna chhod dain, toh bhala aur bhala hi ho!*). Moreover, she comments that it is a fallacy that domestic bliss is the only bliss and a woman's only aim is to produce children. She appeals to men to educate widows so that they are financially secure and can lead a noble life of service.⁶³

A new awareness and determination becomes evident with time. Taking a cue from American women who were active in the 'Temperance Movement', of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Savitri Devi writes on 'Bratdharni Kanyayain'. She informs the readers about a town in America where the wise women formed an association in which they pledged to boycott marriage with men who are addicted to intoxicating drinks. Savitri Devi prays to God to give our country such knowledgeable and determined women who can take a similar stand and fight against the injustices being meted out to them.⁶⁴ With a growing awareness about the women's power, and the possibility of taking initiatives to control their destiny, Hemant Kumari Chaudhari, lady superintendent, Victoria Kanya Pathshala, Patiala state, announces setting up of a 'Vrat Palan Sabha', where all members will take a vow to educate their girls and not to marry them before 14 years of age, or to an old or already married man, or to an addict or a bad charactered person.⁶⁵

Some women writers also respond to situations and practices beyond the domestic horizons. Daulatabai, in her very informative article on the plague, which raged severely during the first decade of the twentieth century, advises the readers to cooperate with the government and to get them inoculated. She gives medical advice on how to avoid getting this infection.⁶⁶ Responding to

the Swadeshi movement, Lal Devi recommends promotion of indigenous goods in her article titled, 'Swadeshi Vastu'.⁶⁷ Savitri Devi recommends that women should learn political science and time management. She also warns women against self medication and advises them to travel, because sheer exposure to the beauties of nature brings knowledge and happiness.⁶⁸

The Punjabi Bhain

The Sikh Kanya Maha Vidyalaya (SKM) was established at Ferozepur in 1892 by the efforts of Bhai Takht Singh (1860-1937) who was associated with the radical leaders of the Lahore Singh Sabha.⁶⁹ He was a protégée of Bhai Gurmukh Singh and was inspired by Bhai Ditt Singh to work for women's uplift. However, later on, he cut off his links with the Singh Sabha, and single handedly, but with unflinching support from his wife, Bibi Harnam Kaur, dedicated himself to the cause of women's education. His selfless and untiring work earned him the title of *zinda shaheed* (living martyr). The *Punjabi Bhain* was a monthly periodical published by the SKM from 1907 onwards. Although the Ferozepur Singh Sabha owned and published it, as the manager of the SKM, Bhai Takht Singh took its overall responsibility. In its initial years, its editor was a former schoolmaster named Vir Singh, employed in the Mahavidyala since 1908, and later on from 1919, Bhai Takht Singh himself edited it.⁷⁰ This was claimed to be the only women's magazine in Punjabi, committed to women's uplift and education, and with articles written by both men and women on propagation of Sikh way of life, which included the family and household duties of women.

The Male Contributors

The male contributors were generally men associated with the management of the SKM, including its patrons, office-bearers of the Sikh Educational Conference, teachers, members of the local Singh Sabha and some readers. However, there are many articles which do not carry the names of the contributors and an attempt has been made to place them in accordance with their tone and subject matter. Most of these anonymous contributions seem to flow from the editor's pen that appears to be writing also in feminine voice. This literary device was probably used by the male writers not only to camouflage their identity and to reach out to women more effectively, but to also give the male contributors the flexibility to hit out at the women and then counsel them as their well wishers. Paradoxically, it could also save the male writers from being ostracized for advocating women's rights.

The main thrust of these articles is on bringing about reform in the Sikh community by imparting education to its women. The writers were aware of the pathetic condition of their women-folk and were convinced that education alone was the key to ameliorate their position. Bhai Takht Singh confesses that it was the inferior (*heen*) and wretched (*ati deen*) condition of the helpless women that motivated him to set up the SKM and provide the girls with an

educational facility, if not better, then at least at par with that available for men's education.⁷¹ Many appeals are made by the male writers through the columns of the *Punjabi Bhain* to promote the cause of women's education. A contributor writes that women need education more than men, and women go through greater hardships to acquire education. If men had to go through similar circumstances they would probably never get educated. He reiterates that educated women can actually help uplift their religion and country more than the educated men.⁷² As a little rain results only in slush and a complete shower shows positive result, so is the case with women's education. Hence, complete education is advocated for women.⁷³ The editor emphasizes that one is never too old to learn, and informs that many 'bebejis' (older women) around 30- 35 years old are enrolled as students in their institution. 'If you love your dumb (*bejuban*), poor (*garib*), humble daughter (*nimmani dhi*) then do not indulge her but give her education, so that she gets respect in her marital home'.⁷⁴

To reinforce its agenda of promoting women's education, the *Punjabi Bhain* published extracts from the public statements of the leading Sikhs of the day. It quotes from the vote of thanks proposed by Sardar Jogendra Singh, the President of the second Sikh Educational Conference, who later became a minister, that the secret of a community's development is the whole hearted support it gets from its men and women. He is happy to note that women participated in this second meeting in unexpectedly large numbers. He thanks the women and appeals to them to remember their duty (*farz*).⁷⁵ A plea is made to the Sikh Education Committee that just like boys, worthy girls should also get the privilege of grants and funds to pursue studies abroad after completing their education here.⁷⁶ The Presidential Address of Tikka Sahib, Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, to the All India Social Conference at Lahore in 1909, is quoted extensively in the pages of the *Punjabi Bhain*. He expresses sadness that the women are kept in the darkness of ignorance and faith whereas their education needs top priority if the nation has to progress.⁷⁷ A similar message is conveyed by Kanwar Daljit Singh of Kapurthala, who presided over the third Sikh Educational Conference. He regards the women's education as an important indicator of the academic status of a community and maintains that no community (*qaum*) can be called educated till its women are literate. Kanwar Daljit Singh blames the men who for their selfish reasons have relegated women's education to learning a few domestic skills, along with reading, writing, a little music, and needle work as the culmination of the women's education. He goes on to say that women are not merely the plaything of the men or nature's embellishment (*istriyan nirian purushan de khidaune aur kudrat di sawawat hi nahin han*). Hence, he calls for a focus on women's education and addresses it as a delicate (*nazuk*) issue just like the women themselves.⁷⁸

The *Punjabi Bhain* carries lengthy articles reassuring its conservative readers that education would enable the women to be better wives, better mothers and better promoters of Sikhism. All doubts about unsexing girls or turning them into 'mehsahibs' (white women) are set at rest by explaining the

curriculum that girls would follow which would be different from that for boys. Another contributor states that there is no need for the women to memorise the subjects taught to boys as the women's needs and responsibilities are different from those of the men. He feels that girls must be taught all domestic chores as they have to go to the 'other' house.⁷⁹ Incidentally, this is testified by Krishnaji, the editor of the *Prakash*, a newspaper published by the Arya Samaj, who visited the SKM at Ferozepur and actually noticed that the girls were not being trained to be like madams but as splendid homemakers (*larkiyon ko memsahib nahin balki umda grihasthan bananey ka yatan kiya jata hai*).⁸⁰ Assuming that no work was like a disease, Bhai Takht Singh employed no servants in the boarding house and made it compulsory for the boarders to manage everything so that they remained active and busy. The aim was to combine education with simplicity.⁸¹ Master Hardayal Singh, B.A. of the SKM advocates that kind of education which can instill into women the virtues of the ancient Sikh women along with the virtues of the western women sans their weaknesses. He recommends education that includes religious instruction, character development, music, painting and care of the children and the household. This would train the women to be efficient housewives; look after the education of their children; give advice to their husband (*sir taj*) and other relatives; and promote religious and spiritual growth.⁸²

Sometimes, the physical disability of women was cited as the reason for a different curriculum for them. For example, the *Punjabi Bhain* cites Babu Uttam Singh who appeals to the organizers of the second Sikh Educational Conference to ensure that girls in village schools are not taught for more than six hours as it is detrimental to their health.⁸³ Another writer agrees that women cannot work as hard as men because nature has made them the 'weaker' sex. He writes that lengthy study hours are detrimental to women's health and beauty, and great distress is caused to the men who marry such sickly girls. Moreover, he feels that the Indian environment is responsible for the early maturity of girls and so marriages have to be solemnized earlier than in other countries. Therefore, given the limited time span, he advocates the teaching of essential skills only.⁸⁴

Many male writers appeal to women not to put obstacles in the way of women's education. It is even recommended that scholarships should be given to girls to promote their education so that their illiterate mothers may send them to school out of greed for money.⁸⁵ Many 'foolish sisters' scoff at the one who goes to school and taunt at her for aspiring to be a '*patwaran, vakilni* or *tehsildarni*', the terms relevant for their small world in those days. The writer laments that she is harassed so much that out of exasperation she leaves her studies. He reprimands such women who themselves do not take initiative and mock at those who make the effort.⁸⁶ Women are depicted as being impediments to their own progress. They are accused of treating their educators as their enemies and their schools as prisons. When a husband tries to initiate his wife into studies, she retorts that he should educate his mother and sister instead.⁸⁷ The editor rebukes the women who are 'sick' but are

foolish enough to refuse to take treatment from their concerned brothers who are likened to the *vaid*s (doctors) who are ready to help them.⁸⁸

Most of these articles focusing on women's education begin by recording their pathetic condition and comparing them with European, American, Chinese and Japanese women who are to be admired and emulated for their usefulness to their society. They are truly the 'better-halves' and enjoy respect and rights because they deserve them. An article applauds European women who bring up their children with so much care that what they accomplish at ten years of age is comparable to what our children achieve at the age of fifteen to twenty years. The editor states that a Russian falls sick once, the Australian for eight days and the Britisher for eleven days in a year, but a Hindustani is generally sick, mostly due to the fault of his (ignorant) mother.⁸⁹

Male writers are critical of the unsatisfactory conduct of the ignorant women. Ridicule and derogatory comments for women abound in many articles. The illiterate women are referred to as animal (*januri*) or witch (*churail*). The editor states that it is because of ignorance that the women are not respected. They are denigrated and treated as 'pair di jutti' (foot wear) and they get what they deserve (*jeha muh tehi chapper*). These women make their homes hell by fighting with their husbands and mothers-in-law and bring disgrace to the woman kind. They are always manipulating to bring their husbands under their control and eliminate the influence of their mothers and sisters-in-law.⁹⁰ The husband is treated shabbily but the mendicants (*sadhus*) are served sweets and dry fruits. Moreover, such women dress up to visit the religious men (*sants*) but give a fright to their husbands by greeting them with shabby clothes and gloomy faces.⁹¹ When their husbands prevent them from performing useless rituals, they are ticked off: 'go and have your meals from those who have taught you such lessons'.⁹² Illiterate women who are coming under the snare of *sadhus*, believing in superstitions and charms, practising ritual mourning (*syapa*), singing obscene songs on marriages and festivals and obsessed with jewellery are repeatedly mentioned to drive home the point that education alone is the key to reform. A poem by Inder Singh of the Khalsa High School, Gujranwala, which was titled, 'Piyarian Bhaina nu Updesh' (Advice to dear sisters), reflects the ideal mould which the male reformers desired for women:

Rise early; do not loiter around in people's houses;
 Recite your prayers; go to school with your books;
 Do not wear ornaments on your nose or hands;
 Guard the five Ks of your faith;
 Do not sing obscene songs;
 Wear simple clothes ...⁹³

Stories highlighting the ill effects of the women's ignorance frequently appear in the *Punjabi Bhain*. The train is used as a metaphor for the dangers that women succumb to because of their ignorance. For example, a newly married woman was in veil (*ghund*), and not having seen her husband's face got down at the wrong station with a cheat who took advantage of her ignorance. The

editor is critical of the training given to this young woman by her mother. He expresses regret that women observe *ghund* even from the elders in the home.⁹⁴ Master Hardayal Singh, B.A. of the SKM calls *parda* a kind of imprisonment (*qaid*). It is responsible for the sickly condition of women and of their weak offsprings. He maintains that it is a sheer fallacy that *parda* was designed to protect women's honour. Even if the walls of the house are made of stone and *parda* of steel (*faulad*), it cannot stop deceit (*be-imani*) of the heart. What is needed is inner strength of the women which can save them from the lusty eyes of the undesirable men.⁹⁵

The *Punjabi Bhain* disapproves of the wearing of jewellery not only because of the crimes it results in but also for its harmful effects like the piercing of the body and harassment of the husbands. Interestingly, however, it defends the women who write about the reasons for their love of jewellery. Denial of equal rights in property and the resultant insecurity is cited as the reason for the women to yearn for the security that gold offers to them. In reaction, in some articles men lambaste women that if they want rights, they had better take on responsibilities.⁹⁶

Issues concerning marriage practices are also taken up by the writers. An article condemning early marriage gives the example of how the press in London criticized a priest who had solemnized the marriage of an 'underage' eighteen year old boy. The writer is upset that in our country the parents do not even feel guilty at marrying children at the age of five or so. He is specifically critical of the 'intellectual' Bengalis who have thousands of child widows. He advises parents not to marry their children till they can stand on their own feet and manage their household, and also appeals to the *granthis* to shun such marriages.⁹⁷ Another contributor advocates simple marriage ceremonies and spreads awareness against dowry, and praises Gurdit Singh, the *wazir* of the Patiala State, who married his son in a simple ceremony. No dowry was taken, and no Brahmanical rituals and wasteful expenditure were evident.⁹⁸ The readers are also advised to do away with the greedy Mirasis and Brahmans who arrange mismatched marriages. Parents are advised to fix matches themselves.⁹⁹

The male writers try to inculcate the concept of *patibrata* or a devoted wife. An ideal wife touches her husband's feet when he comes home, greets him happily and serves him and his parents and children with devotion. This image of women appealed to so many harassed husbands that they are reported to be keen to send their wives to the SKM as if it were an 'asylum' or a reformatory.¹⁰⁰ Women are advised to be cheerful and nurture blissful marriages. The *Punjabi Bhain* in an article 'Sugharh Sahelian' (dextrous companions) advises women to read books like *Lakshmi ya Chhotti Nuh*; *Phulan di Tokri*; and *Istri Jivan Sudhar* to instill virtues of the *patibrata*.¹⁰¹ At the same time, much stress is laid on compatibility in marriage. Many guidelines for a happy marriage are given, advising the couple, among other things, to give time to each other, not to find faults with each other and not to complain about each other to a third person.¹⁰² Examples of companionate marriages are given. The editor informs about the sad demise of Bibi Dharam

Kaur, wife of Sardar Man Singh who was a student at Ferozepur. Her husband wished to educate her so that she could jointly work with him as the sub-editor of the Khalsa magazine. Lord Curzon's example is cited who on being felicitated as the brain that administers India pointed to his wife as deserving the real credit. It is stressed that men and women are like the two wheels of a cart and unless they progress at the same pace no development can take place. Hence, an appeal is made to treat women as equals.¹⁰³

The *Punjabi Bhain* carries many articles on the pathetic condition of widows, especially child widows. The male reformers are rebuked for simply preaching and doing nothing to actually alleviate the misery of widows. An article pleads that all chains round the neck of the cow-like daughters should be broken (*gau te galan ton rassian la key assisan levo*) and all customs in the way of remarriage of child widows should be rejected (*bal vidhwa dey vivah dian rok walian reetan nuh raddi di tokri tey supurad karo*). A writer says that Hindus may make excuses in the name of their scriptures, and asks why are the Sikhs not making attempts to solve this problem?¹⁰⁴ Most articles actually condemn the concept of widow homes and promote the cause of widow remarriage as the better alternative. The evils that may befall widows in such homes are outlined in an article. It fears that the widows would continue to be exploited and some may even fall into disgrace. A widow home is compared to a life imprisonment and widow remarriage is presented as the best solution to wipe the tears of the suffering widows.¹⁰⁵ Budh Singh, Sub Overseer, district Gujrat, suggests two solutions for the widow's problem: widow remarriage, and education for the widows in ordinary schools for girls and not in separate widow homes where their wounds would never heal.¹⁰⁶ Reports of men marrying widows or advertisements seeking matrimonial alliances with child widows without any caste bar are published in the *Punjabi Bhain*.¹⁰⁷

However, some writings tend to reinforce the deep rooted prejudices against women in society. Fearing that education would result in a loss of social control over women, some contributors expressed alarm at their becoming accomplished with degrees. One writer warns the readers not to buy the *Punjabi Bhain*. If uneducated women were harassing husbands what would the educated do? 'Every day we will have to keep our turbans at their feet to appease them' (*sanu te pairan te pag rakhke roj manana paiyaga*).¹⁰⁸ The periodical also served as a forum for exchanging advice for taming the shrews. A story of how the husband of a newly married girl instills fearful obedience from the start is narrated with approval.¹⁰⁹ In 'Bhaino Hosh Karni', the editor laments that since the British had started prosecuting the editors, many women have started pressurising their husbands to quit their jobs in the emerging field of Punjabi journalism. He expresses surprise that men are ready to obey women whom they ordinarily call 'foolish' (*murakh*) and 'lacking in wisdom' (*kanni diye mat valian*), and concludes with the question that if they never took advice from their women before, then why this new trend?¹¹⁰

The *Punjabi Bhain* has articles that promote the cause of the girl child. One writer criticizes a contributor for saying that it is no good to have even one daughter (*beti bhali na ikk*), and maintains that both sons and daughters

are God's creation (*dhian putt sab har ke kiye*). The prejudice against the daughter is comparable to a gardener who sits under the shade of a tree, enjoys its fruits and blessings and then cuts at its very roots.¹¹¹ The writer then congratulates some enlightened families who celebrated the birth of their daughters and distributed alms as thanksgiving and hopes that this spirit catches on.¹¹²

A poem titled 'Anand Jhok', written by Sohan Singh 'Rahi', recounts the contemporary social prejudices against women, and makes a plea for women's equality and uplift along desirable lines. This poem was read by Sadhu Singh on his daughter's marriage and his son Sarban Singh distributed 500 copies of the poem among the people present (*sangat*). It says:

Praise be to the pious father, do not kill or sell your daughters;
Do not marry them twice or thrice;
Sons and daughters are alike, they have been created by the One;
Do you not feel ashamed to treat your daughters as liabilities?
Sons are the masters, daughters are belittled;
Daughters are called cows, girls are called birds;
Woman's wisdom is said to be behind her ankles;
Woman has been treated very shabbily in our country;
Manu has destroyed her right in his famous writings;
If the mother is a Shuder, how come the son is a Brahman
The Gurus have given the message of equality;
If a boy is like gold, the girl is not glass either.

The poem goes on to praise those parents who did not kill their girl child and embraced her with joy; who gave her education and made her partake of *amrit*; who did not marry off their girls to the aged grooms or sell them or exchange them; and who defied the age old customs that exploited their daughters.¹¹³

The magazine takes pride in the commitment and achievements of its students and the alumni. It reveals details about its students reciting *bani* (scripture) and giving speeches before dignitaries, and its alumni serving as teachers and making their ever increasing presence felt in the Sikh Educational Conferences. Satisfaction is expressed at the many letters and the intelligent responses that are pouring in from female writers. The editor remarks that men are knowledgeable, but women showing their creativity in writing is an indicator of hope amidst despair.¹¹⁴ Great happiness is expressed at the four Sikh women having been appointed as the '*Nambardarnis*' as they were found to be more capable than men by the Maharaja of Nabha. He has also formed a women's *panchayat* in Jaito town in his state to report on the internal situation and to propose suitable matrimonial alliances.¹¹⁵ In a later issue, the *Punjabi Bhain* makes an observation about women being as intelligent and capable as men and condemns those who think otherwise as selfish, stubborn and false.¹¹⁶ It is happy to note that its alumunus, Shrimati Devi Bhagwati has launched *Bharat Nari*, a Hindi paper.¹¹⁷ Similarly, great pride is taken in reporting the

organization and performance of an *akhand path* (continuous reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*) in Sargodha by women alone.¹¹⁸

In 'Udaarchit Striyan', women's generosity is hailed and the editor rebuts the general belief that men are more generous than women. But, sadly, women do not have much cash in their control and though they are said to be the better-halves, they have claim only on two meals in a day (*stri jeenu ardhangani aakhde han keval do veley roti khan di bhaival hondi hai*).¹¹⁹ The paper lauds Bibi Basant Kaur for giving scholarship to the needy students; Bibi Dhan Kaur and other students for selling their jewellery for the cause of their *alma mater*; and Bibi Shamsher Kaur even on her death bed reminding her husband to continue sending aid to her beloved institution.¹²⁰

The *Punjabi Bhain* even dwells on issues of wider relevance like Sikh identity, census operations, and important political matters concerning the Sikh community. In its initial issues, a strong case is made in defence of Punjabi as the mother tongue and the need to promote it, with an appeal to the government to issue pamphlets in Punjabi language for the benefit of its Punjabi knowing subjects, especially the women.¹²¹ The dangers of educating girls in mission schools are mentioned and readers are asked to keep education of their women in their own hands and strengthen their own institutions.¹²² The Anand Marriage Bill is lauded and scathing criticism is voiced against the Hindus who are opposing it.¹²³ The *Punjabi Bhain* carries articles in which it is hoped that women could partake of *amrit* as desired by Sant Atar Singh on his visit to the institution on 24 May 1909.¹²⁴ In an article, 'Hun jaag Bhaina' the women are advised to wake up and become true '*singhnis*' and observe all the tenets of their faith.¹²⁵

Women's Writings

Though the known contributions by women writers to the *Punjabi Bhain* are fewer, yet they are significant and help us get an insight into the mindset of its teachers, the present and former students, and the regular readers of the magazine.

Many contributions reflect the women's low self esteem and their desire to improve their condition. In an article 'Vidya di Mahima', Balwinder Kaur, a student of the SKM laments at the present situation of women and writes, 'people have kept us beneath their shoes (*loki rakhya jutti de heth sanu*); they scoff at our lack of wisdom (*gichi pichhe tey sadi mat akhi*); what could be worse than this!' (*is nalon ki hor durkar bhaino*). Women's anguish is reflected in the lament that, 'if this state persists then we will sink' (*jeh eh hal reha, teh asi dubian*).¹²⁶ Earlier writing from Faridkot, Raj Kaur appeals to her brothers to restore to women their lost prestige and status. In 'Bhain di Viran Agge Pukar', she recalls the ancient times when women were educated and respected, and feels saddened at their plight in the present. She highlights the vices that have crept into the society due to lack of education. Women have started believing in *sants* and *pirs* and are keeping fasts and performing *syapa*. She blames her brothers for this pitiable condition and implores them to open

schools and promote education among women to ameliorate their degraded condition. She writes that, without education we have become helpless and our condition is pathetic (*vidya heen asi hoyian lachar vey; vidya to bina sada bura hal vey*); we are treated like foot-wear (*pair di jutti*) and repeatedly cursed.¹²⁷

Women's writings highlight the importance of education and women are urged to gain knowledge. A remarkable insight is gained into the personality of Bibi Harnam Kaur, the wife of Bhai Takht Singh, through a letter she had written in 1906 to her student, Bibi Uttam Kaur. This letter was published later on in the *Punjabi Bhain* in which Harnam Kaur is upset to know that Uttam Kaur's parents are not allowing her to study further, and writes, 'if you were my daughter, I would not have hesitated to send you even to America for studies'. This coming from a woman in 1906 is rather surprising.¹²⁸ After some years, the *Punjabi Bhain* carried the speech given at the Sikh Educational Conference by Bibi Agya Kaur, the second wife of Bhai Takht Singh. She says that education prevents sorrow and does not forsake us in difficult times. Neither can a thief steal it, nor can fire burn it, nor can water drown it, nor do family disputes divide it. She writes that when one educates a son it benefits only one individual, but educating a daughter is a benefit to the entire community. She concludes by recalling the ancient times when women were respected and exhorts the Sikh community to wake up as the other communities have already taken a lead in this direction.¹²⁹

Women often wrote on the importance of compatible marriages and were critical of the contemporary marriage practices. An article by Shrimati Vidyotma criticizes the prevalent marriage customs and compares them with ancient times when mismatched marriages were not solemnised by force. She writes: 'Those times were not as cruel as the present times; when due to greed and false ego, one puts chains around the cow-like daughters, and forcibly marries them off. No thought is given to compatibility or honourable conduct. One just closes one's eyes and completes the formalities'. She laments that compatible matches are few and mismatches are many (*jorian thoriyan teh narar batherey*) and, as a result, Punjabi homes are becoming dens of tension and frustration, resulting in domestic violence.¹³⁰ An earlier article reflects the fear of violence a mother has for her newly married daughter. She remembers her experience on how her body was assaulted with sticks, and worries that the same fate may not befall her daughter (*sotian nal hadh bhanayay san, kitey meri dhi nal vi uven na hundi hovey*).¹³¹

Equal treatment for women is advocated in an article that regrets that man has made every effort to deny woman her rights and has seldom given her an opportunity to grow. It reprimands the brothers, and even if they dislike it, questions their recitation of *Gurbani* which says that God is one and all are his children (*ek pita, ekas ke ham barak*).¹³² Another contributor is perturbed at the degraded condition of the Sikh women and lays the blame squarely on the men folk of the community. She cautions men that if they give such a low status to their mothers, sisters and daughters (*chuhrey chamar di padvi*) then they should quit aspiring for greatness.¹³³ Raj Kaur agrees that God has given equal

rights to women and when men are questioned about this injustice they have no answer (*ik jahe hak rakhe sade kartar ne hak je mangiay tan nahi jawab hai*). She reminds men that they were born of a woman and yet they do not respect women.¹³⁴ A similar message comes out from an article published earlier on in the *Punjabi Bhain*, authored by Sarojini Devi. It says: 'Restore women their rights... women and not you [men] are the nation builders...'. The *Punjabi Bhain* also reported the address of Sarla Debi Chaudhrani who inspired women to work for their own uplift.¹³⁵ Shrimati Vidyotma in an article, 'Asi Kisse Galon Ghat Nahin' asserts that women have always had an inherent potential and will always keep giving a proof of what they can accomplish.¹³⁶

While demanding restoration of their rights in the land, many writings by women justify their love for jewellery. An article on why women wear jewellery reports the oft heard retort of women: 'what else do we have' (*sadey hath paley hor ki hai*). The *Punjabi Bhain* accuses the men who deny them their rightful share in connivance with the government. If men are ready to give women their rights then why would the government hesitate? The writer wonders when such laws were enacted, and concludes: 'You took legal control of the land and we of the jewellery!' (*tusi kanuni malki sambhi; asi sambhe gehne*).¹³⁷

Examples of women's generosity abound in the women's writings published in the *Punjabi Bhain*. However, a widow, Santi, writing from Abbotabad advises her sisters to convert their useless jewellery into money deposits and utilize the interest for the uplift of the community. She recommends giving financial assistance to the SKM, and the widow home and orphanage at Amritsar.¹³⁸ Bibi Harsaran Kaur advises women to sell their jewellery and invest the money in the Punjab and Sind Bank (founded in 1908) and use the interest to help out their husbands in fulfilling his financial commitments and responsibilities. If all sisters follow this example then 'we will soon acquire our rights' (*apne hak asi chheti lai lavan gai*). This advice was given to the writer by her friend Jeet Kaur who analysed that it is the lack of education and the resultant insecurity that makes the women obsessed with jewellery. She gives the example of western women who enjoy equal rights and do not need to wear jewellery to look attractive.¹³⁹ Mahinder Kaur, a student of the third middle, at the SKM cautions women about the dangers they expose themselves and their children to when adorned with ornaments. In their place, she advocates love for education and scriptures which alone can bring bliss.¹⁴⁰ Sham Kaur, a seventh class student at this institution, writes to her father to sell the jewellery he has kept for her marriage or stop sending her pocket money, and instead send financial help to fulfil the condition of Bhai Takht Singh's exile of collecting Rs. 50,000 for their beloved institution.¹⁴¹

Women's writings in the *Punjabi Bhain* are appreciative of British rule. On the occasion of the visit of the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, Sir Louis Dane, and his wife to their institution in January 1911, Bibi Harbans Kaur, a teacher of the third middle gave an impressive speech in English. She talks of Sikh loyalty to the Union Jack and thanks the British for emancipating

‘Indian women who only a decade or two ago were perhaps little better than slaves’. She goes on to say that the principles of Sikh religion are against ‘Sati, female infanticide and selling daughters. When we see that these are punishable by the British we thank God for the goodness He has done us by practically preaching the sacred doctrines of our Gurus through our kind rulers’. The British are lauded also for enforcing the Sikh code of conduct in the army and for promoting western education. Then an appeal for Punjabi to be adopted for teaching is made: ‘Training must necessarily be done through our mother tongue – Punjabi’. The address reproduced by the *Punjabi Bhain*, purportedly on behalf of the students, ends with ‘Your most obedient servants; the girl students of Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya’.¹⁴²

In Comparative Perspective

An analysis of the contributions made to the *Panchal Pandita* and the *Punjabi Bhain* presents an interesting picture. First of all, more articles were written by men in these periodicals solely devoted to the women’s interests. Secondly, the subject matter covered by the male writers was more women centric than that covered by the women contributors themselves. Thirdly, and significantly, the position of women was differently perceived by the male and female contributors. The range of writings in these periodicals also varied: men and women writing on similar themes, with broadly the same message; men and women covering similar themes with differing emphases; and women alone writing on certain themes.

In both the periodicals men wrote on subjects having a bearing on the status of women in the past and their present condition. They outlined the expected duties, responsibilities and role of the women in the household and in the upbringing of their children. Articles on women’s education, its need, its aim, its curriculum, along with the adverse consequences of illiteracy and ignorance also featured predominantly among the male writings. The desirable conduct of women, their dress, food, and health were the other themes taken up by the men. A thematic shift with time is also discernible in their writings. Need for teaching English to girls, encouraging them to travel abroad, attending sessions of the Indian National Congress, or the Sikh Educational Conferences are some of the new concerns voiced. With time, and spread of education among women and their increasing contribution towards society and public life, the male contributors gradually began to write more approvingly about women’s achievements and were less critical of their supposedly inherent shortcomings.

Deviating somewhat from the thrust of male writings, and in addition to the importance of education for girls, the women wrote more on hygiene, health, exercise, time management, travel, horticulture, political-craft, and *swadeshi*, besides issues of morality. Articles on the problems of discrimination against women, child marriage, control of senses (*indriyandaman*), single status (*avivahitava*), veil (*parda*), and the plight of widows were contributed largely by the women writers. They also wrote on

aspects like the women's potential, and their duties and responsibilities. Many of them asserted that women were no less than men, rather better in many ways. With the passage of time men began to be blamed for the pitiable condition of their women and women became assertive, demanding restoration of their rights and status.

A closer look at the two periodicals reveals interesting similarities and contrasts. The conservative mindset of the men steeped in patriarchal ideology, but carrying the burden of ameliorating the women's condition was apparent in both the periodicals. Their contributors were painfully aware of the pathetic condition of women and both the periodicals carried lengthy articles on the need, aim and nature of education to be imparted to women. The awe of the other races, especially the Anglo-Saxons, and the running down of their own women was a strand that ran through both the periodicals. Both dwelt on women's resistance to reform, and recorded the difficulties being encountered by the reformers.

Though the two periodicals converged on many issues and their concerns regarding women's education and uplift seemed almost similar, some differences can nevertheless be noticed. The *Panchal Pandita* had more articles devoted to the undesirable customs and rituals practised by women and the need for reform, along with the strict codes to which women were expected to conform. It had articles written on dress (*pehrawa*), advising women to dress up modestly. Unlike the *Panchal Pandita* the *Punjabi Bhain* did not focus on women's conduct but disapproved in passing of the use of foul language and the evils of *syapa*. There was no prescriptive code for the girls' dress. Only in one instance, Sardar Naurang Singh, Assistant Surgeon, Ferozepur praised the simple dressing style of the girls and appreciated that their dress was not provocative (*bharak vali*).¹⁴³ A marked difference is also visible in the solutions offered for the widow's problem. The image of a self suffering and pitiable widow was constructed in the *Panchal Pandita* wherein she was advised to have control over her senses and devote herself solely to religious and social service. Her needs, desires and emotions had no place in the new social role expected of her. Widow remarriage was not looked upon favourably. The *Punjabi Bhain*, on the other hand, had many articles actually promoting the cause of widow remarriage as a better alternative and condemning the concept of widow homes, much extolled in the pages of the *Panchal Pandita*.

Generally, the articles of the *Punjabi Bhain* were more assertive regarding the idea of equality and women's rights as well as their relative position in society. The writings in the *Panchal Pandita* on the whole were more restrained and even resisted radical change, albeit conveyed in a subdued language. Moreover, the somewhat hesitant female voices steeped in patriarchal ideology noticeable in the early issues of the *Panchal Pandita* were absent in the early issues of the *Punjabi Bhain* which, of course, started a few years later. The maturity of thought processes and confidence seen in the post-1905 publications of the *Panchal Pandita* were evident in the early issues of the *Punjabi Bhain*. With time, and as reflected in the two journals, there was a

growing awareness created by education. It is equally likely that the generally surcharged political climate in the province,¹⁴⁴ and the publication of a politically articulate paper like the *Panjabee*¹⁴⁵ around this time might also have had a bearing on the changed tone of the two periodicals.

In the ultimate analysis, there was a difference in the tone, language and the ideological underpinnings of the two periodicals. The two periodicals functioned broadly under the aegis of the Arya Samaj and the Singh Sabha – essentially following different socio-cultural codes prescribed by different moral systems. The somewhat radical stance visible in the *Punjabi Bhain* regarding the women's property right and the problem of the widows can be attributed as much to the principle of equality upheld by Sikhism as to the majority of the Sikhs being governed by the Customary Law of the landed classes which recognized the remarriage of widows, even if to keep the property within the family. The personality and ideology of the founders of the two papers also appear to have influenced the content and thrust of the articles produced under their guidance. It is noteworthy that Bhai Takht Singh was considered a radical even in the Singh Sabha context.¹⁴⁶

On the whole, the picture that emerges from the early writings in the *Panchal Pandita* and the *Punjabi Bhain* revealed male domination and male leadership, with a hesitant beginning on the part of the women to voice their concerns, and gradually, to even articulate differences of opinion from the male writers. Male contributors as a whole revealed a patronizing attitude wherein their superior knowledge and intellect was called upon to improve the mental makeup of the women. This was expected to equip them to take better care of their children and homes and thereby contribute towards the progress of the country. The men were by and large critical of the weaknesses of the women and their degraded position in the present. They dwelt on the glory of the women in the ancient period and the need to bring such ideal women back to life again. Education was the pivot of this programme for all. The nature and aim of education which women needed, however, could only be decided by the enlightened males. They wished to create the 'new' women who would prove to be good wives and mothers as well as the embodiments of simplicity, humility and congeniality. As the reformers went about their business, they revealed a condescending attitude and a bit of impatience and irritation with the 'subjects/objects' to be so painstakingly moulded. However, sympathy for the women's oppression and exploitation in the home, or a concern to improve the quality of her life and social standing was somehow missing from the writings of the male contributors.

Even when the women wrote on similar themes under the tutelage of the reformers, the thrust and perspective of the women's contributions differed. They increasingly tended to analyse the reasons for their degraded status and derided the men for not doing enough. Women's writings revealed their faith in their capabilities as human beings who deserved a life of dignity. Though not rebellious in their attitude, they reveal a yearning for a better life. Women writers give an insight into women's psyche, defend their position, and articulate their aspirations. Articles on travel, time management, women's

education, and scientific and medical news from all over the world indicated the widening horizons of women and that they dreamed to go beyond the limits set by the male reformers. A sense of self worth was increasingly evident in the women's writings. They did not ridicule women; rather, they tried to explain their weaknesses as arising from their unfavorable circumstances. They were sympathetic to the misery of their suffering sisters and through persuasion and good counsel tried to dispel their superstitions and make them see the light of reason. Women's writings exuded confidence and a steady improvement in their self esteem. One can only attribute this attitudinal change to the spread of education. Generally, they expressed gratitude for the endeavors of the reformers though occasionally, some were also critical of their attitudes. There, however, was no infringement into the male space, as the women wanted only their share of fulfillment under the sun.

Even when the male writings conveyed a sincere desire to improve the condition of women, it was not because they were human and deserved equality, but because they were the caretakers and custodians of their homes and their children. The reformers believed by and large that the women did not enjoy the same rights. At places, they maintained that nature made women different and weaker. Therefore, they needed the protective shield and guidance of the men who could enable them to live decently and not be a source of embarrassment to society. Even a lack of genuine respect for women or for their contribution is occasionally evident.

In short, the nature of change desired by the male and female writers appears to be different. The male reformers wanted reform in women's condition and that too in a limited and controlled manner, without affecting their relative position. They wanted women to be competent and accomplished and yet docile and homely. It was like giving them wings but not to let them fly out. On the contrary, women's writings increasingly revealed a desire to fly out into the world and have a life of dignity and respect, as equal human beings.

Thus, many contemporary social attitudes and prejudices are reflected as well as questioned in the pages of the *Panchal Pandita* and the *Punjabi Bhain*. Many hidden tensions between the old and new norms, roles and images of women surface in these periodicals. They are an important record not only of the self expression of the reforming males as well as of the women as the objects of reform, as of somewhat hesitant social and attitudinal change in the Punjabi society during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Notes

1. I gratefully acknowledge the help extended to me by the Principal and Staff of the Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Jalandhar where I consulted the *Panchal Pandita*. I am thankful to the Staff of the Bhai Kahan Singh Library, Punjabi University, Patiala and its Department of Punjab Historical Studies, where I consulted the issues of the *Punjabi Bhain*.

2. J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2011[1990]), pp. 128-32.
3. J.S. Grewal, 'Christian Presence and Cultural Reorientation: The Case of the Colonial Punjab', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 51st Session* (Calcutta, 1990), pp. 535-42. For a detailed study see John C.B. Webster, *A Social History of Christianity: North-west India Since 1800* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).
4. Kenneth W. Jones, *Socio Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-103. See also Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharma: Hindu Consciousness in Nineteenth Century Punjab* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1976).
6. Jones, *Socio Religious Reform Movements*, pp. 109-15.
7. These writings have been extensively used recently in two significant works on gender history of the Punjab: Anshu Malhotra, *Gender, Caste and Religious Identities: Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Doris R. Jakobsh, *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).
8. Satyadev Vidyalkar, *Lala Devraj* (Jalandhar: Swan Printing Press, 1937), p. 16.
9. *Panchal Pandita* (henceforth *PP*), August 1901, 4:10, p. 8; February 1902, 5:4, p. 3; October 1902, 5:12, p. 4; August 1903, 6:10, p. 7.
10. *PP*, July 1902, 5:9, p. 4.
11. *PP*, December 1900, 4:2, p. 9; February 1904, 7:4, p. 5.
12. *PP*, February 1898, 1:4, pp. 20-21.
13. *PP*, August 1902, 5:10, pp. 4-5.
14. *PP*, February 1904, 7:4, p. 6.
15. *PP*, May 1901, 4:7, p. 6.
16. *PP*, June 1902, 5:8, pp. 10-11.
17. *PP*, January 1901, 4:3, p. 21; August 1901, 4:10, pp. 8-9.

18. *PP*, August 1901, 4:10, pp. 8-9.
19. *PP*, November 1901, 5:1, p. 7.
20. *PP*, July 1908, 11:1, p. 13.
21. *PP*, April 1901, 4:6, pp. 6-10.
22. *PP*, August 1901, 4:10, pp. 3-4; June 1903, 6:8, p. 22.
23. *PP*, January 1901, 5:3, pp. 7-8; July 1901, 4:9, p. 11.
24. *PP*, June 1901, 4:8, pp. 4-5.
25. *PP*, February 1903, 6:4, p. 14.
26. *PP*, March 1898, 1:5, p. 21.
27. *PP*, March 1904, 7:5, p. 8.
28. *PP*, February 1898, 1:4, p. 20. This poem was written by Warner Snoad, *President of the 'International Women's Union' in 1895*, at the request of the Manager of KMV.
29. *PP*, November 1901, 5:11, pp. 3-4.
30. *PP*, February 1904, 7:4, pp. 12-14.
31. *PP*, August 1904, 7:10, p. 6.
32. *PP*, April 1901, 4:6, p. 13.
33. *PP*, April 1901, 4:6, pp. 20-21.
34. *PP*, December 1901, 5:2, pp. 16-17.
35. *PP*, May 1902, 5:7, p. 5.
36. Even though the number of widows in the Punjab was lower than other parts of India, the number of widows in the province in 1881, was reported to be 15, 03,300 which was 14.8 per cent of its female population. It came down to 13,86,000 in 1901, but rose again to 15,51,000 in 1911. See Reeta Grewal, 'Widows in North-Western India under Colonial Rule', in *Social Transformation in North-Western India during the Twentieth Century*, ed. Chetan Singh (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), p. 361.

37. *PP*, November 1900, 4:1, pp. 20-21.
38. *PP*, February 1911, 14:4, p. 9.
39. *PP*, April 1901, 4:6, pp. 3-4.
40. *PP*, June 1911, 14:8, pp. 17-18.
41. Reeta Grewal, 'Widows in North-Western India under Colonial Rule', pp. 374-75.
42. *PP*, January 1901, 4:3, pp. 8-9.
43. *PP*, April 1901, 4:6, p. 4.
44. *PP*, May 1901, 4:7, p. 5.
45. *PP*, October 1901, 4:12, p. 4.
46. *PP*, July 1903, 6:9, p. 3.
47. *PP*, August 1911, 14:10, pp. 19-22.
48. *PP*, December 1901, 5:2, pp. 4-6.
49. *PP*, August 1911, 14:10, pp. 19-22.
50. *PP*, June 1901, 4:8, pp. 18-21.
51. *PP*, June 1901, 4:8, p. 15.
52. *PP*, February 1902, 5:4, p. 7; March 1902, 5:5, p. 6.
53. *PP*, January 1904; 7:3; p. 9.
54. *PP*, May 1901, 4:7, p. 14.
55. *PP*, July 1902, 5:9, p. 18.
56. *PP*, May 1901, 4:7, p. 4.
57. *PP*, June 1902, 5:8, p. 11; July 1902, 5:9, pp. 20-23.
58. *PP*, July 1903, 6:9, pp. 9-10.

59. *PP*, March 1903, 6:5, pp. 10-4; September 1903, 6:11, p. 19. Census records provide ample evidence of the prevalence of child marriage in the Punjab. In 1891, 4 per cent of the married children in the province were in the age group of 5-9 which remained between 2 to 3 per cent till 1921. The largest proportion of married children was in the age group of 10-14/15. From 27 per cent in 1891, it declined to 14 per cent by 1901 but increased to 17 per cent in 1911. From 1921 onwards, however only 15 per cent of the children in this age group were reported to be married. On the whole, there was a decline in the incidence of child-marriage over time. See Vijay Lakshmi, 'Children and the State: A Study of the Colonial Punjab', Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, Chandigarh, 2008, p. 99.

60. *PP*, November 1910, 14:1, p. 5.

61. *PP*, October 1901, 4:12, pp. 13-21.

62. *PP*, March 1902, 5:5, pp. 12-13.

63. *PP*, December 1901, 5:2, pp. 6-8.

64. *PP*, December 1901, 5:2, pp. 8-9. Emerging in the USA during the late nineteenth century, the Temperance movement criticized excessive alcohol use, promoted complete abstinence and put pressure on the government to enact anti-alcohol legislation.

65. *PP*, February 1908, 11:3, pp. 20-22. The proportion of girls being married in childhood was two times more than that of boys. The married female infants in the Punjab in the age group of 0-5 numbered 2,077 in 1911, 2,677 in 1921, and 9,730 in 1931. From 1881 to 1931, the percentage of married children below the age of 15 ranged between 6 and 8 and over 70 per cent were females. See Grewal, 'Widows in North-Western India', pp. 362-63.

66. *PP*, September 1902, 5:11, pp. 8-13. For the use of the press and the educated classes to remove the misunderstandings of the ignorant people about the plague, see Sasha, 'Epidemics in the Colonial Punjab', in *Precolonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics and Culture*, ed. Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), p. 238.

67. *PP*, January 1906, 9:3, pp. 11-13. The Swadeshi movement started with the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905 and continued up to 1908. Strategies of the Swadeshi movement involved boycotting British products and the revival of domestic products and production processes. For some detail, see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 106-29.

68. *PP*, December 1900, 4:2, p. 11.

69. Jones, *Socio Religious Reform Movements*, p. 112.
70. N. Gerald Barrier, *The Sikhs And Their Literature* (Delhi: Manohar, 1970), p. 84.
71. *Punjabi Bhain*, (henceforth *PB*), April 1912, p. 8.
72. *PB*, February 1908, pp. 15-17.
73. *PB*, September 1908, p. 16.
74. *PB*, January-February 1909, p. 4.
75. *PB*, May-June, 1909, p. 25.
76. *PB*, May-June, 1909, pp. 17-18.
77. *PB*, March 1910, p. 13. Tikka Ripudaman Singh was the only son and heir of Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha. He succeeded his father as the Maharaja of Nabha on 24 January 1912, but was deposed by the British on 9 July 1923 for his association with the Akalis and general sympathy for the anti-British individuals and organizations. He had presided over the All India Social Conference held in 1909 in Lahore. See Barbara Ramusack, 'Ripudaman Singh', in *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, ed. Harbans Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2001[1996]), vol. iii, pp. 502-3.
78. *PB*, April 1910, pp. 13-14.
79. *PB*, January-February 1910, p. 15.
80. *PB*, June-July 1910, pp. 3-6.
81. *PB*, November 1910, pp. 11-16.
82. *PB*, March 1912, pp. 13-15.
83. *PB*, May-June, 1909, p. 23.
84. *PB*, April, May, June 1911, pp. 6-7.
85. *PB*, August 1907, p. 17.
86. *PB*, March 1908, p. 10.
87. *PB*, June 1908, pp. 22-24; January-February 1910, pp. 25-30.

88. *PB*, May 1910, p. 3.
89. *PB*, July 1909, p. 35, for example.
90. *PB*, June 1908, p. 17.
91. *PB*, November-December 1909, p. 14.
92. *PB*, January-February 1910, pp. 25-30.
93. *PB*, July 1909, pp. 32-33.
94. *PB*, November 1910, pp. 9-10.
95. *PB*, March 1912, pp. 13-15.
96. *PB*, September 1910, pp. 11-12.
97. *PB*, March 1912, pp. 22-23.
98. *PB*, March 1910, pp. 24-25.
99. *PB*, September 1910, pp. 11-12.
100. *PB*, October 1908, pp. 3-4. Also see Sardul Singh Caveeshar, 'The Sikh, Kanya Mahavidyala Ferozepur', in *The Singh Sabha and other Social Religious Movements in the Punjab 1850-1925*, ed. Ganda Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1984), p. 117.
101. *PB*, February 1911, pp. 11-15; April, May, June 1911, p. 66.
102. *PB*, November-December 1908, p. 20.
103. *PB*, December 1907, p. 2; January-February 1909, p. 41.
104. *PB*, July 1909, pp. 16-22; August 1910, p. 36.
105. *PB*, July 1909, pp. 16-22.
106. *PB*, August 1909, pp. 24-25.
107. *PB*, April 1910, p. 32; August 1910, p. 37.
108. *PB*, September 1908, p. 18.
109. *PB*, September-October 1909, pp. 26-27.

110. *PB*, May 1910, pp. 19-21. The reference here is to the prosecution of a large number of newspapers and their editors under the Newspaper Act of 1908 by which the Press was almost completely suppressed. For detail see Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1988), p. 111.
111. *PB*, February 1908, pp. 7-10.
112. *PB*, November-December 1908, p. 30; May-June, 1909, p. 75.
113. *PB*, September 1910, pp. 14-16.
114. *PB*, July 1909, p. 27; September-October 1909, p. 29.
115. *PB*, May-June, 1909, p. 72. The reference here is to Raja Hira Singh (1871-1911), the ruler of Nabha State, who was made Maharaja just before his death in December 1911. He was one of the ablest of the Nabha rulers – wise, liberal and pious. He was succeeded by his son Ripudaman Singh. See S.S Bhatia, 'Hira Singh', in *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, ed. Harbans Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2001 [1996]) vol ii, p. 276.
116. *PB*, January-February 1910, pp. 8-9.
117. *PB*, December 1910, p. 21.
118. *PB*, March 1911, p. 23.
119. *PB*, May 1910, pp. 10-12.
120. *PB*, September 1908, p. 23; June-July 1910, pp. 19-20.
121. *PB*, December 1907, p. 10.
122. *PB*, November-December 1908, p. 42.
123. *PB*, January-February 1909, pp. 5-6. The Anand Marriage Bill was proposed by Tikka Ripudaman Singh of Nabha and introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council in October 1908. It was meant to give legal recognition to the Sikh ceremony of marriage. After much opposition the bill was eventually passed in October 1909. See J.S Grewal *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, p. 151.
124. *PB*, July 1909, pp. 6-9. Sant Atar Singh (1865-1927) after a brief stint as a soldier had adopted the life of a roving missionary, visiting newly established schools and colleges. He valued education and visualized a future for Sikhs

through western educated leaders and intellectuals. See, Darshan Singh Tatla, 'Mission Abroad: Sant Teja Singh in the Western World', in *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology, Society, Politics and Culture*, ed. Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall (New Delhi:Manohar, 2005), p. 175. For the life of Sant Atar Singh see Teja Singh, *Jivan Katha : Gurmukh Piyare Sant Atar Singh Ji Maharaj* (Barhu Sahib: Kalgidhar Trust, 2008 [1989]).

125. *PB*, July 1909, pp. 14-16.

126. *PB*, April 1908, p. 21; June 1910, p. 15.

127. *PB*, September-October 1909, pp. 40-42.

128. *PB*, August 1908, p. 21.

129. *PB*, April 1912, p. 23.

130. *PB*, August 1910, p. 7.

131. *PB*, November-December 1909, p. 10.

132. *PB*, April 1909, pp. 14-18.

133. *PB*, August 1909, p. 6.

134. *PB*, September-October 1909, pp. 40-42.

135. *PB*, November-December 1908, p. 27; January-February 1910, pp. 17-18. Sarala Debi, the gifted niece of Rabindra Nath Tagore, was brought up in Bengal and moved to Punjab after her marriage with Rambhuj Dutta Chaudhury in 1905. She spent about eighteen years in the Punjab, and participated in major anti-colonial programmes. For more details see Bharati Ray, *Early Feminists of Colonial India: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 13-14.

136. *PB*, August 1910, pp. 5-6.

137. *PB*, September-October 1909, pp. 11-17.

138. *PB*, September-October 1909, p. 48.

139. *PB*, June-July 1910, pp. 31-35.

140. *PB*, December 1910, pp. 25-26.

141. *PB*, February 1911, p. 22. Bhai Takht Singh left for East Asian countries and China in February 1911 with a pledge not to return till he had raised Rs.

50,000 needed for the construction of the building and hostels of the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya. He returned in March 1912 having collected the said amount. See *PB*, March 1912, pp. 18-21.

142. *PB*, January 1911, p. 5.

143. *PB*, June-July 1910, p. 45.

144. For detail, see J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, 'Background of Resistance to British Domination', in *The Ghadar Movement: Background, Ideology, Action and Legacies*, ed. J.S. Grewal, Harish K. Puri and Indu Banga (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2013), pp. 88-110.

145. The paper *Panjabee* was started in Lahore by the DAV Aryas led by Lala Lajpat Rai and Hans Raj (with its motto of 'self help at any cost') in October 1904 as a radical challenge to the relatively moderate *The Tribune* which was controlled by the Brahmo Samajis. The Punjab intelligentsia was infuriated by the prosecution of the *Panjabee* for writing about racist outrages. The trial of its editor led to demonstrations against the British in Lahore in 1907. For some details see Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 127-28.

146. For some detail about Bhai Takht Singh, see Barrier, *The Sikhs and Their Literature*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

