

Religious Socialization and Pedagogy in the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Ferozepur, Punjab

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The Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya (SKM), was established at Ferozepur in 1892 as a girls' school and continues till the present times, albeit not in its original form. This ethnographic paper discusses how the SKM transacts gurnat education to its students, strengthening and consolidating religious identities. It extensively explores both classroom processes and pedagogical practices within the SKM. The main objective of the SKM was to immerse students in the Sikh rituals and observances, both through the school processes and classroom practices. The school ethos with symbols and signifiers depicted its association with norms and values of Sikhism. Teachers and students transposed their understanding of Sikhism on to the curriculum and its transaction. These features have persisted from the past to the current times, though with some variations.

Keywords: *Gurnat*, religious pedagogy, gender socialization, Sikh women's education

Introduction

The present paper discusses the process of religious socialization which operates in the Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya (SKM), which was founded in 1892 as an all-girls' school. The Satnam Sarab Kalyan Trust (SSKT), along with other religious organizations, which supervise the religious content within this school, come up for critical scrutiny in this paper in terms of their aims and objectives. Many Sikh religious organizations in Punjab disseminate religious education actively to school children in both private and government schools. These organizations believe that imparting only general education is inadequate and that religious education should complement the general education. The SSKT monitors the transmission

of Sikh religious education in various schools of Punjab, which it has adopted. The stated aim of the Trust is 'to inspire students to be part of an educated *Gursikh* society living an honest life with feelings of service (*Seva*)'. The SSKT is not the only organization which is interested in promoting the teachings and values of *Sikhi* amongst students. It is complemented in its efforts by others like the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the Sikh Missionary College (SMC) and the Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle (GGSSC). All these organizations aim to disseminate '*gurmat* education in the schools and colleges imparting moral and ethical values to the youth'. In 1995, the SKM became one of the 291 adopted schools of the SSKT providing *gurmat* education to more than one lakh students. The paper discusses how these organizations create Sikh religious identities among both girls and boys in early years of socialisation.

Theoretical Influences

The paper is informed by the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu and Bernstein. Social reproduction happens through education and its inherent processes of socialization and control. Habitus (Bourdieu 1970) plays an important role in the process of social reproduction. It is only through the reproduction of the habitus that the strategy of overall social reproduction succeeds. Put simply, it is the unconscious internalization of the world in which an individual is situated. It is through the habitus that lasting dispositions of mind and body are transcribed on the social body, which gets defined in terms of habits and taste. The overall schema of habits dovetails neatly with the class character of society. The preference for one type of bodily disposition or taste is ultimately a matter of class. But it certainly gets transferred through the strategies, which make up the habitus. In short, there can be a number of habitus depending on the class location of the individual. It is the habitus, which interacts with different forms of capital and gives rise to change as well as constancy within the social structure. In short, habitus is the code through which both change and reproduction can be understood within the system. According to Bourdieu (1970), habitus refers to an embodied disposition that include practices in consonance with principles of the world.

This paper applies some of the ideas of Bourdieu and is therefore necessarily to describe them here. Main thesis of Bourdieu's work is how 'power imposes meanings that mostly are legitimate and in doing so hides

power relations that function as its impetus, actually complementing power relations with symbolic force'. 'Pedagogic action' implies education of the kind much more than formal education is defined as 'imposition of cultural arbitrary (an arbitrary cultural scheme which is actually, though not in appearance, based upon power) by an arbitrary power'. This manifests how reproduction of the social system happens through reproduction of culture through pedagogic action (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970: vi-vii).

Bourdieu also makes use of the concept of cultural capital which is often understood to suggest the educational level of the parents but is far more than that. Bourdieu believes that cultural capital includes aspects that are constituent of the habitus and are acquired through socialization like language and way of life. Often only one kind of habitus is nurtured among the students, which usually is that of the dominant group. Those students who already have such disposition are able to gain education successfully. The students from the dominant sections of the society retain both educational capital and social capital while working class students exchange their working-class capital for educational capital (Harker 1984). A school that is controlled by the socially and culturally dominant groups will have favourable attitude towards the students from leading groups largely because they share the same cultural arbitrary. Students coming from a working class or dominated background have habitus, which are perceived as culturally 'inferior'. Habitus suggests 'system of embodied dispositions that design practices in consonance with principles of the social world'. It is quite close to the idea of socialization and connotes culture that individuals embody. It suggests 'internalization of physical embodiment of the objective structure'. Thus, habitus is a set of dispositions that members of a group come to acquire as a result of their socialization which in turn reflect central structural elements (political instability, kinship rules). Therefore, individuals behave in ways that reproduce those structures (Nash 1990; Harker 1984). This theory ensures practice in accordance with the cultural codes of the society. Habitus is intrinsically linked to the idea of culture. How an individual imbibes any culture is what this encapsulates. The concept of habitus is related to schooling when it is realized that some habitus are associated with cultural capital. Therefore, these are emphasized for success attainment in school while others are not. In order to be successful, children from deprived contexts are expected to secure appropriate cultural capital, and likewise related habitus. They adapt according to expectations of the

school and embody the same (Harker 1984), but then only some can do so while the large majority simply gives up thinking they are not cut out for it. As Bourdieu explains, three kinds of habitus exist- the collective habitus, which amalgamates cultural codes, the dispositional habitus that is basically internalization of the cultural codes, and the manifest habitus focusing on the practical aspects. His framework specifically focuses on socialization. How does expected behaviour of the individuals serve goals of the cultural groups is what he focuses upon. Habitus enables internalization of practice that is much in consonance with the cultural framework of the society (Nash 1990).

Another theorist of social reproduction, Basil Bernstein (1975) examines school's culture along with the nature of behaviour that the school transmits to pupils. He classifies two kinds of behaviour that get transferred to the pupils through schools: the first one aims to mould the character and the second one focuses on formal education. The school through certain activities and practices builds images of pupil conduct and character. At the same time, the school educates students to attain specific skills. Bernstein refers to school behaviour and activities that nurture conduct and behaviour as expressive order of the school. The set of behaviour that enables students to acquire certain skills is referred to as instrumental order. The expressive order nurtures and binds the school as a moral collective (Bernstein 1975).

Rituals are an important source of binding the individual to the society. Though they are specific to a situation, yet they convey a meaning that goes much beyond the definition of that situation. The instrumental and expressive orders operate within the school to serve different objectives. While the instrumental order builds requisite skills through transaction of facts, the expressive order results in transfer of morals and belief systems. The expressive order is responsible for nurturance of the school's value system. The instrumental order, on the other hand, is of much contentious kind. The expressive order paves path for social consensus thereby perpetuating ritualization. The consensual rituals hold the school community together as a moral entity. They ensure socialization into the school's value system. They maintain continuity by carrying forward practices considered significant. The values of the dominant groups in the society are synchronized with the school system. These go a long way in ensuring distinct recognition for the school. Through them the goals of schools are synchronized with the values such that students experience them in a holistic manner. The school assemblies,

aspects related to reward and punishment and observance of specific occasions to mark historical events come within the purview of building consensus (Bernstein 1975).

The School Gurudwara and Associated Rituals

Much of religious education associated with the affective domain constitutes what Bernstein (1975) calls 'the expressive order' of the school. Formally and informally students took out time from normal routine of teaching and learning to observe practices intrinsic to the Sikh religion. Interactions and discussions with them revealed that it was often a matter of pride to have contributed in some way to such religious affairs. Those dexterous in the practice of such rituals were often called to not only guide juniors but also assist the *gurmat* teacher in correct observance of the rituals. The school gurudwara emerges as the focal point of many such rituals through which the inculcation of Sikh identity happens amongst students.

Since the initial years of its establishment, the school has had a *Gurdwara*. The School and the Gurdwara are inter-connected. The school provided secular education and the Gurdwara made religious education available to all. In this School-cum-Gurdwara, both secular and religious education interface in multiple ways and influence life at school. In a corner of the quadrangle, adjacent to the school hall, is a large room with dilapidated walls that houses the Gurdwara. Students use the tap near the corner to wash their feet and hands before entering this sacred space. The Gurdwara has a wooden chamber to rest the holy book (*Sukh asan*) after the school gets over. Operational during school hours, it is the centre of religious activity. Students during recess and teachers in free periods read handbooks of prayers (*gutke nitnem de*) or do the '*Sahaj path*' that is, slow reading or recitation of the whole Sikh scripture incessantly without interruptions (Gill and Joshi 1994: 73). After the morning assembly, the *gurmat* teacher takes out the *Hukumnama* or 'royal decree' (hymn randomly selected from the Guru Granth Sahib that conveys a message from the gurus) along with the students. Most students refer to the Guru Granth Sahib housed in the school Gurdwara as '*Babaji*'. In the Gurdwara, students along with the *gurmat* teacher sang *kirtan* (congregational singing). Students and teachers organize sessions on stories (*katha*), lectures (*vyakhyan*) and recitation of holy verses (*path*).

Every day, the *gurmat* teacher, along with a few students, cleans the Gurdwara. In the morning, she opens the Guru Granth Sahib and after reciting *ardas*, does *prakash* of the holy *granth*, by randomly choosing any *shabad* or *vak* and reading it aloud so that its meaning is clear to everyone. During the day, most students came once at least to pay reverence to the Guru Granth Sahib. They bowed towards the Guru Granth Sahib by kneeling. They also recited '*waheguru ji da Khalsa, waheguru ji di fateh*'. Before examinations teachers offered prayer in the Gurdwara for soliciting students' good performance in the board examinations and the students read the holy *Anand Sahib* to seek its blessings (field notes). In the afternoon, students or *gurmat* teacher recited *Rehras Sahib* and then closed (*Sukh asan*) the holy book (*Babaji da sukh-asan karde han*). The scarf (*Rumala Sahib*) with which the holy book is covered is changed daily, followed by the lighting of incense.

The role of *gurmat* teacher is crucial since she was solely responsible for transmitting religious values among students. In the early decades, most teachers at this school were well grounded in Sikh religion, so they could guide their students. These teacher-mentors socialized students in the sphere of Sikh religion and helped them learn *gurmat* music. Now, this task is assigned to the *gurmat* teacher. The *Gurmat* teacher as role model, preacher and communicator of religious ideas and thoughts executed an important responsibility. She updates students on Sikh religious literature and encourages them to read the same in their leisure time. *Gurmat* teachers (*tarmik teachers*) appointed in all affiliated schools of the SSKT to transact religious education are 'trained missionaries' of Sikhism and are mentors and not just teachers. Almost all Sikh religious organizations required *Gurmat* teachers to be *amritdhari*. These *amritdhari* teachers have undergone *pahul amrit sanskar* or Khalsa baptism ceremony (*khande da amrit*). These teachers have to qualify the two-year correspondence course in *gurmat* studies from the Sikh Missionary College or Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee's (SGPC) or the one-year diploma from Punjabi University, Patiala. SKM's *gurmat* teacher did a two-year correspondence course (*patar-vihar*) on 'Sikh Studies' from SGPC and from SMC. The school *Gurdwara* with *gurmat* teacher acted as the nucleus for the observance of religious practices. She touched lives of students in many ways acting as a role model who taught them about religion and ways to imbibe it in their daily lives. During group discussions, many students shared how school *Gurdwara* socialized them in Sikh rituals and practices. They enter the *Gurdwara* barefoot and kept their heads covered.

They said that they had learnt how to conduct themselves in the *Gurdwara*. Another standard X student remarked 'we got to know about Sikh religion from our school Gurdwara'. The Principal ascertained that many parents sent daughters to the school for character-building facilitated by the religious environment in the school.

The school *Gurdwara* is connected with the local *Akal Garh Gurdwara* in the Kamboj quarters of the city. The *gurmat* teacher tried to replicate practices of the local *Gurdwara* within the School *Gurdwara*. '*Akhand path*' is the unceasing reading of the *Adi Granth* from start to the end which must be finished within 48 hours without any interval. The relay of reciter's repeating it one after another ensures that no break occurs (Singha 2000:15). This was conducted on various occasions like *Gurpurab* (birth anniversary of Gurus), 'for wish fulfilment', to 'express gratitude' on wish gratification and on death anniversary of the school's founder. Initially, six stanzas of Anand Sahib are read followed by *ardas* and *hukam*, finally leading to recitation of the holy book. *Granthis* from the local *Akalgarh Gurdwara* are also called to sing religious *shabads*. The concluding session is marked by distribution of the consecrated food (*karah prasad*) (McLeod 2006:69). Students from primary sections were socialized to engage in religious practices like '*Akhand path*'.

In contrast, *Sahaj path* or slow reading or recitation of the whole Sikh scripture in groups of three/four was quite common and undertaken by various students and teachers in the School *Gurdwara*. Students usually finished *Sahaj Path* in a year. The Principal stated that in free periods students went to the *Gurdwara Sahib* to recite '*Sahaj Path*' and also read the '*Sukhmani Sahib*'. To illustrate, three standard XI students began *Sahaj Path* and wanted to finish it within a year. They read it during school hours (they requested teachers to allow them to read the holy text while the class was going on) or in free periods. For the *gurmat* teacher, this was an indicator of growing interest in religion.

Then there are some special gatherings that are held each month on *massia* (new moon) and *punnia*. *Punnia* (full moon) is final day of the waxing of the moon and *massia* (no moon) is last day of waning of the moon. Certain religious observances are associated with these occasions. On both *massia* and *punnia*, many students visit the school *Gurdwara* and a few senior students along with the *gurmat* teacher read certain passages from the holy book. *Sangrand* (*sankranti*) is the first day of the month. On this occasion, some senior students along with the *gurmat* teacher prepare consecrated food that is offered in the *Gurdwara*. The Principal of the

school shared how teachers along with students donated towards preparation of consecrated food (*halwa*). The *gurmat* teacher usually plans it with the help of some standard XI students.

The SKM remembers the sacrifices of the Sikh Gurus on special occasions. *Gurpurab* focuses on the birth anniversary celebration of the Gurus (Singh 2001:194-195). The *gurmat* teacher inspired students to participate in special events organized in local Akalgarh *Gurdwara* since the school was closed on anniversaries of *Guru Nanak* and *Guru Gobind Singh*. Usually, on *Guru Nanak's* birth anniversary, various events like a quiz competition on the life of *Guru Nanak* were organised for the students. Much in advance, she had acquainted students with biography of *Guru Nanak*. The *gurmat* teacher told me that some students of standards VIII and X along with parents joined either in *parbhat pheris*, that is, early morning rounds held a day before or in *nagar kirtans* which involves singing of religious hymns going around the streets in a procession. The school band, carrying the school banner, played music while *Shabads* were recited. The procession begins from the local Akal Garh *Gurdwara* to Udham Singh Chowk at four in the morning and returns by seven to the *Gurdwara*. The local people set up kiosks to serve sweetened rice with cold water to the participants. On *Shahidi divas* or martyrdom day of *Guru Arjan Dev*, the *gurmat* teacher chooses certain students to sing holy hymns at the Akal Garh *Gurdwara*. Some students along with parents visited the Akal Garh *Gurdwara* to render service (*sewa*).

'*Barsi samagam*', is the annual congregation to remember the contributions of the School's founder Takht Singh and is held on the 18th of December. Students, under the supervision of teachers, take up various responsibilities during this occasion. Senior girls deliver speeches in remembrance of the School's founder. They also revisit the aims of establishing this institution. Special prayer on this occasion is held in the *Gurudwara*. And is generally concluded with a *langar* (free meal) organized by the teachers, students, and parents for all the guests.

Indeed, the *Gurudwara* is not just a physical space but a certain idea associated with orderliness and sacrality which can also be found in other spaces such as the school assembly. The school assembly underlines how the school expects its students to conduct themselves within as well as outside. It also focuses on the religious domain and taught students how to recite verses daily. This was the only occasion during the day when reflection on *gurmat* went beyond the usual class periods. The *Khalsa*

prayer differs from 'secular prayer' offered in the government schools or schools of other religious denominations. It is obligatory for both students and teachers to cover their heads as a mark of respect to the holy texts and Sikh Gurus. In the case of Sikh girls, covering head with dupatta forms an integral part of identity. Boys wear yellow *patkas* (scarves). At 8 AM, the Principal arrives and asks the five chosen 'lead' students to lead the assembly with the 'prayer of the *Waheguru*'. In synchronization with beats of the drum, as the students stand in neat files, they face the centre where the five lead girls stood. They stand barefoot and begin by touching the ground first and then their forehead, which signifies seeking permission from the divine to be able to conduct the singing of religious stanzas in the correct way. The 'lead girls' call out Sikh slogan (*jaikara/fateh*): *Bolo sau nihāl* and all students respond *Sat Sri Akal* (the *fateh* connotes- 'Blessed is the person for whom God is truth'). Following this, all students recite in chorus supplicatory prayer (*ardas*). After the prayer, students and teachers bent down to touch the ground again 'in reverence of the almighty', followed by touching of their foreheads and finally kissed palms of their hands. According to the *gurmat* teacher, this act was to show respect towards the 'holy words' of the Guru Granth Sahib. Thus, we see that the space where the assembly is conducted is transformed into a Gurdwara and all etiquettes followed in the gurdwara are also replicated here. Over the years, these students imbibe such ritualized behaviours.

Transaction of religious education was built into the timetable and daily school routine. Since it is a minority school, they can partly formally teach religion. Students are required to read religious textbooks in addition to the recommended curriculum from standards I to X. The textbooks are distributed based on groups: first is till the V standard, second is till VIII standard, third is till the senior secondary, and fourth group is for higher classes. These textbooks aim to nurture qualities integral for '*Sikh Jivan Janch*' (Sikh life of enquiry) in students like truth, mercy, forgiveness, courtesy, fearlessness, service, equanimity, good behaviour, peace, welfare, sharing, among others (SSKT Textbooks).

The content of religious education is structured at three levels focusing on memorization of *Gurbani*, building familiarity with Sikh history (*Itihass*), and Sikh principles and traditions (*siddhant ate parampara*). Students are expected to memorise *Japuji*, *Sohila*, *Rehras*, *Anand Sahib*, *Sawaiye*, among others. They read biographies of ten Sikh Gurus and Sikh martyrs/heroes. As part of *Gurmat and Rahit Maryada*, they read about *panj pyare* (five beloved), four Sikh princes (*char sahibzade*), *amrit*

ceremony (*khande di pahul*), *kirat karni* (good deeds), *naam japna* (chanting holy name), *vand chakhna* (sharing of food), *sadh sangat* (sacred congregation), *ardas di mahatta* (importance of *ardas*), *simran* (remembrance), *seva* (service), *kirtan* (congregational singing) and finally about the Singh Sabha and the *Gurdwara* reform movement. All these aspects aim to strengthen Sikh identity and internalise seemingly routine practices associated with the Sikh religion. These textbooks were also structured to cater to students of different cognitive levels. '*Japuji Sahib*', initial composition of the *Guru Granth Sahib* recited early morning (Singh 2001: 347), is the main text for primary grades. In the primary stages, students orally narrated while in the middle and secondary stages, they learnt to interpret the meaning of religious texts. Religious poems were introduced standard III onwards like 'living with honour (*anakh*)', 'imbibing *Gurbani* in life', 'identity of a Sikh'. *Gurmat* examination was held twice a year along with the school's semester examinations. In September and March, oral test is held for primary standards and written test is conducted for middle to secondary stages. Students' knowledge about Sikhism is assessed and evaluated through a special examination scheme. Students are expected to recite the *Gurbani* and to memorize Sikh history, Sikh principles, and Sikh traditions.

SKM expects 'good students' to be also 'good Sikhs'. Students are not only educated about Sikhism but are also trained to become 'good Sikhs'. They learn to become familiar with and identify with the Sikh personalities by learning about it formally. Sikh history constitutes learning about lives and teachings of Sikh gurus and their travelogues, also the coming into existence of Sikh *Gurdwaras* and centres of pilgrimage. The content is transmitted in the form of stories called '*sakas*' to younger students. Sikh history plays an important role in building Sikh identity. Through study of Sikh principles and traditions, students are acquainted with specific rituals to be observed like while visiting the *Gurdwara* (*Gurdware kiven jaiye?*). The extensive ritual of opening and closing the *Guru Granth Sahib* is explained and students are instructed on how to show reverence. Unshorn hair considered a pride for Sikhs (*kes Sikh di shaan*) is emphasized as a rule. *Sikh Rahit Maryada* advises on what is prescribed and proscribed in the Sikh religion. Such socialization processes are seen as essential to develop 'true' Sikhs. These practices and symbols of Sikhism gradually become part of the students' habitus.

The religious education at the SKM could be viewed as a part of its expressive order. However, it was also constituted by the transaction of

elements usually associated with the 'instrumental order' of the school. The expressive order of the school not only nurtures Sikh values and religious ethics among the students but the fact that the students had a prescribed formal curriculum which they were expected to read and learn and were assessed as is associated with the instrumental order. Innovative pedagogic methods made learning of Sikh religion interesting to the students. Somehow, the instrumental and expressive orders were not clearly distinguished but intermingled such that socialization related dimensions became much more prominent. The spread of religious education is not only to cater to the expressive domain but also to fulfil certain instrumental goals. The divide between expressive and instrumental orders becomes blurred in such a situation.

Students learnt about the five basic symbols of Sikhism: reciting religious verses, *mulmantra* (basic statement of Sikhism) '*waheguru*' (God), about ten Sikh Gurus, their five disciples, four princes, and five sacred thrones. Likewise, students had to remember the five main disciples who started the *Khalsa* order when Guru Gobind Singh offered them holy nectar. The names of five Sikh princes (*sahibzade*) and four thrones (*Takhats*) of Gurus were embedded in the memory of students. Pedagogy in religion periods was to turn students into 'good Sikhs' conscious of Sikh religion and its practices. Bodily comportment was an essential component of socialization process, which we will reflect on later in the paper. The *gurmat* teacher, through the way she personified Sikh religion, impressed upon the students the need to adhere to religion.

Sikhism and its teachings are analytical and critical of idolatry. Students from early years were nurtured to admire holy Sikh spaces, decipher, and identify religious codes. They learnt to perceive Sikhism as distinct from Hinduism. Certain practices are integral to this religious order. Students were expected to show reverence to both parents and elders. They greeted them with Sikh salutation *Satsriakal* and were familiarized with call for victory (*jaikara*) '*Waheguru ji da khalsa, waheguru ji di fateh*' (Khalsa salutation). Unlike general periods, where students were just given reference books to sit and memorize, the *gurmat* teacher engaged with students instilling Sikh values. Positive reinforcements act to channelize students' behaviour. Ideas of good (*bibe*) and bad (*gande*) children are employed in primary standards to instil morals and values related to good conduct. The *gurmat* teacher reiterated in each class the need to maintain purity of mind by waking up in the ambrosial hour of morning, ensure purity of body by bathing daily, maintain dental hygiene

and stay neat by combing hair. She also emphasized on the purity of behaviour by addressing elders with respect, being soft in speech, studying hard, speaking only truth, regular chanting of Guru's name and visiting the Gurdwara; and religious purity by committing *Gurbani* to memory.

One of the important themes in Sikh religion introduced to students is Waheguru (Ultimate reality or God; literally wondrous preceptor or enlightener) (Gill and Joshi 1994:770). Almost in all classes, students along with the teacher chanted it. Reciting *waheguru* is understood as purest way of remembering the divine. The *gurmat* teacher often started class by asking students to recite main religious mantra (*gurmantra*) 'waheguru' for five minutes (*chalo panj minute lai simran karo!*). Sometimes, students seated on their chairs were seen shifting front to back reciting the holy mantra. The *gurmat* teacher believed that it led to purity of body and mind initiating students to grasp spiritual meaning of religious texts. Students who recited *ardas* correctly were identified and encouraged to participate in the religious events held within the school as well as outside. Religious texts were supposed to be recited with the purity of body and mind. Through stories of Guru's disciples, students were socialized to imbibe traits that defined them as 'Khalsa'. The teacher also asked students to remember Sikh salutation or greeting (*Fateh*). Before starting the class, the teacher and all students said *fateh*. The *gurmat* teacher reminded students that they should greet parents at home with Sikh slogan or *Jaikara*. The *gurmat* teacher effectively employed poems to acquaint students with religious observances. Through easy to remember poems, the teacher taught students the names of ten Sikh Gurus and nurtured what was acknowledged as good religious habits. For instance, in standards I and II, all students along with the teacher, recited the following poem:

one-two, get up in the ambrosial hour of morning (*Ek-do amritvele uth lo*)
 three-four, utter the victory of the enlightener Guru (*teen-char wahe Guruji di fateh uchar*)
 five-six, always meditate on the name of God (*panj-chey naam Hari da sada le*)
 seven-eight, never utter unruly word (*sat-ath kabhi na muhon dheel mat*)
 nine-ten, remember the name of God and live happily (*nau-dus simran kar di sukhi bas*).

Another poem was to celebrate the spirit of '*langar*' by highlighting its importance. The poem expressed how all enjoyed free community kitchen

of the Guru and became courageous through consumption of lentils (*dal*) and consecrated food (*karah prasad*):

Today is Guru's langar (*Aj Guru da langar hain*)
 all will eat food together (*saare ral-mil khavangey*)
 we will form queues with decorated platters (*asi sajiyan thaliyan vich saare pangat lagavangey*)
 we will become brave by consuming pulses and consecrated food (*dale ate parsada chak ke survir ban javangey*)
 we will proclaim victory of the Guru's and the Khalsa's rule (*Wahe Guruji di ve Khalse de raj di fateh bulavangey*).

Biographies (*Jivni*) not only acquaint students with Sikh religious personalities, but through them, students are expected to emulate the qualities of these ideal Sikhs. For instance, in standard IX, the teacher narrated the life story of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, a general in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. She led the discussion on his childhood as well as youth epitomizing valour and courage. These figures are expected to become the role models for students within SKM. Thus, these biographies serve as pedagogical tools inculcating expected behaviours and attitudes among students. For instance, in II and III standards, students were introduced to ideals that epitomized Sikh values. Chapters on 'Saka Sirhind' (standard II) and 'Bal Shaheed Darbara Singh' (standard III) focuses on 'great deeds by little ones'. As young boys, these princes were upholder of honour and prestige of their religion. They inspired young students to become the protectors of their religion.

The life of gurus and devotees is narrated through anecdotes to convey morals to the students. At the primary stage, all students are expected to memorize the names of ten Sikh Gurus (*sari Patshahi da naam lao!*). To illustrate, in standard III, the teacher narrated story of Guru Amar Das who succeeded Guru Angad as the third Guru to convey the moral of obedience and respect for elders. On Guru Angad's order, he got up at two every night and filled pitcher from the pond. The teacher asked students to note how he obeyed his guru irrespective of challenges that came his way and never even questioned his Guru. Similarly, the teacher expected students to work hard despite reprimands they heard from the teachers and parents.

Along with biographies, the texts also have anecdotes or *sakhis*, which are introduced from Standard II onwards. They read out chapters with passages on *Gurbani* and the teacher narrated its meaning. The curiosity

of students to hear stories was used as a tool to create interest in the content by the *gurmat* teacher. It served as classroom management strategy whereby students agreed to follow her instructions provided, she narrated them a story. In the *gurmat* periods, *sakhis* related to the lives of ten Gurus highlighting main teachings were repeatedly shared with students. Through *sakhi* on Guru Amar Das, third Guru, the teacher impressed upon ninth standard students an important teaching that discrimination on the basis of caste should not be done (*jaat- paat ka bhed- bhav nahin karna!*). She highlighted how Hindu priestly order created divisions among people on the basis of caste. Through the *sakhi* of disciple *Bhagat* (disciple) Ravi Das, who belonged to an ex-untouchable caste, the teacher emphasized how Sikhism believed in oneness of humanity. The *gurmat* teacher emphasized how salvation was possible only through the Guru. Students were expected to learn from Gurus' lives since they sacrificed for the establishment of Sikh religion. The *gurmat* teacher used visual images in the text and photographs additionally to gain students' attention.

Sacrality and Embodiment

Bodily comportment of religious symbols, such as keeping uncut hair and abiding by practices that were part of *amrit chakna* process, is considered an important indicator of adherence to principles and traditions of the Sikh faith. The *gurmat* teacher motivated students to undergo initiation ceremony. She recorded half-yearly progress of those who were initiated into *amrit chakhna* (*Khalsa* baptism ceremony) and *kes rakhana* (maintaining uncut hair). The appearance of being a Sikh is considered very important. Especially for girls, who are considered as carriers of culture and its practices, embodiment of religion is integral for they also are thought to transfer such values to the family and extended kin. The office bearers of Sikh religious organizations, like SGPC, stated that girls' appearance should correspond to image of the Sikh women. Unmarried Sikh girls were expected to maintain uncut hair, cover head with dupatta (*dupatta le lena siga*) and not pierce nose/ear. In standard IV, the teacher while discussing the Sikh Guru Amar Das, considered epitome of humility and service, reminded students that 'if they respect the Gurus, then they should look into the mirror to assess and analyse how their appearance corresponded with the Guru's precepts. The school *gurmat* teacher also distributed pamphlets to motivate students to become *Khalsa* and to

assume that special appearance which defined *Khalsa* Sikhs. In multi-grade session of standards III and IV, the teacher commented that intelligent (*sayana*) and good (*biba*) students kept their heads covered. Thus, gradually students were nurtured in the values of Sikhism both subtly and overtly through the school processes and classroom practices.

Students are socialized from early years to imbibe the Sikh symbols of identification. These are considered crucial for the emergence of individuals integrally as 'Sikh' in both body and spirit. Students learn the urgency of adopting these symbols and even when they resisted or defied, they realize they were not accomplishing certain defined standards and faltering in becoming 'complete Sikhs'. For example, the five *kakars* are important physical symbols of the *Khalsa panth*- *kesh* (uncut hair), *kangha* (a wooden comb), *kirpan* (steel sword), *kara* (a steel bracelet) and *kachha* (cotton underwear). The *gurmata* teacher not only theoretically impressed it upon students, but they were also expected to wear these to profess belief in Sikh religion.

Bodily comportment is an essential constituent of the ritualization process (Bernstein 1975). All students were expected to maintain right body postures during chanting, while standing or seating in reverence. In the making of Sikh child, the school and its teachers played a crucial role. In *gurmata* classes, the teacher told students to adopt right body postures before beginning to recite religious verses like seating cross-legged with folded hands and covering head. Bodily discipline is believed to strengthen the practice of religion. Students actively learnt to participate in rituals and activities of the Gurdwara. They are socialized to carry out tasks associated with the Gurdwara. It not only allowed them to affirm to image of a good student, but also was in much continuity with what they practiced at home. Students on rotation basis came to assist the *gurmata* teacher in her performance of tasks. These students not only were responsible and sincere but also were liked by teachers. They gained social and cultural capital through their engagement in these observances of rituals.

However, certain rituals and bodily adherences were difficult to carry out, especially for girls. Adherence to Sikhism implies that women should imbibe practices integral to the religion yet *amrit chakhma* ceremony appeared to be grey area for girls. *Amritdhari* girls have to imbibe five *kakars*, recite *gurbanis* such as *Japuji Sahib*, *Shabad Hazarae*, *Jaap Sahib*, *Tav Prasad Sawaiye*, *Benati Chaupai*, *Anand Sahib* and in the evening have to recite *Rehras* (including *Benati Chaupai*) and *Kirtan Sohila* apart from

observing practices such as waking up at ambrosial hour, among others. I found that families often dissuaded girls from following this austere path. Most parents and students were reluctant to allow initiation through the *Khalsa* ceremony. At the same time, there was a certain ideal image of Sikh girls which was internalised by the students as taught to them by their teachers. The *gurmat* teachers of religious organizations SSKT, SGPC and SMC constructed an ideal of Sikh girls. What came across through these responses were notions of virginity, purity, and dedication to religious principles and focus on familial contexts. In contrast, lack of compliance immediately led to classification of girls as 'polluted'. Sikh girls were meant to be '*khalis*' or pure and unadulterated, lacking impurities. Since girls were axis of the home, it was family's responsibility to make girls realize their potential to uplift the family. In this process, they learnt to become cultured, to follow advice of elders, and to realise skills and identity of nurturer. *Gurmat* teachers elaborately discussed the lives of prominent Sikh women like Bibi Nanki, Mata Khivi, Mata Ganga, Mata Gujar Kaur and Mai Bhago (usually were mothers and wives of the ten Sikh Gurus) in order to present them as role models. Religious education was also designed to 'restrain' sexual instinct amongst girls which, according to teachers was the cause of immoral practices. Control over sexuality was emphasized and those who adhered to such practices received appreciation. The teachers stated that 'instead of thinking about sex and sexuality-related issues, students should meditate on the name of God'.

In Conclusion

The *Gurdwara* and *gurmat* education forms the nucleus of the school processes, as far as religious education is concerned. The school's *gurmat* teacher played a pivotal role in orienting students to become interested in Sikh religion. The school *Gurdwara* maintained an aura of religiosity and sacredness such that many students were attracted to not only visit it regularly but also participated in specific rituals with much interest. The *gurmat* lectures instilled among students the idea of deciphering religious codes and maintaining religious symbols. The formal curriculum had a compulsory component of Sikh religious education or *gurmat* education which made them conscious of their religious identity. Religious pedagogy within SKM incorporated innovative methods that were aimed to create interest of the students in what is otherwise considered a

‘monotonous subject’. Through the strategies adopted by the school, religious education and the morals transacted through them become part of the bodily comportment of an average student. The habitus this created empowers them to negotiate with the schooling and societal structures in ways beneficial to them. Thus, the regime of religious socialization is constraining but also imparts certain cultural and social capital to its practitioners which the later can actively deploy in suitable contexts. At another level, the instrumental order of the school seems to be interspersed with the expressive order when it comes to the transaction of Sikh religious education through the formal curriculum. Students are expected to make gains central to the expressive order through the mechanism of the instrumental order. At the same time, within the SKM, religion emerges as the master signifier to which all other instrumental orders of the school (Bernstein 1975) correspond.

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