

Nanaki: The Definition of Sister and Sisterhood in
the *Bala Janam Sakhi* Recension

by

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to unfold the role of Nanaki, the older sister of Nanak, the founder of Sikhism in the *Bala* recension. In the *Bala* recension, Nanaki is presented as a powerful and assertive woman. Her status is shown to be much different than the women of contemporary Punjabi Sikh society. Revealing Nanaki's status will give us an understanding of the presentation of women in the early Sikh traditions.

The *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension is very popular among the Punjabi Sikh community of the twentieth century. Therefore, I am using the *Bala* recension to investigate the role of Nanaki. Other versions of *Janam Sakhis* recensions also exist, such as *Puratan Janam Sakhi* recension, *Miharban Janam Sakhi* recension and *Mani Singh Janam Sakhi* recension, but they are not followed by Punjabi Sikhs as much as *Bala* recension.

My analysis will focus on the kin relationships of Nanaki, Nanak and their close kin and how they are reflected in the status of women in the *Bala* recension. Nanaki was Nanak's caretaker, protector and guardian. Nanaki's powerful and authoritarian personality played a vital part in the establishment of Sikhism by Nanak.

Nanaki is presented as a powerful and authoritarian daughter, sister, wife and sister-in-law. All these roles of Nanaki will be explored in this thesis.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study addresses kin relationships and how they are reflected in the status of women in the early Sikh hagiographic¹ literature known as the *Janam Sakhi* tradition². The *Janam Sakhis* are the collection of tales, which recount the life stories of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism. The term life story refers to the traditional narratives of the life of Guru Nanak.³ The *Janam Sakhi* tradition expanded very rapidly into a diversified and detailed tradition through the addition of detailed and interpretative dissertations to the early basis of *Sakhi* tradition.⁴ The importance of the *Janam Sakhi* tradition as historical sources is very crucial because they provide information regarding the period and the society within which they evolved.⁵ Therefore, by using the *Sakhi* tradition as historical sources one can gather valuable information about the sociological framework of that society.

¹ The term 'hagiography' refers to the biographies, which are written by the followers of a religious saint or a leader. For example in the case of Mahipati, S.G. Tulpule states that by writing about the lives of saints, hagiographers seek the company or *satsanga* of these saints. Hagiographers also pursue the didactic function of hagiographic literature, which is that hagiographies not only describe the lives of the saints but they also instruct the followers the way of life. Occasionally, hagiographers try to correct, reinterpret legitimise the writings of their founder. Snell, Rupert, "Introduction: Themes in Indian Hagiography," *In According To Tradition: Hagiographical Writing In India*, ed. by M. Winand Callewaert, Rupert Snell (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), pp. 1-15.

² The term 'tradition' covers a number of related manuscripts of the hagiographical accounts of Guru Nanak. Hans, Surjit, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 198), p. 198.

³ Harbans Singh, *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* (Patiala, Punjabi University, 1996), p. 337.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁵ W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A study of the Janam-sakhis* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 9.

In particular this thesis will explore the blood ties and affinal ties among the clan of Nanaki, the older sister of Nanak. This approach will focus principally on the personification of Nanaki as a role model for the Punjabi Sikh community. The portrait of Nanaki is very different from the portrait of twentieth century Sikh woman. In the *Bala*⁶ recension of the *Janam Sakhi*, Nanaki is shown to have power, authority and respect in her society. Today, in contemporary Punjabi Sikh society, these qualities have dissipated and Punjabi Sikh women have little power and authority. This research will attempt to show that Nanaki had a respected, effective, decisive and powerful place in the Sikh society in comparison to the twentieth century Sikh woman. According to the picture given in the *Bala Janam Sakhi*, Nanaki was the driving force behind Nanak's succession as a Guru or as a founder of Sikhism and she had superior place compared to Nanak in her family.⁷ The study of Nanaki's role as a sister in the *Bala* recension of the *Janam Sakhi* will give an insight into how the writer of this recension perceived the role of sister in the time and place during which the *Sakhi* was written.

In the *Bala* recension Nanaki is shown to be the vital force of her father's clan. Nanaki's ability to run the family affairs as though she was a male descendant is very prominent in the *Bala* recension. As result of these characteristics, she is considered to be an important role model for the Sikh community. However, Doris

⁵ W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A study of the Janam-sakhis* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 9.

⁶ *Bala* recension is one of four *Janam Sakhi* recension, which I will discuss in detail in chapter three. I am using *Bala* recension to carry out my research.

⁷ Surjit Hans, *Reconstruction of Sikh History* (Jalandhar, ABS Publications, 1988), p. 204.

Jakobsh states in her forthcoming article that this a “normative” belief, not a “operative” belief; which means that the belief regarding Nanaki’s role as Nanak’s sister is officially stated and prescribed by the *Bala* recension but it is not actually held by the Sikh community.⁸ In other words, does Punjabi Sikh community really follow Nanaki as a role model or is it just a normative belief?

To explore the above problem, I will look at briefly the role of twentieth century Punjabi Sikh woman. To show the role of a woman in the contemporary Punjabi Sikh society, I am largely dependent on Paul Hershman’s book, *Punjabi Kinship*, as well as my own experience and experience of my blood and non-blood female kin.⁹ Paul Hershman did his fieldwork for his book in the village called Randhawa Masand. This village is five kilometres away from the place I was born and raised. I do not agree with some of the information that Hershman wrote in his book. Therefore, I am using my own experience and experience of my blood and non-blood female kin. The analysis of Nanaki’s role in the *Bala* recension will give some insight about normative and operative believes of Punjabi Sikh community regarding Nanak and her clan.

Guru Nanak lived in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The *Janam Sakhi* tradition suggests that from childhood Nanak did not have much interest in the materialistic world. As a child he meditated on God’s name all the time. This

⁸, Doris R. Jakobsh, "The Construction of Gender in History and Religion: Sikh Case". In the *Captive Subject: A Social and Cultural Casebook for Women of India*. Ed. By Mandakranta Bose, Forthcoming, essay no: 20.

process of meditation led Nanak to recognise the true devotion to God. Later in his life, he preached to the world to turn its attention towards true devotion to God.¹⁰

Generally, the *Sakhi* literature asserts that in the process of devoting himself to God through meditation, Nanak ignored worldly concerns in the early years of his life.

This negligence of his worldly life made everyone in his immediate family very upset except, his sister, Nanaki. The *Bala* recension shows that Nanaki never got angry or upset at Nanak. More importantly, she always stood up for Nanak to other blood and affine kin. For example, when confronted by her husband about Nanak's intentions, Nanaki says:

... you do not know the truth yet. You know that I will take my brother's side. World's entire wealth is in Nanak's hand and it goes through Nanak's hand.¹¹

According to the *Janam Sakhi*, Nanaki played the role of a caretaker to Nanak before and after her marriage. This is particularly evident in one episode of the *Bala* recension. During a confrontation with her father Nanaki not only defended and protected Nanak, but also assured her independence by standing up to patriarchal authority. As an extension of her devotion to Nanak, Nanaki managed to move Nanak to her affinal residence from her natal residence after her marriage.¹² There, she and her husband, Jairam become the caretakers of Nanak along with his wife. Again, Nanaki assumed the role of caretaker when Nanak left for his journey to

⁹ In this thesis the experience of my blood and non-blood female kin that I referred to, live in Punjab, Agra, Delhi, England, United States of America and Canada.

¹⁰ Nirmal Hormise Raj, *Evolution of the Sikh Faith: The Historical Formation and Development of Sikhism under the Gurus* (New Delhi, Unity Book Service, 1987), p. 106.

¹¹ Kirpal Singh, ed., *Janam sakhi Parmora* (Patiala, Punjab University, 1969), p. 232.

preach to the world about the equality of human beings regardless of religion and caste by taking care his wife and children.¹³

This thesis argues that the above scenario, which briefly outlines the role of Nanaki, does not fit the typical Punjabi Sikh patriarchal society. Generally in Punjabi Sikh Society the descent line¹⁴ is carried through the male clan member and a married daughter is not considered to be the member of her natal clan¹⁵ and as a result no longer she participates in her natal family's affairs and decision-making. In the Punjabi Sikh patriarchal framework, a married daughter usually has only limited contact with her *pekke*, father's household. After marriage she is supposed to have more involvement in her affinal clan.¹⁶ As a result of the active role of Nanaki in Nanak's life, it would appear that Nanaki's role fits more easily into the matriarchal society model. In an ideally conceived matriarchal model, descent is carried through the female clan members rather than male and clan women make the decision regarding the clan and its members.

This research intends to show that the male and female members of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Sikh society had the opportunity for an equal role in the family framework by using Nanaki's character in the *Bala* recension as a model. Accordingly, the status of Punjabi Sikh women has deteriorated over the past

¹² Ibid., p. 232.

¹³ Ibid., p. 243.

¹⁴ Descent refers to a rule, which affiliates an individual at birth with a group of relatives. This group would provide certain rights and obligations. George Spinder, and Louise Spinder, ed., *Studies in Anthropological Method* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 75.

¹⁵ Natal clan generally refers to the clan into which one is born.

few centuries. Nikki Guninder Singh's statements in the introduction of her book, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*, about status of contemporary Punjabi women supports this argument:

... The Sikh household into which I was born was part of Punjabi society that brought together diverse traditions in which the status of women was as dubious as it was crucial. I saw them exalted, and I saw them downgraded.¹⁷

This appears to suggest that in the twentieth century Punjabi Sikh women do not have an opportunity to experience power and authority.

This analysis of the *Bala Janam Sakhi* text will show that Nanaki was strong, effective and assertive among her clan by using Nanaki's role as a daughter, wife and specifically as a sister in the *Bala* recension as a model.

I have organised the paper into four chapters. The first chapter of my thesis is the introduction. The second chapter will deal with the theoretical tools of kinship. In this chapter, I will look at the kinship theory in general and then I will define the kinship vocabulary terms, which are relevant to my work. In the third chapter, I will discuss three topics. The first topic will present the views of some scholars especially McLeod, Nikki G. Singh and Trilochan Singh regarding the credibility of *Sakhi* as historical sources. The second topic will be on the history of the *Janam Sakhi* recensions and the third topic will be an introduction to Nanak and his clan.

¹⁶ The term affinal clan usually refers to the group of people who are related to an individual through marriage ties.

¹⁷ Nikki-Guninder Kaur Singh, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 1.

In the final pages of the chapter, I will turn to north Indian kinship theory, especially Punjabi kinship and *Pandit* kinship models. These models will provide contemporary information about the Northeast Indian Kinship. *Pandit* kinship theory will be utilised since it fills a gap: since there has only ever been one major study of Punjabi Kinship done, I will be using information on the *Pandit* Kinship system in order to provide a full account of north Indian kinship. The *Pandit* kinship patterns are very close to Punjabi kinship patterns. Therefore, I feel it would be very helpful to use *Pandit* kinship theory to critique Paul Hershman's rendering of Punjabi Kinship.

In chapter four, I will support my argument by using material from *Bala Janam Sakhi* text. Using the theoretical framework and kinship models from chapter two, I will support the argument that Nanaki is shown to have better life than twentieth century Punjabi Sikh woman. The conclusion of my research will be in chapter four, where I will present the evidence that Nanaki was perceived at the equal level as Nanak in the Punjabi Sikh society of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Chapter 2

Kinship Theories

Social network can be described using kinship theories. Anthropologists have produced two main types of kinship theories. These are the descent and alliance theories. The descent theory ties kin according to their blood ties, and alliance theory ties them through marriage. Both concepts, descent and alliance, are and were important in Indian society. My analysis will address both theories in the *Bala* recension of the *Janam Sakhi*. The main focus will be on Nanaki and her perception of blood and alliance ties.

There are two types of descent groups: Unilineal and cognatic groups. In the unilineal system, an individual, the Ego,¹⁸ can trace his/her descent through one parent, i.e., mother or father, but not both. However, the Ego can relate himself/herself to the other through complimentary filiation.¹⁹ In a cognatic system, the Ego can trace his/her descent through both parents depending on the circumstances. Therefore, cognatic descent provides flexibility among groups in terms of contingency.²⁰ Fox states that “the cognatic lineage method is in all

¹⁸ The study of kinship includes the study of the relationships of any particular individual, male or female, in the society. That individual is conventionally titled ego or Ego. Robert Parkin, *Kinship: An Introduction to the Basic Concepts* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), p. 8.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

²⁰ Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), p. 153.

probability an independent type, but that could in some cases result from unilineal breakdown”.²¹

Unilineal descent further divides into patrilineal and matrilineal systems. In matrilineal descent, women continue to live in their natal homes and men move around. One well-documented case of this is the Nayar of Kerala.²² In patrilineal descent, men remain in their natal homes and women move to a new community. In a patriarchal society men have control over the family.²³ In contrast with this, in a matrilineal society women have more control over the family than the clan men. Most of the time the rule of exogamy, marrying outside one's own clan, is applied in both systems. In a patrilineal society, the residence of the Ego is patrilocal, living among husband's clan. Therefore, the effect of patrilocality on women is that their role is undervalued and sometime determined as fragments.²⁴ For example in Chinese patriarchal society women as sisters or daughters have no roles in the household.²⁵ Interestingly enough, some patrilineal societies, i.e., Tallensi society of Africa, do give importance to their clan women. They believe that being born as female is a

²¹ Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967) p. 153.

²² The Nayar of Malabar in Kerala in Southwest India were a warrior caste whose men were, when of military age, engaged as full time soldiers. Therefore due to their long absences, the young women of Nayar would go to the houses of Brahmins and often kept as concubines by the Brahmin men. This was considered a great privilege. The Nayar men would return to their homes after their military services are over. Under these conditions, stable marital relationships were difficult to maintain and the natal local residence pattern was the outcome. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁴ The term 'fragment' refers to the fact that Chinese woman as daughter and sister did not have any defined role. Their patriarchal society would use them for various tasks, when they were needed. Otherwise the Chinese illustrate with harsh clarity the point about the lineage not having any use for its 'non-reproductive' members, i.e., daughters and sisters. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

natural accident for which women should not be punished.²⁶ Therefore, women of Tallensi society enjoy certain rights over their natal clan. They are allowed to participate in ancestral worship and can claim the property of their natal clan.²⁷ Theoretically, this clan is considered to be patrilineal, however, it reflects a cognatic system where both sons and daughters are involved in various clan activities.

There are three types of cognatic descent. Unrestricted, restricted and pragmatically restricted cognatic descent.²⁸ In unrestricted cognatic descent, all descendants are members of the clan. In restricted cognatic descent, only those descendants who stay in the ancestral territory are considered to be the members of the clan.²⁹ Pragmatically restricted cognatic descent is basically the same as restricted descent, the only difference being that the chosen group is not permanent. Therefore, the Ego can move back and forth between clans.³⁰

As I have previously mentioned, alliance theory relates kin through marriage. Various types of systems exist to bring about alliance relationships. In simple terms, in the process of marriage different clans give and take women. The 'basic situation' for alliance theory is that the sister acts as the alliance between her brother and her husband. In this situation the control over a woman is transferred from brother to the men of another clan.³¹ Usually, the rule of exogamy is applied to this process and is considered to be a positive rule, which regulates relations between descent groups by

²⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

means of connubium – having to do with marriage.³² Sometimes in the alliance system, the systematic exchange of women is used, i.e., sister exchanges or daughter exchanges where two clans will give and take each other's sisters or daughters.

The second type of exchange is known as statistical exchange. In statistical exchange, there are only a few direct exchanges of women between the same groups over many generations; therefore, many of marriages would be with 'non-kin' or 'unrelated' individuals.³³ This direct exchange of women is also known as a symmetrical system.³⁴

The third system of exchange is known as an asymmetrical exchange of women. In this system, direct exchange is not possible, because the wife-givers cannot be the wife-takers.³⁵ Generally, asymmetrical exchange exists in patrilineal societies where women move in the same direction in each generation, unlike the symmetrical system.³⁶ Wife-takers are considered to be superior to wife-givers in the system.³⁷ This mentality about those who take wives is very deep rooted in the Indian society; yet, this is not very apparent in the *Bala* recension. I will explain this concept in more detail later in the text.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

³¹ Ibid., p. 236.

³² Ibid., p. 180.

³³ Ibid., p. 201.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 208.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 208.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 209.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 212.

In the work of Fortes, Evans-Pitchard and Goody, descent theory is shown to oppose the alliance theory. They tend to replace the concept of alliance with complementary filiation. Example in Fortes's work among Tallensi society is known as Africanist descent theory. In this theory, there is sense of togetherness in a descent group due to their common ancestors. This theory of descent is applicable to other societies such as New Guinea Highlands, Polynesia, India and other South Asian regions. Fortes also rejects the cognatic system. He does not accept the existence of two unilineal systems in one society, i.e., patrilineal and matrilineal. Fortes justified the 'other' system, i.e., cognatic system, by introducing the concept of complimentary filiation. However, Fortes and his colleagues objected that the complimentary filiation does not carry the descent line.³⁸

This descent concept can be applied to some societies, such as north Indian patriarchal societies. In these societies sons and daughter are tied to their descent through sharing a shared common ancestor. But the land and property goes to sons, as well as to daughters in various different forms, i.e., transfer of property from mother to daughter upon her marriage in the form of jewellery and clothing.³⁹

Parkin agrees with Fox regarding the theories of descent and alliance as different in terms of what they explain. The alliance theory presents society as a

³⁸ Robert Parkin, *Kinship: An Introduction to the Basic Concepts*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) p. 149.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

matter of relations which are established through marriage; whereas descent theory presents society as groups which authorise notions of substances, including rights and duties, being transmitted via descent groups down the generations.⁴⁰

After explaining and exploring the general concept of kinship the attention will be directed towards Indian society. As Irawati Karve explains, three patterns of kinship are found in India: the Northern, Southern and Austric kinship patterns. Specifically the concept of kinship will be looked at in the northern parts of India, in Kashmir and Punjab. My study focuses particularly on the northern kinship pattern because it is most relevant to my analysis of the kinship pattern in the *Bala* recension. It is important to look at the *Pandit* kinship system of Kashmir and Punjabi kinship, because it will help to understand the pattern of kinship in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Sikh community. It is a patriarchal system, which has many close associations with Punjabi kinship. As Patricia Uberoi suggests, kinship data from India's ancient communities may provide information for the reconstruction of a past history of human abilities in the region.⁴¹ Similarly the information about Nanaki's role in the *Bala* recension will serve us to paint an image of a Punjabi woman who exercised power and authority as a daughter, sister and wife in her natal and affinal clans.

⁴⁰ Robert Parkin, *Kinship: An Introduction to the Basic Concepts* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) pp. 149-150.

⁴¹ Patricia Uberoi, *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India, ed.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 3.

Northern India has been invaded many times over the centuries. As a result, there have been many diverse influences on the culture and society. My analysis will begin with the ancient Sanskrit people whose tradition paints a picture of a patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal family.⁴² Marriages were generally exogamic. All cousins were considered to be brothers and sisters, therefore, marriages took place among different clans.⁴³ The interesting characteristic of their kinship pattern is that there are primary words for certain blood relations and certain relations by marriage,⁴⁴ i.e., relation by blood; *pitr* means father and *matr* means mother and relation by marriage; *shvasura* means father-in-law and *shvashru* means mother-in-law. The patrilocality of residence was a major factor for the close knit relationship of agnatic males. A man belonged to his own paternal family, yet he gets support of his affinal family for his entire patrilineage.⁴⁵ The highest virtues for North Indian man were to be loyal to his patri-clan and respectful to his father.⁴⁶

In this society, young women were considered to be the means for establishing alliance relationships and ultimately they were the victims of the failed alliance relationships.⁴⁷ Traditionally, a woman rarely visited her natal house after her marriage.⁴⁸ For women, marriage was an uprooting and transplanting, a death and a rebirth.⁴⁹ She would be isolated from her own people and thrown among strangers,

⁴² Irawati Karve, *Kinship Organization in India* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965) p. 78.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

her husband's clan members. The loyalty to the husband's house and husband's clan and complete submission to the husband's will were some of the virtues which a woman followed.⁵⁰ A woman was needed as a wife for purposes of rituals; no wifeless man could ordinarily give offerings to God.⁵¹ A man's love for his wife was not considered a great virtue of a man, but good and courteous treatment of woman was a special mark of a good family.⁵²

In contemporary north India, the family remains patriarchal with a little bit of flexibility. Generally, women cannot inherit in most of the north Indian societies.⁵³ A woman after her marriage lives among her husband's clan and can visit her parents more frequently than in ancient India.⁵⁴ The parents of the young woman almost never visit their married daughter and eating at the daughter's house is a taboo.⁵⁵ In most of the contemporary north Indian societies, a woman has the right to be supported by her father before her marriage and by her husband's clan after her marriage, but she may not inherit. In her father's house a daughter has a primary role, which means that, she has more authority and power than her brother's wife does. However, after her brother's marriage, her status becomes secondary to that of her sister-in-law. An early Sanskrit grammarian, Panini, refers to a man's sister as a serpent and wife as a mongoose, reflecting natural hatred.⁵⁶ This enmity exists

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵² Ibid., p. 9.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

between Nanaki and her sister-in-law in the *Bala* tradition. To this point, we have seen how a man and woman was perceived in the kinship pattern in north India.

The pattern of Northern Indian kinship has not changed very much in comparison to ancient pattern, i.e., in the Pandit kinship system and Punjabi kinship systems. Most of features of ancient pattern of North Indian kinship still exist in the contemporary patterns. In the following sections we will look at these kinship systems in greater detail.

I. The Pandit Kinship System

The Pandits of Kashmir also known as *Sarawat* Brahmans have organized their clan members into *baradari* (caste).⁵⁷ They distinguish between those with whom they share descent and affinal ties and those who can potentially become their kin.⁵⁸ In *Pandit* kinship the male's focus is his household, *gara*. People who belong to same lineage as him are known as *sakula* and those who have come into the group are known as *amati*.⁵⁹ His mother, wife or wives of his agnates are known as *amati* because they have been recruited into the group through marriage.⁶⁰ Dumont states that a woman is considered as an affine by her husband's kin belonging to her own generation and considered as a consanguine by people of younger generations.⁶¹ Among the Pandits, a woman's individuality as wife predominates over her other

⁵⁷ T. N. Madan, *Family, Kinship and Marriage: The structural Implications of Wife-givers and Wife-takers among the Pandits of Kashmir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 289.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 289

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

individualities as a daughter, sister and even as mother.⁶² An unmarried woman agnate is always referred to as *amanti*, which means she is considered as someone's property, which is held in trust on behalf of her lawful proprietor.⁶³ Before marriage a woman refers to her natal household as *gara*, just as her brother does.⁶⁴ Then, after marriage she is transferred into her husband's household, known as her *variw*. After this she calls her *variw* her *gara*. She is stranger among kin of her affinal family. She does not establish her *variw* as her *gara* until she becomes a mother.⁶⁵ The social superiority of the character of wife stands out in the *Pandit* kinship system, i.e., a married woman's status is superior to her unmarried status. This superiority comes from the fact that she serves as a link between her natal and affinal clans, which are separated due to their descent.

There are specific terms for the Ego's kin who are related to him/her by marriage. For example, *ashnav* is the general term for the Ego's relatives by marriage, *matamal* - mother's natal family, *howur* - wife's natal family and *sonya* - child's spouse's natal family. Pandits hesitate to refer to *sonya* as their *ashnav*, whereas *matamal* and *howur* are considered to be their *ashnav*. The relationship between wife-givers and wife-takers, nonagnatic cognates, is known as *ashnavi*.⁶⁶

As we have seen previously, nonagnatic kinship is born from the ties of affinity. Therefore, the Ego's roles, obligations and privileges towards his/her affines

⁶² Ibid., p. 291.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 291.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 291.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 291.

are related to him/her through his wife/her husband and through his sister/her brother. The wife's brother takes up a very special place in the *Pandit* kinship system, especially if he is younger than the Ego.⁶⁷

In the *Pandit* kinship system, giving daughters above one's socio-economic standing is prestigious and expensive gifts will have to be given in marriage to bring social dignity and celebrity, *yash*, to the natal family.⁶⁸ The marriages are hypergamous. Thus the relationship between wife-givers and wife-takers is basically and unalterably asymmetric.⁶⁹

Pandit community is patriarchal and patrilocal. Descent is very significant in the context of the 'internal order' of kin groups and marriage in the context of interkin-group relations. One of the bases of *Pandit* kinship exists in the roots of relationship of wife-giver and wife-taker. This relationship is hierarchical, non-supplemental and is personified by the unidirectional flow of presents.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 294.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 295.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 302.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 302.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 306.

II. The Punjabi Kinship System

In Punjabi kinship the biological facts of progeny and copulation are said to create certain primitive ties between individuals, which are strong and unchangeable.⁷¹ Punjabi society is composed of many endogamous groups of intermarrying clans, exogamous units in which recruitment of their members is by means of patrilineal descent.⁷² Descent in Punjabi society is patrilineal and marriage patri-virilocal, a woman going to live in her husband's household and village at marriage.⁷³ The intra-village kinship ties are usually agnatic and those between village are affinal or uterine and effective ties of kinship between clansmen of different villages do not occur, other than for the restriction on intermarriage.⁷⁴

Each Punjabi has a special kinship relation with three groups of kin: his/her *dadke* - his/her agnatic kin group, his/her *nanke* - his uterine kin group and his/her *sauhre* - his/her affinal kin group.⁷⁵ A brother performs ritual presentations and acts for his sister, his sister's children and husband. The role of the mother's brother is specifically important in rituals performed at tonsure, marriage and engagement, on behalf of his sister's child.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Veena Das, "Family, Kinship and Marriage in India: Masks and Faces: an Eassy on Punjabi Kinship," in *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, ed. By Patricia Uberoi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p.198.

⁷² Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage*, ed. Hilary Standing (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981) p. 54.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

In Punjabi kinship, marriage is a contract between husband's clan and her wife's clan. There is no positive marriage rule, however there is a complex of negative marriage prohibitions. Ego cannot marry into his clan nor with any woman who has any of her four grand-parental clans in common with the Ego's grand-parental clans.⁷⁷ Ego cannot marry into a clan where any woman of his localised clan has been given in marriage. Therefore, there is no direct exchange of woman in Punjabi society. Direct exchange of woman is seen as inappropriate, i.e. *vatta satta* - exchange of materialistic things at the level of business. Wife-givers are seen to be inferior to wife-receivers. Moreover, if a brother gives his sister in marriage to her husband, he exposes himself to the possibility of "personal indignity".⁷⁸ Punjabis resolve this problem of having to give their sisters in marriage, but at the same time maintaining their honour by vouching the inferiority of the wife-giving role and by forming from this assumption a system of exogamy based on the principle of non-exchange.⁷⁹ The "fundamental contradiction" between the pairs of husband and wife brother and sister is the essential principle of Punjabi Sikh kinship ties.⁸⁰ Anxiety exists between brother and husband and sister and wife. There are many folk Punjabi songs regarding these two relationships. The brother and sister relationship is very important in Punjabi kinship. If the brother is younger than his sister, then he touches her feet, as well as her husband's. This is shown in *Bala* tradition, when Naniak touches Nanaki's and Jairam's feet. I will look at this scenario in more detail in next

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 191.

chapter. A brother is considered to have no honour in his sister's husband's household.⁸¹ It is common for a woman's father to visit his son-in-law's house but he avoids sleeping there.⁸²

A Punjabi woman does not establish her *suhari*, husband's household, as her own household until she becomes the mother of a son. It is only through producing a son that a woman acquires status among her husband's clan.⁸³ Therefore, the first born son is the real key to a woman's establishment in her husband's descent group. This is similar to the Pandit kinship system.

The *Bala Janam Sakhi* tradition kinship system has a great deal in common with both Pandit kinship system and Punjabi kinship system. We have explored the concept of kinship and looked at the two Northern Indian kinship patterns. Both of these theories will be applied to the *Bala* literature to examine the kinship relationships in the fourth chapter.

⁸⁰ Patricia Uberoi, ed., *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

Chapter 3

I. Credibility of *Janam Sakhi* Tradition as Historical Sources

Most information regarding the life of Guru Nanak is derived from *Janam Sakhi* tradition. The *Janam Sakhi* tradition contains the life stories of Guru Nanak written by the Sikh *sangat* (community) of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸⁴ The literal meaning of the term *Janam Sakhi* is “birth evidence”.⁸⁵ *Janam Sakhi* tradition is very important for the popular religion.⁸⁶ Hans categorises the *Janam Sakhi* traditions as the “Little Tradition”⁸⁷ rather than “Greater Tradition”.⁸⁸ Hans claims that since the *Janam Sakhi* tradition is part of the Little Tradition, it empowers Sikhs to grip the *Janam Sakhi* recension’s functional differential in the socially structured framework of Sikhism. Furthermore, it also instructs us to differentiate the “orthodox” *Janam Sakhis* from the “unorthodox” or “heterodox” *Janam Sakhis* which began to come into view before the middle of the seventeenth century and carried

⁸⁴ W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-Sakhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 12.

⁸⁵ W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism And Its Indian Context: 1469 – 1708* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1984), p. 96.

⁸⁶ In this thesis, popular tradition refers to the tradition that is practised by the devoted followers of a saint and religious leader with any questions. Education does not play in any part in practising or not practicing popular traditions. For example the educated and non-educated members of the Punjabi Sikh community practise *Janam Sakhi* tradition. Scholars such Tarlochan Singh believes the *Bala* recension of *Janam Sakhi*’s stories about Guru Nanak’s Journeys actually took place.

⁸⁷ Surjit Hans states that “recently a distinction has been made between the Great Tradition of the reflective few and the Little Tradition of the largely unreflective many”. Otherwise, it means that Great Tradition is limited in reflecting its representation, but Little Tradition has not limits in term of reflecting its representation. Hans states that the writings of the bhatts and Bhai Gurdas can be considered as Great Tradition and the *Janam Sakhis* can be considered as Little Tradition. Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1988), pp. 178-179.

through into the period of Sikh rule in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁸⁹

Many Sikh scholars such as Dr. Trilochan Singh consider the *Janam Sakhi* tradition to be biographies of Nanak. However, some Sikh and non-Sikh scholars, for example, Dr. Nikki-Guninder Singh and Dr. McLeod, consider them to be hagiographies of Guru Nanak rather than biographies. Nikki-Guninder Singh and McLeod do not consider the *Sakhi* tradition to be the biographies of Nanak because first set of *Janam Sakhi* text was put into a written form roughly hundred years after Nanak's death.⁹⁰ This gap between the death of Guru Nanak and the first known recording of *Janam Sakhi* material does not mean that it is totally unrelated to the life of Guru Nanak, but suggests that it may not be completely accurate.⁹¹ The *Janam Sakhi* tradition is based on oral traditions. These oral traditions might have started during the lifetime of Guru Nanak and they may have been changed over time as they were passed from one person to another. This process of change in oral tradition can be seen in Punjab today.⁹² For example, even now many stories about Sant Jarnail Singh Bhadarawala⁹³ are being circulated in contemporary Punjabi Sikh circles.

⁸⁸ Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1988), p. 179.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁹⁰ W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of The Sikh Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 22.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹³ Sant Jarnail Singh Bhadarawala was the leader of a group of orthodox Sikhs. He was very upset the way the federal government of India treated people of Punjab, especially, Punjabi Sikh. Therefore, he started a movement against the federal government in late 70's. Most of the Sikhs were in favour of his movement. In June, 1984, his group and the Indian army had confrontation in the complex of Golden Temple and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhandarawala was killed in the confrontation. Now fourteen

Janam Sakhis are considered to be the 'traditional' biographies of Nanak by the Sikh *sangat*.⁹⁴ The *Janam Sakhis* can be considered as 'sacred' biographies⁹⁵ of Guru Nanak. Most of the Sikh *sangat* considered them as 'authentic' (devotional) biographies of Guru Nanak. Regardless how the Sikh *sangat* views the *Janam Sakhi* tradition, it is important for historians as historical records of the development of Sikh community during sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The debate over the credibility of the tradition of recollection as biographical sources has created some controversy among Sikh and non-Sikh scholars in the present time, i.e., McLeod vs. Tara Singh. In this paper the *Bala* recension of the *Janam Sakhi* literature will be treated as though it is a historically accurate source of social history for the seventeenth and eighteenth century Punjabi Sikh society. However I am not concerned with the *Janam Sakhi* literature as accurate biographical sources of Guru Nanak. Since I am using the *Sakhis* as a framework to explore kin relationships in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *Sakhis*, as biographical sources do not have relevance to my work. Yet, it is important to understand the status of *Janam Sakhi* literature in the academic world and how do Sikhs and non-Sikhs scholars perceive the *Janam Sakhi* literature. Information about the status of

years later, there are many miraculous stories are floating around in circles of Sikh in Punjabi and outside of Punjab.

⁹⁴ The term *sangat* refers to the Sikh community. This term usually refers to the crowd of Sikh in religious occasions. Rupert Snell, "Introduction: Themes in Indian Hagiography", in *According to Tradition: Hagiographical writing in India*, ed. by Winand M. Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995), p. 18.

⁹⁵ 'sacred' biographies refer to those accounts written by followers or devotees of a founder or religious savior. These documents recount the process through which a new religious ideal is established and participated in that process. Frank E. Reynolds, *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1976), p. 3.

Sakhi tradition in academia will give us a foundation on which we can clearly analyse the *Bala* tradition.

Regarding the credibility of the *Janam Sakhi* tradition as biographies of Nanak, I will be looking at the three schools of thought. The first school of thought is W. H. McLeod's who views the *Janam Sakhis* as hagiographic works rather than biographic works. McLeod has most persuasively argued this position.⁹⁶ Nikki-Guninder Singh proposes that the *Janam Sakhis* are clearly myths, puts the second school of thought forth. But she claims that accepting *Janam Sakhi* as myth does not mean that she is in any way minimising their importance for Sikh tradition.⁹⁷ (Singh, Nikki-Guninder, 351) Moreover, she states:

Myths enshrined in the *Janam Sakhi* open up our understanding of Sikh religion and lead to a disclosure of its essential elements. To deploy them for fact-finding and biographical details is to miss the evocative and meta-historical import of the *Janam Sakhi* form, because myth and stories are the animating forces that give direction to our lives.⁹⁸

Nikki Singh agrees with McLeod's statement that "*Janam Sakhis* are important examples of hagiographic growth-processes, as sources of Punjab history for post-Nanak period within which they developed, as a cohesive factor in subsequent Sikh history, and as the earliest works of Punjabi prose".⁹⁹

⁹⁶ W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sakhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 2.

⁹⁷ Nikki-Guninder Singh Singh, "Myth of the Founder: The Janamsakhi and Sikh Tradition," *History of Religion: An international Journal for Comparative Studies*, Vol. 32 Number 4, (May 1992) p. 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

Trilochan Singh, a well-known Sikh scholar, represents the third school of thought concerning the credibility of the *Janam Sakhis* as biographical sources. Singh agrees with McLeod's statement that the *Janam Sakhi* is hagiographic rather than biographic, but he denounces McLeod for giving a misleading impression of the historical importance of hagiographic narratives.¹⁰⁰ Trilochan Singh states that McLeod has manipulated the Sikh scriptures by giving a dubious perception of the *Janam Sakhi* literature. Singh claims that places visited by Nanak in *Janam Sakhi* still exist and people whose ancestors interacted with Nanak still live in these places, i.e., meeting of Nanak and Kaliyuga¹⁰¹ in Puri and the descendants of styuga are still living in Puri.¹⁰² McLeod states that stories of visits to different places by Nanak in the later *Sakhi* tradition, i.e., *Bala* recension, are the imaginings of the devoted Sikh *sangat*. Trilochan Singh criticises McLeod's findings extensively, along with Ernest Trumpp as scholars of Sikh History religion and culture. This can be an unrelenting debate between a moderate Sikh scholars and orthodox Sikh scholars. The use of *Janam Sakhi* literature as the historical source of the Sikh *sangat* is more important than their use as biographical sources of Guru Nanak for this thesis.

Even though the *Janam Sakhi* literature is not considered credible as biographical sources, they are very useful and valuable as historical records of the development of Sikhism over the centuries as McLeod and Nikki-Gunider Singh mention. The value of *Janam Sakhi* literature as historical sources comes from the

¹⁰⁰ Trilochan Singh, *Ernest Trumpp and W. H. McLeod as scholars of Sikh History, Religion and Culture* (Chandigarh: International Centre of Sikh Studies, 1994), p. 263.

¹⁰¹ Kaliyuga and Styuga are the names of the persons who had meeting with Guru Nanak in Puri.

knowledge, which they provide regarding the development of beliefs of the later *Panth* (another name for Sikh community).

II. History of the *Janam Sakhi* Texts

There are close to one hundred *Janam Sakhi* manuscripts currently available, but scholars generally study four bodies of *Janam Sakhis*. These four versions of *Janam Sakhi* are: *Puratan Janam Sakhi* recension, *Miharban Janam Sakhi* recension, *Bhai Mani Singh Janam Sakhi* recension, and *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension. Any new discovery of *Janam Sakhi* manuscript is put under the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* recension. All versions of *Janam Sakhi* traditions are written in the Gurmukhi script, but the language varies from Punjabi to a composite North Indian dialect known as *Sadhukhari* or *Sant Bhasha*.¹⁰³ Arabic versions of *Janam Sakhi* literature do exist, but they are very rare.¹⁰⁴ McLeod states that three principal varieties of linguistic variances are to be found in the *Sakhi* literature. The first difference has a range of dialects extending from the Majhi of central tract (the Bari Doab) to the Pothohari of Rawalpindi District.¹⁰⁵ The second variety exists within the narrative traditions which is a gradual change from the primitive Punjabi prose of the earliest manuscripts to the more refined language of latest letterpress editions. This principal variety gives us information about period during which a particular *Sakhi* manuscript was

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 265.

¹⁰³ W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism And Its Indian Context – 1469-1708* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1984), pp. 96-97.

¹⁰⁴ W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sakhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sakhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 13.

written.¹⁰⁶ Thirdly, there is noticeable distinction between the same unrefined Punjabi of the earliest manuscripts and the polished language of that variety of later *Janam Sakhi*, which emphasise exegesis rather than narrative.¹⁰⁷ *Janam Sakhi* literature was written some time between late sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Many copyists have recorded the date on which they completed their work and if one includes the present addition into the count, then the dates run from middle of sixteenth century to the present day.¹⁰⁸ These dates refer to the actual copying of extant manuscripts rather than their compiling of the manuscripts.

The following section will explain the history of four bodies of *Janam Sakhi* traditions in detail. The detailed information about the *Sakhi* tradition will give us a clear picture of the material that will be dealt with in the fourth chapter.

1. Puratan Janam Sakhi Recension

The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* recension consists of two main manuscripts: the *Hafizabad* and *Colebrooke* manuscripts. The *Colebrooke* manuscript is named after a famous indologist and scholar, who donated this manuscript to the East India House Library in 1815 or 1816.¹⁰⁹ Bhai Gurmukh Singh of the Oriental Collage, Lahore, discovered the *Hafizabad Janam Sakhi* in the town of Hafizabad in 1884. Macauliffe published the *Hafizabad Janam Sakhi* in 1885. In 1926, Bhai Vir Singh, a Sikh

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism And Its Indian Context – 1469-1708* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1984), pp. 165-166.

scholar of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a composite version of the both Hafizabad and Colebrooke manuscripts under the name of *Puratan Janam Sakhis*.¹¹⁰ The English location of *Puratan Janam Sakhi* text had led to its being referred to by many Sikh as the “*Valaitvali*”¹¹¹ *Janam Sakhi*.¹¹² A number of other ancient *Janam Sakhi* texts have been found since the discovery of Hafizabad and Colebrooke manuscripts. They seem to have been written around the same time as Hafizabad and Colebrooke manuscripts. These other texts together are known as the B40 *Janam Sakhi*. They were put together as a text in 1907.¹¹³ Having translated them into English, W.H. McLeod places B40 *Janam Sakhi* along side of the *Puratan* category. He views *Puratan Janam Sakhi* as a text representing a more primitive and oldest collection of extant manuscripts because of its elementary and undeveloped form.¹¹⁴ However, McLeod states that it is misleading to say that *Puratan Janam Sakhi* is the original *Janam Sakhi*.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

¹¹¹ The term *Valaitvali* refers to the Punjabi name of England. In the rural India people refers to England as *Valait*.

¹¹² W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism And Its Indian Context – 1469-1708* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1984), p. 166.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 167.

¹¹⁴ W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sakhi*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, p. 22.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

2. *Miharban Janam Sakhi* Recension

The *Miharban Janam Sakhi* recension is an incomplete text, which was discovered in 1940 at Damdam Sahib, Punjab and is now in the possession of Khalsa College, Amritsar. In 1963, Khalsa College obtained another slightly different version of *Miharban Janam Sakhi*.¹¹⁶ The second version of *Miharban Janam Sakhi* is treated with great caution and much distrust by Sikhs because of its author, Sodhi Miharban. Sodhi Miharban was associated with the Minas, a group of schismatic who were followers of Prithi Chand, the elder son of Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Guru. Prithi Chand was passed over by his father as Guru in the favour of his younger brother, Guru Arjun.¹¹⁷ Minas are perceived as dissemblers by most of the Sikhs because they are suspected of having circulated spurious works bearing the name of Nanak in order to lure the *Panth* from their loyalty to the legitimate succession.¹¹⁸ In 1640, Miharban died and the final completion of this *Sakhi* is said to be approximately around 1650.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ W. Owen Cole *Sikhism And Its Indian Context – 1469-1708* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1984), pp. 167-168.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹¹⁸ W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sakhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 60.

¹¹⁹ W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism And Its Indian Context – 1469-1708* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1984), p. 168.

3. Bhai Mani Singh Janam Sakhi Recension

According to Colebrooke, Bhai Mani Singh, one of the most famous followers of Guru Gobind Singh, composed the Bhai Mani Singh *Janam Sakhi* tradition or *Gyan Ratanavali*. He composed the 'Gyan Ratanavali' upon the request of some Sikhs, to counter the Minas misinterpretation regarding the compilation of *Adi Granth* and of the *Vars of Bhai Gurdas* by Guru Arjun Dev.¹²⁰ Initially, Bhai Mani Singh referred these Sikhs to the *Vars of Bhai Gurdas*, but they were dissatisfied. Therefore, Bhai Mani Singh agreed to compile the *Sakhi* and in his prologue he wrote:

Just as swimmers fix reeds in the river so that those who do not know the easy may also cross, so I shall take Bhai Gurdas's Var as my Basis and in accordance with it, and with the accounts which I have heard at the court of the tenth master, I shall relate to you whatever commentary issued from my humble mind.¹²¹

The epilogue contains a claim that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, approved the completed version personally. Colebrooke claims that the extant version of this *Sakhi* is not that of Bhai Mani Singh. In 1885, when Macauliffe published *Hafizabad Janam Sakhi* manuscript, Gurmukh Singh stated in the introduction of Macauliffe's edition that "this *Janam Sakhi* is popularly attributed to Bhai Mani Singh, although someone else wrote it because its language is modern".¹²²

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 168.

4. Bhai Bala Janam Sakhi Recension

The *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension endured as the most accepted recension of all until 1872. There were two reasons for this status of *Bala* recension. First, it was the only early source available to the *sangat*. Secondly, it was attributed to Bhai Bala, a companion of Guru Nanak and it was claimed that Bhai Bala dictated the *Bala Janam Sakhi* text in the presence of Guru Angad Dev, second Sikh Guru.¹²³ As a result the Panth considered this version the more legitimate text than other versions. The Sikh community accepted this claim and regarded the work as ‘authentic’ or devotional.¹²⁴ The Sikh *Panth* follows the *Bala* recension very closely and literally.¹²⁵ Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that *Panth* continue to celebrate the birthday of Nanak in November rather than April, because *Bala* tradition claims that Nanak was born in November.

The origin of *Bala* recension is explained using three theories. According to first theory, when Bhai Bala learned that Guru Angad was to succeed his Master, Guru Nanak, Bhai Bala came to pay his respect to Guru Angad Dev.¹²⁶ Upon the request of Guru Angad Dev, Bhai Bala agreed to go to Talvandi, Guru Nanak’s, natal village, to search for the *Janam-patri* (horoscope), which had been recorded on Nanak’s birth. When the *Janam-patri* was brought back to Guru Angand, it was

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹²⁶ W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sakhi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 16.

discovered that *Janam-patri* was in *Sastri* (Nagari) characters.¹²⁷ Fortunately, a Sikh named, Paira Mokha, who lived in Sultanpur, was familiar with *Sastri* and Gurmukhi. Therefore, Mokha was called to transcribe the *Janam-patri* of Guru Nanak.¹²⁸ Somehow this process of transcription rather turned into a lengthy dictation by Bhai Bala. The *Janam-patri* incident is apparently a fabricated occasion intended to constitute an imprint of authenticity, but the awkwardness of the transformation from horoscope to narrative has obviously not satisfied this intention.¹²⁹ Regardless of numerous discrepancies in the *Bala* tradition, such as a high incidence of imagination in his travel stories and a generally incoherent travel narrative, it has continuously maintained its supremacy in the Sikh community.¹³⁰

The second theory claims that the entire *Bala* recension is the work of the Hindalis. It was composed of as a medium for their polemic against the supporters of Guru Angad Dev.¹³¹ The earlier manuscripts of the *Bala* recension includes many denigratory references, which could not have been written by a loyal devotee and never would have been tolerated by the Guru's heirs.¹³² McLeod states these references are the work of the Hindalis, a heretic group, which seemingly considered itself as Sikh but which embraced the leadership of a competitive claimant in opposition to the claims of Guru Hargobind.¹³³ The competitor was Bidhi Chand, son of Baba Hindal of Jandiala. Bidhi Chand promoted his claim in the name of Baba

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Hindal's group, which later took the name of Hindali.¹³⁴ McLeod claims that there are many episodes, which seek to exalt Baba Handal within the extant *Janam Sakhis* of the *Bala* recension. For example, there is a belief that the succession of Kabir's guruship was taken over by Nanak and then by Handal.¹³⁵

The early nineteenth-century hagiographer Santokh Singh popularized the first theory about the origin of *Bala* recension. Santokh Singh was successful in appeasing the recension's occasional Hindali disclosures with its indisputable claims to originality.¹³⁶ Later, Santokh Singh used the *Bala* version as the foundation of his work called *Nanak Prakas*.¹³⁷

Another theory was driven from the information in the light of first and second theories. Karam Singh insisted that the earliest extant versions represent an original Hindali composition, not an earlier recension corrupted by them. Karam Singh's claim is supported by the fact that earliest versions must be interjections.¹³⁸ It has been established that the second and third theories could be correct. If the Hindalis were not really accountable for the first *Bala* recension, then they must have appointed it almost instantaneously after it emerged.¹³⁹ The above information

¹³² Ibid., p. 17.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 17.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

The verse presents the legitimacy of Baba Handal to the guruship.

Age hua ab bhi hoi, ik kambira nanak doi

Tija hor handal jateta, janko ap niranjan bheta

Aisi kirapa kari kambir to dujai nanak bandhi dhir

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 19.

establishes that there is not a single *Bala* recension in existence, but there are many different *Bala* recensions that can be found.

Surjit Hans called the *Bala* recension a “heterodox” version. Hans states that “instead of the wonderful exploits of Guru Nanak his personality is compromised in the *Bala Janamsakhi*”.¹⁴⁰ In the *Bala* recension, the institutions of guruship and sangat are attacked.¹⁴¹ Hans claims that to absorb the true sense of the *Bala* recension, it is important to analyze the kin who are close to Guru Nanak. They are presented in an “uncomplimentary light”.¹⁴² For example, his father, Mahata Kalu, is shown to be “a cruel, greedy and ill spoken man; he blames Mardana for spoiling Nanak”.¹⁴³ The image of Guru Nanak is “hopelessly blemished” in the *Bala* recension.¹⁴⁴ Nanak is shown to be “pale and weak due to hunger”.¹⁴⁵ Guru Nanak cannot refuse anything to Bebe Nanaki because she has the upper hand on time, because she is taking care of Nanak.¹⁴⁶ Hans states that the *Bala* recension manages to keep Guru Nanak’s spirituality in a undemonstrative manner by making him keep a low figure in the narrative of ‘wonderful exploits’.¹⁴⁷ The doctrinal merit of the *Bala* recension is entirely negative:

¹⁴⁰ Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1988), p. 204.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

God is glorious. So is Guru Nanak. But this glory is shared with him by Bebe Nanaki, his sister. It falls further on Jai Ram, Nanaki's husband. Thus there is a kind of spiritual conductivity carried through family relationships.¹⁴⁸

The above quotation supports the argument of this thesis that Nanaki was a powerful and authoritarian personality. She was able to achieve a high status in her clan and this status enabled her to share the glory of God with Nanak.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 205.

III. Introduction to Guru Nanak And His Clan

Before proceeding to the next chapter, it is important to acquire knowledge of Nanak and his close kin. This knowledge will help us to follow the analysis of the *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension in the later chapters.

Nanak's Birth and Clan

According to popular tradition Nanak was born on April 15, 1469 in the village of Talvandi in the home of Mahata Kalu and Mata Tripta. As it is written in the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* that he was born on the thirteenth bright night, during the hour before dawn especially recommended for devotion.¹⁴⁹

Guru Nanak was from the caste of Khatri and his family name was Bedi. As it is stated in the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* Kalu Khatri lived in Rai Bhoi Bhatti.¹⁵⁰

Nanak's Paternal and Maternal Grandparents

During the research for this thesis, no information was found regarding Nanak's paternal grandparents. However, the names of his maternal grandparents

¹⁴⁹ ਸੰਮਤ ੧੫੨੬ ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਨਮਿਆ, ਵੈਸਾਖ ਮਾਹਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਤੀਆ, ਚਾਨਣੀ ਰਾਤਿ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲਾ, ਪਹਰ ਰਾਤ ਰਹੰਦੀ ਕੁ ਜਨਮਿਆ।¹⁴⁹

Transliteration: Samat 1526 bābā Nānak janameā, vīsākh māhe tretiā, chānni rāte, āmrīt vilā, pahar rāt rāhandhī ku janameā.

Translation: Baba Nanak was born on Samvat 1526 in the month of Visakh on the 13th of a bright night, during the time of nectar (the hour before dawn especially recommended for devotion), in the final hour of the night. Kirpal Singh, *Janam Sakhi Parmpara: From Historical Point of View* (Patiala: Patiala University Press, 1969), p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ ਤਬ ਕਾਲੁ ਖੱਤ੍ਰੀ ਜਾਤ ਵੇਦੀ ਤਲਵੰਡੀ ਰਾਇ ਸਨ ਭੋਇ ਭੱਟੀ ਕੀ ਵਸਦੀ ਵਿਰ ਵਸਦਾ ਆਹਾ, ਉਥੇ ਜਨਮੁ ਪਾਇਆ।

Transliteration: Tab kālu khatri jāt Talwindi rāi son. Bhoie bhatti ka vasadhī, thī janamu pāyā

Translation: Then Kalu whose caste was Khatri, Bedi lived in Rai Bhoi Bhatti, he obtained birth there (Nanak was in the house Kalu Khatri). Ibid., p. 3.

were found. His mother Mata Tripata was born to Rama Jegaru (ਰਾਮਾ ਝਿੰਗੜ) and Mata Bharee (ਭਰਾਈ). Mata Tripata had one brother named Ram Kisna. The names of Nanak's maternal grandparents mentioned in the *Sakhi*, which described the scenario of his mother sending the news of Nanak's marriage to her natal clan.¹⁵¹

Nanak's Paternal Uncle

As it has been mentioned before, there is virtually no information regarding Nanak's paternal grandparent. However, some of the information about Nanak's parental kin is given in the *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension. It states that Nanak's father had a brother name Lallu.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ ... ਬੀਬੀ ਮਾਝੇ ਪੇਕਿਆ ਨੂੰ ਖਬਰਿ ਕੀਤੀ। ਝਿੰਗੜ ਬੀਬੀ ਦਾ ਪਿਉ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਭਰਾਈ ਮਾਉ ਸੀ ਬੀਬੀ ਉੱਨਾ ਨੂ ਵਧਾਈ ਦਿਵਾ ਭੇਜੀ। ਅਤੇ ਸਾਦਿ ਭੇਜੇ। ... ਅਤੇ ਕਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਤੁਏ ਸੁਣਦਿਆ ਹੀ ਖੁਸੀ ਹੋਏ।

Transliteration: ... Bebei mājhi pakea nu khabari kete. Jhigarū bebe dā peō see āti Bharai māō see. Bebe ōnā nu badhāei devā bhijee. āti sādai bhiji. ... āti kesana māta trīei sunadeā he khuse hoei.

Translation: ... Mata (Tripta) sent the news (of Nanak's engagement) to her father's home. Mata's father's name was Jegaru and mother's name was Bharee; she sends congratulations to them. ... And (her brother) Kisna and her (I assume that Mata Triee is Kinsa's wife) Mata Tripta became very happy having heard the news of Nanak's wedding. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁵² ... ਲਾਲੂ ਆਖਿਆ, ਪੁਤ੍ਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇਰਾ ਚਾਚਾ ਹਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਤਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਅਤੇ ਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਫਰਕ ਵਰਿਆ ਦਾ ਬੋਤਾ ਹੀ ਹੈ।

Transliteration: ... Lāl ākhiā, putra Nānal tirā chāchā hā, āti t veche āti mī veche pharaka vareā da thurā he hi.

Translation: ... Lallu said, son Nanak, (I am) your uncle and between you and me there is not much age difference. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

It is quite interesting that the writer of the *Bala* recension did not consider information about Nanak's paternal clan very important, however, he gave lots of information about Nanak's maternal clan.

Nanak's Sister and Her Husband

As mentioned previously, Nanak had an older sister whose name was Nanaki. It seems that there was not much age difference between her and Nanak. Nanaki is shown to have played the role of Nanak's caretaker in the *Bala* recension. It is stated that at the time of Nanaki's marriage Nanak was eighteen years old.¹⁵³

Nanak's In-laws And Wife

Even though Nanak did not take much interest in worldly matters, his parents arranged his marriage to Mata Sulakhani. Sulakhani's father's name was Mula Chuna and her mother's name was Mata Chandu Rani.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ ਜਾਂ ਨਾਨਕ ਵਰਿਆ ਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਚੇਤੁ ਵੈਸਾਖ ਦੇ ਦਿਨ ਆਹੇ। ਕਛ ਦੇ ਦਿਨ ਆਹੇ ਕਛ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਜੈ ਰਾਮੁ ਪਲਤਾ ਆਇਆ ਸੀ ਅਮਲੁ ਕਰਣਿ ਅਗੇ ਨਾਨਕੀ ਕਾਲੁ ਦੀ ਧੀ ਖੁਹ ਉੱਤੇ ਪਾਣੀ ਭਰਣਿ ਆਈ। ... ਜੈ ਰਾਮ ਅਤੇ ਨਾਨਕੀ ਦੀ ਕੁੜਮਾਈ ਹੋਈ।

Transliteration: Jā Nānak variā dā hoiā chetu vasākh di dena āhi. kaḥa di dena āhi, kaḥa vāsti Jai Ramu palatā āeiā see. amalu karane agi Nānaki Kālu de dheeh khuha uati pāri bharane āei. ... Jai Ramu ati Nānaki de kuramaei hoei.

Translation: When Nanak turned 18, during the days of *Chet Visakh*. Days of *Kacch* came. Jai Ram came to *Palta* to exercise (his) authority in *Kacch*. Later, Kalu's daughter, Nanaki came to the well to fill up water. ... Jai Ram and Nanaki got engaged. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹⁵⁴ ਸਮਤ ੧੫੪੪ ਮਿਤੀ ਮੱਘਰ ਸੁਦੀ ਪੰਚਮੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਕੁੜਮਾਈ ਮੂਲੇ ਚੇਟੇ ਦੇ ਘਰਿ ਹੋਈ। ਅਤੇ ਚੰਦੋ ਰਾਣੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਸਸੁ ਦਾ ਨਾਉ ਆਹਾ।

Transliteration: Samat 1544 meti maghar sudi pachami Nānak ji de kurāmāei Mu li chuṇi di ghare hoei. ... ati chandu raṇi Nānak ji de sasu dā nā āha.

Nanak's Children

Guru Nanak had two sons, named Shri Chand and Lakhmi Chand with Bebe Sulakhani. As it is stated in the Puratan Janam Sakhi recension that Mata Sulakhani was pregnant with Lakhmi chand when Shri chand was four and half years old.¹⁵⁵

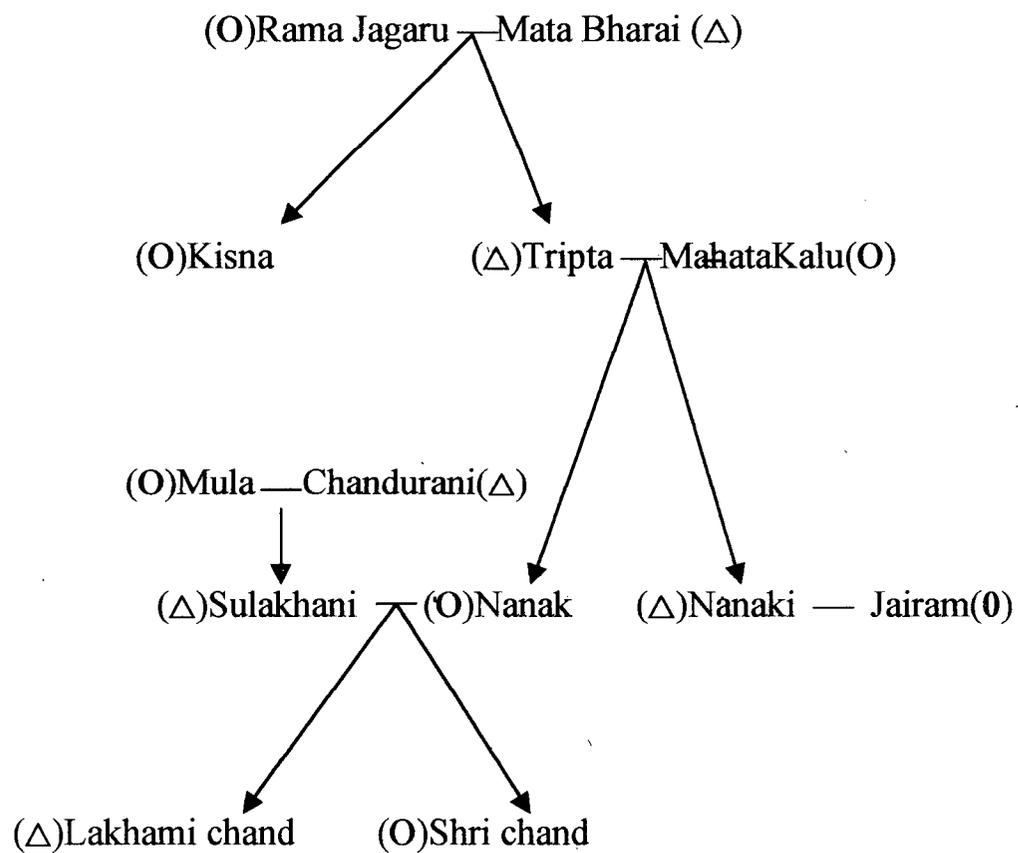
The following figure will show Guru Nanak's immediate family. Some of these relatives were shown to be very close to Nanak in the *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension.

Translation: Nanak's engagement was arranged in the home of Mula Chunna in Samvat 1544 in the month of *Magar* on *Sudhi Panchami*. ... And Chandurani is the name of Nanak ji's mother-in-law. Two sons were born to Nanak and Mata Sulakhani. Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁵⁵ ... ਵਰਿਆ ਬਤੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਇਆ ਸੀ। ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇ ਘਰਿ ਇਕੁ ਪੁਤ੍ਰੁ ਹੋਇਆ ਸੀ। ਸਿਰੀ ਚੰਦੁ ਵਰਿਆ ਸਾਢਿਆਂ ਚਰੁ ਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਲਖਮੀ ਦਾਸ ਖੇਟ ਸੀ।

Transliteration: ... varia batia da Nanak hoeia see. Nanak di ghari eka putra hoei see. Shri chand varia sada chuha da ati Lakhmi Das piata see.

Translation: ... Nanak turned 32. In Nanak's house, a son was born. Shri Chand (his older son) was four and half and Lakhmi Chand was in Sulakhani's womb (his wife was pregnant with his younger son, Lakhmi Chand). Ibid., p. 240.

Figure I**THE FAMILY TREE**

Δ-This symbol refers to a female.

O- This symbol refers to a male.

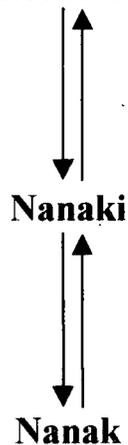
Horizontal lines refer to affinal relationships.

Vertical lines refer to blood relationships.

The above information shows the family tree of Guru Nanak. In chapter four we will see how all the kin communicate with Nanak through his sister, Nanaki. Nanaki is a medium through which everyone communicates with Nanak and also Nanak communicates with everyone through Nanaki. For example, when Nanak and his wife, Sulakhani were having intimacy problems, then Sulakhani's mother Chandurani went through Nanaki to resolve this problem. Chandurani did not talk to Nanak's mother or any other Nanak's clan woman. The following will show the dynamic of this relationship:

Figure II

Blood-related and affine kin



This relationship will be explored in detail in the fourth chapter. Bebe Nanaki drove the mechanism behind the process of communication between Nanak and his kin.

Chapter 4

Kinship in the *Bala Janam Sakhi* Recension

As mentioned in the previous chapters, kinship theories can be applied to a society to describe its framework. Analysis of the patriarchal world of Nanaki in the *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension is accomplished using these theories. Nanaki's world consists of both blood related and alliance related kin. This chapter will be investigating the relationships between Nanaki and her kin, i.e., her father, brother, husband, brother's wife and children and her brother's father-in-law and mother-in-law. Nanaki exercised her power and authority on her male and female kin equally. The focus of my thesis will be to reveal that Nanaki as a powerful and authoritarian Punjabi Sikh woman.

In a patriarchal society, women are not considered to hold a significant place, as a result, they are considered to be temporary members of the patrilineal clan.¹⁵⁶ Similar situation occurs in Punjabi and *Pandit* kinship systems. The motto of a patrilineage clan will be to gain control over the wives, while in a matrilineal clan, it is clinging onto the sister because sisters produce the descendents for the clan.¹⁵⁷ However, it seems as if Nanak remains attached to his sister even after her marriage and while she lives in patrilineal group.

¹⁵⁶ Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Lit, 1967), p. 120.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

This effective, assertive portrait of Nanaki goes the limitation of patrilineal system. Theoretically, Nanaki's society is patrilineal, where men are recruited into descent groups by the means of patrilineal descent and women by the means of both patrilineal descent and marriage.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, a man stays with his father's descent group throughout his life and a woman normally leaves her father's descent and joins her husband's descent group.¹⁵⁹ Once she makes this transition from her father's descent group to her husband's descent group, she is completely integrated into her husband's clan. However, Nanaki does not completely harmonise into her affinal family, and she is still pre-empted by her *pekke*'s or father's household, responsibilities.

The character of Nanaki in the *Bala* recension violates most of the rules of patriarchal society in terms of her role as a female member. Perhaps Nanaki does make the transfer of her residence from her natal group to her alliance group, but she stays very much involved and attached to her natal group. This type of female portrait in Punjabi and *Pandit* patriarchal societies is exceptional. In *Pandit* kinship pattern, daughter or sister is transferred into her *variw* and now she calls her *variw* her *gara*.¹⁶⁰ In the Punjabi kinship pattern, the same process occurs as *Pandit* kinship pattern, but Punjabis refer to husband's household as *suhari* and father's household as *pekke*.

¹⁵⁸ Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981), p. 154.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁶⁰ T. N. Madan, *Family, Kinship and Marriage*. ed. by Irawati Karve (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 291.

Nanaki's involvement in her natal group after her marriage is opposite to other patriarchal systems, i.e., *Pandit* kinship and Chinese kinship.¹⁶¹ In *Pandit* kinship, once an *amanti* or maiden is married and transferred into her husband's household, *variw* becomes her *gara*.¹⁶² In the Chinese patriarchal system women are completely isolated from their natal group after their marriage.¹⁶³ However, Nanaki is not shown to completely isolate herself from her *pekke*. She has considerable control of her natal clan as though she is the male member of the clan. This scenario puts her out of the framework of patrilineal society. Nanaki's character is closer to the perception of females of Tallensi system of West Africa. This group allows clan women to maintain their clanship even after their transfer into their husband's clan through marriage. Their natal group even allows women's children to have some rights among them.¹⁶⁴

Nanaki as a daughter, sister, wife, sister-in-law and an aunt is shown to be a powerful female personality in the *Bala* recension. As a female member of a patriarchal society, Nanaki possesses a great deal of power and authority. The sense of power and authority in Nanaki comes from the fact that she belongs to strong and politically advantageous families, especially her affinal family. Nanaki, as being the strong and assertive member of natal and affinal clans, is able to carry out her decisions and commands in her own manner. Generally, it is assumed that women's

¹⁶¹ I have mentioned Chinese kinship as example because I feel that it is important to look at the one of the kinship system of south Asian countries. So I chose Chinese kinship pattern. I do mentioned African examples as well in the thesis. Therefore, I felt it was important to mention one of south Asian example.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 291.

power is derived from two related sources, family and wealth.¹⁶⁵ Larrington, writer of medieval Europe states that "Status was bestowed by father and husband; thus a wife might be repudiated if a more politically advantageous match could be made with a more influential family".¹⁶⁶ Through the *Bala* recension of the *Janam Sakhi* examples, it is shown that this is certainly true for Nanaki. She has more power and authority than the other women do in her natal clan before her marriage. There seems to be an increase in her power and authority when she marries Jairam.

Nanaki's husband, Jairam, who is brought into Nanaki's natal group through alliance tie, is more involved in the activities of his wife's clan. To a certain extent alliance ties give Jairam the right to be involved in his wife's natal group.¹⁶⁷ In the *Bala* recension, Jairam is shown to be Nanak's guardian along with his wife, Nanaki. Consequently, Nanaki plays the role of Nanak's 'pater' or jural/ritual father.¹⁶⁸ It is not mentioned in the tradition if Nanaki and Jairam had their own children or not. One can presume that absence of Nanaki's children in the *Bala* recension is an attempt to paint Nanaki as the guardian of Nanak, because the *Bhai Mani Singh Janam Sakhi* recension does mention that Nanaki had a son and a daughter with the blessings of Nanak.¹⁶⁹ In a sense Nanak takes the place of Nanaki and Jairam's

¹⁶³ Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Lit, 1967), p. 117.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁶⁵ Carolyne Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995), p. 154.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Parkin, *Kinship: An Introduction to the Basic Concepts* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), p. 139.

¹⁶⁸ C. C. Harris, *Kinship* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 18.

¹⁶⁹ Kirpal Singh, *Janam Sakhi Parmpara: From Historical Point of View* (Patiala: Patiala University Press, 1969), p. 337.

offspring. As a result, the character of Nanak in the *Bala* recension can be placed in the 'childish' position. One can speculate that Nanak was not mature enough to handle his responsibilities as son, brother and husband. Therefore, Nanaki took over his responsibilities as if she were Nanak's brother.

It is interesting that in Punjabi kinship "an elder sister exercises jural authority and stands as an agnatic superior in relation to her younger brother".¹⁷⁰ This statement is confirmed in the *Bala* recension, yet rarely practised in the contemporary Punjab. Nanaki is not only shown to be superior in relation to Nanak, but also in relation to many of her other kin, i.e., father, Jairam, sister-in-law etc. For example, Nanaki's decisions regarding Nanak's life seems to have more weight than her father's decisions or her husband's decisions.

Nanaki's marriage results in the addition of kin, Jairam, to her natal group. Even though Nanaki and Jairam do not live with Nanaki's natal group, they appear to be managing her natal family's affairs. In a patriarchal society, once a daughter leaves her natal clan upon her marriage, she completely loses her rights among her natal group and comes totally under the jurisdiction of her husband's lineage.¹⁷¹ In the Punjabi and *Pandit* kinship patterns, a woman establishes her affinal home as her home after her marriage especially when she becomes the mother of a son. However, Nanaki brings her husband under her natal family's jurisdiction rather than going under his lineage. Even though, Nanaki is presented as a wife with no children, she

¹⁷⁰ Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981), p. 215.

does establish her *suhari* as her home while strengthening her ties with her *pekke*. Jairam has apparently been given an authoritarian place in Nanaki's natal clan. He makes decisions regarding the life of a member of another clan, i.e., Nanak. Usually, alliance theory defines the relationship between sister, brother and her husband as a 'basic situation', which means the 'releasing' of sisters to other men, usually their husbands.¹⁷² However, in the case of Nanaki, Nanak and Jairam, the 'basic situation' means 'taking' control of a brother-in-law through marriage alliance.

We are not told anything about Jairam's descent group. However, we are told that he belongs to a *Khatri* caste and his family name is Mal. Therefore, one can assume that the writer of this recension may have only considered the information regarding Jairam's family name and caste to be very important because he is the wife-taker of Nanak's clan. The narrator wants the audience to know that Mahata Kalu gave his daughter into a clan that is compatible with his own clan. This is important because in Punjabi society marriage is not a union of two individuals, but it is a union of two groups or two clans. Fox states "marriage logically is only a marginal institution in matrilineal societies".¹⁷³ Apparently, Nanaki is taking her marriage as a marginal institution rather considering it as a central institution.

For a woman to obtain power, it is important that her family has high status and wealth; to enhance this power, it becomes even more important to marry into a family with higher status and more wealth. Nanaki adds to her previously existing

¹⁷¹ Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), p. 117.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

power and authority by having Jairam as her husband. Nanaki's clan also gains strength from her hypergamic marriage to Jairam. One can speculate that Nanaki and Jairam has a hypergamic marriage because Jairam seems to have higher status and more wealth than Nanaki's natal family. For example, when Jairam first saw Nanaki while he was visiting Rai Bular, the ruler of Talvandi. Jairam approached Rai Bular to arrange his marriage with Nanaki. His connection with Rai Bular shows that Jairam is from an elite class.¹⁷⁴

This hypergamic marriage seems to have added to Nanaki's dominant and powerful personality. Before her marriage Nanaki was shown to influence her father and after her marriage, she is able to influence her husband and other kin regarding Nanak's personal affairs. Nanaki deals with internal and external conflicts, which exist among Nanak and his kin, i.e., conflict between her father and brother, husband and brother, brother and his wife, brother and his in-laws

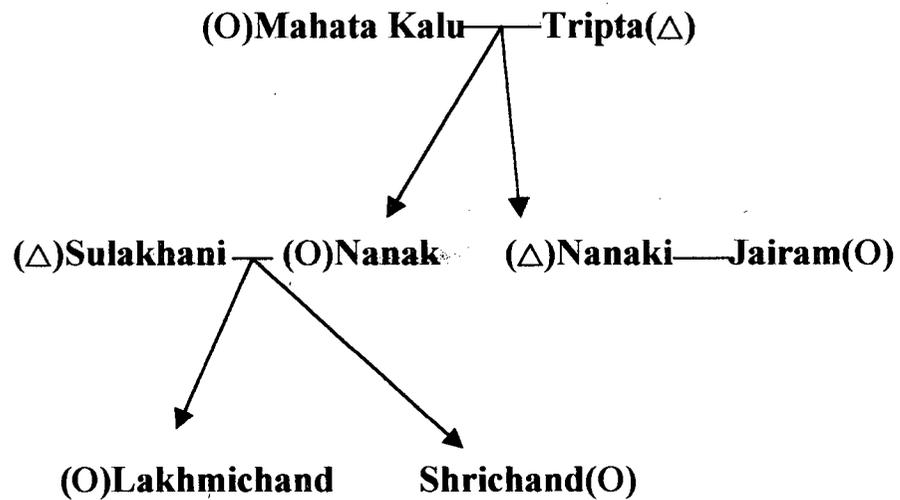
Nanak gets married and brings his wife into his descent group. They live virilocally. Nanaki gets married and lives virilocally with her husband but stays attached agnatically with her natal group. Perhaps Nanaki may have wanted to live uxorilocally, but was unable to do so, because it was considered humiliating for the husband in patriarchal society to do so. For example, a man was allowed to go live uxorilocally in medieval Chinese patriarchal society, only if he was poor but it was

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁷⁴ Kirpal Singh, *Janam Sakhi Parmpara: From Historical Point of View* (Patiala: Patiala University Press, 1969), pp. 228-229.

considered humiliating.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, in Punjabi and *Pandit* kinship, it is utterly degrading for a husband to go and live with his wife's natal family. Therefore, Nanaki may have had to fulfil this requirement of her patriarchal society. Technically, the marriages of both of Kalu's children brought new kin into his descent group, i.e., Jairam, Sulakhani and Nanak's children.

¹⁷⁵ Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), p. 116.

Figure III

Δ-This symbol refers to a female.

O- This symbol refers to a male.

Horizontal lines refer to affinal relationships.

Vertical lines refer to blood relationships.

However, in addition to the vertical growth to Kalu's descent group, there was also horizontal growth. The vertical growth refers to addition of Nanak and Nanaki and Nanak's children Shri Chand and Lakhmi Das and the horizontal growth refers to Sulakhani and Jairam. Sulakhani's addition to the family is patrilocal and Jairam's addition is agnatic. A significant agnatic expansion occurred due to Nanaki's marriage to Jairam. Jairam's presence brought Nanaki's natal clan power and strength.

The relationship of Nanaki and Nanak as two blood kin is made very prominent in the *Bala* recension compared to other versions of the *Janam Sakhi*, such as *Puratan Janam Sakhi* recension and *Miharban Janam Sakhi* recension. The stories in *Sakhis* show that Nanak communicates with his close and 'extended' kin through his sister, Nanaki. Consequently, Nanaki is presented as the medium through which Nanak's family and friends communicate with Nanak. Nanak even relies on Nanaki to communicate with his wife and her parents

The author tends to show that this dominance comes from her love and understanding of her brother, Nanak, who is shown to be very much under her control. Surjit Hans states that "Guru Nanak cannot refuse anything to Bebe Nanaki because she has an upper hand on him due to fact that he is being raised by his sister".¹⁷⁶ As a result, Nanaki is playing the role of a male descendent more than a female descendent in terms of being the head of her natal family.

The *Bala* recension shows that Nanaki gave a new, distinct and unique connotation to the role of a sister and her sisterhood. She devoted her life as a sister to Nanak that is presented at various levels. She acts as a protective barrier between Nanak and the outside world. She also mediates between Nanak and the world around him. For example, when Nanak's father decides to send Nanak to live with her, he warns Jairam to keep an eye on Nanak, so that he cannot spend money on

¹⁷⁶ Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1988), p. 204.

sadhus and fakirs. At this point Nanaki jumps in to defend her brother and says to her father not to criticise Nanak.

... Kalu said, look, son, Jai Ram, when Nanak's engagement is fixed, then let me know immediately and you keep an eye on Nanak. He should not waste money on anybody (sadhus and saints). Then Nanaki said, father, why are you screaming. He may lose it today, he may lose it tomorrow. Now he is losing whatever he earns. Now if he is losing to the fakirs, why is your heart trembling.¹⁷⁷

It can be seen in the above example that Nanaki is defensive regarding issues that apply to Nanak. She does not want to hear that Nanak is doing something wrong. For Nanaki, Nanak is not just a regular human being, because she claims to see divinity in her brother. Therefore, she makes an attempt to touch his feet, even though she is the elder sister. Jairam does the same thing, but Nanaki is shown to disagree with this, because this is not an appropriate behaviour in the material world.¹⁷⁸ Jairam also claims to see divinity in Nanak. The author of the *Bala* recension goes back and forth from material to divine world to establish a solid relationship between Nanak and Nanaki. However, Nanak's father, Mahata Kalu does not acknowledge Nanak's divinity. For him, Nanak is a person with problems. He tries to get his daughter and son-in-law to help Nanak to start his new life as a married man. Mahata Kalu does not trust Nanak with money. He warns Jairam to keep eye on him.

¹⁷⁷ Kirpal Singh, *Janam Sakhi Parmpara: From Historical Point of View* (Patiala: Patiala University Press, 1969), pp. 231-232.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

...The government's not getting less money. Whenever, he shows his accounts, then they are in surplus. Jai Ram said Mahata ji for this reason we do not say anything to him. Then Kalu said, Son when he shows accounts and there is a surplus, then you should claim it. Son, account, non accounts, for Nanak it's same. You should be careful of him.¹⁷⁹

The above quotation not only reflects the status of Nanak as a son, but also the feeling of a father who is very disappointed with his son's behaviour. Kalu seems to have more trust in Jairam than he has in his own son. Kalu blames Nanaki for not taking care of Nanak properly. Kalu believes that Nanaki is spoiling Nanak by accepting all Nanak's actions.

...Kalu started to bad mouth Bala. When I left you, you and Nanak start to sing hymns. Nanak, you must earn the money which you lost. Then he started to tell Nanaki, What have you done! I asked to take care of Nanak and you did not take care of him.¹⁸⁰

Nanaki has built up a protective wall around Nanak with her love and care as his sister and caretaker. We see this scenario repeatedly in the *Bala* recension. The living arrangement of Nanak among his sister's clan does not fit in the patrilineal, matrilineal or cognatic systems. Therefore, this situation presents a unique bond between Nanaki and her natal clan. Nanaki is presented as a prominent female member of her clan because she is able to convince her father to the extent that he agrees to let Nanak live with her and her husband. Generally, in a patriarchal society, this is considered quite humiliating. However, the author in the *Bala* recension shows that moving in with Nanaki was a significant move for Nanak bringing about many

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 232.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 232.

changes in his life. Moreover, Nanaki's husband, a wife-taker, welcomes Nanak, a wife-giver into his house, which is quite unusual according to patrilineal theory.

... Rai said, brother, we offer Nanak to you. On Samvat 1544, Magar Sudi 3, Nanak went to Jairam in Sultanpur on the fifth day. ... Jairam was not home. He came home. He saw that Nanak was already sitting there. Nanak bowed down when Jairam came. Nanak fell at his feet. ... Jairam said, Nanakji you want to work in *Modikhana* Nanak said, brother-in-law, who does it belong to? Jairam said, it is Navab Dault Khan Lodhi's big *Modikhana*, if you can handle it then take it. ... Sister Nanaki said, brother, seeing you is like seeing God, sit down and eat.¹⁸¹

The above quotation presents the situation which shows the time of Nanak's move to Nanaki's affinal home. Nanak comes to Nanaki's home and Jairam makes arrangements for a job as a shopkeeper in a grocery store. This is the beginning of Nanaki's responsibilities as Nanak's caretaker after her marriage. Later in the chapter, we will see that the Nanaki's role as Nanak's caretaker will change into a role of a sentinel and protector of Nanak and his family.

In cognatic societies, it is normal to pick one unilineal lineage over another, i.e., patrilineal vs. matrilineal. But in Nanak's case, he does not pick either lineage, instead he goes to live with his brother-in-law. This arrangement has not been described under unilineal or cognatic theory and appears to be distinctive to Punjabi kinship. Even though he is not part of Jairam's descent group, Jairam takes care of Nanak as if he belongs to his own clan. Jairam approaches Nanaki's natal family, her parents, to come and stay with him.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 230.

... Kalu said son, Jai Ram seems very modest. ? Alive or dead, I want to see Nanak's happiness. Then my heart will feel at rest. Then Jai Ram said Mahata ji you are equal to my Parmanad(?). Then Jai Ram said Mahata ji you stay here. And (we will) call Amma Bibi here too.¹⁸²

This scenario more or less represents the characteristics of a matrilineal system; a female is taking care of her natal family along with her husband. Nanaki is shown to have very strong positive views about her natal family, especially about Nanak. Regardless of what Nanak does, she always takes Nanak's side. For example when Jairam doubts Nanak's honesty, Nanaki defends Nanak to her husband. Jairam is told that Nanak is taking money from the *Modikhana*, grocery store, and Jairam comes home and complains to Nanaki. Nanaki does not support him in this matter. Nanaki admits that no matter what, she would take her brother's side. At the end, Jairam's doubt is proven to be wrong. When some people come to Jairam to complain about Nanak's honesty, Jairam comes to Nanaki having being hurt and reveals his feelings to her. Jairam asks Nanaki to help him to resolve the situation. Nanaki advises him to take over the accounts of the grocery home rather than accusing Nanak of losing money.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 232.

When one month was passed, a man did backbiting about Nanak. (He said) Jai Ram your brother-in-law is taking government's money. You should understand him. (You) know how destructive Pathans (Muslims) can be. Jai Ram came home. He sat with Nanaki alone. He said, listen woman of God, one man has complained to me. He hurtfully said to me, Jai Ram your brother-in-law is losing money. Why are not you teaching him? (You) know how destructive Pathans can be. Wife, what should I do! Then Nanaki said do whatever comes to your heart. What can I say! Jai Ram said give me advice. Then Nanaki said you don't know the truth yet. You know that I would take my brother's side. The world's entire wealth, all is in Nanak's hand and goes through Nanak's hand. You do one thing: take over the accounts.¹⁸³

Nanaki is not ready to accept that her brother has done any wrong to the accounts of the grocery shop. The *Bala* recension shows that she has shown to have complete faith in Nanak. She definitely believes that the accounts will not decrease rather they might be in surplus.

If the accounts are complete, whether it increases or not, it must not decrease, pay no attention to anybody's complaint. Then Jai Ram said, Well if you have made up your mind that I am not careful enough, then what can I say. Then Nanaki said, Rajji Kirari's (businessman's) son does not know how to tell the truth, then who can tell the truth about the accounts.¹⁸⁴

Nanaki advises Jairam to stay quiet until she talks to Nanak about the accounts. Therefore, she calls Nanak to come to her. She invites him by sending her maid, Tulsa to Nanak. The mention of Tulsa in the *Bala* recension is another evidence that Jairam was from an elite group who could employ a servant. Tulsa goes to Nanak and gives him his sister's message. Immediately Nanak is shown to

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 232-233.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 232.

have realised that there is something wrong. He asks Tulsa if there is something wrong, but Tulsa does not say anything.

You should not talk now. I will call Nanak ji.
Nanaki said, O Tulsa, go and bring Nanak. Having gone to Lahudhi, Tulsa greeted Nanak. Nanak said, Why are you here Tulsa, tell me the truth why did you come. Tulsa said, sir, Mrs said to me that go bring my brother. Nanak said, You go Tulsa, I will come. Tulsa went home and said to Nanaki, Madam, he said that he is coming.¹⁸⁵

Bhai Bala is shown to be with Nanak when Nanak gets his sister's message. Bhai Bala seems to have some suspicion about the invitation. He asks Nanak about the reason for the invitation. Nanak confides in Bala by disclosing that he feels that there is something wrong. Therefore, he asks Bala to come along with him. Nanak asks Bala to bring some sweets with them as a gift for Nanaki. The description of the gift below shows that Nanak is a fakir rather than a member of wealthy group. However, mention of a gift for Nanaki shows that the Nanak's society is patriarchal, i.e., a brother takes a gift or gifts for his sister when he visits her.

Bala said why are you being called? Nanak said, Bhai Bala I sense that someone is talking about me behind my back. What are you doing? Nanak said Bhai Bala bring the pot of sweets (*patasas*). Bala brought the pot. Nanak spread his *jholi* (large wallet made of cloth, used by yogis), he put the sweet from the pot into his *jholi*. They are two and half kilo. Nanak brought them to his sister's house.¹⁸⁶

When Nanak reaches his sister's house, Nanaki greets Nanak and Bala. She does not want Nanak to feel that he is being called to answer anything; instead she says that the reason for the invitation was that she has not seen Nanak for many days,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.233.

therefore she desired to see her brother. This scenario shows that how strongly she was watching out for Nanak.

Later, Nanaki stood up and said, Come in, brother. She spread the small bed (*pira*). Nanak sat down. Bala also came along; Nanak asked, Sister why did you call me? Nanaki answered, Brother, it has been many days that I did not see you, so I desire to see you. Therefore, I send Tulsa to you.¹⁸⁷

However, Nanak does not believe his sister and asks Nanaki to tell him the real reason why she called him. Before Nanaki says anything, Nanak asks Nanaki to take all the accounts from his control. One can speculate that either Nanak knew that people suspect him of taking money from the gossip going around, or Nanak is shown to have known about the topic due to his divine insight.

Then Nanak said, Sister, I believe you. Tell me what you called me for? Nanaki said, Brother you know everything. I cannot say it. Then Nanak said I know my heart. So say the same thing take the away accounts from me.¹⁸⁸

As soon as Nanak figures out the reason for his invitation to his sister's house, his sister starts to comfort him. Nanaki probably felt hurt and guilty for putting her brother through the situation. Since she has always been the protector of Nanak and now she is being put in a situation where she has to ask Nanak regarding the accounts to save her husband's reputation, she feels badly.

When the accounts were checked, they were in surplus. At that moment, Nanak approaches his brother-in-law, Jairam, and asks him to take over the accounts

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 233.

and let him free from the grocery shop's responsibilities and Jairam is shown to fall to Nanak's feet and apologises to him. Jairam requests Nanak to forgive his mistake of doubting Nanak's honesty. Nanaki approaches Nanak and says if anything like this happens again in future, she will take the full responsibility. One can see the pain and frustration of Nanaki regarding her brother's situation.

Then Nanaki started to console him. Nanak said is this about the account. There is nothing to be ashamed of. Then Nanaki said, Brother you are wise. On samvat 1543, accounts were checked. Accounts for three months were being checked. After give and take 145 rupees were in surplus. Then Nanak said to Jai Ram, take over the accounts brother-in-law, now I am free of this responsibility. You should give this *Modikhana* (grocery store) to someone else. We (I am) are saying goodbye. Then Jai Ram fell in his feet and Nanaki started to cry. Nanaki said, Brother kill me first, then you can go. Then Nanak said, Sister now accounts are complete. What if they are ever in lose, I would have been confused. Jai Ram said, Nanak ji now on I'd known better than accusing you for losing money. I did not know before. Now I know the truth from both sides. Jai Ram said, Nanak ji forgive my sin of accusing you. I was lost. Then Nanak put his both hands together and prayed. Nanaki said, Bhai ji, forgive my sin. If anything would have been missing, I would have taken the responsibility for it.¹⁸⁹

On another occasion, Jairam comes home furious after hearing that Nanak has gone into a mosque to pray with the *Navab*. People speculate that Nanak has converted to Islam. On this occasion, Nanaki continues to support Nanak by justifying his action, calling him the supporter of everyone regardless of religious background.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 233.

... Jai Ram came home upset. Nanaki saw that her husband is upset. Nanaki stood up and said, " what did get you are so upset." Jai Ram said, " listen, the woman of God, what have your brother, Nanak done; he went to the mosque to do Friday-Namaaj with the Navab. And there is gossip between Hindus and Muslims that Nanak has become Muslim in entire city. Why should not I be upset?" Then Nanaki said, " you get up and go to the kitchen. You should not have any doubt about Nanak; you should not worry about it. He is everybody's supporter."¹⁹⁰

Nanaki comforts Jairam and asks him not to worry about Nanak. She claims that nobody can throw an evil glance at Nanak. Nanaki accuses Jairam's informer for leaving Nanak behind in the mosque. It can be seen here again that Nanaki is blaming someone else for Nanak's actions in the process of protecting her brother.

Nanaki said to Jairam you go to the kitchen with joy thinking that nobody can glance at Nanak with bad sight,. Why are you talking so much and creating commotion. And Jai Ram put Neda Brahmin on spying. Then Brahmin came and congratulated Jai Ram. Nanaki asked Jai Ram to ask Nedi, " Misar (honorific title given to learned Brahmin), how has the gossip settled?" ... This is what I have heard. Then Nanaki said, " Misar, where did you leave Nanak?" Nedi said, " Madam, I have left him in the mosque. Jai Ram started to fight with Nedi, (and said, ") you must have been standing there quite." Nedi said, " he was in the mosque and all the people who were at the mosque, they went to their houses. I did not see Nanak." Then Nanaki said, "Husband, You should not count now, he will be coming." So long, Nanak came into Jai Ram's house.¹⁹¹

In the examples I have given above regarding the relationship between Nanak and his father and Nanak and Jairam, Nanaki is the mediator between Nanak and her father and husband. Every time anyone criticises Nanak for his conducts, Nanaki justifies his actions.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 232-233.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 241-242.

The *Bala* recension also has another powerful and authoritarian female character in the *Sakhis* namely, Nanak's mother-in-law, Mata Chandurani. However, between Nanaki and Chandurani, Nanaki is presented as more dominant and powerful. The writer may have presented Chandurani as a secondary dominant female character because she is related to Nanak through alliance ties, whereas Nanaki is related to Nanak via blood ties. We have to keep in mind that blood ties are taken to dominance over alliance ties. Therefore, the author has taken this in consideration and presented blood ties to be stronger than alliance ties by showing Nanaki as a more powerful female figure than Chandurani.

After his marriage, Nanak does not show any interest in his wife Sulakhani. Therefore, Sulakhani goes back to her natal village to complain to her parents. Her parents, then, come to Nanaki to complain about Nanak's behaviour rather than going to his parents. The interesting point here to notice is that according to patrilineal theory Nanaki has nothing to do with her descent group regarding Nanak's family affairs. However, Sulakhani's parents skip Sulakhani's alliance group and go to her sister-in-law or the wife-taker of Nanak's group which is Jairam to complain about Nanak, who is the wife-taker of Sulakhani's family. Sulakhani's father takes her back to her natal village and Nanak leaves Talvandi to go to Sultanpur, Jairam's house. Sulakhani complains to her father about giving her in to an unpleasant family in marriage. She is referring to Nanak's behaviour, which is very unfavourable towards her.

Nanak came to Sultanpur. Mata Chuni's (Nanak's wife, also known as Sulakhani) father took her with him. Then Nanak came to Sultanpur and started to work at the *Modikhana* (grocery store). Later Nanak met Mula. Even after getting the job at the *Modikhana*, Nanak's behaviour did not change. Sulakhani tells Mula, Father, what kind of family you have given me into; my husband is feeding the people free and he does not care about his household.¹⁹²

After listening to his daughter, Mula, Nanak's father-in-law comes to Jairam to complain about Nanak. Mula accuses Nanaki and Jairam of destroying his daughter Sulakhani's life by arranging her marriage to Nanak. Mula feels very unfortunate to have Nanak as his son-in-law. The following quotation indicates that Nanak seems to have failed Sulakhani and her parents as a husband and as a son-in-law.

Mula came to Jai Ram. He was screaming with anger and said, You destroyed my daughter's life. He said to Nanak where did you born; where did you come to be written in my fate. Nanak did not say anything to his father-in-law.¹⁹³

On another occasion, Mata Chandurani goes to her daughter's *sahuri* to see her. When she arrives there, she finds her daughter to be very unhappy in her affinal home. At this point, Chandurani is shown to be very angry with Nanak and blames him for her daughter's sad state. Then she goes to Nanaki's *sahuri* and accuses Nanaki and her *pekke* of abusing Sulakhani. Chandurani also accuses Nanaki for not taking care of her brother, so he can take care of his wife. Chandurani also blames Jairam for Nanak's behaviour.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 237.

Mata Chuni's name is Sulakhani. Because of Nanak's actions Mata Chuni asked her mother to come. And Chandurani is Nanak ji's mother-in-law's name. Chandurani came to her daughter and daughter started to cry to her mother. Chandurani started to fight with Nanak. Why are you acting as if you are ruling the world. Why are you abusing other's daughters. You do not have fear of God. Chandurani is saying to Nanaki that you do not teach your brother and you do not take care of him. You, Brother-in-law, do not teach Nanak anything. What is in your heart, you tell me.¹⁹⁴

Then Nanaki says to Chandurani in defence of his brother, Nanak, that he is not doing anything wrong; he is not a thief or an adulterer. If he is feeding the fakirs with his earning, then let it be. Nanaki supports his spending of his earning on saints and hungry people. Nanaki states to Chandurani that she should be angry if her daughter, Sulakhani, is suffering with poverty and hunger. Nanaki turns the situation from being against her brother into being in favour of her *pekke*. She puts her *pekke* in a high spot as if her natal family is a high class and sophisticated family. This indicates that Nanaki is very proud of being the member of her natal clan. She indirectly attacks Chandurani's behaviour. Chandurani offends Nanaki because she calls Nanak useless.

Then Nanaki said, listen! Auntie, my brother is not a thief, not an adulterer. He does not do anything bad. He can give charity to the saints and hungry people from his earning. You should complain if your daughter is living hungry and homeless. If you still want to humiliate us, then it is your wish. Our mouth does not permit us to say things like you saying to us. In the place of jewel is jewel, in the place of cloth is cloth, your common sense is gone. From this mouth,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 237-238.

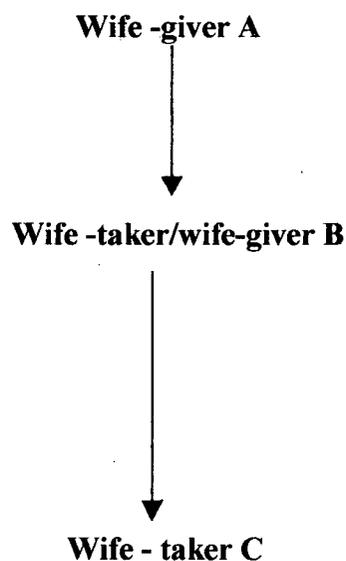
I call Sulakhani Bhabi. I never called her by her name. If you call the son of Khatria useless, then it is not in my control. Chandurani stayed quite.¹⁹⁵

The above scenario does not fit in patriarchal framework. In the following section, we will see the comparison between this relationship and the usual patriarchal relationship between wife-giver and wife-taker.

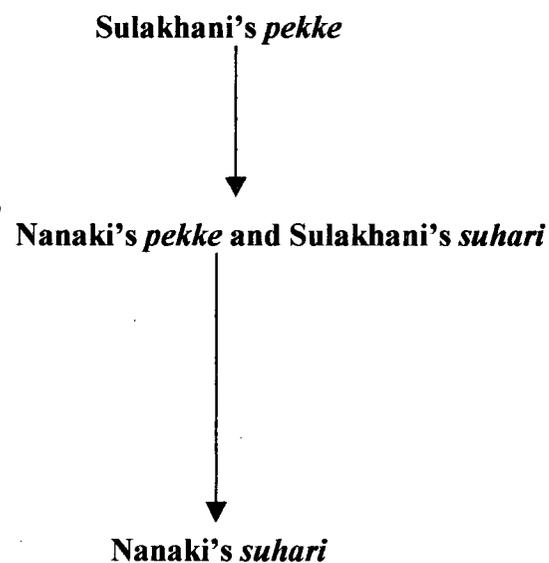
Figure III

Relationship in Patriarchal

framework



Relationship in *Bala Recension*



¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 238.

The wife-giver A is Sulakhani's natal group, who has given their woman into group B. Group B is Nanak's descent group, who is a wife-taker as well as a wife giver and they have given their woman into group C. Group C is Jairam's descent group. In theory if group A goes to group C to complain, it will create tension among all the groups, because this is an asymmetrical marriage arrangement. However, in this particular situation, group B is shown to be silent. Group B is presented as having no problems with the actions of group A. Therefore, it does not totally fit into the theory of asymmetrical marriage. However, it is not a symmetrical marriage either, which means there is no direct exchange of their women. Consequently, they cannot pressure each other regarding welfare of their women. In the *Bala* recension, a woman of group A is shown to pressure a woman of group C for the welfare of their woman in group B, i.e., Nanaki vs. Chandurani and Sulakhani. It seems that there is not any direct communication between group A and group B. They are communicating through group C. Group C is mediating between group A and group B regarding Nanak's actions and his behaviour. When Chandurani complains to Nanaki about Nanak, immediately Nanaki jumps in to defend her brother. She does not admit to Chandurani that Nanak is at fault. After her meetings with Chandurani, Nanaki approaches Nanak to talk about his relationship with Sulakhani. She asks him to show some interest in his wife. As a result Nanak establishes an intimate relationship with wife. This is extremely exceptional for patriarchal society, where brother and sister do not talk about their intimate relationships. However, Nanaki is

presented as sister who can talk to her brother about almost everything. This presents the uniqueness in their relationship. One can speculate that either Nanak respects his sister so much that he cannot say no to anything she asks him to do, or as Hans states, that he feels obligated to her because she raised him.

One day Nanak came to meet Jai Ram and Nanaki. Nanaki said, "brother, today God is being benevolent to us, that you gave us your vision." Nanak said, "Sister, I am your slave, why are you saying such a thing." Then Nanaki said, "I want to say like this to you, not anybody else." Nanaki said, Brother, you are older than me." Nanaki said, "Brother, I am older than you in days, but I am not older than you in deeds or actions. Nanaki said, Brother you are older than me in Karma and in the devotion of God." Then Nanak said, "sister you are right. This God created you to understand it. God is benevolent to you." Nanaki said, "Brother, If you would agree to one thing then I will acknowledge that God is benevolent to me." Then Nanak said, "tell me Sister, whatever you will agree. You are my older sister. We were brother and sister in the previous life. ... Your load is on my shoulder, tell me."¹⁹⁶

Nanaki asks him to take care of Sulakhani. Nanaki encourages Nanak to give Sulakhani the life of a wife in every way. However, when Nanaki says all this to Nanak, the tone of her voice is presented as a sad and regrettable. It seems that she does not want to say anything to Nanak, but Chandurani forces her into the situation.

Then Nanaki said, "Brother, we are being embarrassed. You are not consoling *Bhabi* (brother's wife). They are sisters of wise brothers. We have adopted her. Brother, you are sadhu (wise) yourself, think about it in your mind." Nanak said to Nanaki, Sister is there shortage for anything. Then Nanakji said, "why would there be shortage of anything thing, everything is present. But this is not everything needed by a woman." Then Nanak said, "sister, you said and I understood. Sister you should not worry about this. Whatever you say, I will do. Now you

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 238-239.

leave this matter, talk about something else." Nanaki said, "Brother, other thing in my heart is that I shall see your offspring and I shall play with them in my lap." Nanak said, "well, Sister whatever you ask for, that ever will happen." Having said this Nanak left. It has been said that household was inhabited after Nanak and Nanaki's conversion [in other words, Nanak and Sulakhani had two sons].¹⁹⁷

Even though, theoretically Nanaki is member of Group C, she still takes pride in status of her natal clan. She defends her natal group when Chandurani is criticising it. Chandurani is shown to be very furious about Nanak's action. She blames Nanaki and Jairam for Nanak's doings. Usually, in a patriarchal society, parents of male kin are blamed for his actions, not the sister and her husband. Later in the *Sakhi*, Chandurani and Nanaki are having an argument regarding Nanak's actions. Nanaki rebukes Chandurani using her natal family's pride, morals and values. This shows Nanaki's powerful role in her natal clan. Eventually, Chandurani calms down and promises Nanaki that she will go to her daughter and talk to her.

After her conversation with Nanaki, Chandurani goes to her daughter and asks her to be more lenient to her alliance group. At this point, Sulakhani admits that her alliance family treats her well. It is her husband who is not treating her properly.

... When Chandurani came to her daughter and said, Daughter Sulakhani your sister-in-law embarrassed me. So you should not talk back too much to them. Sulakhani said, Mother I am not starving nor I am homeless, I have everything. Chandurani said, Daughter if you have everything, then why are you dishonouring a Khatri's son. Sulakhani said, Mother what can I do; he does not touch me. He does not talk to me with straight face. Then Chandurani came back to Nanaki and started to say that Nanaki I scarifies myself over you. Chandurani said, Daughter

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 240.

Nanaki, your common sense is wise. I told Sulakhani not to have attitude with you and anybody else. Later, she said that I am not hungry or homeless nor I have any pain from my sister-in-law; but (Nanak does not) talk to me with straight face.¹⁹⁸

After having a conversation with her daughter, Chandurani goes back to Nanaki to let her know that she has had a discussion with her daughter. Women from three different groups are trying to resolve their conflicts regarding one common kin, Nanak. Nanaki complains to Chandurani regarding her daughter's behaviour. Sulakhani does not make any attempt to make any connection with her husband's sister. Nanaki does not tolerate this behaviour, therefore she complains to Sulakhani's mother. Nanaki claims that she gives Sulakhani a great deal of respect, yet Sulakhani never in return gives her any attention or acknowledgement. Nanaki seems to be upset with Sulakhani for not coming to Nanaki's *suhari*. One can theorize that Sulakhani is angry with Nanaki due to the reason that Nanaki has more control over Nanak than she does.

... Then Nanaki said, Aunty Chandu, my sister-in-law is difficult in many ways. She never comes to my house, when I invite her to come. If she ever comes, she comes with red, angry face. I do not mind her this behaviour, because she is younger than me. I say to my sister-in-law that everything is in her control, because we adopted her. She is daughter of wise Khatri's. We do not want anybody to have obligations and nobody forced us to do anything. Chandurani said, well daughter there is not any shortage for anything for Sulakhani. However, you should know that she is behaving this way because her needs are not fulfilled. Nanaki, God will do the right thing. Auntie, you know that I am very protective of my brother. I acknowledge my brother as Lord. You admit this as truth. Therefore, I am scared of Nanak, I do not say anything to him. Auntie now you go, if God wishes everything will be fine.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 240.

You console my sister-in-law. Chandurani went to her home.¹⁹⁹

This scenario also presents Nanaki as trying to establish a relationship with a group to which she does not directly have ties, either through descent or through alliance. Perhaps, Sulakhani does not want any kind of relationship with her sister-in-law because she disapproves of the closeness of Nanak and Nanaki. According to Paul Hershman the brother/sister and husband/wife, are the two relationships that are the central discord of Punjabi kinship.²⁰⁰ The nature of these two pairs of relationships is the cause of this conflict among Nanaki and Sulakhani. The conflict between Nanaki and Sulakhani might have arisen due to the fact that Nanaki has more control over Nanak than Sulakhani. Nanaki's husband also does not have any sister against whom Nanaki has to compete to control her husband. Basically, then the only person she has to compete with is her sister-in-law, Nanaki who is the ultimate winner in every situation.

In the above examples, it is presented that a woman of group C criticises a woman of group A, because she is criticising group B, which is the *pekke* of the woman of group C. Due to the description of the situation, one can theorise that Sulakhani's natal family is wealthy and has a high status in the society. Group C's behaviour shows that wealth and status add to a woman's power because Chandurani talks to Nanaki in a higher tone, even though her group is wife-giver. Nanaki's natal group might have had lower status and less wealth than Sulakhani's natal group.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 240.

²⁰⁰ Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing

Perhaps this is the reason for their silence in this particular situation. Nanaki's natal group might have gained higher status by taking woman from Chandurani's group. This is quite common in patriarchal societies.

All the above examples show the conflicts between two powerful female characters, one belongs to wife-taker and the other belongs to wife-giver. In almost all the situations, the author of the *Bala Janam Sakhi* shows Nanaki, Nanak's sister, to be the winner at the end of the all the conflicts. It appears that the author is trying to paint Nanaki as a winner in every situation, because she is the elder sister of Guru Nanak. She seems to have this advantage due to the reason that she has support from her natal and agnatic groups. Her natal group and agnatic group have very strong ties.

Upon the news of Nanak's departure on his travels, his in-laws are very furious with him. They do not want Nanak to go and leave behind his family. Therefore, Chandurani screams out at Nanak, "listen O Nanak! Did you get married to increase the family and run".²⁰¹ This statement shows the extent of her anger. Nanaki does not agree to give Nanak's children to his in-laws. Though, at the end she lets Nanak's wife, Sulakhani, and his son, Lakhmi Chand, to go with Nanak's in-laws, she however succeeds in keeping Nanak's older son, Shri Chand.

Corporation, 1981), pp. 191-192.

²⁰¹ Kirpal Singh, *Janam Sakhi Parmpara: From Historical Point of View* (Patiala: Patiala University Press, 1969), p. 245.

Then Mula would not leave his daughter and Chandurani also came, holding Lakhmichand. Shrichand was four and eight months old. Then Nanak got ready to leave. Chandurani and Mula would not let him go. And Nanaki would not give Nanak's sons to Mula and Chandurani. At last it was decided that Shrichand would stay with Nanaki. And Nanaki said, "they (Nanak's In-law) can take sister-in-law and Lakhmichan." As soon as Chandurani saw Nanak, she started to yell at him like a thunderstorm. She said, "listen O Nanak! did you get marry to increase the family and run."²⁰²

The significant point to notice in the *Sakhi* is that she agrees to the decision that Sulakhani's natal family can take Nanak's younger son, but not the older one. The reason for this is that among most patriarchal societies, the elder son is supposed carry the descent line over to the next generation. If this is the reason, then Nanaki is protecting the successor of the natal group and avoiding the possibility of him getting involved with his matrilineal group.

After looking at all examples of Nanak and Nanaki's relationship as brother and sister, it is now clear that Nanaki's and her kin's behaviour is more 'Ego-focused Behaviour' than 'Ancestor-focused Behavioural'. Nanak is Ego for Nanaki and her kin. This kinsman is not defined as an ancestor of all the kin. Therefore, this kindred type group includes kin from his descent groups and his affines. Everyone's life revolves around Nanak. They are attached to Nanak either by blood or by alliance ties. However, Nanaki's relationship with Nanak goes beyond the relationship of brother and sister. It seems that she is playing the role of Nanak's mother, sister and companion. For example, when he is depressed in the early years of his life, he is shown to go to his sister; when he has intimacy problems with his wife, his sister

²⁰² Ibid., pp. 243-244.

helps him to solve them. He is physically married to his wife, yet emotionally he is connected to his sister. Although, he has given his sister physically to another man in marriage, he does not seem to have given her to him emotionally. This is very clear in the *Sakhi* that brother and sister are closer to each other than their spouses.

The analysis of the *Bala Janam Sakhi* recension shows that the world of Nanak is not purely patriarchal. It does have some features of matriarchal system. Therefore, I feel that the concept of double unilineal system applies to this society. However, the relationship of Nanak and Nanaki goes beyond these systems. Available theories do not explain the relationship among Sulakhani's natal group, Nanak's patrilineal group and Nanaki's alliance group. Therefore, the kinship in *Bala* recension does not fit in one particular theory or system. Instead various kinship theories and systems are being used to explain the archetype of kinship in *Bala* recension.

The kinship in *Bala* recension becomes exceptional due to Nanaki's role in her *pekke* and *suhari*. She has taken the responsibility of her *pekke* as though she is a male descendent, while maintaining the status of a wife in her *suhari*. One can theorize that the change in her role comes from the reason that Nanak did not fulfil his responsibilities as a male descendent of his clan. Therefore, Nanaki had no choice but to take over Nanak's responsibilities, because there was not any other male descendants in her natal family. Nanaki took care of two clans, her *pekke* and *suhari*.

However, she was more involved in her *pekke*. The deviation in Nanaki's role as a sister is presented as circumstantial. Therefore, one can say that the kinship in *Bala* recension is amalgamation of patriarchal and matriarchal kinship patterns.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

From the analysis of kin relationship and how they reflect the status of woman in the *Janam Sakhi* literature, I have concluded that Nanaki had a privileged, powerful and authoritarian place among her clan. Her father, Mahata Kalu looked up to her for the qualities which he would have probably wanted in his son, Nanak. As Hans states in his book, Mahata Kalu considers Nanak to be spoilt.²⁰³ One can speculate that when Nanak did not meet his father's expectation as a son, then Nanaki took over the family affairs and responsibilities as though she was her father's son. After her marriage she fulfilled her responsibilities as a daughter, sister, wife, sister-in-law and aunt. She took care of her husband, her parents, her brother and his family. Nanaki was able to persuade her husband Jairam to participate in the conduct of fulfilling her natal responsibilities. This kind of behaviour of a daughter or a sister or a wife hardly fits in a patriarchal society. As previously mentioned, Nanaki and her relationships with her blood and non-blood kin do not fit in one particular kinship pattern. Therefore, it can be concluded that Nanaki was a strong, assertive and effective person in carrying out the responsibilities of a male and female descendent in the *Bala* recension.

²⁰³ Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1988), p. 204.

The portrait of Nanaki makes the patriarchal Punjabi Sikh society exceptional in *Bala* recension. The sense of exception comes from the fact that Nanaki plays the role of a male descendent even though her clan does have a male descendent, Nanak.

Today, the character of Nanaki in the *Bala* recension is used as a role model for the Punjabi Sikh women. However, as previously mentioned this is just a normative rather than an operative role model. In general, males in the Punjabi Sikh community preach the qualities of Nanaki's character in the *Bala* recension, yet they do not want to give their women the power and authority which Nanaki had. This is shown by the fact that there has never been a female *Jathidar*²⁰⁴ elected for the *Akal Takh*²⁰⁵. When a Sikh woman named Rajinder Kaur Bhadal²⁰⁶ was elected as the chief minister of Punjab in 1995, she was taunted by the slogans like "a woman belongs in the house. She has no business going out and seeking power and authority". The above two situations contradict the status of Nanaki in the *Bala* recension. This shows that twentieth century Punjabi Sikh women are at a disadvantage when it comes to experiencing power and authority. I am speculating that twentieth century Sikh communities seem to be disputing that Nanaki had no right exercising her power and authority among her natal and affinal clan's internal and external spheres. But in this study we have seen that it would be a female

²⁰⁴ The term *Jathidar* means the leader of an institution. This term is especially used for the Sikh institutions. There are five Sikh institutions that presently have '*Jathidars*' as their leaders to carry out the responsibilities.

²⁰⁵ *Akal Takh* refers to the Sikh institution in India, especially in Punjab. Presently, there are five *Takhs* in power. The most powerful *Takh* is located at the Golden Temple, Amritsar.

²⁰⁶ Rajinder Kaur Bhadal is the daughter of Master Tara Singh who was a prominent Sikh freedom fighter. Mrs. Bhadal belongs to a very strong and politically advantageous family. She is well

assumption and this may be considered as downplaying the Sikh traditions, because Nanaki holds the exceptional place in the “normative belief” rather than “operative belief”. Also it is not permitted in the present Sikh Panth to critic any religious material or a person. Therefore it is considered downgrading the Sikh traditions.

Unfolding Nanaki’s role in the *Bala* recension reveals that Nanak failed his kin as a son, a father, and a husband. Sikh literature can confirm that Nanak’s children Shri Chand and Lakhmi Chand, were angry with their father for giving guruship to Bhai Lahana.²⁰⁷ One can speculate that Nanak’s children were angry not only due to the loss of guruship, but also because their father was rarely around when they were growing up. Therefore, it can be argued that Nanak is shown to have neglected his wife and sons in the *Bala* recension. Therefore, the *Bala* recension tarnishes Nanak and glorifies Nanaki as a sister, a daughter and a wife.

The presence of Nanaki brought her natal and affinal families the vitality, unlike Nanak’s presence. She excised her power and assertiveness by being the force behind Nanak’s guruship. She supported and defended him for his actions. It is even believed among the popular traditions that Nanaki was Nanak’s first follower.

Nanaki was the driving force behind Nanak’s motivation for preaching the oneness of the world. Nanaki took care of him when his parents gave up on him. Nanaki supported him when Nanak’s in-laws accused him of not taking care of their

educated and experienced in the political sphere. She is a single divorced mother. She is utterly involved in the activities of Congress I in Punjab.

daughter, Sulakhani. Nanaki showed her love for her brother Nanak by insisting on taking care of his family when Nanak was leaving on his journeys. From the analysis of *Bala* recension it can be concluded that Nanaki's powerful and authoritarian personality played a vital part in the establishment of Sikhism by Nanak.

The accounts that have come down of Nanaki illustrate how strong an influence she wielded in the maintenance of the logistical support that Guru Nanak's great social and philosophical revolution needed. It is all the more surprising and deplorable that her story has been relegated to the background of Sikh history. Her story thus has to be viewed as part of a universal discourse, that of strong women. In the history of cultures we find glimpses of strong women who held together or even protected their people. But their stories tend to be minimized or even forgotten. The reason seems to be that in patriarchal cultures the legends of women that are valorized are those of good women rather than of strong women. The women celebrated are those who fit the prescribed model of feminine virtue, such as self-sacrifice, patience and submissiveness. Self-assertion and authority in women are seldom praised in life or literature. For instance, Sultana Razia²⁰⁸ was deposed by nobles at her court on the specific charge that she was a woman. At the same time, she has been given virtually no space in the history of medieval India.

²⁰⁷ Guru Angad, the second Guru of Sikhs was known as Bhai Lahana before he took over the Guruship.

²⁰⁸ Sultana Razia was the first and only female sultana ever existed among Muslim rulers. She was also brought down from her throne in few years due to reason that she was a woman. She ruled as a sultan from 1237 to 1241.

It seems that strength and goodness are incompatible in the masculine definition of women. The findings of the present study indicate that though Nanaki was held high esteem within her family circle and her community, she has been the victim of the moulding of historical memory by patriarchal definitions of women. It is hoped that present-day re-appraisals of gender politics will close the gap between strength and goodness in the definition of women. This study is an attempt to achieve this with the Sikh tradition of liberal philosophy.

Glossary

Pandit Kinship Vocabulary

Gara: *Gara* means Ego's father's residence.

Sakula: The members of Ego's clan are known as *Sakula*.

Amati: The members of other clans who come into Ego's clan are known as *Amati*.

Amanti: An unmarried woman is known as *Amanti*.

Variw: Ego's husband's household is known as *Variw*.

Ashnav: Ego's relatives by marriage are known as *Ashnav*.

Matamal: Ego's mother's natal family is known as *Matamal*.

Howur: Ego's wife's natal family is known as *Howur*.

Sonya: Ego's child's spouse's natal family is known as *Sonya*.

Ashnavi: The relationship between wife-givers and wife-takers, nonagnatic congenates, is known as *Ashnavi*.

Punjabi Kinship Vocabulary

Pekke: Ego's father's residence.

Sahuri: Ego's husband's residence.

Dadke: Ego's children paternal grandparent's house.

Nanake: Ego's children maternal grandparent's house.

Vatta-satta: Exchange personal possessions at business level, i.e., exchange of daughters.

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