

Prof. Mann Lecture Report

The Non-Collegiate Women's Education Board (NCWEB) centre at Mata Sundari College organized a lecture on the topic the "Position of Women in Sikh Religion" in collaboration with Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), on the 19th of December 2018. This was the inaugural lecture of an International Lecture Series. The speaker, Prof. Gurinder Singh Mann from the University of California, gave an important insight on the subject. The lecture began with lighting of the lamp and presentation of bouquets the dignitaries, followed by the College prayer.

At the outset, Prof. Mann delineated four core areas that the lecture would address, . (a.) How is the subject presently understood? (b.) How to reconcile the problems inherent in this debate? (c.) Building an accurate understanding of gender relations within the Sikh society; and (d.) Examples from art and literature about the importance of women in Sikhism. He began his lecture by calling Guru Nanak Devji as a revolutionary figure who believed in equality of all beings. That is the reason why there is documented evidence of the important role played by women in Sikh history. Prof. Mann was of the view that though all history forgets the contribution made by women but that has not been the case with Sikhism.

Prof. Mann also highlighted the need to look back at history and the historical sources that were contemporary to the Gurus' times, for example, Gurbani, Rahit Literature, arts and the historical sites. He was of the view that Guru Nanak Devji institutionalized the three major tenets of Sikhism which was truly democratic and radical for its times. These were (a.) belief in God as the creator of all beings, so the issues of caste and gender discrimination had no place in his worldview (b.) family was important and therefore there was no place for asceticism and celibacy and (c.) women and children being more vulnerable get special attention in his writings. The speaker gave us specific examples from the various manuscripts as well as contemporary times where women have left a mark with their significant contributions in writing, preserving of manuscripts, and spreading awareness about the Sikh religion. One such example is that of Bibi Malan (Guru Gobind Singh Ji's wife) who edited the manuscripts of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

The lecture, enriched the knowledge of students and teachers alike and it is hoped that more such lectures are organized in future as well.