

Lion versus Princess: Construction of masculinity in the Sikh community in Spain and Italy

León versus princesa: la construcción de la masculinidad en la comunidad sij en España e Italia

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Abstract

Since 1990s, the Sikh community in India has witnessed three important changes in its socioeconomic and demographic structure, i.e. shortage of women in marital and reproductive age groups (15-49 years), the rapid increase in women's higher education and the large-scale migration of low educated Sikh men. These changes are disrupting the traditional gender roles and putting enormous pressure on the process of gender construction in the Sikh community in India and diaspora. Based on ethnographic observation and 64 in-depth interviews with Sikh immigrants in Spain (26) and Italy (22) and their relatives in India (16), this paper first examines the expectations of masculinity in the Sikh community in Spain and Italy; second, analyse the effect of the socio-demographic changes mentioned above on the construction of masculinity in the Sikh community in both countries; and finally, speculates on its impact on the socio-demographic reproduction of the community in both countries.

Palabras clave

Religión Sij
Masculinidad
Género
Educación de la Mujer
Diáspora

Resumen

Desde la década de 1990, la comunidad sij en la India ha sido testigo de tres cambios importantes en su estructura socioeconómica y demográfica: la escasez de mujeres en grupos de edad conyugal y reproductiva (15-49 años), el rápido aumento de la educación superior de las mujeres, y la migración a gran escala de hombres de baja educación. Estos cambios están cuestionando los roles tradicionales de género y ejerciendo una enorme presión sobre el proceso de construcción de género en la comunidad sij en la India y la diáspora. Basado en la observación etnográfica y 64 entrevistas en profundidad con inmigrantes sij en España (26) e Italia (22) y sus familiares en la India (16), este artículo examina primero las 'expectativas de masculinidad' en la comunidad sij en España e Italia; segundo, analiza el efecto de los cambios sociodemográficos mencionados anteriormente en la construcción de la masculinidad en la comunidad sij en ambos países; y, finalmente, especula sobre su impacto en la reproducción sociodemográfica de la comunidad en ambos países

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INTRODUCTION

Punjab, the land of five rivers, is the birthplace of Sikhism and the homeland of most Sikhs throughout the world. Its fertile soil and perennial rivers facilitated rapid growth of population and accumulation of wealth in the region. However, its geographical location, as a gateway to the Indian subcontinent, kept it under regular attacks of foreign invaders (Khan, 2009). Therefore, the history and culture of this region are overwhelmed with the tales of hard-working farmers and brave soldiers, who provided food and protection to masses in India. Like other agrarian societies around the world, the Sikh community has always shown great desire for hard-working and brave sons who can plough the land during peacetime and fight against invaders during wars (Kaur-Singh, 2008; Purewal, 2010). It weakened the position of women in Sikh community, who under the misogynist patriarchal structure of the mainstream Indian society were considered a burden on their parents (Muller, 1977). Conversely, sons were seen as the source of social security, who were responsible for the care of parents during their old age, and expected to carry family name and perform rites of passage after their death. Sikh men live in a constant struggle to maintain their respect and prove their manliness in family and society at large due to these high expectations. From their childhood boys are expected to learn their role in family and society and construct their masculinity as 'providers' and 'protectors'. As explained by Ranjit, 38, man, Barcelona, "I still remember the strong voice of my grandfather when he used to scold me for my small mischiefs and tell me *Banda ban ja* (be a man) or *Bandeya wale kamm kar* (act like men). For me 'born as a male child' the most important task was to learn to 'act like men'." Over the past three centuries generation after generation Sikh men have taken on the task of learning to 'act like men' in their own unique ways and contexts and the process remains continuous till today.

The Sikh community is the fourth largest religious group in India after the Hindus Muslims and Christians. According to the Indian census of 2011, Sikhism has 20.8 million followers in India, which represents 1.72% of its total population (i.e. 1210 million). In addition, more than two million Sikhs live abroad in more than 50 countries, which constitutes the Sikh diaspora (Garha and Domingo, 2017). The Sikh religion was founded by the first Sikh guru -Nanak Dev- in the second half of the 15th century and spread by his nine successors. After the death of the tenth guru -Gobind Singh- in 1708, the religious scripture *Adi Granth* was venerated as eternal Guru. Sikhs around the world call the religious scripture '*Guru Granth Sahib*' and treat it as a living guru and seek it for guidance and spiritual wisdom. Sikh gurus strongly believed in gender equality and gave a very respectable position to women in religion and society (Kaur, 2010, 2014). In fact, the Sikh religion emerged as a reaction against the exploitative practices of other existing religions namely Hinduism and Islam (Grewal, 1969, 2009), which were exploiting poor peasant class and women through religious rituals (rites of birth and death) mostly based on misogynistic laws and practices. To get rid of the caste system and give a respectable position to women, at the time of the creation of Khalsa sect in 1699, the tenth Sikh guru gave a common surname of 'Singh' (meaning lion) to all men and a common surname of 'Kaur' (meaning princess) to all women and declared them as his

own children. Despite the efforts of Sikh gurus, the Sikh community remained a patriarchal society, where men are breadwinners and women are responsible for domestic and reproductive works. This gender-based division of roles facilitated the reproduction of patriarchal practices in the Sikh community during the last three centuries (Jakobsh, 2003). Some authors believe that 'the ideals of the Sikh Gurus have been distorted because their lives and words were recorded interpreted and taught primarily by male elites. Therefore, the gender becomes a complicated and convoluted issue for Sikhism' (Kaur Singh, 2005).

Over the past three decades, the Sikh community in India has witnessed three major changes in its socioeconomic and demographic configuration: first, large-scale emigration of poorly educated and unskilled Sikh men from rural areas of Punjab to the Western countries caused by the failure of agriculture and a drastic reduction in the recruitment of Sikh men in the Indian armed services, which were their traditional occupations; second, the shortage of women in the Sikh marriage market due to selective abortions of female foetuses that were facilitated by the inappropriate use of ultrasound technologies in India (Kaur Singh, 2008); and finally, the dissemination of women's higher education and their insertion in the labour market. These changes have left Sikh men without their traditional jobs and have equipped Sikh women with higher education and financial independence. These unemployed Sikh men (lions), fearing the loss of their status as the breadwinners in the family or brave soldiers in society, began to emigrate at a very young age to the Western countries (including Spain and Italy) in search of jobs. In doing so, they try to prove their manliness by earning huge amounts of money in a short time. However, they do not get decent jobs and remain in the poor stratum of the host societies due to their poor education and lower skills. In addition, to their weak situation in the labour market of the host countries, they are also challenged by the more educated Sikh women (princesses) in their homes. These princesses, who in the past could not emigrate alone, have completed their studies in Punjab and now looking for work or higher education in India or abroad. Unlike their mothers or grandmothers, they are neither limited to domestic work, nor completely submissive to the male members of the family. They want to participate in the decision-making process regarding their own lives and other family and social matters. All these changes have posed new challenges for men to reproduce patriarchal practices in their private and public spheres.

In this paper, my initial argument is that the aforementioned socio-demographic changes in the Sikh community can shake the foundations of the patriarchal structure of the traditional Sikh society and endanger the socio-demographic reproduction of the Sikh community in India and the Sikh diaspora. In previous research, the construction of masculinity in the Sikh community has not received significant attention from social scientists. Existing studies have focused on the role of military recruitment (Kohli, 2016), land ownership and property (Chopra, 2004), presence in social media (Gill, 2012), caste issues (Lum, 2016) and the symbols of Sikh masculinity, such as the 'turban' (Mandair 2005; Gill, 2014, Chanda and Ford, 2010). However, studies on the construction of masculinity in the new countries of the Sikh diaspora, such as Spain and

Italy, are scarce (Lum, 2016). The main objectives of this paper are: first, to explore the expectation of masculinity in the Sikh community in Spain and Italy; second, to examine the effect of the socio-demographic transformation in the Sikh community in India on the construction of masculinity in the Sikh community in both countries; and finally, to analyse the transformation of gender roles and its impact on the socio-demographic reproduction of the Sikh community.

1. MASCULINITY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

While explaining the concept of 'doing gender' West and Zimmerman (1987: 127) postulate that 'gender...is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category'. Therefore, for men their gender identity is rooted in their performance of masculinity. Several authors have defined masculinity as socially and historically constructed phenomenon, rather than a result of genetic or biological differences between men and women (Sedgwick, 1985; MacInnes, 1998; Clatterbaugh, 1990; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001; Hibbins and Pease 2009). In other words, masculinity is better understood as what men do or are supposed to do then what they are (Kimmel, 1994; Morgan, 1992; Beynon, 2002). According to Connell (2005), masculinity only exists in contrast to femininity, so it does not exist in a culture that lacks a prescribed set of roles for men and women. It 'consists of those behaviours languages and practices existing in specific cultural and organizational locations which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine' (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). Men always remain in a constant pressure to act to the role prescribed to them because the gender roles are predefined by society. Therefore, for men denying all other behaviours and practices that are considered as effeminate become an essential part of their gender construction. The level of masculinity depends on the upbringing, family background, schools, labour market, socioeconomic status and culture in which boys learn the male role through observation and feedback and become men (Edley and Wetherell, 1995).

In relation to the Sikh community, Connell's theoretical framework (1987, 2005) on gender is very relevant, since it integrates the concepts of 'patriarchy' and 'masculinity' in the theory of gender relations, which are the most important characteristics of the Sikh community. Her concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', which relies on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, defines what it means to be a dominant man in a society. She asserts that hegemonic masculinity is "constructed in relation to several subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women" (Connell, 1987: 183). It is the most socially sanctioned form of masculinity that subordinates other types, and it functions as the standard of masculinity that men follow and identify with psychologically (Ibid). In this theory, the most important aspect is the hierarchical nature of masculinities that reinforces the domination both within and between genders. According to Connell (2005a), different historical periods had a certain type of hierarchical set up of masculinities in all

human societies. In the colonial period, the imperial powers had created a masculinity scale to classify their subject groups into masculine 'martial races', such as the Sikhs, Rajputs and Gorkhas, and effeminate groups, such as Bengalis in India during the British Raj. In American society 'marketplace masculinity', which is based on the ability of men to buy tangible goods, is used as a standard definition of manhood against which other forms are measured (Kimmel, 1994: 124). It leaves many other groups with limited purchasing power, such as poor men, blacks, and women, in a subordinate position.

Some scholars have criticised the dualism of hegemonic/subordinate masculinities to explain the complexity of gender power relations. In his article, Demetriou (2001) introduced the notion of "hegemonic masculine bloc" to eliminate this dualism. He suggests that a form of masculinity that is capable of reproducing patriarchy is in a constant process of negotiation, translation, hybridization and reconfiguration. It implies that hegemonic masculinity is capable of transforming to adapt to the specificities of new historical conjunctures. He stresses that 'the hegemonic bloc changes in a very deceptive and unrecognizable way through negotiation, appropriation, translation and transformation of what appears counter-hegemonic and progressive into an instrument of backwardness and patriarchal reproduction' (2001: 355). Later Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reformulated the concept of hegemonic masculinity by 'incorporating a more holistic grasp of gender hierarchy that recognizes the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of hegemonic groups and that appreciates the mutual conditioning (intersectionality) of gender with such other social dynamics as class race age sexuality and nation' (as cited Messerschmidt, 2012). In recent research, some authors described hegemonic masculinity as 'a set of values established by men in power that functions to include and exclude and to organize society in gender unequal ways, which combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities differential access among men to power (over women and other men) and the interplay between men's identity men's ideals interactions power and patriarchy' (Jewkes et al., 2015: 113). Although hegemonic masculinity is the most idealized and desired type of masculinity, it is not available to all men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Men who enjoy hegemonic masculinity are also more prone to the crisis of masculinity with the loss of the role of breadwinner and their status in the family (Cowards, 1999). In this sense Connell (2005: 54), states "masculinity becomes vulnerable when for whatever reason gender performance breaks down." Despite its criticism, the reformulated concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) offers a solid theoretical framework for understanding the nature, form and dynamics of male power in the Sikh community, which is affected by caste and class differences.

In the Sikh community, masculinity also known as *mardangi* in Hindi/Punjabi, is directly related to men's ability to meet their household needs and have control over women (wife, unmarried sisters and daughters). In the process of construction of masculinity Sikh boys are expected to learn skills that make them capable of earning a living and to have control over women in their family. As Connell (2005) claims that each historical period and society have a certain hierarchical configuration of masculinities, the upper caste *Jatt* Sikh men, who still own a large part of land and property in Punjab, represent

the standard hegemonic masculinity in the Sikh community. All other caste groups measure their masculinity by comparing them with *Jatts*. The manhood of a *Jatt* Sikh man in Punjab is measured through his ability to plough the land and his influence in the social and political spheres (Chopra, 2004: 44). The turban, which is also an important symbol of the religious and cultural identity of Sikhs (Chanda and Ford, 2010: 462), is a symbol of their pride and manhood for the upper caste Sikh men.

Using the concept of hegemonic masculinity, this paper examines the construction of masculinity by Sikh men in Spain and Italy. It focuses on the challenges facing Sikh men in constructing their masculinity due to the changing socio-demographic conditions in the origin country and a different social context in the host society. The fear of not fulfilling the 'role of man' assigned to them by society may lead to a crisis of masculinity for Sikh men and affect the socio-demographic reproduction of the Sikh community in Italy and Spain.

2. SIKHS IN ITALY AND SPAIN

In Spain, the first Sikhs entered in the late 1970s (Santos Fraile, 2013), but their numbers were relatively small and concentrated in the La Rioja region of Spain (López-Sala, 2013). A large-scale influx of young, unskilled and poorly educated men to Spain began in the late 1990s. According to the National Statistical Institute (INE), in 2018, the size of the Sikh population in Spain was 26.2 thousand¹, of which two-third were men of working age. They settled mainly along with the Mediterranean coast of Spain. Currently, the autonomous community of Catalonia has half of the Sikh population and ten of the total 21 gurudwaras (Sikh temples) in Spain (Garha and Domingo, 2017). After Catalonia, the autonomous communities of Valencia, Murcia and the Balearic Islands have a considerable number of Sikhs. They are mainly engaged in the catering, agriculture, and construction sector and they have a very low socioeconomic profile (Garha and Domingo, 2019).

The pioneer Sikhs entered Italy during World War II (Bedi, 2011), but their large-scale immigration began in the early 1990s (Garha and Domingo, 2017). In this influx a large number of young men with little education and skills entered Italy in search of manual jobs, regularisation of their legal status and opportunities for permanent settlement. It established Italy as an important destination in the Sikh diaspora. In 2018, after the United Kingdom, Italy had the highest number of Sikhs (according to the estimates provided by the respondents about 70% of the total Indian immigrants are Sikhs i.e. approximately 100 thousand) in Europe. The sex-ratio (males per female) of the Sikh population has always been in favour of men due to the predominance of men in the total influx. Men outnumber women in all provinces of Italy. Most Sikh women entered

¹ This data was collected by using the surnames (Singh and Kaur) information provided by INE in Spain.

Italy with family visas, as wives or daughters of the immigrants. The Sikhs are mainly concentrated in Lombardy and Lazio regions of Italy. In Lombardy, the province of Brescia, Bergamo and Mantua are their main destinations while, in Lazio region, they are concentrated in the provinces of Rome and Latina (Garha, 2019). Their main occupations are dairy farming, agriculture, and manual jobs in small-scale food processing, leather and metal industry (Sahai and Lum, 2013).

When compared to other destinations in the Sikh diaspora (such as the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States) that attract high skilled workers or students, Italy and Spain are new destination for low skilled Sikh emigrants. In both countries, most Sikhs belongs to the first or one and a half generation. They have a very low level of integration into the host societies due to the remarkable cultural differences (language religion and education) with the host population and lower education. At the same time, they maintain regular contact with their country of origin and with the Sikh population in the diaspora through their strong transnational networks (Garha and Papparusso, 2018).

3. DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork for this paper was carried out over a period of three years (2015-2018). The ethnographic research method, where the researchers observe and interact with the participants of a study in their real-life environment, was applied to gather information on the construction of masculinity in all importance spheres of life of the Sikh immigrants in Spain and Italy, such as their houses, gurudwaras (Sikh temples), public spaces and work places. In addition, 64 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with Sikh immigrants in Spain (26) and Italy (22) and some of their relatives (parents, spouses or children) in Indian Punjab (16). The interviews were conducted in seven cities in Italy (Brescia (11000) Rome (9100) and Latina (7000), and Spain (Barcelona (8500) Girona (3500) Valencia (2500) and Murcia (1150)), which has a considerable number of Sikh immigrants. In India, interviews were conducted in Kapurthala, Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts in the Doaba region of Punjab, which is the homeland of most Sikhs living in Italy and Spain.

The respondents in both countries were selected using the snowball sampling technique and matched-sampling methods was used to select respondents in India. For those interviewed in Spain and Italy, the eligibility criterion was that a person must be a Sikh, over 16 years of age and live permanently in either of these two countries. In India, the respondents were close relatives of the immigrants in Spain or Italy. The interviews were conducted with a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire. The immigrant respondents were asked to express themselves on the following topics: family history, migration process, main causes of migration, life in the country of destination, attitude towards gender roles, current socioeconomic condition and future perspectives. The relatives of immigrants interviewed in India were asked to explain their role in the migration process and the consequences of immigration on their lives. The inter-

views were conducted at the usual place of residence of the respondents in one of the following languages: Punjabi or English, thus making the interview as convenient as possible for the respondents.

For a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), all of the interviews were coded in the Atlas.ti computer programme. After transcribing the interviews, following the steps mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006) for the thematic analysis, the topics that were highlighted by the respondents were searched and coded with some initial codes. Subsequently, the families of the initial codes were formed to classify information related to a topic in one place of all interviews. This prepared the primary data for analysis. Subsequently, patterns and themes related to the construction of masculinity were sought in all interviews and several quotations were selected to present different views. Finally, a report was prepared on the general pattern and trends with respect to the gender construction in the Sikh community in Italy and Spain.

4 .EXPECTATIONS OF MASCULINITY IN THE SIKH COMMUNITY IN ITALY AND SPAIN

Before studying the construction of masculinity by the Sikh men in Italy and Spain, it is imperative to explore what it means '*to be a man*' or '*expectations of masculinity*' in the Sikh community in Spain and Italy. Currently, most Sikh men in both countries were born and raised in India. Their early life in the rural areas of Punjab, where the social structure is highly patriarchal, has a very strong impact on their ideas regarding gender roles and the position of men and women in society. The young boys, who have immigrated with their parents, learn their gender role by observing and imitating their parents in home and other community members in social spaces, such as Sikh temples. At the same time, under the influence of host societies, they develop diverse and sometimes contradictory ideas about 'masculinity' and the gender roles assigned to them by their society.

Broadly, there are four main bases on which the Sikh men in both countries construct and measure their masculinity: physical and psychological strength, moral character, economic and political power, and the degree of control over women. First, masculinity has been seen as directly related to the physical strength of men. Tall and muscular men are considered more masculine when compared to others (short fat slim or disabled men). These others are always mocked because of their physical appearance, and struggle to construct their masculinity. Harman, 24, man, Brescia, says that "in our society strong, muscular and tall men always gain more attention and respect compared to slim short or fat men, who are often bullied by others." In the Sikh community, participation in combat sports, such as wrestling, weight lifting, tug of war and *Kabaddi*, and some risky behaviours like entering into bodily fights with other men and working excessively are also considered manly attributes. Moreover, physical appearance is considered as a very important aspect of the normative Sikh identity due to the domi-

nance of the *Khalsa* tradition. Long beard and turban are considered as masculine traits for Sikh men and often clean shaved men are categorised as effeminate. As stated by Gurnaam, 56, man, Barcelona, "men with turban and beard are complete men. All others [clean shaved men] are like sheep and goats, they should not be called as men". In addition to the physical appearance, Sikh men are expected to be psychologically stable and less expressive. They are expected to be emotionally tuff and ready to fight for their values. Major, 34, man, Barcelona, says that "real men do not cry for small things and accept life's challenges with a smile. They keep their promises and do not hesitate to die for their honour."

Second, in the Sikh community, high moral character is considered to be an essential ingredient of masculinity. Sikh men are expected to have qualities, such as truthfulness, honesty, kindness, fidelity, faithfulness to their religion and respect for others. Sikh history and folk music glorify the saints and warriors, who had demonstrated high levels of morality during the peace and war times. Harnam, 35, man, Murcia, explains that "real men have faith in god and do not cheat anyone. They are kind and helpful to others. Several times they have sacrificed their own lives in saving the lives and honour of others." Sikh religion strictly prohibits men for having sexual relationship before marriage. Instead, all men are encouraged to marry Sikh women of adequate age and remain faithful to her throughout their lives. Jeet, 32, man, Rome, affirms that "real men always remain faithful to their partner. They treat all other women as mothers, sisters or daughters. Throughout our history, Sikh warriors have sacrificed their own lives while saving the lives and honour of women from other communities".

Thirdly, as in the Sikh community, most Sikh men emigrated for economic reasons, success in the labour market has become an important symbol of masculinity. In fact, for most of them, 'emigration' is a way to demonstrate their manliness to their families and society in large. An easy adaptability in harsh working conditions and a willingness to perform all of the tasks entrusted by employers are considered masculine traits in the Sikh community in Spain and Italy. Malkit, 36, man, Latina, states that "I consider only those individuals as men who can do any job that is offered to them. Real men do all jobs offered to them. They do not cry doing hard-work. If one does not earn money, how he could perform his role of breadwinner of the family." The remittances are also used as a measure of manliness. In the Sikh community, immigration is a family project in which all family members contribute financially to pay for the journey and irregular entry in Europe. Therefore, it is considered a responsibility of the immigrant men to remit money to the family and help other family members (younger brothers) to emigrate. Pritpal, man, 48, Barcelona, explains that "the real man accepts his responsibility for his family and never abandons them after arriving in Europe. Caring for parents and siblings is a duty of all men who emigrate to the Western countries." Some Sikh men believe that 'money' is a very important factor in earning respect in society. For them, their main duty is to earn money with a decent job, which help them prove their worth in the family and society. Gurjit, 32, man, Barcelona, affirms that "If you do not have money, big house and luxury cars, nobody respects you in the society. Even girls only like rich men, the poor men have no value in the marriage market. A man is valued by what

he owns". Others believe that for a man to spend on friends or doing charity for social or religious causes are manly characteristics. Sikh men are expected to be generous with others. Self-centred men are categorised as less manly than others. Kamal, 33, man, Madrid, says that "money is not something important for real men. It comes and goes, but real men do not lose their character in difficult situations."

The manliness in the Sikh community is also directly related to the ability to have a large social circle. An active social life and participation in the community affairs are essential characteristics of dominant Sikh men. They invest a lot of time and resources in expanding their social network that not only provides a high social status, but also give essential support in search of employment and housing, and facilitate the process of regularisation of legal status in the host countries. Kuldeep, 28, man, Valencia, affirms that "the power of a man can only be measured through his social circle. Real men like to have a large social circle that supports them to gain power in society and politics."

The fourth important factor in measuring the level of masculinity is the degree of control over women. In general, Sikh men are expected to have full control over women (wife, sisters and daughters) in the family and society. In almost all Sikh families, men assume the role of the head of the family, due to the strong patriarchal structure of the Sikh community and the early migration of men in Italy and Spain. As breadwinners and sponsors of their wives and daughters, men feel that this is their legitimate right to be the head of family and women should respect their decisions in all family matters. As explained by Manjit, 41, man, Brescia, "A man must have total control over his family. If one does not have control over his wife or daughters, he cannot be considered a 'man'. Rather he should be called as '*Joru Ka Gulaam*' (wife's slave) or '*Namard*' (impotent)." Conversely women are expected to follow men's decisions and to serve his needs. Many young Sikh men still feel that it is the perfect arrangement to run a family due to a clear division of gender roles in which men work outside and women are engaged in domestic chores. They perceive it as normal behaviour, since, according to them, men are more prepared to work outside and women are good housemakers. Mandeep, 28, man, Murcia, affirms that "men are more capable of working outside and women are good at taking care of the house and children. If both go out for work, who will take care of kids? It is not good for family life."

In addition, heterosexuality is considered an important marker of masculinity in the Sikh community. Therefore, all other sexual minorities are considered as effeminate. In principal, Sikhs are encouraged to treat all human beings equally, regardless of their sexual orientation, but still being gay in the Sikh community is considered a taboo and a disgrace to the whole family. In general, gay men do not reveal their sexual orientation in public and they are humiliated if discovered by others. They live in disguise and, sometimes even forced to heterosexual marriages by their parents to avoid shame and maintain the honour of the family. Unlike gay men, heterosexual men often exhibit pride in exaggerating their ability to sexually satisfy women as a measure of their manhood. As explained by Jagtar, 38, man, Rome, "A person can only be considered a man if he

can satisfy a woman during sexual intercourse. Otherwise, he is not a man. He can be gay, eunuch or trans, but not a man".

In short, the desired masculine figure in the Sikh community in Italy and Spain is a tall, muscular, hardworking, caretaking, responsible, faithful, socially and politically active, economically prosperous, dominant heterosexual man, who is capable to play his role as provider and has total control over women in his family. Most Sikh men aspire to have these characteristics and measure their level of masculinity with this desired masculine figure. However, the recent socio-demographic changes in the Sikh community and the foreign context in which Sikh men live pose several challenges for the construction of masculinity by following the standards mentioned above. In the next section, we will discuss the challenges for the Sikh men in the 'economic sphere' and the 'control over women' in Italy and Spain.

5. CHALLENGES OF CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY IN ITALY AND SPAIN

5.1. Challenges for Lions

The gender roles assigned to Sikh men force them to remain active in the economic sphere and provide resources for their families. Traditionally, agriculture has been the main occupation for Sikh men. The ability to plough the land and produce food in large quantities was a way to demonstrate their manliness in society. After the independence of India in 1947, the government of India launched a pilot project named 'Green Revolution' in Punjab. In the coming decades, agricultural production peaked and Punjab became the bread-basket of India due to the mechanization of agriculture and the use of high-yielding varieties of seeds and chemical fertilizers. The commercialization of agriculture strengthened the patriarchal structure of the Sikh society by accumulating economic powers in the hands of men. However, at the same time the mechanization of agriculture reduced its dependence on muscle power, which left large number of unemployed youth. After agriculture their second main occupation was to serve in the armed forces. With the creation of Khalsa in 1699, Sikh men were encouraged to join the armed services that promoted the hyper-masculine culture in Punjab (Kaur Singh, 1995). Later under the British rule their categorisation as a 'martial race' and their recruitment in the army in a disproportionately large numbers helped Sikh men to maintain their dominance in society. The pride that was associated with the position of a soldier and the good income received in the form of land or cash provide the basic ingredient for the construction of masculinity for many generations of Sikh men. The dominance of the Sikh men in the Indian armed forces remained until 1980, but, after the battle of succession in Punjab in 1984, the recruitment of Sikh men in the armed forces was drastically reduced. It left a large number of Sikh men without their traditional jobs. In addition, the political crisis exacerbated the economic conditions in Punjab and no investments were made to establish industry and create employment opportunities in

the state. At the same time, the neoliberal shift in India's economic policies in the 1990s destroyed the public education system and vocational training centres in Punjab, which deprived the youth from higher education and good health services.

The failure of agriculture, lesser recruitment in the armed forces and the lack of infrastructure (education and vocational training facilities) led to the creation of a pool of unskilled and poorly educated young men who were not eligible for the government job in India or a professional job abroad. Therefore, most of them began to emigrate to the Western countries to earn a living. Even in the Western countries, they are denied legal access and work permits due to less demand for unskilled labour. Therefore, most of them emigrated illegally and began to settle in the countries where the process of regularisation was comparatively easier, such as Spain and Italy in Southern Europe. The dangers that are involved in illegal migration are also seen as opportunities for young Sikh men, who were struggling to show their manliness to their families and friends in India. Therefore, they did not hesitate to undertake risky journeys with the help of human traffickers to enter Europe or North America at any cost. Balkar, 47, man, Punjab, explains that "when irregular immigrants return to India after regularising their legal status, they tell their stories of illegal emigration with great pride to show their courage and manliness, and to earn respect of their parents, younger siblings and friends."

In Spain and Italy, where the lives of irregular immigrants are full of hardships, new immigrated Sikh men struggle to construct their masculinity as providers. In both countries, irregular immigrants cannot work in the formal labour market and do not have social protection at the time of unemployment or illness. They struggle to earn money for their own survival and that of their families left behind in India due to the lack of job opportunities. The difficult journeys undertaken by Sikh men to enter Europe do not help them improve their socioeconomic conditions and demonstrate their worth in the family through remittances. It puts a huge psychological stress on their minds. Tarlok, 29, man, Latina, says, "I do not have paper and work. I cannot remit money to my family. I feel very depressed because my wife has to work in India to feed our son. I am not fulfilling my duty as head of the family".

Most irregular Sikh men have no other choice than to work in the shadow economy for their survival due to restrictions in the formal labour market. The lack of labour contracts, which safeguards the rights of workers in European countries, make them vulnerable to exploitation by their employers who pay them extremely low wages and treat them as slaves. Young Sikh men that are trapped in these working conditions lose their self-esteem and sometimes ended up feeling helpless and depressed. Malkit, 29, man, Brescia explains "We do not have money and respect in the host society. Employers here treat us like slaves because they know we do not have papers [legal work and stay permit]. It gives us a sense of impotency." Even after regularisation of their legal status, they remain occupationally segregated in some low-paid jobs in agriculture and services sectors due to their limited skills and knowledge of the host languages (Italian or Spanish). They remain in a constant threat of losing their role of breadwinner of the family. This affects their upward social mobility and financial stability considered to be

the essential elements for the construction of the Sikh masculinity.

The factors that are central to the construction of masculinity (i.e. land ownership upper caste and job in armed services) in the Sikh community in India lose their importance in Spain and Italy. Especially, upper caste Jatt Sikh men, who have enjoyed a high social status in India, feel the burden of proving their masculinity in this new context where they lack their social and economic capital. As underlined by Jagjit, 27, man, Latina, "In Punjab we were landowners. The workers from Bihar and UP used to work on our fields. We had respect in the society. Here we work under ill-mannered managers who treat us like slaves. It damages our self-esteem." The turban and long beard, which are the important symbol of Sikh masculinity in India, have also lost their importance in Spain and Italy. Here, young Sikh men hesitate to wear a turban as they believe that it will reduce their chances of getting jobs in the hospitality and sales sectors, which are their main occupations in both countries. Manpreet, 24, man, Valencia affirms that "In Spain, it is very difficult for a man with a turban to get a job in the service sector. Restaurant employers do not hire people with long hairs or beard."

In summary, the irregular legal status, the low level of education and skills, the lack of social capital and the poor working conditions in the host labour markets are negatively affecting the construction of masculinity of young Sikh men in Italy and Spain. They feel unable to provide for their families and to give them social protection from poverty and other social risks. Most of them live in the nostalgic memories of their past life in the rural areas of Punjab, where they were land owners and had high socioeconomic status in society.

5.2 Masculinity and losing control over princesses

Over the past three decades, the shortage of women in the reproductive age groups and the spread of higher education among women has begun to change the position and aspiration of Sikh women in India and abroad. The Sikh community has begun to witness a shortage of women in the marital and reproductive age groups due to the widespread practice of selective abortion of female foetuses (Dasgupta, 1987). According to the 2011 India census, the sex-ratio of the Sikh population was 110.7 men per 100 women, which was very far from the overall sex-ratio (around 105 boys for 100 girls). The second major social change in the Sikh community is the growing number of women with higher education. The dependent women of the traditional Sikh society are becoming independent and want to have total control over their own lives. This desire to become independent sometimes clashes with the interests of men (husband, father or brothers) in the family and society, who in the name of family honour expect the total submission of women (wife, daughter or sister) to their authority.

5.2.1 Sikh men (as husbands) in Italy and Spain

In the new destinations of the Sikh diaspora, such as Spain and Italy, where the influx of Sikh migration is mainly made up of single men of marital age, most of them

depend on the marriage market in Punjab to search for their partner. The number of mixed marriages (one partner from the Sikh community and the other is from the host community or other non-Sikh immigrant group) in the Sikh community is very small due to their low socioeconomic status in host countries and the restrictions imposed by religion (the Sikh code of conduct prohibits marriages with non-Sikhs). The shortage of women in marital and reproductive age groups have made difficult for Sikh men in Spain and Italy to find a suitable partner for them in Punjab. Sikh men in Spain and Italy find themselves in a relatively unfavourable position in the Sikh marriage market due to the growing interest among Sikh women in Punjab to marry men settled in Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. As explained by Gurpal, 27, man, Latina, "In Punjab, most women want to marry men who are settled in Canada, the United Kingdom or the United States of America. Sikh men in Italy, Spain, Portugal or Greece have no value in Sikh marriage market."

Currently, girls have more options to select partners for them due to the excess of men in the Sikh community. The lower education and socio-economic status of Sikh men in Southern European countries reduce their chances of being on their preference list. For Sikh men, who have undertaken dangerous journeys to enter Europe and worked hard to establish themselves in Europe, rejection in the marriage market of their community is a matter of shame. They are afraid of being left behind, which affects their self-esteem. Jeevan, 29, man, Rome, explains "For the last three years, my family could not find a suitable bride for me but they did not get anyone. When they tell girl's family that I live in Italy, they refuse. I am afraid I will die *Shada* [a derogatory term for a single man]". Even when they manage to marry a girl in Punjab, they struggle to face a partner who is more educated and not submissive to them. The education gap with their partner makes them insecure about their position in family. They began to feel a lack of authority in the family, which they perceive as an attack on their masculinity. In this sense Gagandeep, 34, man, Latina states "now in Punjab girls are very demanding. They do not listen to their in-laws and if husband says something, they threaten him with divorce. The day is not far when men have to follow the orders of their wives as men do in Europe or Americas." The more educated wives do not hesitate to remind them about their low education and demand participation in all family decisions. Most of them advice others to avoid marrying a girl, who is more educated than themselves. Harjinder, 31, man, Barcelona says "I advise all single men to not marry a 'Master' girl [with Master's degree]. It is better to stay celibate than marry them. They treat their husbands like crap and make them feel inferior throughout their lives."

Similarly, the entry of women into the labour market has also changed the balance of power between men and women in Sikh households. Working women have begun to demand their rights of leisure and participation of men in domestic and reproductive work, which often creates domestic conflicts. Most Sikh men find it embarrassing to do domestic work (such as cleaning, cooking or washing), when their wives work outside. They take it as a direct attack on their masculinity. Even when some of them do some domestic work, they are afraid of being labelled as less-manly by their friends and family. Kulbir, 38, man, Rome, explains his situation as "my wife works in a gift shop. I do all

domestic-work cleaning, washing or cooking, when she was away. But in our community, if you do domestic work people make fun of you. So I don't tell anybody about this not even my parents because they have a very traditional thinking."

The Sikh men who immigrate after marrying a Sikh girl in Spain or Italy feel enormous stress to prove their manliness by making their place in the host country. In traditional Sikh society, it was perceived as very disgraceful for Sikh men to live with their spouse's family. Therefore, when newly married Sikh men enter Spain or Italy to live with their wives, they feel ashamed to live with their in-law's family. Obtain a permanent job and rent an apartment become their primary tasks. In Italy and Spain, due to the language differences, newly arrived Sikh men find it difficult to have good jobs and rent an apartment. Moreover, if wife is working outside, they are expected to do domestic work, which hurts their manhood. Tarinder, 29, man, Barcelona, explains "I immigrated with a family visa to join my wife in Spain. Initially, it was very difficult to adapt to this new situation... I used to avoid Sikh people because they often see me with disrespect... Now I have a decent job and a beautiful apartment. Now I feel comfortable with my male ego."

5.2.2 Sikh parents (fathers) in India and abroad

The attitude of Sikh parents regarding the education of girls and access to the labour market has changed in India and abroad. Currently, most Sikh parents in Punjab and in the diaspora are proud to send their daughters to universities and professional colleges for higher education and vocational training, instead of saving money to pay dowry at the time of their wedding. For fathers, the respect earned in society by giving a huge amount of dowry in the past has been replaced by the pride gained in the form of daughters, who managed to obtain a university degree or a position in the labour market. Kirpal, 48, man, Madrid, says "My daughter has completed her nursing course. I am very proud of her. As a father I have fulfilled my duty." The dissemination of higher education has changed the opinions of young women regarding the gender roles assigned to them by society. They have begun to demand their rights and participation in decisions regarding their lives. In this situation, the same fathers who have spent resources to educate their daughters and make them independent feel deceived by their desire to take control of their lives. It is common to find fathers who struggle to cope with these issues and blame modernization or social-media for spoiling their daughters. Mukhtiar, 47, man, Barcelona, explains, "I sent my daughters for higher education. As a father I have done my duty. But now it's up to them to maintain my respect in society. If they do not follow my decisions now, then it will be a punishment for a father who supported his daughters to fulfil their dreams."

Higher education for girls has also posed a problem in having equally educated matches in the Sikh community. As the Sikh religion does not allow exogamy and the number of highly educated girls is increasing rapidly compared to men who migrate at an early age without completing their studies, for the parents of highly educated girls it has become very difficult to find suitable matches for their daughters in the Sikh community. Gurmukh, 49, man, Barcelona, express his concern as "I have two well-educated

daughters. Both are in the age of marriage. I am looking for good matches in our community, but it is very difficult to find well-educated men in the Sikh community. I am worried about their future." Sometimes, parents feel compelled to marry their daughters to less educated men, which creates generational conflicts in the Sikh families.

In Spain and Italy, cohabitation is not allowed in the Sikh community for both sexes, but the rules are much rigid for women compared to men. Gurlal, 54, man, Barcelona, explains that "if a girl leaves her family to enter in living-relationship, it is a matter of shame for her whole family. No Sikh father, who has some self-respect, will allow this to happen." Therefore, if a girl tries to enter in a cohabitation relationship, she is considered as a matter of shame for the whole family. Mostly her father and brothers takes this as an attack on their self-respect and masculinity. This situation often leads to conflict between more educated girls and their conservative parents, which sometimes results in honour killings of daughters, who try to choose their partner against the will of parents.

Control over women also includes control over sisters by elder or younger brothers. In the Sikh community, it is the responsibility of brothers to take care of sisters throughout their lives. For Sikh men any disrespect shown to their sister is a direct attack on their self-respect and masculinity. They do everything possible to ensure the safety and well-being of their sisters, which at times translates into excessive control over their freedom to eat or drink whatever they want, dress as they wish and be in the company of a person they like. Simran, 28, man, Barcelona, says that "If your sister does inappropriate things such as drinking alcohol, wearing short cloths or spend time with guys in night parties, you have all rights to punish her, even if she is elder than you. As a man, it is your responsibility to have control." More educated young girls do not like the interference of their brothers in their lives, which often leads to clashes in the family.

In summary, rapid change in the education level of Sikh women and their desire to take control of their own lives, creating huge problems for men, who have grown up in a highly patriarchal society, and suddenly find themselves in this period of transition.

CONCLUSIONS: CHANGING GENDER ROLES AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTION CRISIS

In the Sikh community, gender has always been a very complex issue. Sikh religion places women at par with men and give them a very respectable position in family and society at large. All Sikh gurus were firm believer of gender equality and considered men and women as two sides of a coin. But their teachings of universal equality are not yet fully internalized and applied in the Sikh community. Due to the spread of women's education in the last two decades, they have started to demand their rights and freedoms, which is shaking the foundations of patriarchal structure of the Sikh community.

As a socio-demographic reproduction system, the Sikh diaspora is a very dynamic entity. Demographically, it grows with the emigration of Sikhs from their homeland Punjab or from the natural growth of the Sikh population living in different countries around the world. While, socially it evolves firstly with the regular emigration of Sikhs from Punjab, who carry the social norms and values of Sikh culture and spread them in Sikh diaspora and secondly, with the efforts of the people living in the diaspora, who teach these social norms and practices to their children born in the countries of destination or migrated with them at young age. The regular addition of new members from the homeland and the transfer of social values and norms to the young generations makes possible the socio-demographic reproduction of the Sikh community in the diaspora. The smooth function of this socio-demographic reproduction system requires that the gender roles assigned to both men and women should be adhered and the social structures and institution are strengthened. This interdependence also highlights that the socio-demographic reproduction is prone to the changes in the homeland and in the diaspora. The recent changes in the social norms and demographic structure of the Sikh community in India has begun to transform the gender roles that can affect the patriarchal structure of the Sikh society and jeopardize its reproduction in their homeland and in diaspora.

The shortage of women in the marital and reproductive age groups in the Sikh community in India can affect the demographic growth of the community in the new destinations of the Sikh diaspora because most of the single men in diaspora depends upon the homeland marriage market for their marriages. The shortage of expected brides can lead to a situation where a large number of Sikh men remain single throughout their lives. Even if they marry to girls from other communities ignoring the Sikh code of conduct, it will not be possible for these new mothers to teach Sikh social norms to the ensuing generation, which will affect the social reproduction of the community in the diaspora.

The spread of women's higher education has begun to transform the family and social environment in the Sikh community. Changing gender roles in the Sikh families, where more educated women have begun to demand their rights and freedoms, has an enormous impact on the construction of masculinity in the Sikh community. Sikh men, who were born and brought up in patriarchal households, feel challenged regarding their authority in families and social spaces. It results in clashes of interests between men and women, which sometimes leads to rupture of families. The weakening of the institution of family has serious consequences for the social reproduction of the Sikh community around the world.

Now the time has come that the Sikh men have to give up their full authority in their family and social spaces, and accept the participation of women in all spheres of life. For a smooth functioning of socio-demographic reproduction system and construction of masculinity (by fulfilling the *expectations of masculinity* in the Sikh community) in their new socioeconomic context, they have to negotiate their position in their families and society on more egalitarian terms. In this concern, Sikh men born in Italy and Spain,

who are more exposed to the host society in which gender equality is fully respected, can play an important role in the creation of an egalitarian Sikh community, free from all kinds of gender biases.

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