

**GURU GRANTH SAHIB: A UNIQUE SOURCE OF MASS COMMUNICATION****Dr. Deepak M. Shinde, Director & Head, School of Media Studies, S.R.T.M.University, Nanded.****Mr. Ravideep Kaur Madan, Research Scholar, S.R.T.M.University, Nanded-5****Abstract**

This paper primarily gives a brief outline of the Sikh ideology in context of women and her status in society. This is illustrated in the Bani of Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus and Bhagats as is recorded in Guru Granth Sahib. The object is to describe how this ideology differs from the earlier traditions, and to highlight how Guru Nanak completely rejected the world-view of earlier impressions about women and her status in society, religion, family and instead gave a new ideology combining the spiritual life with the practical life of man, based on his own revelation. This research paper focuses on the situation of women in the ancient India and medieval India and how the message of equality of women and her importance in every sphere of life was mass communicated through Guru Granth Sahib.

Various authors in Shri Guru Granth Sahib, have written about various issues which women at that time were facing including inequality in all fields, whether marriage, decision making or her life in case her husband is no more and was merely considered a thing of loot during wars and surrender of kingdoms. Various authors of Guru Granth Sahib have thrown light on how a woman should be looked at by the society and what important role she has to play when it comes to religion or day to day life.

Guru Nanak was very much clear about the importance of equality of all human beings, be it man or woman, of any age, cast or tribe. There was an intense need of a strong system of mass communication in any form, which could communicate and enlighten the misguided masses belonging to the contemporary religions of that day. Guru Granth Sahib utilizes a unique approach to Mass Communication, by using the language of the local people and avoiding something as difficult as Sanskrit and other such languages which were beyond the understanding of a common man and woman, many of whom were prohibited from attaining education because of their birth in another clan meant for fighting or selling, etc. This adaptation of local language eliminated the role of the middle man who in the form of priests misguided the common man and extracted huge loads of wealth and money in the name of God. Also, the common people could never understand and adhere to the real message of the religion. Since the Bani of Guru Granth Sahib not just belongs to one author, but is a compilation of other authors, there is a notable visibility of Marathi, Brijbhasha and other local languages of the places where Guru Nanak visited to collect the Banis.

**History & Background**

The background of this study dates back to the days when the position of women had no dignity in society, The social, religious and political background of the country had no place of dignity for her. She was considered as an object of lust, and the one who can mislead a man towards the doors of hell, and away from God. She was considered just as an object of bearing the kids so as to expand the family. Education, Decision making, participation in religious activities, visiting the holy places of worship, even reciting the name of God was prohibited for her. She was considered as an object of possession, for reproducing off springs and an important part of the loot in case of wars and surrenders. This in turn made her a burden on whichever family she was born to and, societies began to curse the families. This further led to other evil practices like female foeticide, dowry, sati and johar. She was bound to live inside the four walls of her home and if needed to come out, needed to wear a veil in front of her face.

Bhakti movement only tried to restore women's status and as well questioned certain forms of domination. One of the great Bhakti Movement figures was Mirabai, a female saint-poet. Immediately after the Bhakti movement, Guru Nanak, the first Guru of Sikhs, preached equality between men and women who openly advocated social justice and equality between men and women. He advocated that women be allowed to lead religious ceremonies and gatherings and to lead collective hymn singing called Kirtan or Bhajan. Also women could become members of religious management committees and could as well lead armies on the battlefield. That they deserve to have equality in marriage and in equality in Amrit (Baptism). Other Sikh Gurus and included Banis of Bhagats also give the same message preached against the discrimination against women.

### Terminology

Exegesis is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially a religious text.

**Sati:** Quite an old but completely defunct custom which was prevalent among some communities in which the widow was burnt alive on her husband's pyre. Initially it was a voluntary act but later it was forced upon the widow to do so.

**Jauhar:** This also refers to the practice of voluntary immolation of wives specially of defeated Rajput rulers and warriors in order to avoid capture and molestation by the enemies. on honor.

**Purdah System:** This refers to the practice among some communities where women were required to cover their bodies and faces so as to hide their body and form, which further enforces restrictions on free mobility and and interact freely .

**Devdasis:** This refers to the religious practice in some parts of southern India where women were married to idols, deity or temple and were known as devdasis who were further sexual exploited.

Female Infanticide and Female foeticide: Killing of the female fetus in the womb of the mother is called female feticide. The practice has been prevalent since olden times in the form of female infanticide,

### Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study is that Guru Granth Sahib played and still plays a unique role in enlightening the masses:

1. About the dignity, importance and equality of women in society.
2. Those women are not a piece or object to reproduce offspring's, but has equal status as a man in front of God.
3. That women have right to practice religion
4. That women have right to live even after the husband dies.
5. Those Women should not be forced to die if the husband dies.
6. Those Women are not objects of lust or commodities to be taken away in wars and fights.
7. That Woman are not sinful and need not be ashamed of themselves and thus cover their faces in public, specially in religious places.
8. That Dowry is a false practice and need not be practiced.
9. Condemnation of Female Foeticide

### Research Methodology

The study is based on Scriptural Analysis in the sense of Qualitative Content Analysis of Shri Guru Granth Sahib and various exegesis and humanistic studies of Guru Granth Sahib by various scholars.

Since Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a voluminous collection of hymns of different language, therefore, instead of doing complete exegesis from the beginning, it was considered to use the available exegesis done by experts and scholars over the years. For the study we have taken 10 interviews of the eminent person in the community and as per there views we have concluded the paper.

## Reference about Women in Shri Guru Granth Sahib-

### 1. Enlightening the value and Importance of women at every stage and sphere of our life (Praise of Women):

Guru Nanak Asa Di Var  
mehlaa 1.  
bhand jammee-ai bhand nimmee-ai bhand mangan vee-aahu.  
bhandahu hovai dostee bhandahu chalai raahu.  
bhand mu-aa bhand bhaalee-ai bhand hovai banDhaan.  
so ki-o mandaa aakhee-ai jit jameh raajaan.  
bhandahu hee bhand oopjai bhandai baajh na ko-ay.  
naanak bhandai baahraa ayko sachaa so-ay.  
jit mukh sadaa salaah-ai bhaagaa ratee chaar.  
naanak tay mukh oojlay tit sachai darbaar. ||2||

Ang.473

First Mehl:

According to the First Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak in Asa di War, in Guru Granth Sahib, A woman becomes his closest friend, and through woman, his offspring come in to being. In case his woman, wife dies, he feels the longing for her company, and may seek another woman's company, since he feels quite incomplete without her. He is bound to woman as a son, friend, brother and more as a husband. Why then do we call her bad, since if woman was not there, no kings and kingdoms would have been there?

The entire human race would come to a standstill. God has granted her the special powers to bear an offspring which a man cannot bear. So when we respect the kings with pride, how can we disrespect a woman, or think of her as an object which leads man to a sinful path, when it is he who has given birth to various kings of the day and will do so.

Such an important species of mankind, woman, only can bear another woman. She only can give birth to another woman, who will again give birth to others including kings and other women. If there are no women, there would be no one at all. The race of mankind will come to an end. So, why do we disrespect such an honored species by God and nature and make her a mere object of lust satisfaction during times of wars and consider them as means of generating offspring only.

The society should provide equal , in spite more benefits and the status of respect should be even more for a species of mankind who play such a vital role in man's life and without whom, man doesn't feel he is complete and can never have a family .

Therefore women should not be prohibited from reciting Om and should not be restricted to visit religious palces, shrines. Only One, Extremely powerful, True Almighty can sustain without a woman, since he himself created all men and women and various other species. That mouth which continually praises Lord only is beautiful and shall be radiant in the Court of true Lord. ||2||

### 2. Marriage is an equal partnership which constitutes of love and sharing between husband and wife.

mehlaa 3.  
Dhan pir ayhi na aakhee-an bahan ikthay ho-ay.  
ayk jot du-ay moortee Dhan pir kahee-ai so-ay. ||3||

Third Mehl:

Ang788:

According to the Third Sikh Guru Amar Das Ji, merely by making promises in public and sitting together does not make a man and woman , a husband and wife. Only those husbands and wives are in a true relationship, and deserve to be called Husband and wife, if they know understand and respect each other well and love each other so well that they are one light in two bodies, having similar understanding . They are not said to be ||3||

### **3. Women irrespective of cast and creed have an equal right to participate in religious ceremonies and congregation.**

sireeraag mehlā 1.

Siree Raag, First Mehl:

aavhu bhainay gal milah ank sahaylrhee-aah.

Come, my dear sisters and spiritual companions; hug me close in your embrace.

mil kai karah kahaanee-aa samrath kant kee-aah.

Let's join together, and tell stories of our All-powerful Husband Lord.

Ang 17

First Mehl

All my dear sisters and spiritual companions, lets come and hug each other. Let's embrace each other and sing the praises of our All –powerful Husband Lord. This correctly indicates that right from the beginning of Sikhism , right from the first Guru , it was important and clearly indicated that women can be , should be a part of religious ceremonies, singing and reciting hymns.

### **4. Stress is laid on faithfulness with one's spouse, therefore condemning , prostituteism, polygamy, etc.**

Bahgat Namdev

Ang 1165

ghar kee naar ti-aagai anDhaa.

par naaree si-o ghaalai DhanDhaa.

jaisay simbal daykh soo-aa bigsaanaa.

ant kee baar moo-aa laptaanaa. ||1||

Bahgat Namdev

Ang 1165

The one who abandons his wife of his home and keeps courting other women is termed as a blind fool. By doing this, he is behaving like a parrot who is pleased to see the simbal tree, but that tree only becomes the cause of his death.

### **5. Condemnation of Rape and other brutalities committed against women by the Mughal Ruler Babar.**

tilang mehlā 1.

Ang 722-723

jaisee mai aavai khasam kee bancee taisrhaa karee gi-aan vay laalo.

paap kee janj lai kaablahu Dhaa-i-aa joree mangai daan vay laalo.

saram Dharam du-ay chhap khalo-ay koorh firai parDhaan vay laalo.

kaajee-aa baamnaa kee gal thakee agad parhai saitaan vay laalo.

musalmaanee-aa parheh kataybaa kasat meh karahi khudaa-ay vay laalo.

jaat sanaatee hor hidvaanee-aa ayhi bhee laykhai laa-ay vay laalo.(Page 723)

khoon kay sohilay gavee-ah naanak rat kaa kungoo paa-ay vay laalo. ||1||

saahib kay gun naanak gaavai maas puree vich aakh masolaa.

jin upaa-ee rang ravaa-ee baithaa vaykhai vakh ikaylaa.

sachaa so saahib sach tapaavas sachrhaa ni-aa-o karayg masolaa.

kaa-i-aa kaparh tuk tuk hosee hindusataan samaalsee bolaa.  
 The body-fabric will be torn apart into shreds, and then India will remember these words.  
 aavan ath-tarai jaan sataanvai hor bhee uthsee marad kaa chaylaa.  
 sach kee banee naanak aakhai sach sunaa-isee sach kee baylaa. ||2||3||5||  
 Nanak speaks the Word of Truth; he proclaims the Truth at this, the right time. ||2||3||5||

Ang 722-723

Tilang, First Mehl:

Here, the first Guru, Guru Nanak describes the time period when Babur had attacked India. He describes as well as condemns the various atrocities done by the Mughal rulers and their soldiers against common people specially women. Guru Nanak Dev Ji describes that I am reciting however I am being guided by the Supreme Lord, Husband. He describes the times of those days as Babar; the Mughal ruler has brought a marriage party of sin, from Kabul, and is demanding our land and its people as a wedding gift. False hood is the hero of the day and modesty and righteousness have vanished. The marriage rites are conducted by the satan, which suggests rapes and molestation were a common thing done by the army of Babur, where the Qazis and Brahmins could not do anything to save them. Both the muslima and Hindu women are remembering their respective verses and Gods, but both are facing similar atrocities. In this marriage party, the wedding songs are those of murder and blood instead of saffron is sprinkled.

Amidst these, Guru Nanak is singing the praises of Lord since he believes that the Lord is true and true is his justice and he who has created this is watching all this. Gurus also suggest the coming and going of Babur and signs of another ruler are also given.

#### **6. Condemnation of Sati Pratha, a practice of burning wives on the funeral pyre of their husband.**

salok mehlā 3.

Ang 787

Shalok, Third Mehl:

satee-aa ayhi na aakhee-an jo marhi-aa lag jalaNniH.  
 naanak satee-aa jaanee-aniH je birhay chot maraNniH. ||1||  
 mehlā 3.

Third Mehl:

bhee so satee-aa jaanee-an seel santokh rahaNniH.  
 sayvan saa-ee aapnaa nit uth samHaalaNniH. ||2||  
 mehlā 3.

Third Mehl:

kantaa naal mahaylee-aa saytee ag jalaahi.  
 jay jaaneh pir aapnaa taa tan dukh sahaahi.  
 naanak kant na jaanee say ki-o ag jalaahi.  
 bhaavai jeeva-o kai mara-o Dhoorahu hee bhaj jaahi. ||3||

Shalok, Third Mehl:

Ang 787

Here the Third Guru, Guru Amar Das has referred to the immoral practice of Sati, known as Sati Pratha. He has enlightened the principle of being a true sati. He says that, one needn't call those widows as satis who simply burn themselves with their husband's pyre and make an end to the suffering. Instead, only those are in real term accounted to be Satis who bear the shock of separation and die with it.

He further specifies the qualities of a true sati such as those who abide their Lord's order in modesty and contentment, rise in early hours, serve their Lord, praise and meditate on the True Almighty.

This practice of widows burning themselves on the funeral pyre is done in sheer ignorance. There is also a reference here that if they were never in an understanding with their husbands, then there is no need to burn themselves now as even by burning or not, they can never meet their husbands again

### 7. Condemnation of the Dowry Ritual :

Siree Raag, Fourth Mehl, Second House, Chhant:

Ang 78-79

har parabh mayray babulaa har dayvhu daan mai daajo.  
 har kaprho har sobhaa dayvhu jit savrai mayraa kaajo.  
 har har bhagtee kaaj suhaylaa gur satgur daan divaa-i-aa.  
 khand varbhand har sobhaa ho-ee ih daan na ralai rala-i-aa.  
 hor manmukh daaj je rakh dikhaaleh so koorh ahaNkaar kach paajo.  
 har parabh mayray babulaa har dayvhu daan mai daajo. ||4||

Siree Raag, Fourth Mehl, Second House, Chhant: Ang 78-79

Here the Fourth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Ram Dass Ji refers to the veil practice of Dowry System, or better known as “Dahej Pratha”, here referred as “Daaj”. This hymn or Shabad is in the form of a request from a daughter to her father that during her farewell, her father should give her the name of the Almighty Lord and wisdom to practice religion and spirituality as her Dowry and wedding gift. The daughter further requests that O’ Father, please give me the Lord’s name as my wedding gown, that Lord’s name or gain in spiritual wisdom.

Wherever, I will go, this glory of Lord’s name will never be diminished and I can carry it anywhere. This is a much better and desired gift as compared to the materialistic gifts given in dowry which are merely to show, how rich and capable one is, and to show off one’s false egotism and false pride and something which will not sustain throughout all times. This clearly depicts that the Fourth Guru, has clearly indicated in Guru Granth Sahib that any kind of materialistic dowry is not what will sustain a daughter’s happiness in life, instead it is the freedom to practice spirituality which she desires.

### 8. Condemnation of Female Foeticide:

barahman kailee ghaat kanjkaa anchaaree kaa Dhaan.

fitak fitkaa korh badee-aa sadaa sadaa abhimaan.

Ang 1413

Shalok, Third Mehl:

Here the Third Guru of the Sikhs reflects on Female Infanticide or Foeticide, these days.

He says that if a Brahmin kills a cow, or a female infant and takes offerings from an evil person whose has earned the money through evil deeds, then this Brahmin, even though he belongs to a priestly family, will be cursed with leprosy of curses and will be always bound with ego and false pride. Hence, The Third Guru, Guru Amar Das once again condemns another socially practiced evil of the society.

### Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that the Guru Granth Sahib plays an important role in enlightening the society regarding the importance of women and how and why she deserves to be treated with equality, respect and dignity.

It is very important to note that at that time when any of the means of mass communication were absent, the above messages in context of women were regularly read, recited and were available at many houses in the form of the holy books. Therefore Guru Granth Sahib through various authors condemns the evil practices of tyranny against women in all senses and communicates the message of equal and dignified status of women in society.