

Inheritance – ਵਿਰਾਸਤ
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All societies have issues of siblings quarrelling about the rightful ownership of an inherited property, whether it is money, car, house, or business. This is particularly so when there is no will left by the parents. But even if there is a will there can be arguments amongst the siblings as to how the property should be shared, especially when it concerns a house or a business. The arguments can lead to family distrust, friction, disharmony, and eventual breakup. Siblings who have been left out of a will due to the wishes of the parents, can sometimes legally challenge it in a court of law, but there must be an extraordinarily strong and compelling reason.

Traditionally, in the Indian culture, women have been and are still thought of as second-class citizens. Because daughters will eventually get married and are thought of as *belonging* to another family, they are not included in the parents will; it is the son(s) that would inherit the family property. When daughters are married, they are given a dowry, which is thought of as an alternative to an inheritance. The families expect daughters to forfeit their right to any claim to inheritance and are even sometimes required (in India) to sign a declaration relinquishing their right before they get married. Daughters are also usually reluctant to claim their right to the inheritance due to the wishes of the family or due to the fear of losing family connection and causing discord.

Even though the Sikh Gurus advocated equality for both men and women, this disparity towards the daughter's right to the equal share of the ancestral property is still being exercised by some families within the Sikh society.

Daughters are the flesh and blood of the parents, just as sons are. From the moment they are born, they are *coparcener* and have as much right (*hak*) as the sons to the ancestral property. So, why is there discrimination against daughters? Is it because the sons 'carry' the family name through generations to come, and are given more favouritism? Is it because the parents do not want the ancestral property to go to the daughter's in-laws? Or is it because a daughter's gender is simply not that of a male? Whatever the reason may be in discriminating against daughters, it is morally wrong.

Usurping someone's rightful share is an unjustly act of seizing another's property. To usurp the share of another's property, and treat it as if it belongs to them, and to use it as such is *haraam* (sinful).

The following Shabad in the Guru Granth Sahib p. 141, clarifies:

ੴ ॥
Mahalaa Pehilaa ॥
First Mahalaa
ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੂਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥
Hak Paraiaia Naanakaa Ous Sooar Ous Gaai ||

Meaning: Naanak, just as eating pork is sinful for a Muslim and eating beef is sinful for a Hindu, taking another's rightful property is also sinful.

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਾਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥
Gur Peer Haamaa Taa Bhare Jaa Muradhaar Na Khaaai ||

Meaning: The Guru, our spiritual guide only gives surety if this sinful act (misdeed) is **not** conducted.

Muradhaar (ਮੁਰਦਾਰ): Means sinfully appropriating another's property.

Khaaai (ਖਾਇ): Means conducted.

ਗਲੀ ਭਿਸਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਈਐ ਛੁਟੈ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

Galee Bhisat Na Jaaieeai Chhutai Sach Kamaai ||

Meaning: Such misdeeds are not the way to reach *heaven (sahej, bliss)*; only practice of *truth (virtues)* in life can bring *moksh (union)*.

Galee (ਗਲੀ): Means misdeeds.

Bhisat (ਭਿਸਤਿ): Means *sahej, bliss*.

Chhutai (ਛੁਟੈ): Means to be free from misdeeds – *moksh (union)*.

Sach Kamaai (ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਇ): Means practice of *Divine virtues*.

ਮਾਰਣ ਪਾਹਿ ਹਰਾਮ ਮਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

Maarann Paaeh Haraam Meh Hoi Halaal Na Jaai ||

Meaning: Adding '*spices*' (untruthful talk) to justify *haraam* (acquired through sinful means) property will not make it *halaal* (righteous).

Maarann (ਮਾਰਣ): Means untruthful talk.

Haraam (ਹਰਾਮ): Means sin.

Halaal (ਹਲਾਲੁ): Means righteous.

ਨਾਨਕ ਗਲੀ ਕੁੜੀਈ ਕੁੜੇ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥੨॥

Naanak Galee Koorreeeiee Koorro Palai Paai ||2||

Meaning: Talk of deceit will only gain deceitfulness within.

Koorreeeiee (ਕੁੜੀਈ): Means deceit, lies.

Koorro (ਕੁੜੇ): Means deceitfulness.

Whether the usurped property is the rightful share of inheritance that is due to the daughter, son or belonging to another family member, or even that owned by someone unrelated, it is an act of *haraam* (sin).

Although, this article has focused primarily on the problem concerning the share of the inheritance of family ancestral property for daughters, it is equally applicable to usurping of property belonging to someone who is a stranger. The above shabad by Guru Nanak encompasses all forms of usurping, whether it is the inheritance of family ancestral property or any other form of property belonging to another person.

Guru Nanak's message within the Shabad is for us to understand that by unjustly acquiring property belonging to another is as sinful as a Muslim eating the meat of a pig and a Hindu eating the meat of a cow. Forcefully taking another's property is not acceptable to the Guru and mere talk will not bring *sahej, bliss*, only practicing of *Divine virtues* can Parmaatma grace *union*. Such folly talk will not make the misdeeds become righteous. Guru Nanak ends the Shabad by saying that when people talk of deceit and lies, these misdeeds then become the nature of the individual.

The Gurus do not want their Sikhs to lie and be deceitful, let alone usurp property belonging to another, which would be a sinful act. Sikhi is to live a life of a householder, to be socially involved, serve the community, and make *Naam Simaran* (Internalisation of *Giaan, Divine Virtues - Gunn*) part of the daily life.

Of course, there are families who do practice equality for all genders, and quite rightly they should be applauded. There will also be people making counter arguments as well, but if we dig deep down and try to grasp the root cause of disparity shown against the daughters, we may then be able to comprehend and understand Guru Naanak's message within the above Shabad.

Guru Naanak has eloquently expressed his message regarding equality of women within the following Shabad, SGGS, p. 473:

ਮ: ੧ ॥ ਭੰਡ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡ ਮੰਗਣ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੇਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥ ਭੰਡ
ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥ ਸੇ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ
ਉਪਜੈ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੇ ਸਜਾ ਸੋਇ ॥ ਜਿਤੁ ਮੁਖਿ ਸਦਾ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਭਾਗਾ ਰਤੀ
ਚਾਰਿ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਤਿਤੁ ਸਚੈ ਦਰਬਾਰਿ ॥੨

Mahlaa 1. Bha(n)d Jammeai Bha(n)d Nimmeai Bha(n)d Ma(n)gann Veeaahu. Bha(n)dahu
Hovai Dostee Bha(n)dahu Chalai Raahu. Bha(n)d Muua Bha(n)d Bhaaleeai Bha(n)d hovai
Ba(n)dhaan. So Kiau Ma(n)dhaa Aakheeaai Jit Ja(n)meh Raajaan. Bha(n)dahu Hee Bha(n)d
Upjai Bha(n)dai Baajh Na Koe. Naanak Bha(n)dai Baahraa Eko Sachaa Soee. Jit Mukh Sadaa
Salaheeaai Bhaga Ratee Chaar. Naanak Te Mukh Ujle Tit Saachai Darbaar.

First Mahlaa: Through a woman life is born, through a woman life is conceived, through a woman engagement and marriage is solemnised. Through woman friendship is made, through woman generations come. When a woman dies another woman is sought, through woman relationships are made. Then why call woman bad when kings are born from her? Woman are born of her, without woman there can be no one. Naanak, only Karta Purakh is not born of woman. Those (persons) who always praise Parmaatma are blessed with imbued beauty. Naanak, their faces are radiant in Parmaatma's court.

The above Shabad is self-explanatory, except for the two last lines, which needs further clarification in terms of spirituality, ਜਿਤੁ ਮੁਖਿ ਸਦਾ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਭਾਗਾ ਰਤੀ ਚਾਰਿ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ
ਉਜਲੇ ਤਿਤੁ ਸਚੈ ਦਰਬਾਰਿ ॥੨

Meaning: Those who always praise/sing (internalise) Parmaatma's Gunn (virtues) are blessed with enlightenment (imbued beauty). Naanak, they are graced with Parmaatma's union (radiant) within the mind(court).

If Guru Nanak has conveyed equality towards women, then should not we as his Sikhs also follow his teachings?