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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S PERIODICAL OF PUNJABI LANGUAGE IN THE FIRST HALF OF TWENTIETH CENTURY IN THE PUNJAB

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### ABSTRACT

After the annexation of Punjab by the Britisher, some social reform movements and social reformers made a significant contribution to the spread of education in Punjab. Education gave women a chance to develop and they entered the field of journalism like men. Magazines, journals and newspaper in various vernacular languages like Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi started to publish in Punjab in the last decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century in there were many periodical of different languages like as *Tehzeeb-i-Niswan*, *sartaj*, *Noor-Johan*, *Saheli*, *Zeb-un-Nisa*, *Sohag*, *Muslima of Urdu*, *Jalvid-Shakha and Panchal-Pandita of Hindi*, *Bhujangan Patter*, *Komal sansar Istri*, *Istri Rattan*, *Istri Samchar*, *Istri Satsang*, *Istri Sudharak*, *Fuleran*, *Azad Bhain*, *Istri Chikista Darpan*, *Sughad Saheli and Punjabi Bhainof Punjabi*. These periodicals were published for many specific purposes. All these periodical had their own aims and objectives but all these periodicals made significant contributions to upgrade women, giving them equal right with men and raising awareness among them about their duties and rights.

#### Objectives:

- To Identify women's periodical of vernacular languages in the early twentieth century in Punjab.
- To trace out the aims and objectives of different women's periodicals of Punjabi language.
- To highlight the role of women's periodicals in creating awareness among women.
- To examine the role of women's periodical in uplifting the status of women during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the spreading of education and social reform movements there were change in the status of women in Punjab. Education motivated them to enter in the public sphere. During early twentieth century women started to enter in the field of journalism. As a concept of new women arose they become the editor of various journals, magazines and newspapers. Muhammadi Begum was the first women editor in Punjab who started a women weekly newspaper from Lahore in Urdu named *Tehzeeb-e-Niswanon* 1st July 1898. This magazine was started with an aim to emancipate the women. She started her work with her husband Mumtaz Ali. It was printed on Rifah-e-Aam Press, Lahore (Tuhina Islam 2016: 22). In the early twentieth century in Punjab there were many vernacular periodicals (mainly Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi languages) started to published. Urdu Periodicals such as *Satraj* (1925) from Lahore, *Noor Jahan* (1926 and 1929) from Lahore and Amritsar, *Saheli* (1927) from Lahore, *Zeb-un-Nisa* (1934) from Lahore, *Suhag*(1940) from Lahore, *Muslima* (1932) (Jalandhar), *Sharif Bibi* (1910) from Lahore and many others were released. These periodicals created awareness among women (Tuhina Islam 2016:22).

Hindi periodicals *Jalvid-Shakha* (1910) and *Panchal Pandita* (1898) were published from Girls' Higher Secondary School, Jalandhar. *Jalvid-Shakha* used to publish writings of School and College girls students or activities conducted in Schools and Colleges (Personal interview). Another periodical *Panchal Pandita* of the college was published under the editorship of Lala Devraj and Lala Badri Das. This paper was started in the year 1990. Its annual subscription was Rs. 2. This journal was published for the development of women/female race (K.M.V. Heritage Org.). Like Hindi and Urdu's there were many magazines, journals and newspapers were published in Punjabi Language, with the motive of equal rights for women, uplifting their education standards, to fight against social evils, and to make women independent. The aim of all these journals were influenced by editors' perception of urgent problems of society and politics. Some magazines have political agenda, some revolved around social evils and some had economic or cultural agendas (Hayer 2010: 38). In 1923, *Azad Bhain* magazine was started which was a significant magazines concerned with women issues. Its name suggested that its motive was to make women free or independent. *Azad Bhain's* means an independent sister, or woman free from bonds of society. It was a monthly journal published from Rawalpindi. It was started with a view to present not only with the views of women's

on current social problems and national issues but also the views of common man. Many articles of this magazine talked about the women's issues, a comparison was made between ancient women and British age women. The magazine was divided into various sections in news section and entertainment section in which stories of great men and women were also published regularly. (Azad Bhain 1924 :37-38). *Bhujhangan patter* was started in the year 1918 (18 *Harh*) in the supervision of editor Lavleen Kaur and Manager Milap Kaur. It was published by Bhujangan Council of Kairon (Amritsar). The monthly journal was published every first week of the month. Its annual subscription was Rs. 10/- and it was printed on Gurmatpress. (Azad Bhain 1924 :7). *Komal Sansar* monthly magazine was also published from Amritsar under the editorship of Dharam Kaur Amrit, B.A. News of all issues for the women (from childhood to mid-life aged) were published in this magazine. Although particular year of this journal could not be traced, but it is evident that it was printed in the decade of 1930-40 (Ashok 1962 :237). *Khalsa Suanni* was a weekly journal, printed on Gurmat Press, Amritsar. The journal had been printing from Dec 15, 1927 to Oct 1938. Its editor was Mrs. Niranjana Kaur. It described the status and social position the contemporary women and the problems faced by them. The newspaper advocated the women's education. It referred the virtues and vices of the house wives. This journal also gave the reference the establishment of Khalsa Kumari College in this magazine. Although this magazine was mainly published the news related with Sikhism but also published various news related with politics and social evils (Khalsa Suanni 1927:1).

"*Istri*" was a monthly magazine which started from Amritsar in 1932. Its editor was Sardarni Parvaal Kaur and co-editors were Sardarni Raghvir Kaur, Bibi Ratan Kaur and Bibi Inder Kaur (Istri 1932 :28). Its name *Istri* (Women) describes that it was a magazine for the women by the women. News on all subjects related to women were published in the magazine *Istri*. Its annual cost was Rs 4 in the nation and Rs 6 in abroad. Various educational institution' academic syllabus was also published in it. Businessmen were requested to give the commercial advertisement. It was the best source of income for the magazine. The purpose of this magazine was that the editors were influenced by the problems of the Punjabi society. It was believed that the contemporary magazine started for the women was putting a great significant contribution. No other source was doing effort to realize and reduce the pain and social problems of the women of Punjab. So these editors started a new model for the women of Punjab who wanted to be secure and independent. The main objective of the magazine was to aware people which type of education for the girls was necessary, medium of education should be Punjabi and it helpful for the household jobs they do. Articles on various schools and women education were published in this magazine regularly. (Istri 1932 :50-51). *Istri Chikitsa Darpan* started to publish from Amritsar in 1921 (*Bikrmi Samvat* 1978) by editor was lady Dr. Kirpal Kaur. Its name suggests that this monthly magazine published by a Women related diseases curing hospital focused to eradicate the pain faced by women race. Its annual cost for nationals was Rs 2 and Rs 21 for island residents. The magazine was published by Akal Press, Amritsar (Istri Chakitsa Darpan 1921:1). In May 1936 monthly magazine *Saheli* was started by Smt. Prem Kaur Prem From Peshawar. Its editor was Kulwant Kumari Naaz. Its annual subscription was Rs. 2 from common people, Rs. 10 from rich, and Rs. 100 per copy for queens, kings. It was monthly magazine was published to provide a great knowledge about educational, religious, political, academic and given entertainment filled articles to Punjabi women. Kitchen knowledge was also given in it. This magazine opposed the Purdah system (Saheli 1936 :1). *Istri Ratan* monthly magazine started to publish from Lyalpur in 1925. It can be named in English as "Jewel Woman". It was a monthly magazine filled with illustrations. Its annual and six monthly subscription was Rs. 4 and 2 respectively. To enhance its readership people were encouraged to multiply its members. A free annual subscription was given to the person who used to make 10 new members of it. (Istri Rattan 1925 :2). It was published for social, political and educational purpose. It was a pro-British magazine and it openly welcomed new policies British Govt. Female education started by British Govt made Punjabi girls more aware about the women

education, their society and politics. *Istri Ratan* started advocating the need of women education. All political events with illustration were regularly published in this magazine. The main purpose of this magazine was to make people aware about the new policies of British Govt. (Istri Rattan 1926 :27-30). *Istri Samachar* was a weekly journal was published from Kota. Its name meant "Women News" which suggests the purpose of publishing of this magazine all news related to women. The journal started to publish from 1908 onwards. Its editor was Bibi Rajinder Kaur. Its main objective was mental development of the women and aware them about the numerous social evils. The reference in this magazine was given about the establishment of Purdash College in Patna (Istri Samachar :4) This magazine presented examples of widow re-marriage, inter-caste marriages and appointment of British teachers for the teaching of girls in the schools. *Istri Samachar* also published advertisements for the requirements of female teachers for teaching girls. The magazine made Punjabi women to think about how to progress and how to support their husbands (Istri Smachar 1909 :15-17).

*Istri Satsang* was a fortnightly magazine of Punjabi Language, which started in 1909 from Amritsar. The magazine gave importance to highlighted political, social and cultural events. It also focused on the widow remarriage (Istri Satsang 1909: 4-8) The main objectives of *Istri Satsang* were to bring the fruits of civilization such as women education, universal brotherhood and concept of new woman. It tried to touch every social evil of those times prevailing in the society such as Sati System, status of the widow women, child marriage and superstitions. (Istri Satsang 1909 :7-9) In this newspaper articles regarding Sikh Gurus and great reformers were published on regular basis. The newspaper welcomed the British policies and appealed People to adopt these developing policies (Istri Satsang 1909 :3-5) Another journal *Istri Sudharak* which English meaning is Women Reformer was started in 1924 from Amritsar. It was published two days in a week. Its editor was Dushtaman Kaur. Its annual and semi-annual total subscription was Rs. 3 and Rs. 2 respectively (Istri Sudharak November 1924: 1). In 1926, its subscription was increased to Rs. 5 and Rs. 3 respectively, which was reasonable according to the other magazines (Istri Sudharak January 1936:3). Its main objective was to make aware women about the various women reforms that was undertaken in the many parts of India. It proposed to accelerate the immediate socio-cultural and political changes in India and peace of many holistic developments. The journal also gave reference of the establishment of Women Tract Society in Amritsar 1927 and its aims were published and widely discussed in this magazine regularly (Istri Sudharak March 1927: 3). This magazine also gave many references of various foreign women who came to India as well as Punjab and working for women. This magazine served as a forum for creative dialogue and exchange of ideas and proposed to enable its readers especially women to understand the roots of social problems and aware them to participated in the process of social change and also learn to use the heat of ideological conflict to reinvent tradition (Istri Sudharak January 1926: 3)

'*Fuleran*' was started in 1926 from Amritsar. Its annual subscription was Rs. 2, which was very reasonable. It was easily available being cheaper. The newspaper adopted the policy of debate between upholders putting social and political and cultural issues. By this readers were got held more benefit have two views on an issue. Its main objective was to aware women's about the women conferences in India such as All India Women Conferences (AIWC), Women's India Association (WIA) and Viyah Sahayak Sabha Lahore (Fuleran June July 1926: 30-32). Articles of foreign women were regularly published by the editors in this magazine. Women were appealed to help men's in religious and political affairs and requested them to send articles and poems for publication of this magazine (Fuleran October 1926 :33). *Punjabi Bhain* was a monthly magazine which was published in Punjabi from Ferozepur. *Punjabi Bhain* meaning in English Punjabi Sisters or Sisters of Punjab. The Magazine was started in 1907 from Sikh Girls Higher Secondary School, Ferozepur. Bhai Takht Singh and his wife Bibi Harnam Kaur were its editors. The newspaper regularly published from 1907 to 1920. It was closed from 1920 to 1930 due to financial crisis.

It was restarted in 1930 and continued upto 1933(Punjabi Bhain February 1932:22). Its annual subscription was Rs. 3. It had foreign subscribers and the magazine received articles from European and other nation's women occasionally. In the beginning It was only an educational magazine which motivated people to educate their girls. But after some time it changed its agenda and added social evils and political events in its main objectives. With its successful career of one decade it won the admiration and approval of a number of its contemporary magazines such as Partap, Khalsa Advocate and others This Journal was cultivated the minds of women with two goals to raise them a level where they could be suitable companions for their husbands and the second was to prepare them mentally well-developed to play their dual role. This magazine threw light on topics liked as agriculture, health, education, industry, industry, economics, social, political issues, literature, law and other areas of human life.all the major developments in any parts of India were regularly discuss in this magazine. (Punjabi Bhain May 1914:32-34). *Sughad Saheli* (Wise Friend) was a monthly magazine started from Amritsar. Its annual subscription was Rs. 2 and it was published in Gurmukhi script. Its focus was on the status of women in the society and politics. The articles related to girls education and women's participation in the Sikh Ladies conference of Punjab were regularly discussed in this magazine (*Sughad Saheli* 1917 :4) In the columns of this magazine debates were also published about the right to vote for women. The policy of scholarship distributed to girls by government was published in this magazine. Many political parties which were taking women issues were regularly praised by this magazine. At least this magazine wanted overall development of women in the society (*Sughad Saheli* 1918:20)

## CONCLUSION

Finally, it may be concluded that all these magazines/newspapers were published by women or with the cooperation of their husband. They provided a platform for women to share their ideas and communicate their opinion/emotions. These all magazines were published in the Vernacular (local) language in the colonial era in Punjab to develop the status of women in the society. Various problems of women such as female feticide, child marriage, polygamy, Purdah system were mentioned with their bad impacts on the society.

Women education was promoted in the articles and all magazines have same voice on the issue. These magazines also advocated the place of women in their families for household responsibilities. They gave women readers an opportunity to share their ideas and discuss women issues. These magazines contributed for a bigger change in the private and public life sphere of the women.

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