

Valences of the Dialectic: Un-Inheriting the Religion-Secular Binary in Sikh Studies and Beyond

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ABSTRACT: This is a response by the author Arvind-Pal S. Mandair to the contributors of the Review Forum discussing his work *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (hereafter *RSW*), published in 2009 by Columbia University Press.

I want to begin by thanking the editors of RoSA for generously allowing space for this review forum around *Religion and the Specter of the West (RSW)*. I am also deeply grateful to all the reviewers for their helpful critiques of my book, and especially to Balbinder Bhogal for undertaking the somewhat daunting task of organizing this review forum.

Thus far, *RSW* has elicited a very diverse range of critical responses, as is evident from opinions that have appeared in recent review symposia similar to this one. What intrigues me about these collective responses is that few, if any, have adequately managed to foreground the major organizing strands of the book, namely, the problem of universals, the inherently dialectical nature of 'reform' in modern Sikhism and Hinduism and, related to this, the emergence of agency via forms of enunciation within the Anglo-Europhone categories of the dominant symbolic order (or what I also refer to as repetition). I will therefore begin by: (i) making some clarifications about the structure of the book (responding to Timothy Fitzgerald and Srilata Raman). Following

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that I'd like to address the more specific—and to my mind generally helpful—questions that were raised in the reviews: (ii) does the book re-inscribe categories that are otherwise the target of deconstructive critique, for example, religion/secular, religion/politics, which amounts to constant tensions and ambiguities throughout the book; do these ambiguities not perpetuate the 'linguistic prison of dominant Anglophone categories' (Fitzgerald); (iii) why the book resorts to 'postmodern' philosophy in order to do the critical work of decolonizing the study of religion? Can Asian materials not do this work (Jacob de Roover)? (iv) why is such an important role given to Hegel throughout the book (de Roover, Raman)? I shall conclude in section (v) by answering questions about the role of authority and orality in relation to pre-modern Sikh scriptural commentaries (Raman).

CONTESTING THE DIALECTICAL NATURE OF 'REFORM'

At the heart of this book is a critical analysis of the project of reform enacted by Singh Sabha elites as both response to, and entry into, the dominant symbolic order of European imperialism and the parallel emergence of political Hinduism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The project of 'reform' entailed much more than organizational changes to Sikh society. It also brought about fundamental changes in the Sikh psyche and ontology. That is to say, a different way in which Sikhs (i) imagined themselves to exist in the world and structured relations with others, and (ii) enacted their being in the world and with others, or what I have referred to as repetition/agency/subjectivity. Objectively, therefore, the structure of the book can be seen as the development of a dialectical relationship between the macropolitical (Part I), and the micropolitical (Part II) domains.

Part I (Indian 'Religions' and Western Thought) looks at the macropolitical domain, specifically the invisible structures of power associated with Empire—such as law, language and metaphysics (or ontotheology)—that helped the colonizer to fix and consolidate power by reproducing identity frameworks into regulating hierarchies of dominance and subordination, especially the creation of a public versus private sphere. Part II (Theology as Cultural Translation) looks at the micropolitical aspect of colonialism through the lens of reform movements. Because it operates at the level of the particular, micropolitics is a politics of movement, of resistance to privatization by the creation of voluntary bodies that sought to enter the public sphere, of the juxtaposition of difference and the creation of new identities through shifting political relations between selves.

However, the book goes much further than simply presenting objective historico-phenomenological analyses of the modern reconstruction of Sikh tradition. What complicates this scenario quite severely (and what scholars either forget or repress) is that this scenario of power relations did not just

happen in a historical moment. Rather, it continues to be *repeated* in the way that Sikhs today continue to retrieve the reformist identity as a religious identity within the parameters of the modern social imaginary. This is why the subjective aspect of the book, which I tackle through the question of repetition, and the attempts to *re-enact repetition otherwise* than the politics of religion-making (or identity politics), is so central to the book and why a purely objective, historical framing cannot properly articulate the problem or the desire to rethink it.

What, then, is it about the project of 'reform' that links the colonial, neo-colonial and postcolonial domains, and thus holds together the various parts of the book? The simple answer to this is the movement of the dialectic. Indeed, the question of reform is inseparable from the work of the dialectic. The reformist project as such manifests in the desire of Sikh and Hindu elites to improve, that is, to elevate themselves above their present condition which, from the outset, was assumed to be a condition of lack. The native elites were perceived by the colonizer—and through mutual interaction began to perceive themselves—as lacking religion, language, civilization. They believed they had lost these, and therefore needed to retrieve them from some original source. In other words, the generative force of the ontology that shapes the agency of the colonized is motivated by loss or lack. Its cause is a negativity that stems from a problematic notion of difference—one where the colonizer's own identity as European-Christian is assumed as the basis for defining difference. The native elites' notion of identity (and therefore difference) results from a comparative relation to the colonial (specifically the West/East binary). Although the colonized may desire to overcome this, the association with the colonizer results in a representation of difference in essentially negative terms, as lack or opposition, and by a desire to negate this difference through the movement towards a unified presence that is granted recognition by the colonizer. Hence the agency of the native elites (e.g. the Singh Sabha), based on dialectical movement, continues to be shaped by an imperial or possessive inclination of self to other. Shaped by a form of difference grounded in causal negativity, the reform movements were driven by a politics of negation ('I am Hindu because I am not Muslim/Christian', 'I am Sikh because I am not Hindu', etc.) which consistently positioned bearers of difference (Sikh, Hindu, Muslim) as active agents of change, but simultaneously as bearers of the problematic negativity that the desire inherited from the colonial encounter seeks to eliminate or transform.

Now, when the responsibility for transformative action (reforming agency) rests with the negating class (Sikhs/Hindu reformists, etc.), the active critical potential and accountability of the dominant class is elided, with the result that the apathy of the privileged (British/European) is excused. There is therefore little or no motivation for the colonizing class to engage in any postcolonial transformation 'when this is not presented as a common task responsibly shared by all within the postcolony' (Bignall 2010: 232).

Related to the ontological negativity of the dialectical process is another process that informs the dominant Western view of progressive history-making and is in turn absorbed by the reformist scholars in their various constructions of national histories. When history itself is understood to be driven by the causal negativity of difference and desire, each conceptualized in relation to the transcendent ideal of mutual recognition, the process remains tied to a form of agency grounded in an imperial disposition. This in turn generates social forms (Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj, etc.) that reproduce relations of power structured by the impulse of self-mastery and self-possession, and by relations of desire aimed at appropriating the lacking object (the Tat Khalsa, the Arya, etc.). Any break with this neo-colonial sociability requires us to introduce a genuine historical (and therefore dialectical) discontinuity rather than continue with the progressive process of continuous reconciliation (Singh Sabha history, theology etc. as reconciled with the master narratives and codes of imperial discourse). Only such a discontinuity can inaugurate new kinds of difference and a qualitative change in the kind of sociability that is practiced.

The organizing structure of *RSW* therefore reflects my desire to bring into view the operations of the dialectic not only in past historical moments (imperialism, reform movements, etc.) but also *right here, right now* in the very institutions and practices that comprise the symbolic order of our late modern social imaginary. My broad argument is that the structure of the dialectic frames not only the colonial and neo-colonial but also the post-colonial/post-modern. As I see it, there is a continuity between the colonial and the post-colonial/post-modern, despite the latter's loud claim of having broken with the past. The continuity consists in the perpetuation of the religion-secular binary and the perpetuation of an opposition between (i) contemporary secularism which defines the nature of the public sphere in terms of belief in ontological fullness derived from Christian-European metaphysics or Christianity as the standard religion, and (ii) the construction of religions saddled with a lack. This binary is reincarnated in the postmodern, postcolonial era through the interlinked apparatus of state, media and academia. To bring this continuity into sharper focus was the purpose of the first part of the book. It was designed to show that the dominant symbolic order of the colonial period is not qualitatively different from the dominant symbolic order that is operative today—what Charles Taylor calls the modern social imaginary. Only its form has changed. Non-Western discourses are still faced with the burden of translating into a dominant Western conceptuality. And from this bind stem the basic problems that the book tries to address.

How, then, to bring about a genuine historical discontinuity in the seemingly inexorable cycle of the dialectic? How to break the cycles of repetition driven by the causal negativity of the dialectic? How to effect an alternative repetition, a different kind of subjectivity, that does not reproduce the vicious cycles of identity politics?

My solution to the problem of the dialectic's causal ontological negativity and the process of repetition and history that it drives was to turn, not to Western theoretical sources (which I have explored mainly for the purpose of diagnosing the problem), but to the writings of Guru Nanak. Of course, the Singh Sabha scholars of the colonial period also based their exegetical reformulations on the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. But as I have argued at length in the book, their interpretations were caught within a field of translation governed by Western metaphysics—specifically, a comparative conceptual framework which was central to the colonial symbolic order. Once they began to enunciate within this framework, and therefore by the rules of the dominant symbolic order, they could not avoid reproducing the dialectic. And this is best illustrated in their collective conceptualizations of the figure One or Oneness, which acquired ontological lack in the very moment that these were produced philosophically, theologically and politically in relation to the comparative frame of world religions. For reformist elites in the late nineteenth century, this perceived lack in the Sikh Gurus' conception of Oneness then became the force that drove their desire to prove the existence of God in order to establish a conception of the One that had ontological fullness. Nanak's experience of Oneness, which he translates into language through the enigmatic phrase *ik oankar*, articulates a positive conceptualization of causal difference and creative desire that establishes an alternative reading of the ontological process as actualization (*sargun*), that is at the same time an unfolding of an immanent virtuality (*nirgun*). This ontology helps to actualize a theory and practice of complex relational embodiment enabling multifaceted, heterogeneous and affective forms of subjectivity. By drawing on this alternative ontology it is possible to theorize postcolonial agency and transformative action through a non-dialectical method, that is to say, one that does not accrue lack from the outset. Nanak's ontology of virtual creativity (*nirgun*=hidden/non-present=reality here and now) can only make sense as a materially engaged, employed in the here and now of this world. In doing so his ontology inverts the Real/Virtual binary upon which depends modernity's central claim, by allowing what is virtual (hidden/immanent) to be seen as Real in the actual.

AMBIGUITY OR APORIA?

Fitzgerald's main complaint in his review was that I re-inscribed the very categories that were being subverted. He argues that there is a 'constant tension and ambiguity' throughout the book between my practice of critically deconstructing Anglophone categories—such as religion, the secular, the political, political theology and so on—and my then re-inscribing them elsewhere. For Fitzgerald, such moves imply a 'surrender of principle and practice'. It is, he argues, a mistake to move from a critique of the secular to then find suitable

forms of secularism (*sic*) in the Sikh texts, since it ends up perpetuating the 'linguistic prison of dominant Anglophone or Europhone ways of classifying' despite the intended aims of challenging them. Fitzgerald suggests that we find ways of distancing or quarantining such terms as 'religion', 'secular', 'politics'. And if I read him correctly, the 'new discursive space' that might be opened as a result of such quarantining/distancing, would permanently allow indigenous terms such as *panth*, *quam*, *dharam* and so on to circulate and contest the colonially loaded signification 'religion'.

While I have strong sympathy with what Fitzgerald is saying, insofar as I too seek an alternative discursive space, nevertheless I find it necessary to stress that our differences boil down largely to strategy. Our different strategies are in turn due to the fact we each espouse a different form of logic. As I see it, Fitzgerald's remedy of simply quarantining or distancing problematic categories such as religion and the secular, is uncomfortably close to the logic of non-contradiction (either/or) that undergirds the philosophical logic of identity ($A=A$, $A\neq B$). This particular logic has exerted hegemonic influence in the Western history of ideas in as much as it also constitutes the central law of the dominant symbolic order. Terms such as religion, the secular, politics have set meanings which if adopted lead to certain social practices and consequences thereby perpetuating imperialistic frames of reference. Simply excising these terms from current practice may not be entirely practical because, as a result of colonization, Sikhs, like other social groups, have acquired a bipolar consciousness. One part of this bipolar consciousness consists of the modern imaginary which translates indigenous terms into the dominant (Anglophone) symbolic order. Since the nineteenth century Sikhs have come to imbibe and live with the category 'religion' because their existence became one in which they were required by the law of the dominant symbolic order—without which they could not become part of the modern social imaginary—to enunciate in a manner that recognizes Anglophone categories concepts such as 'religion' or 'politics', *but not* such indigenous categories as *panth*, *quam*, *dharam* and so on. The other part of the bipolar consciousness is a pre-modern imaginary in which terms such as *panth*, *quam*, *dharm* have continued to retain meaning and signification albeit in the relatively privatized consciousness and discourses of the community. Although this pre-modern imaginary is alive and well, it works in subservience to the dominant symbolic order, since Sikhs cede their sovereignty to the law of the dominant language each time they enunciate in Anglophone categories, through what is effectively a 'forced choice'. As a result, Sikhs have come to equate 'religion' with *panth*, *quam*, *dharam* and it is this apparent 'equivalence' that I find problematic since it perpetuates the dialectic of lack.

As I see it, the practice of quarantining by itself would do little more than create a prison within an existing prison for the simple reason that the operations of normative logic will not have changed. The critical practice of quarantining may be fine within the rarified atmosphere of academic scholarship

but I am not sure how it would make any impact in the far more complicated and messy scenarios that most communities live and work in. To give a quick example, in 2004 I became involved as an expert witness in two very different legal cases involving Sikhs. On the one hand, in New York, I had to testify that Sikhs could justifiably claim that the turban worn by male and (in some cases) female Sikhs was a 'religious' item, which of course could only be derived from the presupposition that Sikhism was a religion, one of the many 'world religions'. On the other hand, and roughly at the same time, at the French embassy in New York, I was talking to an advisory group nominated by the then president Jacques Chirac (and indirectly advising a Sikh human rights group working on behalf of Sikhs in Paris in the wake of the French government's ban on wearing religious items in public), that the turban was *not* a religious item, and that *Sikhi(sm)* was not a 'religion', although it had become one through its encounter with modernity. In both cases the claim was perfectly correct, only the context was different. In New York it was more expedient to play up the Sikh tradition's 'religious' characteristics. In Paris it was expedient to claim precisely the opposite.

I cite this example to show that what may appear to some as 'double speak' or 'ambiguity' actually gestures towards a very different logic, namely, the logic of *aporia*. Stated simply, an *aporia* is an irresolvable contradiction, an impossible inheritance. The logic of *aporia* might be stated in the following way: the same attribute can at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject. The same subject can have contradictory attributes at the same time, thereby prescribing a form of life or existence in the world that may not be identical to itself. Aporetic logic derives from the paradoxical structure of time—the fact that each moment must disappear in the very event of its appearing. The challenge presented by *aporia* is that it refuses the move that subsumes time under a non-temporal present in order to secure the philosophical logic of identity that in turn is responsible for the continuity of a certain name or thing, for example, 'religion, or 'secular', and so on. The challenge of *aporia* is not a simple refusal to inherit this legacy (e.g. quarantining or distancing the term 'religion'), but involves an active decision to un-inherit it. Coined by Ananda Abeysekara, the term to 'un-inherit' denotes the inability to fit comfortably into either of the two poles of a binary opposition. To un-inherit designates a necessary opening towards the future (as the aspect of time that cannot be controlled by or unified into a present identity). It signifies a constant displacement that unsettles definitive assurances or given meanings associated with the notion of belonging to a given heritage, for example, religion, secularism, or the opposition between these terms.

For postcolonials this mode of un-inheriting and its aporetic logic cannot be reduced to a scholarly exercise. It corresponds to a way of life, a frame of mind that exists within the dominant Anglophone order, but constantly resists the latter's authority by seeking out an alternative discursive space which is attained not simply by jettisoning the terms it is contesting, but by

un-inheriting them, that is, by cultivating a 'double-speak', a way of living, working, thinking within and outside of them. For Sikhs, such a 'double-speak' does not just derive from their entry into the colonial symbolic order. It derives from certain principles internal to Sikh practice and thought, in this case the principle of *shabad-guru*, which can be regarded as *both* equally religious and secular, *and* neither religious nor secular. In fact it points to something else entirely. My point is that postcolonial Sikhs, and postcolonials generally, cannot afford either to disown the terms 'religion'/'secular', or to own them completely as has become commonplace in the neo-colonial reformist/modernist tradition. Rather they must deploy the logic of aporia which allows them to belong and not-belong at the same time. It is a practice that conforms to their existential situation in which the 'I am' and 'I am not' become equal possibilities. When Fitzgerald talks about his own postcoloniality (a point which I completely endorse) he too must un-inherit, which means to accept the aporetic nature of his identity. Quarantining alone would amount to little more than an exercise of 'muscular liberalism' (to use the name of David Cameron's remedy for the failure of multiculturalism) that represses the plural and paradoxical nature of our inter-cultural existence. The search for a 'new discursive place', I would suggest, will be better served not by quarantining but by *infecting* the normative symbolic order with a different logic, thereby also empowering a mode of critical practice that can resist assimilation into the movement of the dialectic.

THEORIZING SOUTH ASIAN PHENOMENA

A question that is often asked about this book and others like it, is why a project concerned with challenging the hegemony of Western theory should rely on the same Western theory as a tool? Stated differently, why should one use Western models to theorize South Asian materials? This question, which incidentally was also raised by Sheldon Pollock in his recent work *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture and Power in Premodern India* (2006), has recently become a call to arms for theory-shy scholars of modern South Asian studies. Jacob de Roover presents a slightly different variation of Pollock's question in his review. De Roover states that there appears to be a 'paradox' at the heart of *RSW*: 'In order to theorize and address the need for decolonizing the study of religion, he turns to postmodern Western philosophy'. For de Roover, the use of 'postmodern' theory is a sign of 'weakness', a weakness which suggests that South Asian traditions themselves lack something, that they are unable, by themselves, to provide meaningful universals.

Before I address the central question, let me quickly deal with the issue of the 'postmodern'. It never fails to amuse me when this term is casually thrown around by scholars who are either unfamiliar or uncomfortable with theory as such. For many such scholars 'postmodern' has turned into a catch-

all term of condescension, a metonym for debates and discourses that many find impenetrable (despite the fact that those who complain most often have never even tried to engage with them), or nothing more than a fashion that has come to dominate the humanities and social sciences. However, even a cursory reading of *RSW* should leave the reader in no doubt that: (i) I do not subscribe to any such theory or philosophy called ‘postmodern’,² and (ii) that I have spent an entire chapter (Chapter 6) and significant portions of other chapters (1, 3, 4) strongly critiquing the relationship between the postmodern and the postsecular as an unfinished task of decolonization. Indeed, as I stated earlier, the postmodern and the postsecular are part of the problem of dialectical thought and are thus fettered to forms of agency grounded in an imperial disposition.

Turning to the more serious question about the appropriateness of Western models for theorizing South Asian phenomena, let me state categorically that this book is neither concerned with using South Asian models to theorize South Asian phenomena, nor with debunking Western models in order to simply replace them with South Asian ones. Rather my aim is to alert the reader that there is something disingenuous about the very question, namely, the *demand* for the South Asian text or culture to equivocate with its own model or theoretical system. It is disingenuous for two reasons. One reason is that from the outset this question works within the Platonic model of generalized adequation (equivalence) between the Western and non-Western—the idea being that you can simply and unproblematically bring them onto a neutral (hence adequate) horizon. But such equivalence or adequacy already presupposes that identity is the condition for difference. As a framing logic the Platonic logic of adequation presupposes an intrinsic connection between the law of thinking and the language in which that thinking is carried out (here Anglophone or global-Latinate languages).³ In other words, the question itself is silent about the logic of the framing structure within which such comparison between Western and non-Western models would be carried out. The logic of this framing structure is based on the need to create the ‘unity’ of a system as an identity, which can then be used for grounding, legalizing, institutionalizing and thereby perpetuating itself, precisely by way of excluding, including or assimilating an oppositional counterpart that has been produced specially for this purpose. The common assumption here is that this process of putting two entities onto a single plane of comparison is akin to allowing South Asian terms to dialogue with Western categories. But far from ‘dialogue’ what results is a coercive channeling of South Asian terms and

2. If de Roover is referring to Derrida, Heidegger and others as postmodern, then he is clearly using this as a caricature intended to trivialize the seriousness of their thought, and he is clearly unaware of the extent to which these thinkers themselves critiqued this term and the way it has been appropriated especially by American literary theorists in the 1960s, 70s and 80s.
3. For Plato there is an absolute proximity between the art of thinking and thinking about art.

concepts into the cycle of the dialectic; that is, they are ascribed lack/desire which then kick-starts the dialectical cycle. Once it is brought into the dialectical relation, the oppositional other then becomes known as the 'foreign', the marginal, the unessential and so on. Paradoxically, the South Asian other obtains the status of a foreign body and is excluded precisely because it is seen to constitute the identity of a self through generalized adequation. The point here is that as long as we remain within the 'charmed circle' of this language, or at least, as long as we allow the framing logic of this language to go un-interrogated, the illusion will always be perpetuated that non-European language concepts can do their work unhindered (i.e. tolerated) in another medium.

The latter is of course a reference to the problem of translation—or rather its disavowal—with which this book is centrally concerned. Short of writing in Punjabi, for example, the most practical way out of this conundrum was to contest the universality of Western concepts and theoretical models in order to enable at least a degree of co-contamination in the target language which would enable South Asian terms or concepts to circulate and do their work without being forced to conform to the framing logic of the target language and culture (or what I referred to above as the dominant symbolic order). Given that: (i) the framing logic of the South Asian text under consideration here, the Guru Granth Sahib, is poetic, lyrical and musical all at once; and (ii) that that its central teaching (*gurmat*) revolves around a critique of the ego as a primary frame of reference, a critique that it performs through music (*gurbani kirtan*), these two factors alone represent the Guru Granth's strong internal resistance to the kinds of theory that force it into a dialectical relation with the West (i.e. a comparative relation based on the West/East binary that is in turn based on the assumed, and therefore spectral, identity of the West).

In order to avoid being coerced into a dialectical relation, I adopted the more pragmatic strategy of co-contaminating the dominant symbolic order of Anglo-Europhone categories. To give an example of this strategy of co-contamination, throughout the book I reformulated interpretations of *shabad-guru* (Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6), and two other terms, *anhad-shabad* (Chapters 4 and 5), and *nirgun-sargun* (Chapters 3, 4, 5). I chose these terms from within the Sikh lexicon because they harbour the potential to unsettle the dominance of Anglo-Europhone public space, by contesting the apparently settled meanings of terms such as 'religion', 'secular', 'politics and so on, precisely by competing with these terms as universals. Central to this effort are the extraordinarily significant terms *shabad* and *guru*, which are conjoined in the Sikh tradition as the concept *shabad-guru* (the word-as-guru).

In its literal sense *shabad-guru* means that the Guru (as the locus of sovereign power and authority) exists as word (i.e. not the Word of a deity but language-in-general) and that this identification between a human guru and language-in-general occurs through the event of death, sacrifice, or self-

surrender in lieu of the emergence of a form of speech that is free from the traces of ego-formation (in the sense of an absolute return to self). The potential of this concept resides in its complete ambivalence to interpretation and translation. On the one hand, it can be interpreted conservatively, that is, as a key concept of a doctrinal belief system that is central to the *modern* Sikh imaginary (and Sikh nationalism). On the other hand, it can be interpreted as a radically subversive concept insofar as it ruptures the very horizon of time and language. Thus, in the discourse of modern Sikh apologetics, *shabad-guru* is transcendentized such that it became a boundary marker of nationalist sovereignty and was used to remove associations with ‘Hindu’ signification (‘we are Sikhs, because we are not Hindus’ etc.).

But it could also be used—in a manner that would be far more ‘authentic’—as an empty signifier—an ‘absent centre of political ontology’ to use Žižek’s term. The emptiness of *shabad-guru* comes from its association with death, self-surrender, ego-loss, and most importantly the experience of a God that is simultaneous absent and present, existent and non-existent in this very moment. This paradoxical property of the concept *shabad-guru*—radically conservative yet radically subversive, the very element of what eventually became ‘religion’, yet at the same time the very element of disenchantment or secularization (without there being a separation between religion and the secular)—this aporetic quality of *shabad-guru* enables it to be translated, to circulate and eventually compete within the dominant symbolic order of public space. It therefore possesses the very qualities that proponents on the global Left and Right of Euro-American political discourse claim can only come from Christian or Western sources. Hence why it cannot be ignored (easily) either by continental religious philosophers or by atheistically inclined secular liberal theorists. At the very least, my reformulation and deployment of indigenous Sikh concepts such as *shabad-guru* throughout the book renders somewhat moot de Roover’s suggestion that I have simply used Western theory to do the work of decolonizing the study of religion.

Now there is a second reason why the very question of replacing Western with non-Western theoretical models is disingenuous: it imputes to the other an essentiality (a non-Western being and thinking) *which the other may neither desire nor choose to identify with*. This imputing of non-Western essence and desire merely reinforces the very structure of polarity that my book is trying to dismantle. Indeed, when the West/non-West polarity manifests at the level of conceptual thought, it reveals a barely veiled ethnocentrism that grants belonging to one form of knowledge and non-belonging to others. In contradistinction, the critical standpoint that I have adopted within this book can be seen as a hybrid conceptuality in which European and Asian terms mutually affect and transform each other, as they do in the actual lived existences of multilingual diasporic communities. So perhaps what I am pointing towards with this book is a form of thinking/existing that is first and foremost a thinking/existing-between cultures which would be nothing more than a

sharing of concepts and categories. According to this logic that I call thinking-between, which I believe was the form of thinking that prevailed in pre-colonial India, terms, concepts and categories no longer belong to a particular culture. They constantly and fluently move between cultures and languages creating zones of heterogeneity. This thinking/existing-between—which also effects a form of repetition which I believe is symptomatic of multi-lingual diasporic communities—simultaneously disorients and reorients the dialectic of lack/desire that drives the colonial and neo-colonial treadmill by pointing to the enactment of a repetition very different from the kind that regenerates the nationalist subject. And this is precisely where Lacanian theory proved useful for me. For as much as Lacanian theory derives from and is imbricated in the generative movement of negativity which is the engine of the dialectical process, it also provides sensitive tools for tracing the location of this desire in theoretical discourses of religion and within indigenous/nationalist politics of religion-making which tap into the force of the dialectical process, whether directly through Hegel or otherwise. By adapting Lacan's triadic model of the psyche and juxtaposing it with terms and concepts from Sikh sources, it was possible to shed light on the conceptual linkages between dialectical negativity and the articulation of difference that lent itself to processes that remain imperious in character.

HEGEL

This brings me to the question that was raised by two of the reviewers: why does the figure of G. W. F. Hegel merit so much attention in my book? De Roover, for example, is puzzled by what he sees as the 'bizarre role' or 'mysterious omnipresence' apparently attributed to Hegel in my book, a view that is shared by Raman, though more specifically in relation to the evolution of Indology in the nineteenth century. In order to clarify why I think Hegel justifies the treatment I have given him in the book, let me reiterate something that I mentioned very early on in the Introduction. Specifically I stated that

[t]here may be a tendency for some to misread my interpretation of the Hegelian influence too literally—believing that I see him as a master architect whose agency is omnipresent throughout the chain of intellectual exchanges being explored particularly in later chapters. However, I want to stress that Hegel's role is better perceived as a spectral presence rather than a literal agent. Hegel's ideological influence functions like a cipher. It is more like a post-hoc justifier rather than an actual initiator of what are in fact complex large-scale cultural and political processes. In this sense one could simply replace the name 'Hegel' with the metonym 'ontotheology' [or 'metaphysics']. Nevertheless Hegel continues to be named in these explorations partly because he is directly responsible for reformulating the matrix of knowledge-power in relation to Asian cultures, and partly because this

very matrix, if not the name 'Hegel', continues to influence not only the production of theory in the humanities but the way this theorization continues to be put into practice. One way or another, Hegel continues to haunt the very movements that have tried to overcome modernity: postcolonialism, postmodernism and postsecularism. Perhaps the key cipher of this haunting is the presence of a 'fundamental translatability' between religion and secularism that continues to structure unholy alliances between academic theory, media, and the state. (RSW: 16–17)

To answer Raman's question first, I do not claim that Hegel affected discourses such as Indology *directly*. Rather my argument in Chapters 2 and 4 was that Hegel's philosophy significantly influenced the intertwined discourses on religion and philosophy, and *through this* it influenced the theoretical presuppositions of Indologists. Contrary to what Raman suggests, the evidence for this is unmistakable. In fact the evidence for Hegel's influence on the hermeneutic of modernity itself, or what might be termed the construction of the Western imaginary, is incontestable. So much so that, to quote Peter Singer (1983: vii) 'without Hegel neither the intellectual nor the political developments of the last 150 years would have taken the path they did'. Indology could never have remained immune to this. Hegel changed the hermeneutic of modernity by centralizing the structure of human consciousness (or self-representation) around the operations of metaphysical logic, and re-embedding consciousness within the dialectical movement of historical time. Hence, what has come to be known as 'historical consciousness', central to which is the movement of dialectic, becomes the defining mark of modernity. From here it was but a short step to suggest that *critical thinking or critique is secular* insofar as it dialectically overcomes religion. Accordingly the relationship between 'religion' and 'the secular' is seen as dialectical. By thus implementing a circular relationship between (i) historical consciousness, (ii) critique, and (iii) secularity, he was able to identify tangible and threatening 'others' (e.g. Asia, Africa, etc.) as 'religions' while arguing that Christianity is 'Religion' because it provides the cultural constituents necessary for overcoming its particularity (that Christianity is also a 'religion' like others) and inexorable movement towards secularity, which non-Western 'religions' lacked.⁴

My argument about Hegel is relatively simple. It basically focuses on the idea that the construction of the religion/secular binary, or the East/West mode of comparativism, cannot be separated from the construction of representational consciousness in late modernity. It is this peculiar form of consciousness that becomes the *modus operandi* of the modern social imaginary which in turn stakes its dominance on the general translatability of its linguistic categories. Thus the reason as to why we should take Hegel seriously, especially today, should be fairly obvious. Hegel's discourse provides

4. For a better explanation of this, see the introduction to Dressler and Mandair (2011).

an enduring mechanism for translating the structures of consciousness, and therefore the language categories associated with this, into: (i) earlier periods of European and world histories and cultures; (ii) the nature and placement of non-Western cultures within the order of knowledge. In doing so it enabled a discourse of *civility* or *public space* that empowered the work of a variety of actors: missionaries, theologians, colonial administrators, Indologists, politicians and others, who in turn proceeded to rationalize Western civilization in terms of its ability to create metropolises, to form stable nation states, capitalist economy, models of democracy, to develop technology, and so on. Of course, such a discourse was always constructed in comparative (dialectical) relation to the 'barbarity' of others (Asian, African, etc.), who could make the transition to capital, to history, to critical thinking, to democracy and so on, by first making the transition to religion. That is to say, they must learn to *re-make* religion and subsequently learn to distance themselves from it. From the standpoint of these colonized others, the demand for this transition (the shift from the premodern to the modern) was nothing more than the self-inscription of ontological negativity into their very being. And, as I have explained earlier, it is this self-inscription of ontological negativity (the dialectic) that defines the very nature of the reformist movements.

To confront the dominance of Anglophone categories (what I have termed the 'specter of the West'), is to confront Hegel. This is not to say that Hegel was solely or even mainly responsible for constructing the modern social imaginary. Far from it. Only that he provided the most sophisticated and integrated model for domination and naturalization of Anglophone categories. Clearly, such a statement would have far less cogency if it were not for the fact that Hegel's writings continue to impact Sikh and Punjabi literature and thought even today. This impact goes well beyond the usual Marxist literary circles. It can be found in the writings of thinkers as different as Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia (who wrote mainly in English) and the late Harinder Singh Mahboob (who wrote only in his native Punjabi). Mahboob, a leading Punjabi poet, philosopher and critic of the Singh Sabha ideology, is credited with having reversed the trend amongst 'Marxist Sikhs' of importing wholesale Western ideas and frameworks, and in the process totally secularizing the Punjabi idiom. Mahboob regrounded Punjabi prose and poetry in consonance with the literature of the Sikh Gurus but without succumbing to the religion-secular binary that had plagued Singh Sabha and Marxist writers alike. What is strange, however, is why, in order to instigate certain critical moves and new narrative structures, Mahboob should have relied so heavily on works such as Hegel's *Science of Logic* which plays a key role in his major work *Sahaje Rachio Khalsa*. If anything, it bears out my argument above about the hegemony exerted by the dominant symbolic order and Anglophone categories even when one writes in native South Asian languages.

AUTHORITY AND THE NATURE OF PREMODERN SIKH COMMENTARIES

Finally I would like to touch upon the questions of (i) orality and writing, and (ii) the nature of authority in exegetical commentaries on Sikh scripture prior to the modern period. Raman remarks that 'it is very difficult, if not misguided, to speak of Indian culture as devaluing the written word'. Quite frankly I agree, and for precisely the reasons Raman suggests!⁵ My concern, however, and here Raman's statement of the issue at stake is somewhat misleading, was to illustrate how, despite the centrality of a massive written corpus in the form of the Guru Granth Sahib and related literatures, the paradigm of orality has continued to transcendentalize the prevalent understanding of experience and authority in the domains of theory and normative practice. I cited the popular practice of Akhand Path (unbroken oral recitation of the written text) to demonstrate how orality pushes exegesis and meaning towards a metaphysical perspective which inadvertently supports two seemingly opposed models of Sikh experience. One is a theistic model based on the notion of divine speech being communicated by a personal God to Guru Nanak, thereby perpetuating the idea that Sikhism is *sui generis*, a model championed by the modernist/reformist Singh Sabha. The other is a model based on the Vedic economy of sacred sound rooted in the theology of 'eternal Sanskrit' which is believed to transcend historical time, thereby perpetuating the idea that Sikh tradition is nothing more than a strand of an ahistorical *sanatana dharma*.

Thus the critical aspect of my argument was that within the Sikh context, the reception of a written text (the Guru Granth Sahib), a text already treated with utmost respect as a living Guru, is further privileged in contemporary ritual practice, not only as a *visual* icon, but more importantly, as a *sonic* icon. Contrary to prevailing opinion about orality/writing in the history of religions, it is the sonic aspect that pushes the transcendentalization of the text much further. This is because the sonic aspect perpetuates a form of metaphysics that derives from an *a priori* assumption of the nature of sound as transcendental, an assumption that in turn derives from the Vedic theology of eternal Sanskrit. To repeat my argument: *despite the overt presence of writing in spheres as different as the Sanskritic and the Prakritic (in this case the Sikh), the privileging of sound via the Vedic paradigm of 'theology of eternal Sanskrit' continues to influence the reception of these texts particularly at the level of popular practice.* Pollock's argument, while it is certainly not incorrect, limits itself to the phenomenology of the orality versus writing argument, as evidenced by his focus on the elitist sphere of manuscript culture. What seems to escape his analysis is the almost invisible and inaudible

5. In fact the sources that I cite in relation to the orality/writing issue (Goody 1987; Graham 1987) bear this out. I am also very much aware of the status of writing and manuscript culture in India since the first centuries CE, and closer scrutiny of Chapter 5 will show that I have cited Pollock (2006) to register this.

theological/metaphysical aspect of the orality and writing which manifests itself especially, but not only, in the realm of popular praxis.

Turning to the question concerning pre-modern commentaries on the Guru Granth Sahib, this is part of a much larger and important issue, but it is one that would require much more space than is available here. Nevertheless I would like to make a couple of observations and comments in passing.

As the Sikh scholar Taran Singh has outlined in his 1980 treatise *Gurbani Dian Viakhia Prnalian* (lit. *Traditions of Gurbani Exegesis*) there are several major strands of pre-modern scriptural commentary stretching from the times of the Sikh Gurus to the modern period. Taran Singh's ordering and nomenclature for the commentarial traditions is somewhat idiosyncratic (he has named them: *Sahaj Prnali*, *Bhai Prnali*, *Parmarath Prnali*, *Udasi Prnali*, *Nirmala Prnali*, *Giani Prnali* and *Singh Sabha Prnali*), suggesting that the main rationale for his particular classification was ease of classification. What clearly links all of these pre-modern exegetical traditions are: (i) their rootedness in a broader 'Indic' universe that was resistant to reformulations of emergence of Sikh and Hindu traditions as 'religions' during the modern period; (ii) their resistance to the formation of strict linguistic boundaries, as a result of which they bore the imprint of extensive conceptual and linguistic borrowing from the existing streams of North Indian devotional and philosophical literature. The issues that I want to briefly clarify here are: (i) what motivated the Singh Sabha reformers to contest so vigorously certain pre-modern traditions of commentary; (ii) why, despite making conscious, concerted and to some extent even successful attempts to break with pre-modern traditions, they nevertheless remained, indeed continue to remain, linked to the pre-modern Indic frameworks of theory and praxis? Is this continuation of a link to pre-modern traditions not a clear indication that there were already, prior to modernizing influence, contestations going on within devotional movements over key questions such as the nature of authority?

The first of these commentarial strands, *Sahaj Prnali*, goes back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE and comprises implicit commentary by the Sikh Gurus on their own writings. This is followed by the *Bhai Prnali* which refers to a variety of sixteenth-eighteenth century commentators such as Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Mani Singh who were contemporaries of the Sikh Gurus. Taran Singh then mentions the *Udasi Prnali*, a tradition of commentary that is linked to the Udasi Sikhs, the followers of Guru Nanak's elder son, Baba Sri Chand, whose ascetic thought and practice is reflected therein. A notable exegete in the *Udasi Prnali* was Sadhu Anandghan whose most important contribution was a commentary on Guru Nanak's *Japji*. Anandghan completed his work in 1825, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire was reaching its zenith. It is known for its strongly Vedantic tone and his contention that Guru Nanak's writings contained nothing that could not be gleaned either from the Veda or the Hindu *shastras*. The emergence of the *Nirmala Prnali* is associated with the celebrated works of the poet Kavi Santokh Singh, who wrote *Suraj Prakash* and

Nanak Prakash, as well as a commentary on *Japji* called *Garbganjani Tika* (lit. 'a commentary to humble the pride'), written in response to Anandghan's thesis which made Nanak a disciple of the Hindu deities such as Brahma, Visnu and Shiva. The example set by Kavi Santokh Singh was followed by scholars such as Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, Giani Gian Singh, Pandit Gulab Singh, just to name a few. By and large, a noticeable hermeneutic trend within the Nirmala school of interpretation was its tendency towards reductionism, effectively maintaining that the *bani* of the Sikh Gurus was nothing more than an expression of Vedic teaching written in the current vernacular (Punjabi *bhakha*).

The last of the pre-modern streams was the so-called *Giani Prnali* which Taran Singh traces back to figures such as Bhai Mani Singh (who is known to have received his training in the exposition of Sikh scripture directly from the last of the living Sikh Gurus, Gobind Singh at Damdama Sahib) and stretching all the way to the Bhindran Taksaal, a school of interpretation started by Sant Sunder Singh in 1906, continued by Giani Gurbachan Singh Khalsa (1902–1969) and his more famous student, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. What is perhaps more interesting about the *Giani Prnali* is that it includes figures whose scholarship imbibes pre-modern and modern influences, in so far as its early proponents witnessed the fall of the Sikh kingdom and the establishment of British rule in Punjab in the mid-nineteenth century, and then reacted to the emergence of new colonial interpretations in the late nineteenth century. This is evident in what was perhaps the first major work of this school, the *Faridkot Tika*,⁶ which was the first complete commentary on the *Adi Granth*. Although it was written as a response to Ernst Trumpp's 1877 translation and exegesis of the *Adi Granth*, and is therefore part of the early Singh Sabha literature, it did not make anywhere near the impact it was supposed to have made. There are two reasons for this. First, the lateness of its publication in 1905 ensured that the *Faridkot Tika* was quickly superseded and made irrelevant by the modernist literature of the Tat Khalsa faction of the Singh Sabha movement. Second, its idiom contained a great deal of Braj, which made it inaccessible to ordinary Sikh readership. More importantly, though, it continued the trend within Nirmala scholarship of self-consciously framing its hermeneutic in relation to the Vedic paradigm. For example in the *bhumika* (or preface), Badan Singh argues that correct interpretation cannot be attained by those persons whose faculty of inner consciousness is not correctly attuned (*asmdadi jivan de antahkaran shudh nah hon karke gur ashya nu anubhav karna hor bhi katthan hai*).⁷ The focus should be on understanding meanings through intuition (*anubhav*); if intuition is not fostered then the meanings of *gurbani* will go astray (*je gurbani da arth keval vidhya di chatri nal kita jave aur anubhav di sahayta na kiti jave tad arth de anras ho jande han*).⁸

6. Giani Badan Singh *et al.* (1989 [1905]: i), hereafter *Faridkot Tika*.

7. *Faridkot Tika*, *bhumika*, p. i. (see Appendix).

8. See Appendix.

The idea of intuitive interpretation can only be developed in the company of 'enlightened souls' (*mahatma di nikhari*), a practice that has been specifically fostered by and transmitted from mind to mind within the *sanatan* tradition (*jo sanatan samparday arthan di sine-b-sine chali auondi si...*) of oral exegesis.⁹

Badan Singh's reference to Sanatan traditions of oral exegesis, and his further claim that this Sanatan exegesis is by default the authentic tradition (*shuddh samparday*) that has retained its form intact despite the changes of time (*jo shuddh samparday si oh vakhra rup rakhi hoi bhi samen di herr pherr vich aake...*),¹⁰ suggests that he located the Faridkot Tika within the broader tradition of *sanatana dharma* with its Vedic, or Brahmanic, heritage of exegesis. This is immediately evident when we read the first lines of his exegesis on the *mul mantar*, and particularly the syllable *ik oankar*, with which Guru Nanak begins the *Japji* and opens the *Adi Granth* itself. Badan Singh's opening line is: *Veda rup updesh main...* 'according to the teaching of the Veda', following which he delineates the non-duality of the syllable *ik oankar* by way of reference to the tripartite system of the Hindu syllable *om/aum*.

In light of the above it is not difficult to comprehend: (i) what motivated the Singh Sabha response; (ii) why so much came to be invested in the defining notions of Oneness or Unity. At the heart of this tussle between Sanatanists and Singh Sabhites was the question of authority or sovereignty. According to Sanatanists, Guru Nanak's notion of Oneness or non-duality (*advaita*) was derived from Vedic tradition. As such only those 'great souls' (*mahatmas*) who received their training within a strictly oral-tradition Sanatan lineage, could gain the capability of intuiting the authentic meaning. Of course, the deployment of terms such as 'intuition' or 'purity' of meaning constituted nothing more than rhetorical claims to authority based on the 'theology of eternal Sanskrit' or the metaphysics of sacred sound to which only a particular consciousness could be properly attuned. And this consciousness was of course invested in particular caste lineages. Sanatanist claims to authority therefore amounted to little more than invocations of an ancient Brahmanic ideology.

Now the Singh Sabha scholars fully understood the main theoretical and practical implications of the Sanatanist claim to Vedic authority (*deh dhari gurus*, caste etc.). They realized that at stake was Nanak's own status as a Guru, as someone who claimed to have truly experienced the kind of unity or non-duality that he then proceeded to express in his poetry. At stake was the sovereignty of experience as such—the ability of any person, man or woman, within or outside of caste lineages, and at any time, to experience this non-duality, and to repeat that experience again and again. But while they understood this aspect, which was not exactly difficult as it is one of the central teachings of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, they chose to frame their arguments within the emerging discourse of religion, of 'world-religions', and of the

9. See Appendix.

10. See Appendix.

nation, a move which shifted their arguments closer to Christian and Western metaphysics, thereby also closing off the broadly Indic universe within which the Sants, the Sikh Gurus and later exegetes had operated. That this boundarifying process has been only partially successful, however, is attested to by the fact that the Sikh life-world has continued to access the richness of Indic cosmology and terminology despite the prevalence of modern 'religious' discourse. This is particularly evident in contemporary *katha vachic* traditions of oral exegesis within Gurdwaras which draw profusely from Indic traditions of cosmology even as they contest Vedic authority.

Thus, to reiterate the main point I am making here and also in my book: it is not helpful to read the debates between the Sanatanists and the Singh Sabha (Tat Khalsa Sikhs) solely in terms of pre-modern versus modern. Taken by itself this distinction can be misleading. Both factions were contesting a claim to a more ancient and authentic source of authority. For the Sanatanists, this authority was invested in living (*dedhari*) gurus who in turn derived their authority ultimately from the Veda. For the Singh Sabha reformists, authority is derived from direct experience of ego-loss, and this process is to be discerned within a radically different understanding of the nature of language and time, even though, as I explain at length in the book, the reformist commentaries managed to eclipse this relationship to language and time by focusing their discourse around the existence of a monotheistic deity. Moreover, the Singh Sabha discourse is only superficially modern. Its ground is the *bani* of the Sikh Gurus which is deeply resistant not only to the modern Christianized idiom but also to the Vedic paradigm, despite being completely rooted within an Indic universe of meaning.

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APPENDIX

Faridkot Tika, Vol.1. bhumika, p. i.

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

ਭੂਮਿਕਾ

ਪੰਜ ਪੈਨ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ! ਸਿਹਨੀ ਨੇ ਕਲਯੁਗ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੋਏ ਭਵਸਾਗਰ ਤੋਂ ਪਾਰ ਹੋਣ ਲਈ ਐਸਾ ਪੁਲ ਬਣਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਕਿ ਜਿਸਦੇ ਆਸਰੇ ਸਭ ਲੋਕ ਸੁਖੀ ਹੋ ਪਾਰ ਹੋ ਸਕਣ !

ਪੰਜਵੇਂ ਸਾਮੇ ਵਿਚ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਨਾਮ ਸਦਾਇਆ, ਅਰ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਕ ਈਸ਼ ਬੰਨੂ ਦਿੱਤੀ, ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਪੁਲ (ਗਾਠੀ ਰਾਹੁ-ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਮਾਰਗ) ਵਿਚ ਹੋ ਗਯਾ !

ਭਾਵੇਂ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਆਸਰ ਸੱਖੇ ਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕੱਖੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਜਿਸ ਤਰਾਂ ਸੂਰਜ, ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਸੂਰਜ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਵਤ ਭਾਈ ਦੇ ਆਸਰ ਨੂੰ ਬੁਝੀ ਰੂਪ ਨੇਤਰਾਂ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਾਧਨ ਸਪੰਨਤਾ ਦੇ ਗ੍ਰਹਿਣ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ !

ਅਸਮਦਾਇ ਸੀਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਅੰਤਰਕਰਣ ਸੁੱਚ ਨਾ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਆਸਰ ਨੂੰ ਅਨਭਵ ਕਰਨਾ ਹੋਣ ਲਾਗੂ ਕਰਨ ਵੀ ! ਜੋ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਅਰਥ ਕੇਵਲ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਦੀ ਗਤਰੀ ਨਾਲ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ ਅਰ ਅਨਭਵ ਦੀ ਸਧਾਇਤਾ ਨ ਲੀਤੀ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਦ ਅਰਥ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇ ਹਨ !

ਸੋ ਸਨਾਤਨ ਸੰਪ੍ਰਦਾਯ ਅਰਥਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੀਨੇ ਕ ਸੀਨੇ ਠਲੀ ਆਇਦੀ ਸੀ, ਉਹ ਕਲਮ ਬੰਦ ਨ ਹੋਏ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਾਜ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਵੇਲੇ ਵਿਚ ਹੋ ਗਈ !

ਇਹ ਮਤਾਂ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਦੇਵਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਪ੍ਰਦਾਈ ਮਹਾਤਮਾਂ ਦੀ 'ਨਕਦਰੀ' ਅਤੇ ਮਿਸਰਤ ਆਏ ਕੇ ਅਭਵ ਕਰਨੇ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਸਨਾਤਨ ਸੰਪ੍ਰਦਾਯ ਨਬੀਨ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀ ! ਤਦ ਹੋਂ ਸੋ ਇਹ ਠੁਕਰੀ ਕਾਲੇ ਕਾਰਕ ਕਰੇ ਤੁ ਵੱਡਾ ਖਜਾਨੀ ਸੰਨਿਆਂ ਜਾਣ ਲੱਗਾ !!

ਇਸ ਨਾ ਸਤੁ ਵਿਚ ਕੇ ਸੁਧ ਸੰਪ੍ਰਦਾ ਸੀ ਉਹ ਵਕਰ ਰੂਪ ਰਖਈ ਹੋਈ ਭੀ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇ ਹਰ ਫੇਰ ਵਿਚ ਅਕੇ ਤੁਕ ਲੈਣੀ ਕਰਨ ਹੋ ਗਈ !!

ਜਿੱਥੇ ਇਤਯਾਜ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਟੀਕਾ ਭੂਬੁੱਧਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਰਸਨਾਂ ਪਰ ਹੀ ਹੋਣਾ ਚੱਜਲ ਸੀ, ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਨਈ ਬੰਸਨੀ ਕੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵਧਦੀਰ ਅਵੇਰ ਦੀਕੇ ਤੇ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀ, ਜਿਸਨੂੰ ਪੂਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਰੂਪ ਕਾਰਿਕ ਵਿਚ ਸਰਮਨ ਵਿਦਵਾਨ ਨੇ ਕਲਮ ਉਠਾਕੇ ਇਕ ਅਨੁਧ ਟੀਕਾ ਪ੍ਰੈਸ ਦੀ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕੀਤਾ, ਜਿਸਨੇ ਇਕ ਨੂੰ ਹੋਰ ਵੀਕੇ ਦੀ ਖਿੱਚ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪੈਲ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀ !

ਇਸ ਪਿੱਛ ਖਿੱਚ ਦੀ ਪੂਰਨਤਾ ਦਾ ਖਜਾਲ ਸੁਰੇ ਹੀ ਜਾਂ ਉਦਨ ਸੁਨਾਵਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰੁ ਵੈਗਾਰ ਬੰਸ ਅਵਤੰਸ ਮਹਾਰਾਜਾ ਵਿਕ੍ਰਮਸਿੰਘਜੀ ਕਹਾਦਰ ਵਾਲੀਏ ਰਿਆਸਤ ਕਰੀਦਕੋਰਏ ਹਿਰਦੇਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਹੋਇਆ ਏ ਆਪਨੇ ਰਾਹਿਯ ਕਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਕ੍ਰਿੱਕ ਰਾਹਿਬ ਜੀਦਾ ਸਮੇਂਗਰ ਟੀਕਾ ਤਿਆਰ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇ, ਪਰ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਠਨਤਾਈਆਂ ਦੀ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਨੇ ਵਿਸ਼ਾਲਾ ਬੀਤਾ ਕਿ ਇਕ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਟੀਕਾ ਕਰਨ ਅਰ ਵੇਰ ਇਕ ਵਿਦਵਾਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਭ ਕੋਰਕੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕਰੇ, ਜਿਸਤੋਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਭ ਹੋਰਕੋ-

(ੳ) ਵਾਰਾ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਸਦੀਂ ਚਾਹੀਏ, ਉਹ ਆਮ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਭਰਮ ਨਵਿਰਤ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇ !

(ਅ) ਕਦੇ ਸੱਜਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਖੋਜ, ਵਿਚਾਰ ਵਧੀਕ ਅਸਲੀਅਤ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੀ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ !

ਇਸ ਵੇਰਾਰ ਪਰ ਭਾਈ ਕਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਸਿੰਘਵਾਂ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਹੋਰ ਸੁਭ ਵਾਚਜ ਸੰਮਤ ੧੯੩੪ ਵਿਚ ਆਰੰਭ ਕਰਾਂਦਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਸੇ ੧੯੪੦ ਵਿਚ ਸੰਪੂਰਣ ਹੋਇਆ, ਅਤੇ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਮਾਨ ਬਾਬਾ ਸੁਮੇਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਸੰਗਤ ਕਰਤ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਚਰਨ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨਗੀ ਵਿਚ ਅਲੇ ਲਿਖੇ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਮੁਕੱਰਰ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੁਧਾਈ ਦਾ ਆਰੰਭ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ-

- (ੳ) ਭਾਈ ਹਰਭਾਜਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਜੀ
- (ਅ) ਭਾਈ ਸੇਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਕਾਪੂਰਥਲਾ ਸਰੋਟ
- (ੳ) ਭਾਈ ਬੰਡਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਨਨਕਾਨਾ (ਸਿੰਘੜੂਰ)
- (ੲ) ਭਾਈ ਰਾਖਿ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਜੰਗੀ ਰਾਣਾ
- (ੳ) ਭਾਈ ਧਿਆਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗਜਾਨੀ ਸਿਖਵਾਂ ਵਾਲਾ
- (ੲ) ਪੰਡਿਤ ਹਮੀਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ
- (ੳ) ਪੰਡਿਤ ਕਾਲਕ ਰਾਮ ਜੀ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਸੋਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ
- (ੲ) ਭਾਬਾ ਕੁਠਾਵਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਗਜਾਨੀ