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Editorial

Many significant debates have emerged, giving rise to a range of refreshing and thought-provoking discourses within the domain of Sikh studies. As new perspectives continue to challenge established paradigms — including those upheld by long standing scholarly schools — there is a noticeable resurgence of interest in foundational inquiries surrounding *Śabda* philosophy. This renewed engagement signals a vibrant wave of intellectual exploration.

Strikingly, much of the emerging discourse in Sikh studies is no longer originating primarily from traditional academic institutions within Punjab. Instead, a significant portion of contemporary scholarships are now being generated within what is increasingly described as ‘Western academia.’ The recent resurgence of Sikh studies — driven in large part by independent researchers and scholars appointed to endowed Sikh Chairs in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom — has opened new theoretical and methodological horizons for the field. This renewed interest is also reflected in the growing number of publications on Sikh themes produced by leading academic presses, including Routledge, Oxford University Press, Cambridge, Columbia University Press, Bloomsbury Publishing, and, more recently, the Harvard Oriental Series.

At the same time, within Punjab, Sikh studies continue to be propelled by the dedicated work of independent scholars, small research collectives, and collaborative intellectual networks. The launch of *Shabdārth* in 2025 marks an important milestone in this direction, signaling a renewed commitment to foster rigorous, locally grounded scholarship. Together, the local and global efforts in this domain are expanding the boundaries of current conversations, introducing new perspectives, and adding greater nuances to ongoing debates. Moreover, the intellectual maturity that Sikh

studies has cultivated through sustained scholarly engagement in the West over the past several decades has further transformed the field into a more comprehensive system of knowledge production across diverse spaces. The analytical insights of philosophers and critical theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur, Gilles Deleuze, and Emmanuel Levinas have been especially influential, opening new possibilities for re-examining and expanding the conceptual frameworks through which the field has traditionally been approached.

Recognizing these shifts in modes of theorization — shifts that exceed both colonial and post colonial frameworks and expose the internal constraints of earlier scholarly engagements — the emerging body of scholarship is beginning to transcend inherited boundaries. It is simultaneously cultivating an openness to more viable and generative forms of discourse suited to the contemporary intellectual environment, one that demands greater conceptual maturity and more robust structural formulations.

As the landscape of theoretical discourses continues to expand, it not only opens opportunities to incorporate new horizons of inquiry — such as ecological ethics, engagements with geo philosophies, and studies on mental health and gender identities — but also renews interest in classic philosophical debates, including those surrounding *Śabda* philosophy. In our journey through the previous volumes of *Shabdārth*, we have continued to cultivate discourses that have renewed interest in these emerging debates. Taking stock of the underlying areas of focus that have shaped the trajectory of our publications reveals four prominent themes — cross cultural philosophies, symbolic decryption, textual hermeneutics, and theoretical formulations and conceptual (re)constructions — all of which remain consonant with our overarching guiding principle of creating “inter-subjective transparencies.”¹

While creating space for cross philosophical dialogue that is often restricted by territorial, religious, or cultural boundaries, few articles — such as “ਕਸ਼ਮੀਰ ਸ਼ੈਵ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ” [Kashmir Shaiva Philosophy] by Maninder Singh,² “Comparative Analyses of Ibn Arabi and Wei Wei” by M. Asad Khan,³ and “ਮਨਸੂਰ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਦਿਤ ਪੈਗ਼ਬਰੀ ਅਸਤਿਤਵ” [Mansoor’s Articulation of the Prophetic Being] by Maninder Singh⁴ — have expanded the limits of discourse and enabled broader participation beyond any predetermined contexts. These research papers help us go beyond any restrictive domains that in many ways have disenabled experience to go beyond bounded selves

and ideologies. Theoretically speaking, these papers actively seek to retrieve resonances between philosophical foundations of diverse traditions that continually propound for creative re-engagements with deeper insights of such traditions. These cross cultural studies have generated textual ambivalences that allow us to sustain a fluid landscape of ideas flowing across times and spaces, thereby enabling a meta ontology of languages, cultures, and thought.

Symbolic decoding is another central theme that has remained predominant in many of the articles published thus far in different volumes of *Shabdārth*. One reason for the dominance of semiotic derivations and symbolic unpacking in these papers stems from our effort to probe deeper layers of human imagination as we seek to open horizons beyond the limits imposed by linguistic kinships. Papers such as “ਪ੍ਰਤੀਕਾਤਮਕ ਅਰਥ ਸਿਰਜਣਾ” [Symbolic Meaning Making] by Rajvir Kaur,⁵ “The Symbolic Surplus of Meaning” by Ankita Sethi,⁶ “Myth as a Symbolic Form” by Kulwinder Singh,⁷ etc. have extended the discourse that do not fit into preset ideological schemes or lingual consistencies. These articles remain instrumental in creating trans-historical utterances revealed not just as recontextualizations or recovery of lost traditions, but as conceptual formulations that lay the very foundations of meta-linguistic ontologies.

Hermeneutics and textual interpretation is the third important theme that has remained predominant in different volumes of *Shabdārth*. Besides the various book reviews that have been undertaken, articles such as, “ਪੂਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾ ਵਿਆਖਿਆ-ਸ਼ਾਸਤਰੀ ਅਨੁਭਵ” [Puran Singh’s Hermeneutical Experience] by Jaswinder Singh,⁸ “ਹੈਜ਼ਿਊਗ੍ਰਾਫੀ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਰਚਿਤ ਸੰਤ ਗਾਥਾ” [Hagiography and Bhai Vir Singh’s *Sant Gatha*] by Gurdial Singh,⁹ “ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਰਸ ਪਸਾਰ” [The Diffusion of Poetic *Rasa* in the Writings of Bhai Vir Singh] by Harmangeet Kaur,¹⁰ retrieve latent meanings in the works of different authors, moving beyond any strictly structuralist reading. These articles open up possibilities for looking beyond pre established normative frameworks, allowing not only linguistic or theoretical but also experiential spontaneity to emerge from the text, thereby making these writings performative rather than fixed canons of information. This allows the texts to disclose themselves in new realms, enabling their continuity to persist through ever renewed realizations.

Theoretical formulations and conceptual (re)constructions become fundamental enablers for mindfully reinvestigating the impacts of metaphysical hegemonies. Articles like “Aesthetic: Trans-Aesthetic” by Himat

Singh,¹¹ “Beyond Critique” by Amandeep Singh,¹² “Beyond Divine Command” by Jaypreet Kaur,¹³ and “Unveiling Alentheia” by Tanwir Alam,¹⁴ “Reclaiming Feminine Divine” by Deepinderjeet Kaur Randhawa,¹⁵ dislodge and reconstruct fundamental constitutional structures while mediating in the presentation of authentic meanings that exceed established interpretations and constructions. Undertaking original reevaluations of the underlying encounters between experience and standards, existence and metaphysics, canons and resistance, these articles demonstrate a polyvalent orientation toward the unbounded of knowledge traditions — an orientation capable of dismantling the spectral boundaries of philosophical thinking.

Within this broader vision, the new edition of *Shabdārth* is being released, in which all four themes emerge with particular clarity. We also encourage new authors across diverse domains to submit their original pieces of works that can expand the horizons of philosophical thinking. The freshness of thought in each edition inspires our editorial team to carry this flame of hope forward. We wish to acknowledge the team of reviewers — especially our assistant editors, Lakhvir Singh (IUST, Kashmir), Jaswinder Singh (JMI, New Delhi), and Heera Singh (Punjabi University, Patiala) — for their tireless efforts in coordinating the publication presented here. We hope this edition will further advance research in the domain of religion and *Śabda* philosophy.

References

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