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Revisiting Śabda through Himat Singh's Writings: An Exploration into the Grammatical Dimension

*This paper is an attempt to re-read the conception of Śabda in Sikh tradition. For this, I engage with the writings of Himat Singh, primarily through his book *The Philosophical Conception of Śabda in Gurū Granth Sahib*, first published in 1985. Two significant reasons underpin this re-reading. First, although this seminal writing was published nearly four decades ago, it has received negligible intellectual attention and remains marginalized, if not effectively foreclosed, within the field of Śabda philosophy, to the extent that it risks becoming extinct. Second, the philosophical conceptualization developed in this writing contains a constellation of foundational concepts and philosophical apparatuses that stand outside the domineering influence of conceptual frameworks underpinned by modernist/structuralist and post-modernist/post-structuralist modes of philosophizing Sikh academic discourses. While undertaking an exploration of grammatical dimension of Śabda as one among its multi-layered reading, I will examine the recourse through which this grammatical dimension was addressed by modernist and postmodernist scholars within Sikh Studies. Then I will explore Himat Singh's interpretation of Śabda as presented in his writings while simultaneously appreciating the academic significance of his contribution.*

Introduction

While engaging with Himat Singh's *The Philosophical Conception of Śabda*, one is often reminded of conditions that perpetuate a possibility of so called 'recovery' of a traditional Sikh understanding of Śabda¹ where its primary conception is not monolithic but multidimensional. Beginning with examining the various ways in which Śabda has been treated within modern and postmodern Sikh scholarship, I argue that while both these engagements with Śabda unfolds its meaning through linguistic structures, they often restrict Śabda to a textual form, or to borrow from Paul Ricoeur, to a