Ideology of Singh Sabha Movement: Initiation into Modern Hermeneutics  
(As Revisited in Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation (2009) by Arvind-Pal S. Mandair)

Dr. Sukhwinder Singh

Creating a rupture from ongoing discipline of Sikh studies, Arvind-Pal S. Mandair emerged as a leading academician with his innovative research work, Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation (2009) (hereafter as Specter). The work has received sober remarks not only from Sikh studies but also from disciplines which are not directly related with this. It is first time in the history of Sikh speculative thought that insights of influential philosophers have been deployed for remapping the impact of colonial encounter between South Asia and West. It tries to understand the construction of colonized subjectively by the colonizer’s symbolic order through the strategy of translation. Mandair has made effort to highlight gaps of western understanding in relation to religion, language, translation and politics. His thesis is also an attempt to indentify the limitations of postcolonial discourse that is being considered an authentic response to the phenomenon of globalization because Postcolonialism in itself is under the spectral influence of meta-narrative based on the dualism of secular principle. He also unveils the invisible connections between state, media and academy. His critical approach, to resist secular dialectic in fact challenges the established framework. It motivates reader to know the “…relationship between three intellectual formations: (1) historical consciousness (2) the assumed secularity of critical thinking (or critiques the critical attitude etc.) and (3) western civilization identity (I have termed the comparative imaginary of the west).” Most importantly book poses a question whether Sikh universals are possible in the domain of epistemology where from these can be circulated in public sphere. Comprehensive area of book transcends the formal limits of issues pondered upon within it. History of religions, postcolonial theory and continental philosophy has been rendered and intersected logically and precisely. The book not only encourages eastern psychology to contest or enter into the discursive space monopolized by west but to prepare a ground for exchanging epistemological categories while at the same time revitalizing the original character of tradition. Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, himself states that, “My aim throughout the book has been not simply to re-enter the currently globalatanzied discursive space of the public/political sphere (which colonized groups managed well), but to negotiate the meanings and articulation of indigenous concepts.”

Distinction of the book lies in handling many disciplines simultaneously with a mature sense of objectivity. Due to its scholarly assessment, the book has impressed leading academicians from concerned disciplines in international universities. It has been reviewed in some symposiums which later on published in international journals. In these reviews, the book has been described as an, “essential reading in the fields of South Asian and Sikh Studies, postcolonial studies and contemporary theory.” The book has received praise for, “a graphic example of the rich possibilities of interdisciplinary work.” Brian Pennington declared it, “an authoritative accounts of that dramatic (colonial) shift and its impact on Sikh tradition.” and for Gavin Flood the work indeed is directed to “develop a non-colonial “Sikh theology. ” According to Sian Hawthorne’s views, Specter is an call, “…to rethink the uneasy relationship between religion and secularity.” She also further expresses risk of applying Lacanian theory on Sikh experience. Ruth Mas examines that, “Mandair is critical of the invisibility with which the schematizing…” of generalized version of ‘religion’ is circulated as cultural universal. She basically talks about Derrida’s theory of translation rather than Specter. Micheal Hawley suitably remarks that book, “…is broad in its theoretical scope, yet goes beyond and applies in new.” Complex and informal idiom also have been criticized. From language viewpoint, it has been reviewed as ‘slippery and dizzying.’ Some critics also raised question that if Eastern subject is untranslatable to Western sense of academy then why Mandair seeks supports from it and why colonized subject is unable to produce its own theoretical frame work. Author has answered all such questions published in different journals. The Specter not only contests westernized version of gurmatt but also challenges the boundaries and patterns being followed by modern Sikh studies. It opens new doors to enjoy relations with well established discourses in academia disrupting the prevalent patterns of Sikh studies. The book displays a variety of discourses undertaken in and masterfully used them to deduce thesis. Due to a wide range of areas discussed in the book, it is very difficult for a researcher to address the book as a whole. In this paper, I would fix myself, only on (trans)formation of Sikh subject during the colonial rule as Mandair highlights.
Singh Sabha was a primarily reformation movement initiated by native Sikh elites to highlight Sikh identity as compared to other ‘religions.’ And for this purpose, they also interpreted Sikh tenets to preach the message of Sikh Gurus. Mandair mentions that colonizer entrapped land of India and Punjab, as well as psychology of elites who were representatives of people. All this happened through the network of Anglo-vernacular schools which introduced them a new terminology and idiom. He states that, “If these Anglo-vernacular schools mere in effect factories for manufacturing a new subjectivity for the native elites, a subjectivity that had been religiously, linguistically, and racially corrected according to the English type…”10 Being educated in these schools native Sikh elite started to translate their own tradition embracing colonizer’s terminology in response to objections raised by Orientalists. With these exchanges, this idiom adopted a generalized form in intellectual circles and possessed the space as standard, authentic and universal framework of knowledge. In this process, key term ‘religion’, identified as cultural universal and subscribes a social empirical identity to a set of beliefs, played a central role to make Sikh tradition a subservient one. Penetration of ‘religion’ in native intellectual exercise influenced not only then scenario, even present living and thinking styles are being inspired by the similar colonial narrative unconsciously. Due to the conformity to this narrative by indigenous tradition, on the one hand reduced spiritual signifiers just to socio-cultural context and on the other hand, this adoption prevented Sikh(sm) to participate into public spheres by fixing it strictly to private affairs. A detailed survey of early Christian missionaries and travelers as presented by Mandair, confirms Orientalists understanding of Sikhism as Deism in which rationality and morality are stressed as natural religion. H.H. Wilson and Earnest Trump’s descriptions presented Sikhism as a faith that lacks sense of history of civilization. It totally changed the mindset of native elites from pre-colonial understanding of their own tradition. They started to interpret, sikh, gurmat, akal paurkh etc. in terms of Sikhism, Sikh theology, God etc. Native elites were forced to realize that Sikhism has been degraded from its ‘natural stage’ and it must be resurrected. They were imposed with terminology and framework incompatible to their own traditions. It altered the meanings of key terms of indigenous originality.

In pre-colonial subjectivity, there was a consciousness about the sovereignty of Sikh(sm) but it was not absolutely alienated from its surrounding counterparts. It had very fluid demarcation with others in preference to a determinate cultural identity of religion. So Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam were sharing a deep relationship in pre-colonial social environment whereas later on took their position as opponents under the umbrella of ‘religion’ as a cultural universal. Thus Sikhs endeavored to be enlisted into the category of ‘world religions’ by leaving aside versatile spirit of Sikh experience. During British rule master signifier was of Christian that was later on substituted by Hinduism. That’s why after Britishers, Sikhs were in sharp contrast with Hinduism. To have a break with Hinduism and to evolve the Sikh tradition as a new beginning in history, the reformists stressed rationality and morality. Explaining the strategy of Singh Sabha ideologues, Mandair states that, The movement from the pre-narrative stage of bhakti reformers to the narrative stage of Nanak and his successor Gurus indicates a new beginning…As such in the movement from pre-narrative to narrative the origin corresponds to the movement from immoral chaos to a moral order. The moral order is the representation of the origin because the origin unfolds as the worldly activity of Nanak, this narrative can be imitated and repeated. By contrast, the quietism of the bhakti reformers (because it is pre-narrative) does not allow for a repetition in the sense of being able to participate in a moral order.11 To achieve their goal Singh Sabha ideologues consciously translated term ‘Guru’ as ‘prophet’ not as avatar and “<” and “Akwl mUriq” particularly interpreted with emphasis to establish break from Hinduism.12 In fact Mandair is facing the questions as to whether interpretation of Sikhism other than Singh Sabha ideology is possible. Is it possible to float Sikhism in public sphere, a space already occupied by secular dialectic and its political incarnation namely nation state? Can a new interpretation be invented based on aporetic relationship, while sustaining the sovereignty of Sikh doctrines? He wants to set free not only Sikh ideals/concepts but also the process of conceptualization and its pragmatic implications motivated by metaphysical ideology of Hegel because colonialism has worked in both directions. “…He (Hegel) is directly responsible for reformulating the matrix of knowledge power in relation to Asian cultures, and partly because this very matrix, if not name “Hegel”, continues to influence not only the production of theory in the humanities but the way this theorization continues to be put into practices.”13 Hegel’s metaphysical structure poses itself as universal or legitimate to the extent of self-referencing phenomenon and promotes the supremacy of West. Being assimilation to great extent in Eastern traditions, its presence can’t be negated even when discourse is against or not about west. It works in a subtle, latent and silent manner. This is what has been called ‘specter of the west.’ To avoid the serious misunderstanding, from the critical analysis of Specter, it cannot be assumed that Sikh identity was invented in the colonial rule; rather there happened a radical transformation in it. Arvind Pal S. Mandair writes that, The enunciation of Sikh identity does not begin in the colonial period, and it would be wrong to adduce this from my analysis above. A Sikh identity, however amorphous it might have been had already emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather what changes in the colonial period is the way in which identity was conceived. As I stated earlier, it is logic of identity that changes in the colonial period. In the pre-colonial period
articulation of Sikh identity was never articulated through the dualistic logic of either/or (e.g. A=A, B=B but A≠B) the logic of Sikh identity (indeed of Hindu identity) prior to colonialism, and as far back as the sixteenth century, was articulated in terms of a complex or relational logic, according to which it would be perfectly valid to suggest that A=B, the implication of which would be the existence of relatively fluid social and individual boundaries. In other words, the logic of identity changes from complex or relational to dualistic. And this change resulted from of politics of religion-making driven by ontotheory the first victim of which was the signifier “Hindu.”

This is the basic shift occurred during the colonial period in the context of identity politics. In pre-colonial interpretation Guru Nanak was both a ‘pir for Muslims and a ‘guru’ for Hindus. But afterwards in Singh Sabha discourse, he is emphasized as a founder of Sikhism completely in alienation as compared to others. According to Mandair though Bhai Vir Singh, Jodh Singh, Teja Singh etc. worked out very sincerely yet their efforts unconsciously favored the ontological argument of Anselm, Aquinus, Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Marx. Interiorization of this argument and appropriation of ‘gurmats’ to this framework latently worked in the subjectivity of these scholars that is ‘unconscious hermeneutic of modernity.’ Out of such Deistic mechanism, they tended to systematize the Sikh doctrines under the structure of theology. After independence, this structure was adopted by next generation of Sikh theologians and historians namely G.S. Talib, Kapur Singh, Daljeet Singh, Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, Kushwant Singh etc. “These writers simply assumed the historical narrative and theological proofs the Singh Sabha writers had so painstakingly worked out.” Main characteristic of the colonial schema is that it first of all assumes its own opposite or an ‘other’ to sustain its existence, and then exercises/imposes its enunciation declaring it universal/legitimate. Once we are agreed or compelled to interact with, it starts to function extensively upon its ‘other.’ This schema produces the networks of identity politics and nation state. It automatically takes on concepts of comparison, separation, interfaith dialogue etc. Mandair has named it ‘comparative imaginary of the West.’ In this way, Sikhs are transformed as nation, as a racial/ethnic group leaving aside their versatile image of ‘panth or dharma. After realizing ‘effect of shame’ Indians gave up their native way of experiencing dharma rather started to conceptualize their own experience and doctrines along with European lines. Singh Sabha scholars like other Indians articulated Sikhism according to rational and moral principles to establish it a valuable ‘ism’ before colonizer. In this way a process started to construct Sikh history and theology. It is a contradictory category of ‘religion’ that on one side subscribes it a temporal phenomenal but on the other side transcends religious identity by preventing to share a public sphere. It proves a fact that why Sikhs are so far unable to regulate a compatibility with modern democratic set up of nation state. When Sikh tradition came to be identified as one of the ‘religions’ under the anthropo-historicist/secular frame, it gave up its claim over temporal sovereignty that is an important aspect of Sikhism. Miri-piri bhakti-shakti, sant-sipahi, granth-panth etc. are inseparable pairs of indigenous lexicon which become meaningless in the colonial processing. Impact of project taken up by Singh Sabha movement is not confined to then circumstances rather it also extended over the period of post independence. Its symptoms can be diagnosed from nature of modern Sikh studies. Educational Institutions and universities have also taken up themes proposed by Singh Sabha writers. W.H. McLeod, a forerunner of Sikh studies in western universities, can be seen as continuation of colonial legacy. Like Trump, he claims that Singh Sabha writers did not show any interest to have systematized set up of theology. Mandair suspects of his intention that why a historian is interested in the formation of Sikh theology? One of the reviewers from Punjab, perhaps out of misunderstanding, found Mandair as a propagandist and in sound consonance with W.H. McLeod’s analysis shows an opposite side. However he also accepts the limitations of Singh Sabha discourse to solve the problem of nirgun and sargun and “how the sense of divinity that animated the living Guru was transferred to the written word?” and how God communicates with man.

Mandair is not proposing the idea that Singh Sabha writers clothed their own nativity by taking a shelter of western categories consciously or knowingly. But they were forced to realize the ‘economy of lack’ and by engaging themselves with colonial translations accidently they overlooked the principle of sovereignty of their native language. Thus substantial and indigenous nature of language employed in Sikh texts was disturbed by the interference/imposition of colonial idiom and translations about Sikhism. By doing so, they transcended the key terms of Sikhism. Misunderstanding of conceptual linguistic equivalence generated work of translation, exactly speaking ‘representation’. Resultantly, terms such as ‘Sikh theology’, ‘Sikh History’, ‘Sikhs as nation’, ‘Sikhism as world religion’ subscribe to the logic of A=A and more surprisingly these are being understood as native categories of knowledge. With the passage of time, this reformist interpretation is shifted to modern academy. Through this description, Mandair wants to highlight the idea that on the one hand Singh Sabha wants entry of Sikhism into the category of ‘World Religions’ that is secular mode of religiosity enunciated by modern nation state to control the religiosity of different traditions but on the other land, methodological frame under which Singh Sabha writers started to represent Sikhism, prevents participation of Sikhism into politics and violence by declaring ‘ism’ or ‘religion’ a pacific phenomenon. If ‘religious’ claims any type of its political authority it will be recognized as deviation from religious spirit. In this way, Mandair brings into light the distortion of Sikh
spirit occurred accidentally due to colonial structures of knowledge promoted by Singh Sabha Scholars unknowingly. Because formation named ‘religion’ is based on the contradictory dualism of spiritual and secular. W.H. McLeod put forward the similar hegemonic mechanism of colonial interpretation and his most famous book Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion points out towards this transference. Mandair notes that roots of McLeod’s writings can be found in above mentioned western enunciation and colonial categories. Mandair has afforded a full chapter on the analysis by W.H. McLeod on Sikhism and particularly on Guru Nanak’s life and teachings, who especially emphasizes the nature of Guru Nanak’s following as religious community. Mandair explains reasons that why McLeod is stressing Sikhism as a community of interior spirituality rather than organized/institutional form of religiosity. On one hand he wants to co-relate Sikhism with sant tradition of Medieval India, but on the other hand imposes category of ’religion’ on Sikhism as a secular enunciation. According to that, public sphere is strictly prohibited to interior religion. And more importantly by categorizing it to mystic fold; it is easy for McLeod to declare Sikhism a non-rational and deprived of moral mechanism. Thus he tries to show contradictions between teachings of earlier four Gurus and other subsequent successors. Borrowing term from Mircea Eliade, Mandair calls it ‘religious hermeneutic’ that McLeod is trying to construct under the project of theology. Question arises that what’s wrong with this if McLeod wants to systematize the teachings of Guru Nanak applying historical methodology. Problem is not with ‘systematic form’ of teachings of Sikh Gurus but with the concepts, methods and conclusions which are deduced through this process. So Mandair should not be considered a radical critic of Western methodology rather he highlights consequences which happen due to this neo-colonial interpretations and which are extrinsic to the text/data/object upon which critical analysis is being constructed by McLeod. Under such pattern, panoramic image of Guru is reduced to ‘a study of a man Guru Nanak’ and his teachings are termed as mere theology. By referring writings of McLeod, Mandair notes that his commentary on Sikhism serves to establish the idea of ‘generalized translation’. According to that, spoken words may differ from one person to other, yet the mental experiences are same. According to this pattern of thought “…McLeod’s “creative” hermeneutic: that the body of signifiers known as Adi Granth and regarded as Guru is no more than a vehicle not only for communication God’s truth to man but for translating God’s truth to all men…” In other words McLeod’s theological or creative hermeneutic serves primarily as a building block for a broader project of Anthropology. To counter this logic, Mandair re-interpreted the sahki of vein pravesh taking help from Lacanian model. Mandair thinks that language is being controlled through spoken words by modern man. Humans use language according to his motives either negatively or positively. But according to Lacanian model, as Mandair notes, language exists prior to experience, in spite of subsequent to experience. In this way, Mandair is able to construct a very sound logic as opposed to McLeod’s interpretation but still unable to establish Guru Nanak as a Devine Archetypal. Mandair’s counter interpretation of Guru Nanak and his bani are captured by the very another method that is not completely intrinsic to the text, as Sian Hawthrone has pointed out in his review. According to McLeod, the bani of Guru Nanak outwardly does not show any sign of systematic form but ‘such a pattern was present in the mind of their author’. Mandair pronounces that McLeod’s presentation of Guru Nanak, “who successfully negotiated the passage from nothingness to existence…”, in fact had “the faculty of rationality without which he would not be able to communicate with others in the world”. Mandair reacts against this argument not to install non-rational aspect of Guru personalities and their sacred hymns. But to deny the hegemony of western model of rationality that passes judgments over other experiences assuming itself as a legitimate/universal narrative. Mandair’s theorization encourages Sikh Studies to understand and confront the modern challenges and crisis faced by subaltern traditions of South Asia, particularly by Sikh tradition. By locating gaps of western theory, he tries to remove the illusion of western supremacy and finds out basic differences between experience of West and that of East. He unveils the subjectivity of West working in disguise of objective methodology, a trauma that always authoritatively governs the space of theory posing itself as rational, historical, humanistic, secular etc. Psychology of Singh Sabha reformists was strictly seized by the “effect of shame” before it and they finally advocated a shift from traditional to modern that influenced Sikh way of life so far. In spite of such conditions under which they had to work accidently did their best by taking initiation into theoretical thought. They struggled to free Sikh spirit from clutches of feudalized and racist orthodoxy that had occupied a dominant space in Sikhism. Such type of orthodoxy took birth during misril period and was fostered by cultural elements that existed within Sikh Panth. It was only Singh Sabha reformists who identified the crisis and questioned the anarchic elements. So firstly, these reformists’ desire for borrowing help from western model of thought in fact was to formulate a system to control these circumstances. Secondly, there does not exist any tradition of discursive thought within Sikh panth that might be considered a precursor of Singh Sabha to provide some guidelines rather they made efforts to take up the task as a challenge. Therefore considering Singh Sabha merely a reactionary outcome to encounter colonizer would reduce its contribution. It would create a problem to understand the overall situation during Singh Sabha period. It must be noticed that intellectual exercise of reformists was under the pressures of colonizer, Arya Samaj, Muslim counterparts and feudal/cultural/racial elements within Sikh panth. Thus steps taken by reformists were not natural rather conditioned by several
reasons. That’s why it cannot be examined as an independent process of intellectual exercise. So, it is an incomplete picture of role of Singh Sabha that Mandair portrays. To some extent, we find his critical evaluation mystifying real spirit of Singh Sabha.

Mandair’s comment upon Bhai Vir Singh’s explanation of mool mantra is most weak point of his analysis. A critical examiner can’t deliver his judgment taking up just a piece of writing authored by somebody. Doing so, he would necessarily ignore fundamental spirit of his writings. A scholar, while writing about something can’t ignore total perspective of any person/text that is an important thing to be remembered. To interpret a small section or treat any text partially according to his own requirements may discredit a writer.

Bhai Vir Singh penned lives of Ten Gurus and he consciously named them chamatkar (miracle), a style of writing that is native in its spirit as opposite to rational and historical method of European experience. He revived native form of sakh in accordance with Sikh spirit. To work in the colonial period may be a coincidence but his writings cannot be declared fully in conformity to colonial format along with other writers. It is rather an achievement of Bhai Vir Singh who underwent the colonial pressure and never let down the originality of Sikh spirit. Nature and style of his writings display a huge difference from other contemporaries. Personality of Bhai Vir Singh symbolizes traditional spirit that is not in consonance with colonial patterns. It means his writings incorporate seeds of a rebellious epistemology and academic methodology that further can be extended to the critical theory of indigenous experience. It is also a fact that, due to the lack of intellectual exercise directed to outline critical theory, Sikhs are so far deprived of a critical method that may serve to cultivate a sovereignty of Sikhism in the domain of knowledge. It is strange that Mandair wants to derive poetics of the Sikh experience by removing effects of methodological structure borrowed from Europe but himself is unable to see the signs of originality underlying the writings of Bhai Vir Singh. Except this, he cultivated the system of santhya, a native method to study religious texts; rather he correlated spiritual experience with meanings. At that time Sikh orthodoxy has monopolized the very method delimiting it just to shudh uchcharan (correct pronunciation). In this way, he was opposing the typical psychology that wanted to hijack the scripture. He also edited the texts such as Sri Gurprapat Suraj Granth by Bhai Santokh Singh, Sri Guru Panth Prakash by Rattan Singh Bhangu, Puratan Janam Sakh etc. which promoted the traditional style of writing. Till his times Kissa and Sufi poetry were predominant modes of poetic expression and both were alien to Sikh aesthetics. Kissa poetry stressed romantic love preferred by cultural psychology and a great part of Sufi poetry had its mystic roots in Islamic experience and its cultural darbari form. Through his poetry Bhai Vir Singh turned the flow of aesthetics to Sikh spirit. His poetry presents an instance of forgotten shift.

Mandair has also charged Singh Sabha to follow the strategy of ‘a new beginning’ an historical origin of a new religion in terms of a novel identity. For Mandair, incident of Guru Nanak’s meeting with parbraham parmeshar during bath at Sultanpur Lodhi, was reinterpreted by reformists, “...in terms of a pseudo theory based on revelation and embellished with suitable quotation from the Adi Granth.”43 He criticizes that they, for establishing a cemented demarcation between Hinduism and Sikhism, followed Hegelian pattern of evolution from ‘immoral chaos to moral order’. But Mandair’s own interpretation about this incident projects Guru Nanak merely a ‘subject’ transformed by the experience of ‘Word’ (Language=bani).44 It is very surprising that Mandair ordinarly translates sabda or bani as language/text/Word. As a devoted Sikh, he will definitely be conscious about the status of bani, therefore such translation of these terms would be misleading. While exploring alternative meanings of the vein pravesah sakh, he uses Lacanian/Heideggerian model of language. He presents the psycho-linguistic explanation of this incident. For Sikhs Guru Nanak is not only a ‘self’ or ‘subject’ who undergoes transformation through the meeting with language. Objective image of Guru Nanak found in early Sikh sources presents ‘Him’ as cosmic figure that incorporates entirety of abstract and empirical phenomenon. He covers totality of time and space (Awid-AMIq). Mandair’s explanation fails to note this point. What he missed here is that according to Sikh experience language in itself is a product of some Ultimate Source (parbraham parmeshar), ineffable to describe yet gurbani inspires human for experiencing the akath (beyond linguistic figures) and moreover bani holds the status of Guru as a divine revelation descended from ‘Dur.’ It is still a matter of investigation to conceptualize the source from which bani takes its origin. There are also some critical questions related with the nature of bani that how historicity participates in this sacred expression as we find some historical references in Guru Granth Sahib? We find variation in the nature of bani revealed through different Gurus and bhaktas. It means sacredness may also engage itself with subjectivity, but question is that how it happens? What is difference between subjectivity of occurring within revelation and that of a human being? All these issues must be investigated determining the nature and status of bani. Interpretation by Mandair obviously offers a novel method and meanings to explain sakhis but diversions are also there. Native subjectivity, of course, needs to be set free from colonizer’s models of knowledge. But it must be remembered, that non-colonial claim, that Mandair wants to highlight, out of some fear may also create dialectic of ‘self’ and ‘other.’ This localized subjectivity after attaining privileged right/authority may prove to be hegemonic and of racial disposition. Its over emphasis on localization creates possibilities of anarchic assertion that may fabricate another metaphysical strategy. So it can be postponed until the theoretical construction by native psyche, not only comparable to but also including analogical elements and recognizing creative
contribution of secular model. Basic problem with this discourse is that it accepts dominating section among oppressed as definitive form of subaltern but denies that within a particular subaltern group may exist oppressed divisions suffered from dominant subaltern subjectivity or class/order. These problems and issues must be addressed otherwise non-colonial ‘subject’ can further constitute a hegemonic narrative. Therefore, looking from Sikh standpoint, Secularism cannot be deleted absolutely from human life. It had, no doubt, some biases against human race particularly South Asian traditions but had also played a significant role to get rid of hegemonic set up of medieval period. Its spirit necessarily incorporates some sense of compassion.

At last, I can conclude that in spite of some evident limitations of Specter, Mandair succeeds to point out a complex space that necessarily requires attention of scholars devoted to Sikh studies. This space, being full of complexities, is slippery and risky as Mandair’s analysis has shown us. He has demonstrates the potential of colonized subjectivity driven away from the boundaries of dominant symbolic order. He has handled his area of analysis with intellectual maturity and has identified that how politics of knowledge is fabricated to control other’s creative potential. The Specter helps us to discover invisible interiorization that has become a part and parcel of our existence. Through this thesis, he puts a break on imperial discourse prevailing in Sikh studies so that originality of Sikh nativity can be sustained. It not only enables Sikh terminology on equal footing in private domain but also in public one. Above mentioned break or resistance is not defensive or reactionary in its mode of articulation but a critical examination. As a whole, we can say that Specter has broadened the scope of Sikh studies stretching out its quest to major philosophical discourses. Mandair’s initiative is surely a risky and radical step.

References and Notes

[2] Ibid.
[16] Ibid, p. 239.
[18] Ibid, p. 258.
[22] Ibid, p. 286.
[23] Another question important to this discussion that what is driving force behind the working of Singh Sabha? What’s its nature? Is it just a psychological passion or inspired by any spiritual motivation? To my opinion, no doubt, movement may have conditioned psychological fervor but religiosity cannot be deleted entirely. Because all of their efforts were directed to establish sabad guru as an archetypal of Sikh way of life. Though they translated it as cultural universal unconsciously but their total devotion and commitment to sabad guru reflect mystical dimension behind their hard work.
[24] Guru Nanak Chamatkar, Ashat Gur Chamatkar and Kalgidhar Chamatkar are most valued works of Bhai Vir Singh written during the Singh Sabha Movement.