

Abstract

Picking up the renewed focus on Punjab's religious groups known as deras in the run-up to the 2022 legislative election in the state, this paper builds upon the anthropological studies on them to prepare ground for potential political investigations. It tries to make sense of their nuanced functions and sustenance through an etic perspective of a secular progressive citizen who is both pessimistic and sceptical of their role in both society and politics, despite being aware of their contribution in articulating the Sikh-dalit consciousness. To explain the material existence and activities of these deras, this paper also borrows two concepts of 'governmentality' and 'imagineering,' and noting the expanse, plurality and comparability of such deras, it presents them as an ideal category for the study of state politics.

Keywords: *Sikhism, Dera, Governmentality, Imagineering, state-politics.*