

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
Ik oānkār saṭ nām kartā purakh nīrbhāo nirvair akāl mūrati ajūnī saibhān gur parsād.



THE SIKH BULLETIN GURU NANAK AND HIS BANI



September-October 2016

ਅੱਸੂ-ਕੱਤਕ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ

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Technical Associate Amrinder Singh

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The views expressed by the authors are their own. Please send the feedback and inputs to:

editor@sikhbulletin.com
Our Website: www.sikhbulletin.com

Discussion Gnerated by July-August 2016 Editorial SIKH AND GURSIKH

From: Hardev Singh Shergill

[<mailto:editor@sikhbulletin.com>]

Sent: Monday, 29 August 2016 6:19 AM

To: bawaj@optusnet.com.au; brar_jiwanwala@hotmail.com;

Sewa Singh Sidhu; 'Sarjeet Sidhu';

akalsahaigurtejsingh@yahoo.com

Subject: SB

Please forward on your email list. Thanks. HSS

*

From: Bawa Jagdev

[<mailto:bawaj@optusnet.com.au>]

Sent: Monday, 29 August 2016 2:02 PM

Sikh Bulletin Vol 7&8,

Please forward it to your friends

With Kind Regards

Bawa Singh Jagdev OAM

(Mob) 0401211111

Bawaj@optusnet.com.au

*

From: Gurmit Singh

[<mailto:GurmitSingh01@bigpond.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 4:27 AM

Subject: FW: The Sikh Bulletin:

July-August 2016?

If Dr. Harbans Lal, USA (DOB: 8th January 1931) son of the Respected mother Ramkali Devi and father Dr. Beli Ram Saxena is “a Sikh and a Gursikh”, then it would mean that Keshadhari Sikhs would fall in the category of the Hindus because most of them continue to believe in Manu-Smriti’s caste system!

If any doubt please write to the Editor:

Email Address: editor@sikhbulletin.com

Gurmit Singh (Sydney)

On Tuesday, 30 August 2016 12:10 PM, Hardev Singh Shergill <editor@sikhbulletin.com> wrote:

Gurmit Singh Ji you have spoken the Truth, Absolute Truth. Thank you. Hindu India and their Sikh toadies in connivance with its BJP masters and RSS, Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh & Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, have narrowly defined a kesadhari turban wearing a true Sikh who can vote in SGPC elections and get admission to medical colleges run by SGPC. These Sikhs run Gurdwaras, supposedly preaching Nanakian Philosophy but more like Hindu worship. They do not understand the teachings of Adi Granth but parade it as Hindus parade their Gods of stone and have replaced Hindu Havan with Akhandpaths, continuous reading of Adi Granth, without anyone listening or comprehending. Accutremments of burning essence, ghee lamps, coconut, flowers and colourful ramallas are the same as in Hindu temples. They have not discovered the gem of a wisdom Guru Nanak preached all his life. A true Sikh is he or she who believes and practices Guru Nanak's philosophy and does not have a particular outward appearance. Therefore it is essential for a true Sikh to either look different from ill defined Sikhs, as Dr. Harbans Lal does or if he or she looks like them to deny that they are **that type** of Sikhs and stop going to the gurdwaras. Instead have Nanak's Dharamsal in their own homes and discuss and share with their neighbours and friends his philosophy and live by it. They can respond to a question about their religion as Guru Nanak responded to Qazi *Rukn-ud-din*'s question in Mecca: **"I am a man of The Creator, and belong to no religion"**.

If you want to get an introduction to Nanak's message to the world please see this link.

<http://sikhbulletin.com/Files/NanakMyDiscoveryMarApr2015.pdf>

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From: surinder kanwar
[mailto:kanwar238@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, 31 August 2016 3:29 AM

To: Hardev Singh Shergill
<editor@sikhbulletin.com>; 'Gurmit Singh' Cc:
Subject: Re: The Sikh Bulletin: July-August 2016

I believe you might have seen and known one person of India named BABA RAM DEV who is teaching yoga. Like many other so called sadhus he does not cut his hair and also does not shave. If uncut hair and beard is to be considered symbol of Sikhs then in what category such sadhus are to be taken?

Surinder Singh Kanwar
Advocate
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Cell - +61-468432632
Tel: (03)93183612

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On Wednesday, 31 August 2016 9:47 PM, Gurmit Singh <GurmitSingh01@bigpond.com> wrote:

Dear Advocate Surinder Singh Kanwar (Melbourne),

Thanks a lot for your feedback for further discussion, though we have no authority to pass any judgement. As I understand, Almighty God (Akall Purkh) has not created different religions but by passage of time, human beings have chosen their way of life under the concept of various Religions/Faiths such as Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism.. Accordingly, their adherents follow their respective Holy Scriptures and Code of Conduct as laid down by their Founders.

Similarly, followers of Sikh Religion obey the Guru's Teachings as enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib from the Commencing Verse to Mundavani at pages 1 to 1429. All the Sikhs are required to maintain their hair, beard, moustaches, eye-brows, etc. intact from birth to demise, followed by the Sachi Bani, which means like legal tender money, Government's official seal as well as coin's prescribed metal both are essential. Anyone part missing is considered as counterfeit coin, unacceptable.

Even though Baba Ram Dev neither cuts his hair nor shaves his beard and moustaches, he can't be considered as a Sikh because he does not follow the Sikh Guru's teachings. Similarly, Dr. Harbans Lal may have

In-depth study of Gurbani but he regularly cuts his hair and shaves beard & moustaches, which means he does not practice the Guru's Teachings. As per my limited understanding, both continue to practice Hindu religion, and they have not adopted/embraced Sikh religion.

Some Quotes from Guru Granth Sahib:

Jupp Stanza 1: Hukam Razaiee Chalnaa Nanak
Likhiya Naal.

Guru Nanak Sahib says that veil of darkness and ignorance could only be dispelled when we act and obey the Almighty God's Divine Command i.e.

follow the Laws of Nature from the very beginning of life. (Look, when the baby is born hair also grows together with other body parts and as such, Sikh families should never cut their hair).

□Jupp Stanza 6: Matt Vich Ratan Jawahar Manik
Jay Ek Gur Kee Sikh Sunee.

If a person listens to, understands and practices the Teachings of the Guru, then one can acquire all the bounties and virtues in the heart.

□Jupp Stanza 15: Manaiy Taraiy Taaraiy Gur
Sikh.

By obeying Guru's Divine Command, the Guru-oriented person also rejoices successful life.

□GGS page 465: Sikhee Sikhiya Gur Vichaar.
The Guru-oriented persons, who have learnt the art of living as devoted Sikhs, along with other instructions & teachings from the Guru, are successful..

□GGS page 601: Soe Sikh Bandhap Hai Bhai Je
Gur Kay Bhanaiy
Vich Aavaiy.

The Sikh, who follows the Guru's Command is my true friend, brother and close associate.

□GGS page 667: Gursikh Meet Chaloh Gur
Chali...

O Friendly Gursikh! Let us follow the Guru's guidance through the Guru's Command. Let us

follow the Guru's Will, by accepting His dictates without a murmur.

□GGS page 44: Sabh Sianapaan Schadd Kaiy
Guru Kee Charni Pah.

We could attain the Almighty God's Bliss only by surrendering ourselves and by renouncing all our cleverness.

Also thanks for your Article: Hell-Heaven at page 31 of Punjabi Akhbar, August 2016, Adelaide –
South Australia //
Gurmit Singh (Sydney)

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On Thu, Sep 1, 2016 at 2:27 PM, surinder kanwar
<kanwar238@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Sardar Gurmit Singh Ji, Sat Sri Akal
I believe to understand and define a SIKH is not an easy proposition. I fully agree with views as explained by S. Hardev Singh Shergill, of Sikh Bulletin that Shri Harbans Lal is a Sikh. At the same time I do not want to drag the discussion, still I feel that some aspect must be made clear. In fact I wish to understand the things and clear the concept in my mind. It is for such reasons I am just writing all these things.
Kindly help me and guide me.

When we talk of Baba Ram Dev, on the contrary to Baba Ram Dev, Navjot Singh Sidhu may not understand gurbani, as most of us do not understand, but he believes in Guru Granth Sahib, at the same time he does Havan etc. He is known as Sikh. I believe he has full right to vote for SGPC elections. I do not know he is to be treated as Sikh or Hindu. You might have seen the appointment of Jathedar Patna Sahib the photo is attached along with other photos of Sikhs as per your definition. I do not know whether they are sikhs or not.

Jupp Stanza 1: Hukam Razaiee Chalnaa Nanak
Likhiya Naal.

So far as I understand it means to understand the law of nature and follow the law of nature. In case it covers keeping hair and beard only because it is given by nature then we should live like NAGA

SADHUS who live naked, do not wear clothes because they say that god has sent us naked and we should live naked.

Gurbani says:

ਕਬੀਰ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਇਕ ਸਿਉ ਕੀਏ ਆਨ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਭਾਵੈ ਲਾਂਬੇ ਕੇਸ ਕਰੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਘਰਰਿ ਮੁਡਾਇ ॥25॥

Kabeer preeth eik sio keeae aan dhubidhaa jae |
bhavai laabae kes kar bhavai gharar muddae |25|
What does it mean? So far as my little knowledge goes it does not simply means JATAN as is generally explained by many persons.



Surinder Singh Kanwar

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On Thursday, 1 September 2016 6:11 PM,
Devinder Singh Chahal- IUSCanada

<iuscanada@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear S Surinder Singh Kanwar, S Hardev Singh Shergill and S Gurmit Singh,

I agree with S Kanwar that it is very difficult to define a Sikh. The pictures shown with his missive indicate that if these people with beard and turban and playing Holi and some of them carrying a turban as big and heavy that it is difficult for a normal person to carry then I am sure Guru Nanak would laugh at such Sikhs.

Moreover, Guru Gobind Singh would also laugh at the Sikhs who are wearing 5 Ks and a different Khanda than that, ☪, being used currently and punting a TILAK on their forehead. The new

Khanda is the first stage to change original Khanda into Trishul as ☪ is being accepted as

Ek Oankaar, Ek Omkaar or Ek Aumkaar which represents OM - God in Trinity which goes against the basic principles of GOD in Nanakian Philosophy.

I THINK TO DEFINE A SIKH IS AS DIFFICULT AS TO BE A TRUE SIKH.

Please go to www.iuscanda.com for studying Gurbani and Sikhism in their right perspective. It covers articles and books on Sikhism explained scientifically and logically.

Regards,

Devinder Singh Chahal

iuscanada.com

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD

President

Institute for Understanding Sikhism

4418 Rue Martin Plouffe,

Laval, QC, Canada, H7W 5L9

450-681-1254

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On Thu, Sep 1, 2016 at 9:22 PM, surinder kanwar
<kanwar238@yahoo.com> wrote:

Thanks for commenting on the views expressed by me. As was suggested I keenly opened the web site ius Canada and the first sentence on it was (Guru Nanak (1469-1539) founded a scientifically and logically sound religion, Sikhism, for the welfare of the mankind.) Now when we claim that Guru Nanak founded religion, this creates the whole confusion. Editorial of Sikh Bulletin of July August 2016 very nicely explains that Guru Nanak never founded a religion. It was explained earlier in previous issues. Philosophy of Guru Nanak may be termed as Philosophy of Sikhism but it should always be kept in mind that Guru Nanak never founded a religion. In case religion of Guru Nanak is to be understood it is Humanism (A SACHIAR PERSON). When we talk about religion we get involved in Rituals and this leads us into confusion. I shall be very happy to have guidance from all of you.

With best of regards

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*

From: Devinder Singh Chahal- IUSCanada
[mailto:iuscanada@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, September 02, 2016 9:57 AM

To: surinder kanwar

Dear S Surinder Kanwar,

In the following statement pointed out by you I used the word, Sikhism, because many Sikhs were allergic to the use of "Nanakian Philosophy" for the religion founded by Guru Nanak. In fact if you read the philosophy of Guru Nanak then you will find that Guru Nanak has forcefully discouraged rituals in his religion, commonly called Sikhism.

(Guru Nanak (1469-1539) founded a scientifically and logically sound religion, Sikhism, for the welfare of the mankind. Moreover, if you go for a "scientific and logical religion" that means a religion without any rituals. Please go further deep into the iuscanada.com.

Regards,
Devinder Singh Chahal
iuscanada.com

DIWALI AND SIKHI

By Karminder Singh Dhillon Ph.D (Boston)
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Note: This is a revised and updated version of the original which was first published in The Sikh Bulletin Vol 10, No 11 & 12 Nov-Dec 2008. Editor, October 2016.

This article attempts to answer the question: Is Diwali a Sikh Celebration? It is inspired by the actions of some Sikhs to celebrate Diwali within the precincts of the local *Gurdwara*. Such celebrations range from encouraging Sikhs to bring sweets and delicacies to the *Gurdwara*, lighting the *Gurdwara* premises with oil lamps, to actually conducting full scale *kirten*, *katha* and *ardas diwans* in relation and in conjunction with Diwali.

Some *parbhandaks*, *parcharaks* and *ragees* have justified such practices by quoting *Gurbanee*, citing historical incidents that connect Diwali to our Gurus, and by pointing to the prevailing practices relating to Diwali of the *Darbar Sahib* and other *Takhts*.

This article thus aims to (i) examine the *Gurbanee* quotes that are said to suggest that Diwali is a Sikh festival, (ii) examine the Diwali-related Sikh historical incidents cited, and (iii) encourage evaluation of prevailing practices (pertaining to Diwali) in the *Darbar Sahib*, *Amritsar* etc. The final part of the article will attempt to put Diwali into its original and proper perspective by tracing the origins, purpose and philosophy of the festival.

DIWALI AND GURBANI. The most commonly sung and quoted *Gurbani* verses relating to Diwali are derived from Bhai Gurdas's¹ *Var 19 Pauree 6*. Sikh *ragees* sing this *pauree* and explain it as evidence that Diwali and the lighting of lamps is to be celebrated as an authentic Sikh practice. For a full understanding, the entire *pauree* is quoted below. An explanation of the *pauree* follows.

ਦੀਵਾਲੀ ਦੀ ਰਾਤ ਦੀਵੇ ਬਾਲੀਅਨਿ॥

Diwali Dee Rat Deevay Baleean.

ਤਾਰੇ ਜਾਤ ਸਨਾਤ ਅੰਬਰ ਭਾਲੀਅਨਿ॥

Tarey Jaat Snaat Ambar Bhaleean.

ਫੁਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਗਾਤ ਚੁਣ ਚੁਣ ਚਾਲੀਅਨਿ॥

Fullan Dee Bagaat, Chun Chun Chaleean.

ਤੀਰਥਿ ਜਾਤੀ ਜਾਤ ਨੈਣ ਨਿਹਾਲੀਅਨਿ॥

Teerath Jatee Jaat Nain Nihalean

ਹਰਿ ਚੰਦਰੀ ਝਾਤ ਵਸਾਇ ਉਚਾਲੀਅਨਿ॥

Har Chandauree Jhaat Vasae Uchaleean

ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਸੁਖਫਲ ਦਾਤ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ॥੬॥

Gurmukh Sukh Fal Dat Shabad Smaleean. [6]

Keen readers of *Gurbanees* know that the main **message of a *shabad* is encapsulated in the *Rahao*** line. This is the generic rule of the five thousand plus *shabads* that are written by the Gurus and *Bhagats* in the *Guru Granth Sahib* (GGS). The writings of Bhai Gurdas do not follow such a practice. Bhai ji does *not* use *Rahao* in any of his 912 *paurees* (in 40 *vaars*), 672 *Kabits* and 3 *swayees*. **In all his writings, his main message is always contained in the final verse of the *pauree*, *kabit* or *swayea*.** The first five lines of every *pauree* are illustrations / explanations for

the real message which is provided in the final / concluding line. A translation of the above *pauree* is as follows:

The lamps of the night of Diwali eventually burn out.

The stars of the night sky stop sparkling when dawn comes.

The beauty of the orchard disappears as the flowers are picked.

The gaiety of the place of pilgrimage dies when the crowds leave.

Life- even as bestowed by God- is temporary; settled and then destructed.

Yet, the Gurmukh is blessed with the fruit of Immersion in the Shabad.

The meaning of this *pauree* is therefore as follows: A *Gurmukh* seeks bliss from the *Shabad*. The joy that comes from the *Shabad* is not as temporary as the lamps that burn on Diwali night, the star-lit night skies, and the beautiful sights of the blooming orchard, the joyous atmosphere of the places of pilgrimages or of human life itself.

The Sikh *Rehat Maryada* recognizes Bhai Ji's compositions as explanatory *Gurbanees*. In the above *pauree* - as is the case with all of Bhai Ji's writings - **he is extolling the Sikh to link spiritually with the *Shabad*** - by which he means the GGS and all the messages that are contained therein. This *pauree* is written to give inspiration to the Sikh to connect with the *Shabad* by virtue of the **permanence** of the joy that comes as a result.

Now, to use the first line of this *pauree* - *Divalee Dee Raat Divey Baleean* - as *Gurbanees* justification for Sikhs to light lamps (or otherwise celebrate) the Diwali night is **ignorance** - feigned or genuine. If that is the case then gazing the stars (the second illustration of temporariness in line two) can also be argued to be a call by Bhai Gurdas for Sikhs to worship the planets. On the same account, then planting orchards and going for *teerath yatra* or pilgrimages (as mentioned in lines 3 and 4) is also recommended Sikh spiritual

¹ Bhai Ji (1551- 1636) was a contemporary and uncle of Guru Arjun. The first version of the *Granth Sahib* (*Pothee Sahib*) was written in the handwriting of Bhai Ji as narrated by Guru Arjun during the compilation process over a period of two years. Bhai Ji is further credited for the tireless *Sikhi parchaar* that he did within and outside of Punjab. Guru Arjun did not include Bhai Ji's writings in the *Pothee Sahib*, but Sikhs consider Bhai Ji to an exemplary Sikh philosopher and his writings are accepted by the Sikh *Panth* (as sanctioned by the *The Sikh Rehat Maryada*) as "explanatory *Banee* fit for *Kirtan* and *Katha*". The only other Sikh writer whose writings enjoy a similar stature is Bhai Nand Lal Ji.

practice. Obviously such is not the intent of Bhai Ji.

The reality is that each of the four events in each of the four lines are examples / illustrations used by Bhai Ji to make a concluding point regarding a particular characteristic - permanence of the joy - of the Shabad. This characteristic of the Shabad is **contrasted** with characteristics of the four events (their temporariness). Surely then, it would be highly disingenuous to suggest that the events being contrasted are acceptable as Sikh practice.

A cursory examination of the language used by Bhai Ji in the *pauree* gives indication of his emotions. Lamps are lighted. The word for lighted is *Jagaeyan*. However, Bhai Ji uses the word *Baleean* – meaning burned. He is saying “lamps burn away.” His emotive context is easily discerned from here. The emotion behind “lighting” a lamp is generally positive. Lighting lamps gives one a sense of creating light and brightness. But Bhai Ji’s emotions are concerned with the temporariness of the act – that the lamps (no matter how many positive feelings they create) *eventually* burn out, or burn to cinder, burn to darkness. Bhai Ji’s message is concerned with the *final* outcome – that lamps burn out. His concern with the *initial* act (the lighting / *Jagayean*) is no more than to indicate its temporariness. He is using this act (and three others) to explain the concept of temporariness as opposed to permanence (of the joy of the *Shabad*) – which is his *main* concern. Hence to interpret this line as a call by Bhai Ji to Sikhs to “burn” lamps on Diwali night is to miss the point all together.

It must also be pointed out that apart from singing the above *pauree* and interpreting it (albeit wrongly), no *ragee* or *parcharak* has been able to find a single *shabad* from the 5,871 that make up the GGS that discusses Diwali. In fact the word Diwali or any of its equivalents does not appear in the GGS even once. This alone should make any Sikh wonder. Why would a Sikh related festival (if indeed Diwali was such) not be mentioned even

once in the GGS? Even in this *pauree* of Bhai Gurdas Ji, the issue is the burning away of lamps during the Diwali night – not the *celebration* of Diwali per se. It therefore goes without saying that attempts by some of our *ragees* and *parcharaks* to stretch to breaking point, the meaning of this line, requires nothing less than distortion.

Such reality however, has not stopped some Sikhs from picking a verse from the GGS with the words “lamp,” “oil” and “lighting” and attempting to connect it to Diwali. The most common one is ਬਿਨੁ ਤੇਲ ਦੀਵਾ ਕਿਉ ਜਲੈ ॥ ੧ ॥ Meaning, how can one light a lamp that is devoid of oil. A complete picture can be obtained if one looks at the complete verses of this *shabad* as follows:

ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਘਰੁ ੫ ॥

ਬਿਨੁ ਤੇਲ ਦੀਵਾ ਕਿਉ ਜਲੈ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

How can a lamp remain lighted without oil. Rahao
ਪੋਥੀ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥ ਭਉ ਵਟੀ ਇਤੁ ਤਨਿ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ ਸਚੁ
ਬੁਝਣੁ ਆਣਿ ਜਲਾਈਐ ॥ ੨ ॥

Make spiritual knowledge the oil, and loving fear of God the wick in the lamp of your body. Then light it to seek the Truth.

ਇਹੁ ਤੇਲੁ ਦੀਵਾ ਇਉ ਜਲੈ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤਉ ਮਿਲੈ ॥
੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

This is how the lamp will remain lighted, within which brightness one meets with the Master. Rahao.

This *shabad* has two *Rahao* lines. The first raises the question, and the second answers it. But the subject of the discourse is not Diwali or some physical lighting of lamps. It is about the need for spiritual knowledge and the loving fear of God to enlighten oneself in the pursuit of Godly union.

DIWALI AND SIKH HISTORICAL INCIDENTS. Two significant historical incidents are cited by those who attempt to link Diwali to Sikh history and spirituality. The first relates to what is termed *Bandee Chor Divas*, (literally:

prisoners release day) and is related to Guru Hargobind Sahib, our sixth Guru. And the second is Bhai Mani Singh Ji's martyrdom. Both need examination to separate fact from apologetic thinking.

(i) **Bandee Chor Divas.** Sikhs have been told that Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji was ordered released from the Gwalior prison by Emperor Jahangir. The common narrative is that Guru ji accepted the release on condition that 52 other Hindu kings / princes imprisoned in the same jail be released together with him. The Guru, upon securing the release of the kings, himself arrived at Amritsar, and the Sikhs celebrated by doing a *deep-maala* (literally: rosary of lighted lamps) display at Harmandar Sahib. This release happened on Diwali day. So on Diwali day, Sikhs actually celebrate the release from prison of Guru Hargobind ji – by lighting lamps.

Is this an accurate depiction of Sikh history and an accurate interpretation of Sikh sentiment? Or are some Sikhs so eager to celebrate Diwali, and so fervent to want to link Diwali to Sikh practice and tradition that they simply *had* to find or create or embellish an incident that is suggested to have happened on or close to Diwali day, and use that as a pretext to celebrate the occasion? The following arguments will help answer this question.

First, the euphoria of *Bandee Chor* – a Guru being released from prison – needs to be looked at within the context of Sikh history. In 1521 Babur attacked Saidpur at Ahmenabad and reduced the city to rubble. Guru Nanak, witnessing the episode of destruction went up to Babur and critiqued him in spiritual yet stinging terms, as recorded in his *Tilang Raag Shabad* on page 722

ਪਾਪ ਕੀ ਜੰਵ ਲੈ ਕਾਬਲਹੁ ਧਾਇਆ ਜੋਰੀ ਮੰਗੈ ਦਾਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥
ਸਰਮੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਦੁਇ ਛਪਿ ਖਲੋਏ ਕੂੜੁ ਫਿਰੈ ਪਰਧਾਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥

Paap Kee Janj Ley Kablon Dhaeya, Joree Mangey Daan Ve Lalo

Saram Dharam Doe Chap Khaloe, Koor Firey Pardhan Vey Lalo.

Translation: *Bringing the marriage party of sin, Babur has invaded from Kabul, demanding our land as his wedding gift, O Lalo. Modesty and righteousness both have vanished, and falsehood struts around like a leader, O Lalo.*

And again in Asa Raag GGS page 418

ਇਕ ਹਿੰਦਵਾਣੀ ਅਵਰ ਤੁਰਕਾਣੀ ਭਟਿਆਣੀ ਠਕੁਰਾਣੀ ॥
ਇਕਨਾ ਪੇਰਣ ਸਿਰ ਖੁਰ ਪਾਟੇ ਇਕਨਾ ਵਾਸੁ ਮਸਾਣੀ ॥
ਜਿਨ੍ ਕੇ ਬੰਕੇ ਘਰੀ ਨ ਆਇਆ ਤਿਨ੍ ਕਿਉ ਰੈਣਿ ਵਿਹਾਣੀ ॥੬॥

Translation: *The Hindu women, the Muslim women, the Bhattis and the Rajputs — their head coverings were shredded and trampled upon, while others came to dwell in the cremation ground. Their husbands did not return home alive— how did they pass their night? || 6 ||*

The result of the critique was harsh punishment for Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana who were thrown into prison with thousands of others – mostly women and children meant to be sold as slaves in Kabul. Guru Nanak gave solace to the prisoners, consoled them, and stood up to Babur as their representative. After a discourse with Guru Nanak, and having made to realize his folly, Babur ordered Guru Nanak released. The Guru's condition was that he would only accept release if each and every innocent prisoner was released. Now the question: Why aren't Sikhs extolled to celebrate Guru Nanak's *Bandee Chor Divas*? Why is there no *Deep Maala* to commemorate this day? Because it does not coincide with Diwali? Or it did not happen close enough to Diwali day? Or there was no Darbar Sahib to be lit up with lamps then? Or simply because this *Bandee Chor* provides no convenient pretext for celebrating Diwali?

The story of Guru Hargobind's release on Diwali day deserves further examination. Given that the

52 Kings were Hindu, their release on Diwali eve is of significance to them and their subjects. It is thus likely that Jahangir – upon the persuasion of his Sufi wife Noorjahan² - decided to release them on a day that was auspicious to the Hindu Kings. For all intents and purposes, Jahangir considered Guru Hargobind to be Hindu. Entries made by him in his official diary, *Tauzekey Jahangiri* on page 35 for instance record the fact that Jahangir considered Guru Arjun to be a Hindu. If this is to be the case, then the whole story of Guru Hargobind insisting the other 52 Hindu princes be released together with the Guru may be an afterthought. It may well be that the Guru was released together with the rest.

Even if we accept the *Bandee Chor* incident as fact, the story still has many loose ends. Sikhs are told that the *deep mala* was done at Darbar Sahib upon the Guru's arrival at Amritsar. Gwalior Prison is in Agra – 210 kilometers out of Delhi. Delhi to Amritsar is another 465 kilometers. An express train journey these days from Agra to Delhi takes 5 hours and from Delhi to Amritsar another eight hours. The mode of travel by Guru Hargobind would have been horse back, or a horse carriage. Even if the Guru had rushed back to Amritsar – without stopping to meet with any of the *sangats* that would have gathered to greet him at the many villages and districts between Agra, Delhi and Amritsar – he would have arrived days if not weeks or months *after* Diwali. Not meeting with the multiple *sangats* en-route and rushing back to Amritsar is highly uncharacteristic of any Guru. No Guru would leave behind *sangats* to

² Noorjahan was the daughter of an Iranian Sufi employed named Mirza Gyaas who frequented Akbar's court when Jahangir was a teenager. Jahangir was smitten by her charm and wanted to marry her. Akbar however thought Noorjahan was unsuitable for Jahangir and had her married off to Sher Afghan Khan. The couple was given a large *jangeer* in Bengal and sent to live there. Upon assuming the throne, the first thing Jahangir did with was to raid the Sher's home, have him killed and marry Noorjahan. Historians have commented that Jahangir was greatly under the influence of his wife. See Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, pp. 1770.

rush off to Amritsar or anywhere else. What was he rushing there for? To sit on a throne as the 53rd Hindu King? Or to make sure he arrived on Diwali night? In any case, **even if he did rush**, Guru Hargobind's arrival would *not* have coincided with Diwali – it would have been off by weeks at the very least.

The writer of *Guru Kian Sakhian* in *Bhat Vahee* (pages 27-28) provides the following chronology relating to Guru Hargobind's release and subsequent arrival at Amritsar:

Guru ji was released from Gwalior on Katak Vadee 14 1676 (B) [1619 AD]. He proceeded to the home of Hari Ram Daroga who performed a *deepmala* in his home. On Fagan 1 1619 AD Guru ji came to Nannaul Pargna at Batala where he met with Baba Budha, Bhai Gudas and other Sikhs. From there Guru proceeded to attend the funeral of his uncle Prithi Chand at village Heher. On 1 Magh 1620 AD the Guru arrived at Pargna Nijhar-ala and proceeded to Guru Ka Chak, Amritsar. With him were Arjani, the son of Mohre, Meharvan, the son of Prithi Chand, Baba Budha, Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Ballu (grandfather of Bhai Mani Singh Shaheed) and other prominent Sikhs.

If this record is considered accurate then the **Guru's travel from Gwalior to Amritsar took 98 days or over three months**. Going by this record, the Guru missed Diwali by that many months!

Second, the performing of a *Deep Maala* itself needs examination from a Gurmat point of view. There is no Sikh spiritual activity that resolves around the *Diva* (lamp). Beyond an article of practical use (providing light), *Gurbanee* discounts any and all *Diva* related rituals. In fact *Gurbanee* discards physical *diva*-related ritual and instead gives inner spiritual context to the lamp. On page 878 of GGS, in *Ramkali Raag* for instance we have one entire *shabad* devoted to the lighting of an inner *Diva* (enlightenment) by Guru Nanak. *Gurbanee* accords similar treatment to

another practice involving the *Diva* namely the *aartee*. Physical *aartee* as a ritual is discouraged and *Gurbanee* provides inner spiritual context to *aartee* in the shabad *Gagan Mei Thaal Rav Chand Deepak Baney* (Dhnasree First Guru).

Given that such *gurbanee* injunctions already existed, it is thus unlikely that Sikhs would have indulged in a mass lamp lighting ritual or *deep mala* to welcome their Guru. It is even more unlikely that the Guru would have allowed his Sikhs to indulge in a ritual that was not only of no significance in Sikhi, but against *Gurmat*. It is more likely that huge numbers of Sikhs thronged to visit him on the way from Agra to Amritsar and he had divans of *kirten*, *katha*, *langgar sewa*, and *parchar* for months culminating in a grand *sangat* gathering at Darbar Sahib.

Third, if one assumes that Guru Hargobind started the practice of *deep maala*, in defiance of the teachings of the first 5 Gurus, then one must look at other historical events of stature and importance. It is worth noting that there is no record of the Sikhs having performed *deep maala* when Darbar Sahib was inaugurated, when the first *parkash* of the GGS was conducted, when Akaal Takhat was installed, when Guru Hargobind initiated his *Meeri Peeri* army, and or when he returned victorious in each of the four wars he fought with local Mughals. These are all events that happened within a 50 year span (before and after) of the sixth Guru's release from Gwalior. If indeed *Deep Maala* was an accepted practice then, it would have been done on all these other occasions. Yet, it was not. Surely no Sikh would have trouble accepting that *all* of the historic events above would be of a higher importance to the Guru when compared to his release from prison. Why then is a lesser event being celebrated with a grand *Deep Mala*?

An examination of the collective mental psyche of the Sikhs at the time of their Guru's release will shed light on the probability of the Sikhs undertaking an exercise of lighting thousands of

lamps to celebrate Diwali. Jahangir had, on 30th May 1606, after having kept him in prison, put to death in the most inhumane and cruel way, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs,. That this was the first martyrdom of the Sikhs, that their peace loving and beloved Guru was the victim, and the terrible tortures he endured had a lasting impact on the Sikh collective psyche. The Sikh psyche was tormented and beleaguered beyond imagination. One Guru was cruelly executed; the successor was imprisoned for one and a half year. It is impossible to imagine that the Sikhs would have decided to have *any* grand celebration (Diwali or otherwise) with the cruel and inhumane death of their Guru still fresh on their mind. It is equally impossible to imagine that Guru Hargobind would have allowed or condoned a grand celebration to commemorate his own release from prison. For someone who was prepared to die in battle four times with the Mugal tyrants, and for someone to call upon his Sikhs to be ever prepared to lay down their lives for justice, being jailed would have been as **trivial** as being released.

In light of the above, it is clear that the *Deep Maala* story is concocted as an after thought by people eagerly seeking to provide a historical justification to link Diwali to the Guru. The similarity between the story of Guru Hargobind returning to Amritsar and that of Ram Chander ji returning to Ayothya to celebrate Diwali (elaborated below) is striking enough for Guru Ji's *Bandee Chor* celebration to come across as unimaginative, whole scale plagiarism and dull fabrication. As is the case with most afterthoughts – they do not withstand careful scrutiny, are shaky at best, and dubious at worst. Given that lighting lamps was the standard way of providing light and given the huge crowds present when Guru Hargobind arrived from Gwalior (even if 98 days after Diwali), a great many lamps may have indeed been used for their practical value. But if using many lamps constituted *Deep Maala*, virtually every day before the advent of electricity would have been a *Deep Maala* day at Darbar Sahib.

(ii) *Bhai Mani Singh's Shaheedee*. Sikhs are told that Bhai Sahib Ji sought to have a gathering of Sikhs during the Diwali of 1737. The local ruler agreed to not persecute the Sikhs who attended provided Bhai ji agreed to pay a fixed amount of money. Subsequently, upon discovering that the ruler had devised a plan to attack the *sangat*, Bhai ji sent notices for the Sikhs to not attend this function. There was thus no function and Bhai ji refused to pay the agreed amount to the ruler. He refused to allow the existing *golak* of the *Guru Ghar* to settle the amount due. As a result, Bhai ji was cut up limb by limb.

This incident is used to portray the fact that Sikhs *did* celebrate Diwali as a religious function because that is what this great *Shaheed* intended to do. But was that the intention – to celebrate Diwali as a Sikh religious function? Or was Bhai ji merely using the occasion to gather Sikhs to conduct a spiritual *diwan* that had everything to do with Sikhi (*Kirtan, Gurbani recitation, langgar sewa* etc) and nothing to do with Diwali per se? In any case, the function was never held. More importantly, the outcome of the Diwali of 1737 was the cruel limb by limb mutilation of a brave, noble, bright and principled jewel of the Sikh community. Only one thing can be worse than this cruel annihilation of a man of God. And that would be to use his name, his sacrifice, and his loss of life to sanction us Sikhs to do *deep malas*, distribute sweets and to *celebrate* a day that has nothing to do with the faith of Bhai ji the martyr. And those who are most guilty of such gross deviation are the present day guardians of the Darbar Sahib. What is most disturbing to the Sikh psyche is the fact that the roots of this great martyrdom of a great *Bhram Gyani panth rattan* soul lay in his desire to maintain the sanctity and dignity of Darbar Sahib. But now the guardians of the same seat of Sikh authority are bent on soiling Bhai Ji's sanctity!

DIWALI AND DARBAR SAHIB. In what can be described as a senseless waste of funds, money and energy sincerely contributed by Sikhs who

look to the Darbar Sahib for their spiritual guidance, *parbhandaks* of this seat of holiness conduct, at virtually every Diwali night an ostentatious display of fireworks, *deep mala*, and distribution of sweets. To see Darbar Sahib (and other leading *Gurdwaras* and *Takhats* – notably Patna and Damdama) take part in a ritual so decidedly critiqued by the GGS, on an occasion so unrelated to Sikhi – is a clear indication of the spiritual and moral corruption that has seeped into today's Sikh spiritual leadership.

No authority at Darbar Sahib, Patna or Damdama has been able to justify their Diwali night extravaganza save to quote *Pauree 6 Vaar 19* of Bhai Gurdas Ji, mention *Bandee Chor Divas* and link to Bhai Mani Singh's *Shahidee* – as discussed above. No one can authoritatively give a time frame when this practice started. It certainly was *not* practiced during the Guru's times because there is no mention in the GSS. Such practice certainly did not happen during the 80 years or so after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 and defeat of Baba Banda Singh *Bahadur* – as the Sikhs – hunted as they were by the rulers of the day - were hiding out in the jungles as guerillas.³ The Darbar Sahib itself was destroyed many times over during this period to prevent the Sikhs from even secretly visiting it to get spiritual strength. This period is replete with tales of Sikhs challenging each other to go for a dip in the *Sarowar* (pool) of Darbar Sahib. The challenge was substantial as it involved the risk of getting caught and losing one's life. The price of the head of a Sikh was 80 rupees then!. It is thus difficult to believe that Sikhs would have conducted a *deep*

³ Guru Gobind Singh's demise in 1708 was followed by Banda Bahadur's reign until 1716. The Sikhs underwent terror at the hands of Mughal rulers and grouped under Misls (12 groups or bands of Sikhs) in 1747 which was the year of the first of nine invasions of Ahmad Shah Durani. The Misls used guerilla tactics for survival, and lived inside or in the fringes of the jungles. Baba Deep Singh's sacrifice is while fighting Durani's attack on the Darbar Sahib in 1757. In 1801 Maharaja Ranjit Singh managed to unite these 12 Misals and created the Sikh Raj headquartered at Lahore. The British annexed this territory in 1849.

mala or any celebration every year on Diwali under such circumstances during these 80 years.

Yet it is highly likely that the Diwali related *deep mala* crept into Sikh Gurdwaras sometime during these 80 years of a tumultuous period. Since the Sikhs were fighting for their survival in the jungles of Punjab, the hills of Jammu and the deserts of Rajasthan, the Sikh *Gurdwaras*, including the major historical sites were in the hands of *Nirmalas*, *Mahants*, *Uddhasis*, pseudo-sikhs, government backed deviant Sikhs etc. By and large they were anti-Sikh and had their philosophies rooted in deviant practices or Bhramanical beliefs. This is a period when Bhramanical rituals such as *Lohree*, *Maghee*, *Rakhree*, *Shraad*, *Sangrands*, *Maasiyas*, *Puranmashi*, *Karva Chauth*, *Dushera*, *Diwali* etc were brought into and institutionalized as “Sikh” practices. Eighty years was more than enough for these rituals – even though tossed out by the GGS – to be rooted firmly in Sikh *maryada* and Gurdwara practices.

When Sikh Raj was established in the 1800s – the Sikhs were no longer hunted, but their Gurdwaras continued to remain in the hands of the deviant Sikhs. Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s ministerial portfolio for Sikh Religion was in the hands of the **Dogra brothers** who were Hindu converts from Jammu and Kashmir. We now know that these brothers were on the pay roll of the British for the purpose of destabilizing the Sikh Raj. These Dogra brothers sat as *parbhandaks* of Akaal Takhat, sanctioning deviant practices and doling out huge sums of money and land to the deviant *Mahants*. It is thus most likely that Diwali related *Deep Mala* at Darbar Sahib and other leading Sikh Gurdwaras was regularized during this period. When the British annexed the Sikh Raj, these *Mahants* and controllers of Sikh Gurdwaras were supported by the new rulers for politically expedient goals and actively allowed to carry on their activities. **It was during the British rule (Guru Nanak’s Nirangkari Gurpurab of 1942) that the first Akhand Paath of the**

***Bachittar Natak Granth* (dubiously called *Dasam Granth*) was conducted at none other than the Akaal Takhat itself !**

It wasn’t until the Singh Sabha Movement of the early 20th Century that the historical Gurdwaras were liberated and put under the control of SGPC. These Gurdwaras were physically liberated, but Sikhs are still trying to liberate themselves from the deviant practices and rituals that were rooted by their previous occupiers. At the same time, non-historical and local Gurdwaras continued to remain in the hands of individuals and a host of *deras* have sprung up. The *deras* are run by a sanitized version of the *Mahants* known as *Sants*. A good number of local Gurdwaras, including diaspora gurdwaras are staffed by *granthis* who are the products of *dera* philosophies and *sant* influences. It is in this context that the introduction and continuation of Diwali *deep mala* (and other Bhramanical rituals) at Darbar Sahib (and other Gurdwaras) is perhaps best understood.

PRESIDENT OBAMA SPEAKS. The White House in Washington underwent a transformation of sorts with Obama as its resident. For the first time in US history perhaps, a sitting US President decided, in 2013 to convey Diwali greetings to Hindus in the USA. The move is worthy of praise (and politically expedient too). Obama decided to widen the net of his greetings by including the Sikhs into his message. He mentioned Guru Hargobind’s release from Gwalior prison as the reason why Sikhs celebrate Diwali. The President most likely meant well, even if he was misinformed. It is us Sikhs who have to get our history and spiritual contexts right before we can expect the same of others.

UNDERSTANDING DIWALI. It now remains to explain Diwali within the context of Indian spirituality. *Bramanism* dictated the classification of Indian Hindu society into four main groups – *Brahmin*, *Khatri*, *Veshyas* and *Shudars*. Dress, occupations, language and celebrations were allotted accordingly to allow for distinctions to be

made at the outset. **The Brahmin thus celebrated Vesakhi while the Khatri considered Dusshera to be their main celebration. The Veshayas – because they were the Bania or business class – were allotted Diwali which is a celebration of Laxmi Puja (goddess of wealth). The Shudars – because they were lowest in the pecking order of castes – were deemed satisfied to consider Holee as their main celebration whence forth they gathered to throw colored dust at each other in the name of guttural fun.**

(i) **The Philosophy.** Diwali is a shortened version of *Deepavlee*; meaning a festival of lamps. It is fixed on the moonless (*masia*) night of the month of *Kathak* – a month associated with labour (as opposed to *Veskahi* which is associated with reaping the benefits). By definition *Kathak Masia* falls at the end of the “working month.” The day after Diwali is known as *Vishkarma Divas* (literally: day of no-labour – also the name of a *devta*) and then next *Dhan Chaundas* (literally: day of wealth – also the name of a *devta*). Wealth will only arrive if the deity of wealth – Laxmi, consort of Vishnu, arrives on Diwali night, and the devotee is home waiting for her. So prior to Diwali, devotees clean their homes, give it a new coat of paint etc. On Diwali night, they light up their homes, perform fireworks, and distribute sweets – in anticipation of Laxmi’s arrival. The main door of the house is never closed on Diwali night. Laxmi’s photo is adorned with silver and gold decorations and *Kesar* and *Ganesh* are drawn in full color on the walls / floors of the house. Many devotees gamble during Diwali night hoping for wealth. Shivji and his consort Parvati are commonly depicted as gambling during Diwali night. The Ramayan narrates a session of gamble between Ram and Sita on Diwali night.

(ii) **The History.** Given that the civilization of India is 5,000 years old, a number of significant events would have coincided with Diwali which would have come 5,000 times over. Of these the most significant is the return to Ayothya by prince Ram Chander after having defeated rival king

Ravan. This battle is depicted as the triumph of good over evil. Diwali night has therefore since witnessed fireworks and *deep malas* and the burning of effigies of the defeated Ravan.

CONCLUSION. It is fairly clear therefore that Diwali is a celebration that holds deep philosophical and historical significance to followers of the Hindu / Bramanical faith. And it is equally clear that Diwali has no significance whatsoever from the view point of Sikh philosophy, *Gurbanee*, *Gurmat* and Sikh practice.

Sikhs, having lived in cosmopolitan Punjab from the days of Guru Nanak would have undoubtedly shared the joy of Diwali (and even the Muslim celebrations such as Eid) with their neighbors and countrymen – *without* needing to share the philosophical underpinnings of the event. The same can be said of Sikhs outside of Punjab and India who live in mixed societies. It is thus likely that Diwali has been accepted from the social and cultural perspective by the Sikhs – in the name of good inter-communal relations and ties. A good number of Sikhs living in western countries are known to “celebrate” Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year, - without ascribing to the religious and spiritual connotations of these events - presumably within the spirit of good citizenship. As a minority almost everywhere, Sikhs have perhaps better understood this principle than others. There is nothing in *Gurmat* that prohibits a Sikh from sharing in the joys of his neighbours and countrymen. It is in fact encouraged in the name of sharing within the precincts of humanity.

But attempts to provide Sikh philosophical and historical basis to Diwali (and any other non-Sikh celebrations) and endeavors to bring these functions into Gurdwaras are grossly misguided. Such endeavors necessitate the distortion and manipulative interpretation of *gurbanee* to provide basis where none exists. They make a mockery of the rich Sikh tradition by implying a bankruptcy of indigenous Sikh celebrations. Such attempts falsify Sikh history and rob our younger

generations of the chance to appreciate their own distinct identity. The spiritual esteem of the Darbar Sahib (and other sites) is undoubtedly affected amongst *gurmat* and *gurbanee* appreciating Sikhs over the misguided and wasteful actions of these institutions to burn lamps and conduct fireworks on Diwali night. While our Hindu brethren do all the above to await the arrival of Lakshmi, whose arrival are the Sikhs anticipating?

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SABD GURU OR GRANTH GURU
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‘Sabd’ and ‘Guru’ are two words on which the whole philosophy of Guru Nanak revolves. Philosophy of Guru Nanak has been termed as ‘Nanakian Philosophy’ [1]. Although these words have been discussed in the ancient philosophy from time immemorial, they have special meanings and applications in the Nanakian philosophy. The intrinsic values of ‘Sabd’ and ‘Guru’ and their implications to understand Nanakian philosophy in their real perspective and to construct integrated and comprehensive philosophy of Sikhism for the humanity of the Science Age has already been discussed extensively by Chahal [2]. This article discusses whether the ‘Sabd’ is the ‘Guru’ as declared by Guru Nanak in his bani or the ‘Granth’ is the ‘Guru’ as declared by Guru Gobind Singh according to Sikh history?

A. Sabd (ਸਬਦ)

There are about five different types of spellings of ‘sabd’, when written in Roman alphabet, found in the literature. Most of the time, all the five

different forms of spellings, are in the same article of the same author. The spelling of this word has been standardized as ‘SABD’, which is based on the root word, ਸਬਦ (sabd) without any vowels, for *UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal* and this spelling is used consistently in all articles in this journal and in books published by the Institute for Understanding Sikhism. Different forms of sbd found in Gurbani are– ਸਬਦ, ਸਬਦਿ, ਸਬਦੁ, ਸਬਦੰM, ਸਬਦਾਹ, ਸਬਦੀ, ਸਬਦੀਂ, ਸਬਦੇy, ਸਬਦੈY, ਸਬਦੇo, ਸਬਦੈ. It indicates that various vowels have been added to the basic word to convey the context in which they are used.

Let us examine what does ‘sabd’ mean according Gurbani, incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [3]. Although the Punjabi word ‘sabd’ simply means a word but in Gurbani it has many meanings as explained by Bhai Kahn Singh [4]:

- i) Sound, Word, Speech, Conversations;
- ii) Religion, duty,
- iii) Message, advice,
- iv) Philosophy, and
- v) Guru.

In addition, I have found a few more meanings from the Gurbani:

- vi) Purifier,
- vii) Vehicle to Meet God,
- viii) Peace of Mind, and
- ix) Elixir of Life (*Amrit*).

i) Sound, Word, Speech, Conversation Sound

In general, ‘sabd’ is taken as ‘sound’ but here Guru Nanak has used it as ‘unstuck sound’ while describing beauty and praise of the Nature:

ਅਨਹਤਾ ਸਬਦ ਵਾਜੰਤ ਭੇਰੀ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Anhaṭā sabaḍ vājanṭ bḥērī. ||1|| rahāo ॥
AGGS, M 1, p 13 [3].

As if the sound (sabd) is coming out from a drum without beating. ||1||Pause||

ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਧੁਨਿ ਉਪਜੈ ਸਬਦੁ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ ॥੪॥੨੨॥

Nānak tē mukh ujle dhun upjai sabad nīsāṅ.
||4||22||

AGGS, M 1, p 22.

Nanak says that faces of those persons, from whose mind the musical sound (sabd) arises as the message (of the Guru), are radiating purity.

||4||22||

Word, Speech, Conversation

The Gurbani tells us that one's personality is discovered from one's sabd (word/speech/conversation):

ਸਬਦੈ ਹੀ ਭਗਤ ਜਾਪਦੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਚੀ ਹੋਇ ॥

Sabdou hī bhagat jāpde jinḥ kī baṇī sachī hoe.
AGGS, M 3, p 429.

Through one's sabd (word) the noble persons (Bhagat/devotees) are discovered, whose bani (word) tells the truth.

ii) Duty/Religion

ਜੋਗ ਸਬਦੰ* ਗਿਆਨ ਸਬਦੰ ਬੇਦ ਸਬਦੰ ਤ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ॥

Jog sabdān giān sabdān bed sabdān ta barahmaṇḥ.

ਖਯਤੀ ਸਬਦੰ ਸੂਰ ਸਬਦੰ ਸੂਦ੍ਰ ਸਬਦੰ ਪਰਾ ਕ੍ਰਿਤੁਰ ॥

Khaytarī sabdān sūr sabdān sūdar sabdān parā kirtḥ.

ਸਰਬ ਸਬਦੰ ਤ ਏਕ ਸਬਦੰ ਜੇ ਕੇ ਜਾਨਸਿ ਭੇਉ ॥

Sarab sabdān ta ek sabdān je ko jānas bheo.

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਾ ਕੇ ਦਾਸੁ ਹੈ ਸੋਈ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਦੇਉ ॥੩॥

Nānak tā ko dās hai soī niranjan deo. ||3||

AGGS, M 1, p 1353. (Also AGGS, M 2, p 469)

The duty of the Jogi is to attain knowledge,

And that of Brahmans to read Vedas.

The duty of the Kshatriya is to show bravery,

The duty to understand the One, that Entity (God), is the duty of all.

Nanak is the servant of that Entity (God), Who is without any blemishes."

*Some interpret ਸਬਦੰ (sabd) as 'Religion' rather 'duty'.

iii) Advice, Message

ਸਬਦੁ¹ ਵੀਚਾਰੀਐ ਪਾਈਐ ਗੁਣੀ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ॥੮॥੧੦॥

Nānak sabad vīchārī¹ai pāī¹ai guṇī nidhān. ||8||10||
AGGS, M 1, p 59.

Nanak says:

By contemplating/deliberating on the Advice/philosophy¹ (of the Guru) one attains the treasure of wisdom.

ਲਗੁ ਸਬਦਿ¹ ਨ ਭੇਦੀਐ ਕਿਉ ਸੇਹੈ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿ ॥

Jab lag sabad na bhedīai kio sohai gurduār
AGGS, M 1, p 19.

Until the advice/philosophy¹ is not deliberated how can one be honored at the God's courts?

iv) Philosophy

ਅਮਲੁ ਕਰਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਬੀਜੁ ਸਬਦੇ¹ ਕਰਿ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਆਬ ਨਿਤ ਦੇ
ਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥

Amal kar dhartī bīj sabdo kar sach kī āb nit dēh
pāī.

AGGS, M 1, p 24.

Make good deeds as the soil, and put the Guru's philosophy¹ in it as the seed;

Irrigate it continually with the water of truth.

ਘਰ¹ ਹੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਮਹਲੁ² ਪਾਇਆ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ³ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥੨॥

Ghar hī vich mahal pāī¹ā gur sabdī vīchār. ||2||
AGGS, M 3, p 30.

By deliberating on the philosophy³ of the Guru that Entity² (God) was realized in my own body¹ (instead of going to the forest or elsewhere).

Note: ਮਹਲੁ² (Mahal): Metaphorically used for palace of God means God Itself. However, throughout this paper the word, 'that Entity', has been used for God since no name can be assigned to God according to Nanakian Philosophy.

v) Guru – Discussed later under subheading B

vi) Purifier

The Sabd is a great purifier when it is understood properly and becomes part and parcel of mind and body:

ਸਬਦੈ¹ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਉਤਰੈ ਮਰਿ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥

Bin sabdai mail na utrai mar jameh hoe khuar.
AGGS, M 3, p 29.

Without the sabd (Guru's philosophy)¹, pollution (of mind) is not washed off; otherwise, one suffers with misery (symbolic cycle of death and rebirth).

ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ¹ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੧॥

ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Gur ka sabad man vasai man tan nirmal hoe. ||1||
rahao.

AGGS, M 3, p 32.

(When) the mind abides the sabd (Philosophy)¹ of the Guru, then the mind and body become pure.
||1||Pause||

vii) Vehicle to Realize that Entity (God)

ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ¹ ਸਚੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਦੂਖ ਨਿਵਾਰਣਹਾਰੁ ॥

Gur sabdi sach paiaa dukh nivaranhar.

AGGS, M 3, p 36.

Through the enlightening sabd (philosophy)¹ of the Guru one realizes the truth, that removes all troubles.

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਚੁ¹ ਨ ਵੀਸਰੈ ਮੇਲੇ ਸਬਦੁ² ਅਪਾਰੁ³ ॥੮॥੧੨॥

Nanak sach na visrai mele sabad apar. ||8||12||

AGGS, M 1, p 61.

Nanak says: *May that Entity (God)¹ be not forgotten when realized through the Eternal³ sabd (philosophy)².*

viii) Peace of Mind

ਮਨ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ¹ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

Mere man gur sabdi sukh hoe.

AGGS, M 5, p 46.

Peace of mind is attained through Guru's sabd¹ (advice/philosophy).

viii) Elixir of Life

ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ¹ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ² ਹੈ ਜਿਤੁ ਪੀਤੈ³ ਤਿਖ⁴ ਜਾਇ ॥

Gur ka sabad amrit hai jit pitai tikh jae.

AGGS, M 3, p 35.

The elixir of life² is obtained⁴ through understanding³ the Word¹ (literal meanings: quenching the thirst for wisdom).

A.1 Sabd - Bani (Speech, Utterance)

'Sabd' and 'Bani' are interchangeable in Gurbani both mean speech or utterance. It has been very well explained by Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, as follows:

i) Sabd and Bani are the Truth*

ਬਾਣੀ ਸਚੁ² ਸਬਦੁ³ ਹੈ ਜਾ ਸਚਿ⁴ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ⁵ ॥

Sach bani sach sabad hai ja sach dhare piar.

AGGS, M 3, p 33.

Put your love (faith in) the truth³, since the bani is the truth¹ and the sabd is the truth².

* **Truth:** the true or actual state of a matter; conformity with fact or reality; verity:

i) Bani Is Equated to that Entity (God)

ਵਾਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

vahu vahu bani nirankar hai tis jevad avar na koe.

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ॥

AGGS, M 3, p 515.

Wondrous is the bani of the Formless and is worth laudation as nothing equals it.

ii) Bani is Equated to Guru

'Guru' and 'Bani' are equated with each other by Guru Ramdas:

ਬਾਣੀ¹ ਗੁਰੁ² ਗੁਰੁ³ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ⁴ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ⁵ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ⁶ ਸਾਰੇ ॥

Bani gur gur hai bani vich bani amrit sare.

AGGS, M 4, p 982.

"Bani (bani)¹ is Guru² and Guru³ is bani⁴ and it (bani)⁵ contains all types of elixirs of life⁶."

iii) Who says Bani?

Now there is another question. Who says the bani? Guru Ram Das has resolved this issue in the following phrase that it is the Guru who says bani:

ਗੁਰੁ¹ ਬਾਣੀ² ਕਰੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ³ ਜਨੁ⁴ ਮਾਨੈ⁵ ਪਰਤਖਿ⁶ ਗੁਰੁ⁷ ਨਿਸਤਾ

ਰੇ⁸ ॥੫॥

Gur banī kahai sevak jan mānai partakh gurū nistāre. ॥5॥

AGGS, M 4, p 982.

"Guru¹ says bani² and the servant (Sikh)^{3,4} accepts⁵ and practices it.

Obviously⁶, this is the Guru⁷ who helps to get salvation⁸."

Note: Whether it is ਗੁਰ, ਗੁਰੁ, ਗੁਰੂ and ਗੁਰਿ all means ਗੁਰੂ according to Bhai Kahn Singh's *Mahan Kosh* [4].

iv) Who is that Guru in the above phrase that says Bani?

Here again Guru Ram Das made it very clear that Nanak is that Guru who says the bani:

ਨਾਨਕੁ* ਬੋਲੈ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਾਣੀ¹ ॥

Jan Nānak bolai amrit banī.

ਗੁਰਸਿਖਾਂ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ² ਪਿਆਰੀ ਭਾਣੀ ॥

Gursikhā'n kai man piārī bhānī.

ਉਪਦੇਸੁ³ ਕਰੇ ਗੁਰੁ⁴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ⁵ ਪੂਰਾ⁶ ਗੁਰੁ⁷ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ⁸ ਪਰਉ

ਪਕਾਰੀਆ⁹ ਜੀਉ ॥੪॥੭॥

Updes kare gur satgur pūrā gur satgur parupkārī jīo. ॥4॥7॥

AGGS, M 4, p 96.

Nanak* person speaks bani, the Elixir of Life¹. It is dear and pleasing to the minds² of the Guru-oriented Sikhs. The Guru⁴, the true Guru⁵ and perfect⁶ Guru (Nanak)⁷, preaches³; the perfect Guru (that Entity-God)⁸ is Generous⁹ to all.

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਬੋਲੈ ਗੁਣ ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ

॥੪॥੫॥

Jan Nānak bole guṇ banī gurbānī har nām samāiā.

॥4॥5॥

AGGS, M 4, p 494.

"Nanak* person speaks the bani of good qualities, that Entity (God) is realized through this Gurbani. (* Here Nanak is Nanak himself, since Kaka is with Ounkar in the above two stanzas.)

B. Guru

'Guru' is a very wide term that covers many aspects. It is very important to understand the intrinsic values of 'Guru', 'Sat Guru', and 'Perfect Guru' and their implications when used in Gurbani. 'Guru' in English dictionary is:

1. Personal religious teacher and spiritual guide, esp. in Hinduism.
2. A teacher and especially intellectual guide in matters of fundamental concern.
3. One, who is an acknowledged leader or chief proponent.

According to Bhai Kahn Singh [4] the word 'Guru' originated from 'Gri' meaning that engulf and to enlighten, i.e., the one that engulfs the darkness (ignorance) and enlightens (makes to understand). According to him [4] 'Guru' in Gurbani is spelled as: ਗੁਰ, ਗੁਰੁ, and ਗੁਰੂ. In addition to these spelling, it is also spelled as ਗੁਰਿ. In spite of different spellings, all the forms are pronounced as 'Guru' and mean as explained above.

Bhai Kahn Singh in *Gurmat Martand* again explains 'Guru' as follows[5]:

One that dispels ignorance and teaches the truth, affection, interest, and benefit (human rights). According to him Nanak is the Guru sent by that Entity (God) for dispelling the ignorance and preaching the truth and the human rights.

A critical analysis of Gurbani indicates that 'Guru' has been used very specifically for specific Entity/Being as follows:

i) God is Guru

ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੇਈ
ਜੀਉ ॥੫॥੧੧॥

Aprampar pārbarahm pamesar Nānak gur miliā soī jīo. ॥5॥11॥

AGGS, M 1, p 599.

The One, Who is Infinite, Transcendent, and Supreme, is the Guru realized (by Nanak).

That Entity is Guru for Nanak.

ii) God is Sat Guru

Guru Ram Das explains the above principle of Guru Nanak about 'Sat Guru' as follows:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਨਾ ਆਵੈ ਨਾ ਜਾਇ ॥

Satgur merā sadā sadā nā āvai nā jāe.

ਓਹੁ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਇ ॥੧੩॥

Oh abhināsī purakhū hai sabh meh rahiā samāe. ||13||
AGGS, M 4, p 759.

My True Guru is that Who exists forever and neither takes birth nor dies.

Oh¹ is imperishable² Entity³ and pervades everywhere.

That Entity is Sat Guru for Guru Nanak.

iii) Nanak as 'Guru'

Chahal [6] and Baldev Singh [7] in their research articles have outlined that Nanak was declared as Guru first by Guru Angad and then by Guru Amardas, and Guru Ramdas in their Bani. Finally, Guru Arjan confirmed in his bani that Nanak is the Guru:

a. Guru Angad:

ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਕਿਆ ਉਪਦੇਸੀਐ¹ ਜਿਨ² ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਉ³ ॥੧॥

Fin kao kiā updesīai jin gur Nānak deo. ||1||

AGGS, M 2, p 150

What teachings can be imparted¹ to those² who have Nanak as their enlightened Guru (teacher)³?

b. Guru Amardas:

The next Guru, Amar Das, also says that Nanak is the Guru:

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਕਉ ਸਤਿ¹ ਗੁਰੁ² ਮਿਲਿਆ ਤਿਨ੍ਹ ਕਾ ਲੇਖ³
ਨਿਬੜਿਆ⁴ ॥

Nānak jinḥ kao satgur miliā tinḥ kā lekḥā nibṛiā. |
AGGS, M 3, p 435.

Those, to whom Nanak, the true¹ Guru², has imparted his philosophy, their deeds³ have been accounted⁴ for.

c. Guru Ramdas

Thereafter, Guru Ram Das, also says the same thing:

ਧਨੁ ਧੰਨੁ¹ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਮਦਰਸੀ² ਜਿਨਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ³ ਉਸਤਤਿ⁴
ਤਰੀ ਤਰਾਂਤਿ⁵ ॥

Dhan dhan gurū Nānak samadrasī jin nindā ustāt
tarī tarānt.

AGGS, M 4, p 1264.

Praise worthy¹ is Guru Nanak, who treats everybody equally² and has overcome⁵ the character of slandering³ and praising⁴ others (for selfish purposes) and helps others to overcome⁶ this nature. 4.5.

And

ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੂ¹ ਗੁਰੂ² ਹੈ ਪੂਰਾ³ ਮਿਲਿ⁴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ⁵ ਨਾਮੁ⁶
ਧਿਆਇਆ⁷ ॥

Nānak gurū gurū hai pūrā mil satgur nām dhiāiā.

AGGS, M 4, p 882.

Nanak is the Guru¹ of Gurus^{2}, is the perfect³ and true Guru⁵ by understanding⁴ him one can realize/comprehend⁷ that Entity (God)⁶.*

Note: ਗੁਰੂ¹ ਗੁਰੂ² 'Guru Guru' means 'Guru of the Gurus' according to Bhai Kahn Singh [4].

d. Guru Arjan

Finally, the following phrase of the Guru Arjan clearly confirms that Nanak is the Guru:

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨ ਸੁਣਿਆ¹ ਪੇਖਿਆ² ਸੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਰਭਾਸਿ³ ਨ
ਪਰਿਆ ਰੇ ॥

Guru Nānak jin suniā pekhiā se fir garbhās na pariā re.

AGGS, M 5, p 612.

Those, who have heard¹ and analyzed² the philosophy of Guru Nanak, do not fall into ignorance³ again.

Note: ਗਰਭਾਸਿ³ (*garbhas*): it has been interpreted as 'ignorance' rather than literal translation as 'womb'.

C. Sabd Guru

The thought realized by Guru Nanak was written in word called 'sabd' ('bani) keeping in view that Guru in human form cannot exist forever but his

‘sabd’ can be preserved by his followers. Therefore, Guru Nanak declared his ‘sabd’ as his ‘GURU’ during the discourse with *Siddhas*:

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Sabaḍ gurū suraṭ ḍhūn chelā.

AGGS, M 1, p 943.

Sabd is Guru, consciousness and intention toward it make ‘me its disciple (Sikh).

What are Meanings of ‘Sabd’ Here?

The word ‘sabd’ is interpreted differently by different scholars. For example, Dr Jodh Singh [8] (p 64) says that “sabad” has been clearly accepted as *Guru*.” based on the *Sidh Gost of Guru Nanak*. He further says [8] (p 64) that “This conception of shabada as God and Guru by Guru Nanak is consistent also with the Indian religious tradition, in which Shabda-brahman principle has been widely accepted.” Similarly, some Sikh scholars have the same opinion and accept ‘sabd’ as ‘God’. (The spellings of ‘sabd’ used by Dr Jodh Singh have been kept intact. Similarly, many Sikh scholars use different spellings of ‘sabd’.)

However, the following phrase in the Stanza # 38 in JAP bani of Guru Nanak indicates that Guru advises the Sikhs to coin a ‘sabd’ through freethought* and then to follow it to be a noble person:

ਜਤੁ ਪਾਹਾਰਾ ਧੀਰਜੁ ਸੁਨਿਆਰੁ ॥

Jaṭ pāhārā ḍhīraj suniār.

ਅਹਰਣਿ ਮਤਿ ਵੇਦੁ ਹਥੀਆਰੁ ॥

Ahraṇ maṭ veḍ hathiār.

ਭਉ ਖਲਾ ਅਗਨਿ ਤਪ ਤਾਉ ॥

Bhau khalā agan tap tāo.

ਭਾਂਡਾ ਭਾਉ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਤਿਤੁ ਢਾਲਿ ॥

Bhāṇḍā bhāo amrit tit ḍhāl

ਘੜੀਐ ਸਬਦੁ ਸਚੀ ਟਕਸਾਲ ॥

Ghāṛīai sabaḍ sachī taksāl.

ਜਿਨ ਕਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰਮੁ ਤਿਨ ਕਾਰ ॥

Jin kao naḍar karam tin kār.

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲ ॥੩੮॥

Nānak naḍrī naḍar nihāl. ||38||

AGGS, Jap # 38, p 8.

Self-control should be the furnace, and patience of goldsmith.

Wisdom should be the anvil, and knowledge be the tools.

Love for that Entity (God) should be the bellows to blow air into fire to make it super-hot.

The body is the melting pot where self-control, patience, wisdom and knowledge to be melted together to mould (prepare) Amrit (elixir) and to coin the sabd in the mint of truth.

Nanak says:

That Entity (God) has blessed everybody with these qualities, the one, who works for it, is blessed by God to achieve it.

The theme in the above stanza #38 of JAP of Guru Nanak explains how to prepare the *Amrit* (elixir for life) and to coin a ‘sabd’ (word), which will make a person noble. From this it can be assumed that ‘sabd’ in the phrase, ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥ Sabaḍ gurū suraṭ ḍhūn chelā,

means the ‘freethought’*, realized by Guru Nanak under the conditions described in the above stanza of JAP. That ‘sabd’ (freethought)* became the ‘Guru’ of Nanak.

***Freethought:** The thought unrestrained by deference to authority, tradition, or established belief, especially in matters of religion.

Guru Amar Das has explained the above principle of Guru Nanak in which the ‘sabd’ has been declared as ‘Guru’ as follows:

GRANTH GURU

Dr Gopal Singh [9] observed that due to poor understanding of intrinsic values of ‘Sabd’, ‘Guru’, and ‘Sabd Guru’ the Granth started to be worshipped more than read, uttered as magical formula or a *Mantram* for secular benefits. Now in almost all the Gurdwaras in the world, whether they are under the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar or any

other organization, the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) is treated almost as an idol [10] although the idol worship is condemned in Nanakian philosophy.

The practice of reciting of many *Akhand Paaths* of the AGGS under one roof or in many rooms has become an important feature of many Gurdwaras [11]. Deliberation on the sabd is totally absent except that which is done by a few *parcharak* (preachers) without involving the *sangat* (congregation) in the deliberation of the sabd. The effective deliberation is that which is two-way that is between the *parcharak* and the *sangat* when the *sangat* can ask questions and express their views also [12].

Now there is a big question.

IS SABD THE GURU OR GRANTH IS THE GURU?

This question can be discussed under the following two major headings:

- A. Concept in History
- B. Concept in Aad Guru Granth Sahib

A. Concept in History

A new controversy on the declaration of Granth as

Guru was started by McLeod [13]. Since the 'Granth Guru' had become an established fact in the old Sikh literature, Prof Madanjit Kaur wrote a detailed article entitled, "*The Guru-ship and Succession of Guru Granth*" to justify that Granth is Guru and Guru-ship was bestowed by Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 [14]. She stated that this article was written to refute the following statement of McLeod [13] "...tradition which

conferred his (Guru Gobind Singh's) personal authority upon the sacred scripture and the corporate Panth may perhaps be a retrospective interpretation, a tradition which owes its origin not to an actual pronouncement of the Guru but to an insistent need for maintaining the Panth's cohesion during the later period."

Grewal [15] had also pointed out about the contention of McLeod [13] as follows: "*He (Justice Gurdev Singh) thinks it is unfair on McLeod to suggest that Granth Sahib was installed as Guru to serve as a cohesive force for the leaderless community after the execution of Banda Bahadur and not because of injunction of Guru Gobind Singh.*"

In the above both contentions it appears that McLeod [13] refused to accept that Guru Gobind Singh declared the Granth as Guru in 1708 CE. He believes that it was a later addition after the execution of Banda Bahadur the Granth was declared as Guru as a cohesive force for the leaderless community.

In response to the above contention of McLeod [13], Justice Gurdev Singh, Harbans Singh and Ganda Singh Cited from Reference [15] and Madanjit Kaur [14] and Ganda Singh [16] have proven historically that it was Guru Gobind Singh, who bestowed Guru-ship to the Granth in 1708 CE at the time of his demise.

Nevertheless, when I examined the information (data) given in *Sri Gur Sobha* [17], *Gurbilas Patshahi 6* [18], *Rahit Namay* [19], other historical evidence, and Gurbani a new picture appeared that originally 'Sabd' was accepted as 'Guru' but later 'Sabd Guru' was changed to 'Granth Guru' and then bestowing of Guru-ship was ritualized steadily and stealthily. Let us find the truth from the Aad Guru Granth Sahib:

B. Concept in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib

According to Prof Sahib Singh [20] Guru Nanak at the time of his demise handed over a *pothi* (book, Granth), containing his bani, to Guru Angad who succeeded to the House of Nanak. Guru Angad added his bani in it and handed over this *Pothi* to the next Guru Amar Das, who succeeded to the House of Nanak. This system of preserving the bani of Guru Nanak in its original form continued till Guru Arjan, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, received it. When Guru Arjan opened and

examined this *pothi* (inherited treasure) he exclaimed it in astonishment as follows:

ਪੀਊ ਦਾਦੇ ਕਾ ਖੋਲਿ ਡਿਠਾ ਖਜਾਨਾ ॥

Pī-ū dāde kā khol dithā khajānā.

ਤਾ ਮੇਰੈ ਮਨਿ ਭਇਆ ਨਿਧਾਨਾ ॥੧॥

Fā merai man bhāi-ā niḍhānā. ||1||

ਰਤਨ ਲਾਲ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਕਛੂ ਨ ਮੋਲੁ ॥

Raṭan lāl jā kā kachhū na mol.

ਭਰੇ ਭੰਡਾਰ ਅਖੁਟ ਅਤੇਲ ॥੨॥

Bhare bhāṅdār akhūt atol. ||2||

ਖਾਵਹਿ ਖਰਚਹਿ ਰਲਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਭਾਈ ॥

Khāvèh kharchèh ral mil bhāi.

ਤੇਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵਧਦੇ ਜਾਈ ॥੩॥

Fot na āvai vadhdō jāi. ||3||

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਸਤਕਿ ਲੇਖੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ॥

Kaho Nānak jis mastak lekḥ likhāi.

ਸੁ ਏਤੁ ਖਜਾਨੈ ਲਇਆ ਰਲਾਇ ॥੪॥੩੧॥੧੦੦॥

So eṭ khajānai laiā ralāi. ||4||31||100||

AGGS, M 5, p 186.

As the inherited treasure (Gurbani) of our ancestors (Gurus) was opened and viewed, then the mind was illumined with Treasure (Gurbani). Compared to this treasure the jewels and rubies have no value.

The chest is full of inexhaustible and immeasurable treasure (Gurbani).

Let us utilize it together, and dispense (disseminate) it amongst other, Brothers.

The Treasure (Gurbani) will not be exhausted instead it would multiply manifold.

Nanak says whosoever has the Grace of that Entity (God) will be a shareholder of this Treasure (Gurbani).

It appears from this message, ਖਾਵਹਿ ਖਰਚਹਿ ਰਲਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਭਾਈ ॥

ਤੇਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵਧਦੇ ਜਾਈ ॥੩॥

(Khāvèh kharchèh ral mil bhāi. Fot na āvai vadhdō jāi. ||3||)

In the above stanza Guru Arjan thought to bind this inherited treasure, bani of Guru Nanak and that of other Sikh Gurus who succeeded to the House of Nanak along with the other bani of Bhagats and also that of *Swiayae* (eulogy of Sikh Gurus) by Bhattas into a *pothi* (Granth) so that this Granth is made available to everybody for dissemination of Gurbani to the humanity.

Since the ‘Sabd’ was declared the ‘Guru’ by Guru Nanak, therefore, the *pothi*, in which the ‘sabd’ of Gurus was incorporated, was equated to as *Parmeshar* (Enlightener/Guru) by Guru Arjan some time before its compilation in 1604 as is indicated in his following stanza:

ਪੇਬੀ¹ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ² ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ³ ॥

Pothī parmesar kā thān.

ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਪੂਰਨ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥੧॥ ਰ

ਹਾਉ ॥

Sādhsang gāvahi guṇ gobind pūran barahm giān. ||1|| rahāo.

AGGS, M 5, p 1226.

The pothi¹ is equated³ to the Enlightener/Guru². (From which) the noble people discuss (sing) the attributes of God and deliberate on the wisdom (philosophy) of God in the congregation.

Note: ਪਰਮੇਸਰ² (*parmesar*): It has been metaphorically interpreted as *Enlightener/Guru*².

ਥਾਨੁ³ (*Than*) – keeping its meaning as place, position, status or standing it has been metaphorically interpreted as *equated*³ to.

Declaration of Granth as Guru

It means, the day in 1604 CE the Granth was compiled, it was equated to the Guru (ਪੇਬੀ¹ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ² ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ³ ॥ *Pothī parmesar kā*

thān.) because of the fact that ‘sabd’ was already called as ‘Guru’ by Guru Nanak in the very beginning of his teachings as discussed above, which has been enshrined into the Granth. Since then preaching of sabd was carried on from this Granth by Guru Arjan himself and by all other Gurus who succeeded to the House of Nanak and that view has been expressed in the early writings, i. e. *Sri Gur Sobha* [17] and *Gurbilas Patshahi 6* [18]. Therefore, the Granth is ‘Guru’ ipso facto the ‘Sabd Guru’ is enshrined in it since its compilation in 1604. **However, the fact that sabd is the Guru cannot be ignored.**

Addition of bani of Guru Teg Bahadur sometime during 1705 by Guru Gobind Singh does not make any difference in the original concept/philosophy embodied in the Granth, therefore, the same Granth is the ‘Guru’ since 1604. However, this does not allow to treat the Granth as a deity to perform various rituals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CAN WE ACTUALLY TRANSLATE GURBANI INTO OTHER LANGUAGES?

November 10, 2009

By Gurujot Singh

The act of translation contains its own intrinsic impossibility. That is, that every translation is only an approximation of the original. That does not mean that we should not attempt the impossible! In fact, I believe it's actually necessary to do so.

I find it somewhat difficult to translate Gurbani into English because one word in Gurbani could require a whole story or several paragraphs of explanation to understand the whole meaning. Many of the examples used in Gurbani require an understanding of the culture that existed at the time it was written. Gurbani was written over 300 years ago, on the other side of the planet from me. For example, many existing Hindu traditions and Vedic stories are mentioned, but if you are not familiar with those stories and traditions the comparisons lose their meaning.

Did you know that the Chaatrik bird (Pied Cuckoo) has a mythological significance in India? It is considered to bring the monsoon. It is a loud bird that is always chirping, and is poetically considered to be calling for the rain because of its thirst. So when Gurbani says, "*My mind longs for*

the Blessed Vision of the Guru's Darshan. It cries out like the thirsty song-bird." then we understand why this bird is crying out and it makes the example less cryptic and closes the cultural gap of 300 years ago. All of the sudden this line doesn't seem outdated. It comes alive.



Did you know that '*khin*' isn't just a moment? It is exactly the amount of time it takes to blink an eye. Or, for example the word '*paap*' is often translated as '*sin*', but sin has a heavy Judeo-Christian cultural connotation. In the Gurbani context we don't believe in evil, the devil, sin, heaven and hell, eternal damnation etc. So perhaps sin isn't the best word to use. *Paa-aap = an action against oneself*. How about '*misdeed*'? How about '*any action that takes you away from awareness of your divine essence*'? Simply translating it to '*sin*' brings in a whole set of incorrect connotations and seems to take away the deeper universal, transcendental meaning of Gurbani.

But that presents us with another dilemma in translating the Siri Guru Granth Sahib; how can we translate each line accurately without doubling or tripling the amount of text? I think the translators are always having to 'make due' with the words in the English language. My personal feeling is that there is a way to do it. When translating I find myself simplifying some phrases and expounding on others to convey a more accurate or literal meaning. Overall it has ended up to be about the same amount of text. I don't

think a translation has ever been attempted by an experienced poet or a creative "wordsmith". Dr. Sant Singh's English translation is the best one of very few that are available, but still, some things are lost in translation.

When reading in Gurmukhi the words seem to be deeper, more significant and more powerful. I think one reason is because Gurbani forces your mind to complete the meaning. Let's take this line for example, "Safal darshan pekhat puneet" Dr. Sant Singh translated it as "Blessed is His Darshan; receiving it, one is purified".

safal - successful, fruitful
darshan - vision, blessing
pekhat – seeing
puneet - pure, holy

So if we break this line down in Gurmukhi there is a 2 word subject "safal darshan" - '*fruitful vision*', and a 2 word predicate "pekhat puneet" - '*seeing and becoming pure*'. I have inserted the word 'becoming' because that's how it makes sense to me. So, already we find that taking it in its purest simple form, the line doesn't make sense in English and we have to start adding words and interpretations. It wouldn't make sense if the line just said, "fruitful vision, seeing pure" even though it's literal to the poetic power and simplicity of the Gurmukhi. There is no "His" "receiving it" "one" "is." It's pure and esoteric. In Gurmukhi form, this line leads you through a process. It doesn't say everything, but it lets you discover the meaning within the line. Your mind gets to interject who is doing the seeing, and who has the fruitful vision. Your mind decides if the fruitful vision is causing the purity. Based on your perception your mind interprets the experience the Guru is describing. The point is that the pure Gurmukhi is interactive in its simplicity. That's the beauty of Gurbani - it is a transcendental conversation with your soul and instruction to your mind.

I have also noticed that translations tend to add tenses that aren't there in Gurmukhi. "...my sleeping mind has been awakened" (...so-eyo man



jageyo) directly translating, it would be "sleeping mind, awaken(ed/ing)". We are adding the past tense to make it make sense by saying "has been". But how do we know that this line is telling us a story in the past? The

Gurmukhi doesn't mention "my" singular, nor is it in past tense. What if we said, "...the sleeping mind is awakened". Or what if this line is a command? "...awaken your sleeping mind."

There are other lines of Gurbani translated in future tense such as, "The doubts of your mind will be dispelled." (...man ki laahe bharaant) Instead, I think it could be "The doubts of the mind are dispelled".

This is because the Shabd is transcendental and the Gurbani describes experiences that are actually outside of time and space. Everything is in the moment and everything is happening now - in the moment the word is spoken.

We are always adding in characters to Gurbani like "I" and "Him". "Those who love Him are very rare" (...bhao laaey jan koe). Instead we could say "there are very few beloveds". Then you are left to construct in your mind who they are beloveds to. That attempts to create a subtle presence of God that doesn't have a personality.

"I have not practiced meditation, self-discipline, self-restraint or righteous living" (jap tap sanjam dharam na kamaeya). We could instead translate that as "The human has not practiced meditation...". This way we take the "I" out, which isn't in the Gurmukhi anyway, and putting in human which is another interpretation because Gurbani is directed at the human mind. Or it could be "Meditation... [etc] have not been practiced", and the reader can decide *who* has not practiced it.

Gurbani speaks to the collective human mind (not the singular “I”). The Siri Guru Granth Sahib is our living Guru so it is ever-present and always true in every moment, so whenever I can, I lean towards using a present continuous tense, and unless absolutely necessary I do not use the past or future tense. Gurbani gives the feeling of the Creator as an All Pervading Presence but we tend to translate it in such a way that it seems like a personality. Even though the Creator is beyond personality, we are always referring to a “Him”. Even using the word “God” is limiting. Instead of saying 'God' we can say 'The Divine' or "The Infinite." To me, that takes God from a noun to an adjective which fits better because everything is God, so to use a word that makes God a personality is misleading, but to make it an attribute that can be applied to any noun (everything) does more justice to the idea.

The word God is probably deserving of an article for itself. In Gurbani the words that we translate to “God” are usually descriptions or aspects of God. The following is a list of examples where the word 'God' is often used in translation thereby losing the essence of the original.

Prabh – beloved one

Brahm – creator of the world

Paarbrahm – beyond brahm; a spirit that is even beyond the capacity to create the world

Gopal – one who sustains the world

Gobind – one who preserves the world

Dayal – merciful one

Kirpal – kind one

Antarjami – Inner knower; knower of the heart/inner feelings

Nirankar – Formless

Patit Udaaran – uplifter of the fallen ones

Many times we find the word 'God' or 'Lord' interjected into a line. “jo kich karna so kar rahiya” - translated as, “Whatever is to be done, the Lord is doing.” The literal translation would be “Whatever is being done, that is sustained” and there is no mention of a Being in this line. I think

it would be good to stop using the word 'God' altogether. 'God' brings up thoughts of a Being who has a personality of sorts.



This Christian God is a male. He gets angry sometimes. He has a human like form, he is in constant struggle against evil, and he operates with some human limitations. This is a completely different concept than what we understand from Gurbani. I think that culturally we Westerners need to break out of this Man/God concept, and go towards an **Ik Ongkar** concept. Creator/Sustainer/Destroyer, Ying Yang, Nirgun Sargun. The problem is that we don't have a word to differentiate the two. So in translating Gurbani let's start saying something like 'The Divine' or "The One" for example. It does seem like I'm getting very nitty-gritty with words here, when words are just symbols. Words just represent ideas, and the current translations do fairly well at conveying the ideas in Gurbani to modern English vernacular. So what's the big deal if we change it from “I” to “one”, if we take it out of past tense “have been saved” to “be saved”?

Well, it is because the Gurus and other writers of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib chose their words very carefully. Bani is sacred sound. Reading Gurbani takes you through a transformation. Gurbani is subtle, powerful, and always evolving as your own concepts evolve. So anything we can do to restore the poetic power, the literal meaning and pure simplicity of it is not only good, but it is necessary. I have found personally that even changing one word in a line of Gurbani can completely change my experience of reading that

line. When our entire lifestyle revolves around Bani then making it more powerful and more spiritual is one of the best things we can do.

Please help with the Gurmukhi to English dictionary project. We want to restore the deeper meanings to the words of the Guru. www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Gurmukhi_to_English

This article is not intended to criticize any existing translation of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib. I am not a scholar, so this is only an exploration of ideas.

Courtesy

<http://www.sikhnet.com/news/can-we-actually-translate-gurbani-other-languages>

CELEBRATING KHOJ GURBANI:

Pitfalls & Pleasures of Translating

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April 16, 2014

The Internet is abuzz these days with a sea of initiatives in translating the Guru Granth. I hope to capture some of the complexity of this never ending task today. In the process I want to take note of a new portal [Khoj Gurbani](#)— an effort embarked upon by mostly young tech savvy minds; I am the lone exception on both counts,

[Khoj Gurbani](#) was unveiled last week on Vaisakhi 2014. A group of Sikhs: men and women, based around the world in India and the diaspora aim to meet via a connected, wired platform once a week. Starting from page one of the Guru Granth, and moderated in turn by one of the small group, the participants, who can log in from the world over, will raise questions and exchange insights and ideas on how to translate the verses being read, how to frame the ideas of the weekly reading assignment in user friendly

terms and how to present the proceedings in easily searched and researched platform.

I, of course, celebrate the initiative most heartily. I also see that in a single hour the group would be sorely limited in how much material from the Guru Granth it can pursue – perhaps no more than a page or two. Clearly reaching the last line (page 1430) would take us far into the foreseeable future; it would surely be a lifetime project.

On the other hand, one could argue that several English translations and search engines of the complete Guru Granth already exist; I possess four of them. Some are easily accessible on the computer with appropriate search engines. Do we need another time consuming initiative.

My answer is an unequivocal yes. So, let me build a meandering and convoluted case for it.

Today, there is perhaps no continent or country where Sikhs are not. Wherever we have ventured, we have taken our lifestyle, family values, seductive cuisine, song and dance, and our incomparably enterprising spirit. And we have taken along Sikhi – a unique, universal and timeless message -- a way of life that makes us what we are. **Now we have a globally connected existence of a nation without walls.**

Historically ours has always been a polyglot reality, but now more than ever. Now Sikhs are growing up outside the comfortable cultural cocoon of Punjab and India. Their *norma loquendi* is no longer Punjabi or any Indic language; the cultural context, too, has dramatically shifted.

The mythological antecedents of India shaped many of us, not because they were essential to core values of Sikhi, but because Indian mythology was the overarching cultural context of India. This lore is now alien to a new generation of Sikhs. Many diaspora Sikhs may be more conversant with Greek folktales than with the Indian. This is not unexpected or unwelcome;

technology merely hastens the process.

Much as any immigrants, Sikhs in the diaspora remain in an increasingly complex bind. We dearly value, what is for us many of us our mother tongue, Punjabi, but within our lifespan it has already diminished to a transactional presence, effectively limited to social banter, music and humor. **We are not comfortable enough to pick up a book of poetry, history or philosophy in it, and so we usually don't.**

Then there is English, but in that, too, our command of the language is frequently transactional. We master it to the extent demanded by our work that puts food on the table, but rarely, if at all, for the pleasure of ideas on history, poetry or philosophy in it. So, the education of the mind is often effectively stalled in both Punjabi and English.

Now consider this: The repository of our spiritual heritage -- Guru Granth -- is traditionally penned in the Gurmukhi (Punjabi) script, but contains little of present-day conversational Punjabi vocabulary. In fact, Gurbani showcases the lexicon of many Indic and Middle Eastern languages extant when it was composed 300 to 500 years ago. It is written in the vernacular of the times with copious references to Indian mythology. Gurbani does not endorse mythic legends but frames the teaching such that it would resonate with the average Indian of that time.

Why? Clearly, no matter the topic, teaching is best couched in the culture, context and language of the student or else the lesson is lost. I can vouch for this, having taught a very different discipline for umpteen years in the North American university setting.

Most Sikhs in India, but even more, those who have spent lives outside it, are not quite so adept in the Indian languages, and absolutely at sea in much of Indian mythology. Plus, those legends have little or no relevance to our present day lives.

In brief, I submit that many of us are equipped to handle neither any Indian language nor English with much finesse or fluency beyond a rudimentary transactional level. We are equipped to peruse history, philosophy or poetry in neither English nor Punjabi. And the mythology only distracts us. Hence, the dire need for translations; they connect us to the eternal and essential message of Gurbani without disconnecting us from the modern world in which we live.

Moreover, our sacred writings are largely cast in inspired poetry that, to us, is divine. And I don't need to tell you the difficulty in deciphering the mind of a poet when he plays with words, language and meter in the cause of poesy.

Ergo, good faith efforts to translate the poetry of Guru Granth and capture its lofty message are critically essential; how else can we understand or adopt it as a blueprint for our life?

Why translate? Think of a moment in any conversation, no matter how simple, no matter if it is with an arch enemy or a soul mate. Isn't it accompanied by some thought about what the other person really meant or understood? Isn't that, in effect, a translation of the simplest communication? Understanding the other person demands tuning into (translating) his or her moods, gestures, body language, words and frame of reference and mining them for meaning. Translation then is the only effective way to delve into what another mind has to offer. War and peace stem from translating or mis-translating each other before framing responses.

I aim today to plough a path between the pitfalls and rewards, the bouquets and the brickbats whenever we dive into translation.

The literary output of human civilizations of yore often comes to us via translations. That's how we know of Homer, the greatest poet of ancient Greece, and of Virgil and Ovid, of similar standing in Rome of a bygone era. We celebrate

Kalidasa as the preeminent playwright and poet of ancient India and we access his work through modern translations of it.

Since a translation and the original text can never be equal to one another, translation is, by definition, an essentially impossible task. So the relevant question becomes: how accurately does a translation capture the mind and insights, even the beauty of the poet's meter and language? Such questions are rarely laid to rest, but they give birth to new scholars of the original language and also the one in which a translation is done. Countless academicians earn doctoral degrees from such effort. By starting from every translator's premise: "I am going to attempt the impossible," there is an essential courage implied by taking on the task.

Times and cultures change, as do languages. Over time, the vernacular becomes opaque, literary language even more so. For instance today, only a few hundred years after Chaucer, his Canterbury Tales defy comprehension without translation into modern English. Similar hurdles abound in engaging with classics of Western civilization, such as the writings of Plato, or German and Latin Masters.

How good is any translation? This is not so easily answered, but it deserves an exploration. As examples, let's revisit two classics: the poetry of Omar Khayyam and the King James New Testament. And then we will segue into the matter of translation of Guru Granth.

Omar Khayyam was a Persian poet and astronomer who lived from around 1048 to 1131. Some of his quatrains (*Rubaiyat*) have been seen at least 15 translations in English and also in German, French and even Indic languages, including Hindi and Bangla.

Why so many English versions? Obviously, scholars differed on fidelity or its lack in the available renderings. In fact, some critics derisively labeled the immensely popular version

by Edward FitzGerald as the "*The Rubaiyat of FitzOmar*." FitzGerald himself published five editions in 30 years that show significant variations among them.

A translation depends on how the translator interprets the philosophy and context of the original message. My second example, even more instructive, comes from Christianity.

Many versions of the New Testament exist. The earliest was in the Koine Greek language; some chapters were possibly in Aramaic. Some Hebraic scholars deem the label "*New*" Testament to be a misnomer open to misinterpretation; they reason that "Christian Bible" would be a more accurate title.

The first English translation of the Christian Bible was by followers of John Wycliffe but it was banned in 1409. King Henry VIII authorized an English translation, The Great Bible; its version (The Bishop's Bible) followed in 1568.

The puritans, a part of the Church of England, were upset by these versions. In 1604, King James convened the Hampton Court Conference. It proposed a new translation that became the Authorized Version of the Bible in English, and was prepared between 1604 and 1611 by 47 scholars, all members of the Church of England.

Opposition to this Bible surfaced early. Hugh Broughton, a Hebraist scholar, condemned it in 1611; Broughton said that "he would rather be torn in pieces by wild horses than that this abominable translation should ever be foisted upon the English people."

But a hundred years later, it became the Bible in all Anglican and Protestant denominations and remains unchallenged today. Nevertheless, The Roman Catholic Church continues to follow its own Bible that has seven more books than the King James Version.

The history of scriptures in most religions is equally convoluted, except that the Guru Granth Sahib of the Sikhs was compiled by the Founder-Gurus themselves and its authenticity remains unchallenged.

My purpose is not to judge any scripture but to explore problems inherent in translation and transmission of a heritage. A plethora of Sikh sites on the Internet host translation projects these days; I welcome them and I also wonder.

When my interest in the Guru Granth awakened, my intimacy with its language and grammar was minimal. My stumbling eased when I discovered the 1966 UNESCO publication -- an English translation of selections from Guru Granth and related writings by five iconic masters of the grammar and lexicon of Sikh scriptures -- Trilochan Singh, Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkishen Singh and Khushwant Singh, and edited by a poet, George Fraser. I still find this by far the best translation, way above any that I have seen. It captures the magic, even though now the language seems a little archaic, and the book remains incomplete.

In the early 1970's the first complete translation of Guru Granth in English by Manmohan Singh appeared. (Ernst Trump's translation was way earlier, but it was incomplete.) Manmohan Singh's phraseology was often awkward; sometimes he left me wondering exactly what he meant. As translations by Gopal Singh, Trilochan Singh, Sant Singh Khalsa, Pritam Singh Chahil, and Kartar Singh Duggal appeared I eagerly pounced on them, but was left flailing at sea by the language, style or lack of clarity.

In time, I graduated to exegesis in Punjabi by Bhai Vir Singh, Professor Sahib Singh or others. Sometimes they, too, left me untouched and baffled when they appeared to mix unquestioned traditional or mythological lore with the pristine purity of the Guru's message.

All our existing translations bar two are solo efforts -- one person's endeavor. The exceptions are the UNICEF publication and the four-volume *Shabdarth* in Punjabi which is not a complete translation, but a guide to difficult words and concepts throughout the Guru Granth; it is published by the SGPC and no single author is identified.

Of many that are possible, I offer you brief examples where the traditional translations often leave me stranded.

Should one literally interpret Farid's recommendation to kiss the feet of the enemy? Or, for that matter, what to make of the traditional take on the cycle of birth and death; or that even our smallest action is controlled and prewritten by God, which would then leave us no free will and no option to act otherwise.

I don't quite see that a Creator -- that Gurbani assures us repeatedly cannot be measured, has no form, shape, color, caste or gender -- sits out there somewhere micromanaging my puny existence, keeping track of all my sins committed or contemplated, and yet all of my actions are in accord with God's prewritten dossier on me.

Such matters often leave one wondering what exactly the Guru meant.

As I see it, living a life in *Hukum*, like walking in the shadow of God, transcends our literal rendering of Gurbani. To me it becomes to live in the present -- in the moment -- to have the courage to change the things we can change, to accept with serenity (as *Hukum*) what we cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.

After all Gurbani is mystical poetry -- full of allegories, analogies and metaphors, seldom to be literally rendered. Ultimately, the follower of a faith has to interpret what the teaching and the doctrine or traditions mean to him or her.

A translator's lot is never easy. He has to know two cultures intimately: their languages, idioms and traditions, the land and the people, the history and mythology that have shaped them. And then the translator has to navigate between the two realities seamlessly. In the process of translation an early obvious loss is the inability to capture the rhythmic flow and cadence of inspired poetry that transcends the literal rendition.

Given the richness of the original language, grammar and mythology, any translation project promises to be a life-long unfinished quest. *Remember that a translator needs to merge the cold-blooded mind of an analyst and grammarian with the warm joyous heart of a poet in an existence of faith.* Not only that, but the translator himself is growing and changing and therefore his insights into the original text are bound to change over time. Any translation is but a snapshot in the moment of committing pen to paper. Translation is a daunting task but surely, many dedicated translators who are steeped in Sikhi will come out of making the effort to translate.

Even when the language is not so alien or abstruse, differences in interpretation between equally brilliant minds are not uncommon. Look at the laws of any country. Without plausible and differing interpretations of the same law a society would not need thousands of lawyers and so many different levels of judiciary, and the courts would never be so busy ferreting out the truth.

For example: What exactly did the framers of our Constitution really mean – Is ours a Christian nation? How is the line between Church and State to be interpreted? Do differences in interpretation of civil rights exist or don't they? And many more questions like these.

This says to me that I, or any Sikh, will always have to struggle to make sense, from an inadequate translation, of what the Guru likely

meant, no matter how good it appears to be. And that becomes the lifelong path of a Sikh.

Do I still get lost? Often! But I am reassured by Gurbani that my smallest, hesitant step towards the Guru will be reciprocated by the Guru covering miles towards me. In other words, grace will pervade and prevail. And that with further analysis, cogitation and reading, a sense of the poetry will emerge.

When I realized this, I knew that I was on my way home.

I love all translations; particularly the ones that don't seem so good or easy. Essentially, they place the onus on me. I then stop and wonder if the Guru could have meant what the translator implies. If the translations had been excellent, I might never have made the struggle my own.

No person and no interpretation may be guaranteed to be totally true today and forever. The best scholar or translator, like a lawyer, can only guarantee **honesty of effort, not purity of result.**

That and a hefty dose of grace make my relationship with the Guru Granth semipiternal. Guru Granth tells us (p. 594) "*Dithay mukt na hoveyee jichhar sabd na karay vichhaar,*" it is not the sight of the Guru Granth but thoughtful engagement with the Word that will liberate one.

The translations are necessary and the road ahead is rocky. I celebrate [Khoj Gurbani](#) and point out that what we translate today is not for ever; it will need retranslating and tweaking by every new generation. Explore the translations, old and new, and keep on hand the original text of Gurbani.

Access the site by clicking on:

www.khojgurbani.org

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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
FORMULATING METHODOLOGY FOR
INTERPRETING GURBANI**

Dedicated to

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The Centennial Anniversary of Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913) is passing away unnoticed in India and also in the West although anniversaries of some *sants* are celebrated every year regularly in Gurdwaras and at various *Dehras* with great pomp and show. However, a Conference to celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of Macauliffe was held by Prof Brian Bocking on March 15, 2013 by the Study of Religions Department, School of Asian Studies of University College Cork, Ireland with the generosity of the Sikh community in Ireland through the Cork University Foundation (2). I am not aware of any other celebration in India or elsewhere.

Macauliffe was the first scholar who observed that there was a lot of diversity in interpreting the Sikh scriptures among the various theologians of his time. Therefore, *The Institute for Understanding Sikhism* is dedicating this International Conference: *Formulating Methodology for Interpreting Gurbani* being held on September 21, 2013 at Montreal, Canada to celebrate his Centennial Anniversary with the objective that some Standardized Methodology for Interpreting Gurbani can be formulated as a guide to achieve interpretation of Gurbani in its real perspective.

Macauliffe was born on September 10, 1841 at Newcastle West, county Limerick, Ireland. In 1862, he was appointed to the Indian Civil Service in the Punjab. In 1882 he was appointed as Deputy

Commissioner. During his assignment in Punjab the focus of his life was to work as translator and interpreter of Sikhism for the English speaking world. His first work on Sikhism appeared in *Calcutta Review* in articles published during 1875-1881.

His phenomenal work of translating the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) and writing definitive history of Sikhism could not be carried out along with his responsibilities of Civil Service. In 1893 the Khalsa Diwan offered him financial Assistance thus he resigned from lucrative Civil Service.

He worked at Amritsar and at Nabha where Bhai Kahn Singh was assigned to him for help by Raja Ripuduman Singh of Nabha. The work on, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, was completed in 1909. The other professional scholars, besides Bhai Kahn Singh as the chief, who helped Macauliffe were: Bhai Nihal Singh and Sant Singh of Sialkot; Bhai Ditt Singh, Gurmukh Singh, Rajinder Singh and Nihal Singh of Lahore; Bhai Sardul Singh Giani, Prem Singh, Fateh Singh and Darbara Singh of Amritsar; Bhai Sant Singh of Kapurthala, Bhai Bhagwan Singh of Patiala and Dasaudha Singh of Ferozpur (14 in number).

The proofs of his final work were read by Bhai Kahn Singh, Diwan Lila Ram, Bhai Shankar Dayal, Bhai Hazara Singh, Bhai Sardul Singh, Bhai Ditt Singh, Bhai Bhagvan Singh and others from 1901-1903 (4). He returned to England with Bhai Kahn Singh to make this work ready for press. Six volumes were published by Clarendon Press in Oxford (4).

In his Preface to the above book Macauliffe declared that “*I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished throughout the world as a great military people, but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion.*”(6) This is a very important point worth to be noticed that after about 354 years of Guru Nanak the Sikhs

were known as military people and Sikhi founded by Guru Nanak was not known properly even to professionals and was not practiced by the Sikhs. With regards to Sikhi practiced during his time (1882-1909), Macauliffe observed (6):

“Notwithstanding the Sikh Gurus’ powerful denunciation of Brahmans, secular Sikhs now rarely do anything without their assistance. Brahmans help them to be born, help them to wed, help them to die, and help their soul after death to obtain a state of bliss. And Brahmans, with all their the deftness of Roman Catholic missionaries in Protestant countries, have partially succeeded in persuading the Sikhs to restore to their niches the images of Devi, the Queen of Heaven, and of the Saints and gods of the ancient faiths.”

It becomes evident from the above observations of Macauliffe that original Sikhi founded by Guru Nanak was lost within 354 years after Guru Nanak (from 1539 to 1893 - the time when Macauliffe started his research on Sikhism in 1893).

It is a pity that in spite of the following facts about Guru Nanak as observed by Macauliffe the Sikhs continued to follow Brahmans rather than the Sikhi of Guru Nanak:

“Guru Nanak was not a priest either by birth or education, but a man who soared to the loftiest heights of divine emotionalism, and exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the conception of Hindu or Muhammadan.” (6)

And he continued to describe Guru Nanak’s contributions as:

“Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influence. Based on the concept of unity of God, it rejected Hindu formularies and adopted an independent ethical system, ritual, and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak’s age and country.” ((6)p- Liv – book) On contrary to the above observation Sikhi (Sikhism) is being equated by Sikh and non-Sikh authors to Hinduism and Islam and now also to Christianity

in general writings on Sikhism as well as on Interfaith Conferences being held throughout the world.

Although he took the help from all expert theologians of that time still he noticed that their opinions were often widely at odd with one another. At times this situation caused him anxiety, slight annoyance, irritability and distress (4). Strange is the nature of some Sikh theologians even today that they must disagree with the other theologian’s interpretation of Gurbani. Macauliffe’s thinking, about different opinions among Sikh theologians, was further confirmed when his work has been widely acclaimed by the Sikh community but there were other *gianis* who could call the whole thing into question: *“I have met so-called gianis who could perform tours de force with their sacred work, and give different interpretations of almost every line of it.”* (4)

According to Prof Nikki Gurinder Singh, Macauliffe was so much frustrated that he reported in *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 1898 at page 365 as following (2): *“Had I known earlier the difficulties I should have to encounter, I should certainly never have undertaken a translation of this description,”* Under these circumstances one can easily imagine how difficult it would have been for him to represent right biographies of Sikh Gurus and proper interpretation of their writings. It is evident from the above observations of Macauliffe that original Sikhi founded by Guru Nanak was lost within 354 years after Guru Nanak - from 1539 to the time of Macauliffe when he started his research on Sikhism in 1893.

The difficulties met by Macauliffe for interpretation of Gurbani and representation of Sikhism in its real perspective appear to be discouraging continuously to the dedicated Sikh scholars since then. That is the reason that we do not have an interpretation of the AGGS in its real perspective till today as most of the interpretations are based on the prototype exegesis called *Faridkot Vala Tika*, which is based on Vedic and

Vedantic philosophies. And no scholar wants to go against the basic concepts given in this *Tika*.

According to him the problems to understand Sikh religion were that the hymns of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) were written in Persian, mediaeval Prakrit, Hindi, Marathi, old Punjabi, Multani and several dialects. In several hymns Sanskrit and Arabic vocabularies are freely drawn upon. There were no dictionaries of the Guru Granth Sahib or sacred books of the Sikhs when Macauliffe commenced his work. He also noticed that there were hardly about ten expert theologians and none was capable of giving an English interpretation. They generally construed in tedious paraphrases in their own local dialect. Macauliffe's work is the first interpretation of Sikh scriptures in English, which has become a prototype for further translations of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) in English by various authors.

After this work Macauliffe contributed articles on Sikhism to the 11th Edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and continued to interpret Sikhism to both popular and scholarly audience by lectures and articles. He passed away on March 15, 1913 in London home, Sinclair Gardens, West Kingston. He was attended by a Punjabi servant, Muhammad, who reported that Macauliffe recited *Jap (Ji)* shortly before he breathed his last. Prof Tadhg Foley reported at the Centennial Conference held to honor Macauliffe that he was deeply interested to Sikhism and it appears he was converted to Sikhism (2).

Macauliffe failed to gain support from India and from the Punjab Government and all his work was supported by his own funds and support and financial help from Sikh Rajas and prominent rich Sikhs. "*Macauliffe's translation will remain a basic witness to the meaning of the Guru Granth Sahib.*"(4) On the other hand Trumpp, a German missionary linguist, was retained by the India Office to translate Sikh scriptures. His work appeared in 1877 but was widely repudiated by the

Sikh Community as an inaccurate and misleading (4).

However, before all the above efforts to translate/interpret Aad Guru Granth Sahib by Trumpp and Macauliffe in English, the first exegesis of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi was completed in 1883 by Bhai Badan Singh Sekhvan, one of the Nirmalas trained from School of Vedas and Vedanta at Varanasi, about 26 years before that of Macauliffe in English(8). Since the Nirmala School generally echoed the Udasi trend of interpreting Sikh scriptural texts in the inflated style prescribed by Hindu commentators on Upanishadic and Vedic texts (1), therefore, it appears that all those advisors of Macauliffe might also be under the influence of Nirmala during the last 26 years of Nirmalas. Under these circumstances Macauliffe's work in English cannot be declared free from the influence of Nirmalas' thought.

According to Ashok (1) it was Guru Gobind Singh who had deputed five Sikhs -Karam Singh, Vir Singh, Ganda Singh, Saina Singh and Ram Singh – for training at Varanasi, the Hindu learning center. They returned Anadpur as accomplished scholars of classical Indian theology and philosophy. After vacating Anadpur in 1705, the Nirmala preachers went to different places outside the Punjab. They believe in 10 Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib but Baptism and wearing of 5 Ks were not compulsory for them. They were traditionally inclined towards classical Hindu philosophy especially Vedanta. After well establishing themselves outside Punjab, they came back to Punjab and took over the control of almost all the Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions.

If we look into the way Sikhi (Sikhism) is being preached and practiced today it confirms the statement of Macauliffe made during 1893—1899 (6): "*Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable*

without State support.” It is widely accepted that Jainism and Buddhism, which do not believe in the concept of God, flourished very well in India because of support of the state. In spite the fact that there is no God still many gods have been introduced into these two religions and original principles of their philosophies have been lost. Jainism has become a minority in India and is hardly found in rest of the world. On the other hand Buddhism has also become a minority in India; however, it is still progressing in rest of the world especially in the East.

Since the observation of Macauliffe Sikhi founded by Guru Nanak is declining steadily without being noticed by the custodians of Sikhi. The major cause in decline for Sikhi is that Gurbani has not been interpreted in its real perspective so far. Professor Puran Singh was the first researcher after Macauliffe who noticed misinterpretation of Gurbani during 1920s:

“It is to be regretted that Sikh and Hindu scholars are interpreting Guru Nanak in the futile terms of the colour he used, the brush he took; are analyzing the skin and flesh of his words and dissecting texts to find the Guru’s meaning to be the same as of the Vedas and Upanishads! This indicates enslavement to the power of Brahmanical tradition. Dead words are used to interpret the fire of the Master’s soul! The results are always grotesque and clumsy translations which have no meaning at all.” (9)

The above observation of Prof Puran Singh also remained un-noticed for at least 77 years as is evident from the study of Prof Taran Singh, the then Head of the Department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala that although there have been eight different **Explanatory Schools of Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS)** (*Viakhia Parnalian*), which have been working right from Bhai Gurdas to Maherban (Sodhis) to Sadhu Anand Ghan to Nirmalas and Samparday (Santokh Singh and *Faridkot Vala Tika*) to that of modern theologians like Prof Sahib

Singh’s *Tika* and many other *tikas* prove that philosophy of Sikh Gurus was not different than that of Brahmanical and Vedic philosophies. He further stressed that although it appears that universities have taken good steps, their research could only establish that the truth in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) is not different than the truth of ancient India. Nevertheless, he acknowledges it as a ‘powerful achievement’(11).

Now a question arises about 409 years after the compilation of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib:

Can a standardized methodology be formulated for an ‘authentic’ Interpretation of Gurbani?

Current literature indicates the paucity in the availability of a precise and comprehensive methodology for interpreting Gurbani. An exception is the formulation of Grammar of Gurbani by Professor Sahib Singh (10). Professor Chahal (3) has also attempted to discover the methodology used by Guru Nanak from his Bani and it has been described in Chapter 6, *Nanakian Methodology* of his book, *Nanakian Philosophy: Basics for Humanity*. Gurnek Singh (7) has noticed difficulties in interpreting Gurbani because of: *“The religion is based on the experience of the metaphysical reality i.e. God or Numinous. This experience is the result of the direct encounter or the communication with this reality. As a consequential effect it comes down to us through non-rational media i.e. the intuition which is beyond intellectual understanding and comprehension. So being the product of direct vision of the ultimate reality i.e. God, it intellectually is both unapproachable and not understandable because the language through which the Bani or revelation is coming down to humanity is most of the time symbolic, metaphorical and allegorical.”* On the other hand Inderjeet Kaur (5) is of the opinion that: *“In the modern world, where the science and technologies are rapidly developing thereby effecting a change in the thinking and attitude of the people. In order to meet the new challenges, the interpretation of*

the scripture thus became necessary. Some other writers have mentioned some sort of methodology to interpret Gurbani.

Therefore, the Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS) is holding this International Conference for “**Formulating Methodology for Interpretation of Gurbani**” at Montreal, Canada on September 21, 2013. Some members raised their eyebrows on holding such type of conference was announced for the first time at the Sikh Translation Group and Gurmat Learning Zone at Internet Yahoo Groups. By and by some papers started to pour in. Right now we have 12 papers to be presented in one-day conference and about 12 papers to be considered as unread papers for inclusion in proceedings of the Conference.

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THE UNIQUE LOGO

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ABSTRACT

The ੴ, is pronounced by many Sikh theologians as ‘Ek Oankaar’ or ‘Ek Aumkaar’ because they consider the open ‘Oora’ is the abbreviation of ‘Oankaar’ used in Gurbani. Many Sikh scholars relate ‘Oankaar’ to ‘Aum’ according to Vedic and Vedantic philosophy. This paper presents the findings of our continuous research into the meanings of the logo, ੴ, coined by Guru Nanak. Here it has been fully documented that ੴ stands for ‘Ek Oh Beant’ (One and

Only, Oh, Infinite).

INTRODUCTION

The ੴ designed by Guru Nanak is most misunderstood logo by many Sikh theologians, scholars and researchers since a long time, which has been accepted widely as “Ek Oankaar” or “Ek Aumkaar” by the Sikhs at large. I have discussed ੴ as an original logo designed by Guru Nanak that it has nothing to do with “Ek Oankaar” or Ek Aumkaar” in some papers [2-6]. Now some more documents to re-affirm my previous findings that ੴ stands for ‘Ek Oh Beant’ (One and Only, Oh, Infinite) have been reported in this paper.

What does ‘Logo’ mean?

Logo is defined as:

- i) A design used by an organization on its letterhead, advertising material, and signs as an emblem by which the organization can easily be recognized [8].
- ii) It is a graphic mark or emblem commonly used by commercial enterprises, organizations and even individuals to aid and promote instant public recognition [15].

Examples of some Logos:

1. Northwest Airline



This logo reflects a clever way of presenting the ‘Northwest’. North is represented by letter “N” and West with an “arrow” pointing to West in the upper left corner [15].

2. ZIP Logo



Designer – Mike Erickson Zip – The “P” has been replaced with a zipper to connect the Z & P [15].

The ‘logo’ should not be confused with ‘symbol’ or ‘emblem’. The ‘symbol’ is something that stands for or represents something else, especially an object representing an abstraction. The ‘emblem’ and ‘symbol’ are interchangeable in many ways. Examples:

Indian Rupee



1. The Indian rupee is represented with a new symbol, which is - a blend of the Devanagari 'Ra' and Roman 'R' - joining elite currencies like the US dollar (\$), euro (€), British pound (£) and Japanese yen (¥) in having a distinct identity. Before this Indian Rupee had no symbol and was represented as ‘Rs’ [12].

2. The ‘**Christian Cross**’ is a symbol of the Crucifixion. It is an emblem of sacrifice.

3. The ‘**Red Cross**’ is a symbol to humanitarian spirit.

4. The ‘**Crescent shape**’ is a symbol of the moon; it is an emblem of Islam.

5. The ‘**Skull and Crossbones**’ is a symbol identifying a poison or danger.

Let us come back to ੴ. The ੴ is an original and unique ‘logo’ designed by Guru Nanak to represent his concept of God and it has been used at the very beginning of the AGGS and before every major sections and subsections of the AGGS. It is also used by almost all the Sikh organizations on their letterheads, on the title page of numerous books on Sikhi or Sikhism, and is used where easy recognition of its message is required.

Since it is an important logo, therefore, it necessitates that the Sikh theologians, scholars, and researchers should look into what it really stands for and what message is being given in it. If it is not understood in its real meaning then a wrong message of Guru Nanak will be delivered to the humanity. Therefore, it is utmost necessary to work out what does it stand for and what the message is being conveyed by this ‘logo’.

This is my latest article in which I have tried to explore the real message in this logo, designed by Guru Nanak. This 'logo' forms the first part of 'Commencing Verse' (which is erroneously called as Mool Mantra) of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1].

COMMENCING VERSE

The Commencing Verse of the AGGS is as follows:

ੴ¹ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ² ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥³

The Commencing Verse has been divided into three parts for the sake of easy interpretation:

1. The first part is ੴ¹.
2. The second part is from ਸੈਭੰ² to ਸੈਭੰ².
3. ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥³ is the third part.

In fact all the three parts make one unit of the 'Commencing Verse'. Only the first part ੴ will be discussed in this paper. The second and third parts distinguish it from other descriptions of God found elsewhere.

HOW WAS THIS LOGO MISUNDERSTOOD?

The first part ੴ is generally pronounced by many Sikh theologians and scholars as ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Ek Oankaar) or ਏਕੁ ਓਮਕਾਰ (Ek Aumkaar). The survey of the available literature indicates that the early Sikh theologians under the heavy influence of ancient philosophy have pronounced it as such because writing of 'Oankaar' or 'Aumkaar' or 'Aum' or 'Om' on the top of every writings was very common in ancient literature. Giani Harbans Singh [20] says that it is not known who first started to pronounce ੴ as ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Ek Oankaar) or ਏਕੁ ਓਮਕਾਰ (Ek Aumkaar). However, I have noticed that Bhai Gurdas might be the first Sikh scholar who has pronounced ੴ ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Ek Oankaar) as is evident from his Pauri 15 of

Vaar 3. Thereafter, other Sikh scholars followed Bhai Gurdas' pronunciation of ੴ.

Let us discuss Bhai Gurdas' Pauri 15 of Vaar 3 [30]:

ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਦਾ ਗੁਹਝ ਭੇਦ

The Deep Secret of Mool Mantra

ਏਕਾ¹ ਏਕੰਕਾਰ² ਲਿਖ³ ਦਿਖਾਲਿਆ⁴ ॥
 ਊੜਾ⁵ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ⁶ ਪਾਸ⁷ ਬਹਾਲਿਆ⁸ ॥
 ਸਤਿਨਾਮ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭਾਲਿਆ ॥
 ਨਿਰਵੈਰਹੁ ਜੈਕਾਰੁ ਅਜੂਨਿ ਅਕਾਲਿਆ ॥
 ਸੱਚ ਨੀਸਾਣ ਅਪਾਰ ਜੋਤ ਉਜਾਲਿਆ ॥
 ਪੰਚ ਅੱਖਰ ਉਪਕਾਰ ਨਾਮ ਸਮੂਲਿਆ ॥
 ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ਰ ਸੁਖ ਸਾਰ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲਿਆ ॥
 ਨਉ ਅਮਗ ਸੁੰਨ ਸੁਮਾਰ ਸੰਗ ਨਿਰਾਲਿਆ ॥

ਨੀਲ ਅਨੀਲ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਪਿਰਮ ਪਿਆਲਿਆ ॥ 15 ॥ ਵਾਰ 3 ॥

First of all the heading of this Pauri indicates that 'Commencing Verse' has been declared as 'Mool Mantra' by Bhai Gurdas according Vedic philosophy.

Parma Nand [16] has confirmed that the 'Commencing Verse' is called 'Mool Mantra' according to the rules of Vedas for declaring a word or sentence as Mantra, Beej Mantra or Mool Mantra. Mantra, according to Vedas, is a word or sentence repeated again and again under certain conditions forces the deities to perform miraculous work to fulfill the desires of the performers (devotees). Under this influence the 'Commencing Verse' is recommended by many Sikh preachers to be recited again and again to fulfill their wishes.

Bhai Gurdas has pronounced ਏਕਾ¹ (one) as ਏਕੰਕਾਰ² (Ekankaar) and ਊੜਾ⁵ (Oora⁵) as ਓਅੰਕਾਰ⁶ (Oankaar⁶). Therefore, ੴ should be pronounced as ਏਕੰਕਾਰ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Ekankaar Oankaar) according to Bhai Gurdas' interpretation. But ੴ is being pronounced as ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Ek Oankaar) in general by the Sikhs at large. Nevertheless, it

becomes clear that Bhai Gurdas was the first scholar, who declared open ਊੜਾ⁵ (Oora⁵) as ਓਅੰਕਾਰ⁶ (Oankaar⁶).

The exact date of writing of Vaaran by Bhai Gurdas is not known. However, it could be considered as the first writing dealing with Gurbani in Sikh literature after the compilation of the AGGS in 1604. Bhai Gurdas is accepted as a great scholar of Gurbani and his Vaaran are considered next to the Gurbani by many Sikh theologians. Moreover, his Vaaran have been declared as the KEY to the Gurbani by Guru Arjan as reported by Bhai (Dr) Veer Singh [30]. Critical analysis of Vaaran of Bhai Gurdas indicates that none of the Vaar interprets any Sabd of Gurbani. Rather he used Gurbani in his own way to discuss various topics [30].

The fact is that the KEY to the Bani of Guru Nanak is the Bani of Guru Nanak itself and the Bani of the Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak', which is incorporated in the AGGS [28, p 23-25]. This fact has been ignored by many Sikh theologians and researchers. Chahal [6] has further quoted a number of such examples throughout his book, Nanakian Philosophy - Basics for Humanity. In fact the researchers working on the interpretation of Bani of Guru Nanak should look for a KEY in the Bani of Guru Nanak and that of other Sikh Gurus.

The truth is that no **Teeka** (exegesis) of AGGS (compiled in 1604 CE) was written until 1883 CE. The first formal Teeka in line with the traditional interpretation of Sikh scriptures was written by Sant Giani Badan Singh Ji of Dera Sekhwan at the request and encouragement of Maharaja Bikram Singh of Faridkot. It took him six and a half years to complete it. It was completed in 1883 CE. This Teeka was further reviewed by a committee appointed by Mahant Bawa Shamer Singh of Patna. After incorporating the comments of this committee, the first edition of this Teeka was published by funds provided by the Maharaja Balvir Singh of Faridkot in 1906. It was printed by

the Wazir Hind Press (started by Bhai Vir Singh) at Amritsar. The second edition of this Teeka was published by Maharaja Harinder Singh of Faridkot in 1928 [28 – pp 205-206]. Therefore, this formal Teeka became available in printed form only in 1928 (about 324 years after the compilation of the AGGS in 1604).

This Teeka is considered as a classical exegesis of the AGGS in 'Braj Bhasha' by a team of scholars of Nirmala Sect. This Teeka is known as the "**Faridkoti Teeka**" or "Faridkot Wala Teeka." For all future attempts on interpretation of the AGGS it became an ideal Prototype Teeka [6]. In this Teeka the Oora in ਊੜ has been equated with ਓ (Om / Aum), the **Trinity of God**, which is a compound word formed with A (Akaar), AU (Aukaar), and M (Makaar). It is mentioned in this Teeka that Bhai Gurdas has pronounced Open Oora (E) as ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar), which means Aum or Om [9].

But Guru Nanak is against the concept of Trinity of God [3].

Nirakari [17], a retired Professor of Philosophy from the Punjabi University, Patiala is of the opinion that ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) is Om, which has been mentioned in almost all the Upanishads. The description of Om given by Nirakari is same as described in the Faridkot Wala Teeka [9] and by Parma Nanad [16].

Bhai Kahn Singh [23] says that:

- i) ਓ (Open Oora) with extended end,
- ii) ਓਅੰ (Aum), and
- iii) ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) all the three forms represent ਓਅੰ (Om / Aum) as in Faridkot Wala Teeka and pronounced it ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) as has been pronounced by Bhai Gurdas. Bhai Kahn Singh follows Bhai Gurdas to interpret ਓਅੰ (Aum) as 'Protector'.

It is evident from the above information that

Bhai Kahn Singh has reported exactly what is represented in Upanishads and which has been confirmed by Bhai Gurdas and by Faridkot Wala Teeka.

On the other hand Bhai Kahn Singh [23] also explains that ਓ (Open Oora) is ਅਚਰਜ ਬੌਧਕ 'ਓਹ'. ਅਚਰਜ means astonishing, marvellous or wondrous. For example, ਅਚਰਜ ਰੂਪੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਗੁਰਿ

ਮੇਲਾਇਆ ਮਾਇ ॥੧॥ Guru Arjan Says:

O my mother! I have found an astonishing Immaculate One through the Guru. AGGS, M 5, p 416 [1].

According to Bhai Kahn Singh ਓ (Open Oora) is also ਓਹ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ {abbreviation of ਓਹ (Oh)}. The open Oora (E) has been used as ਓਹ (Oh meaning 'that') by Bhagat Naam Dev for the flute of Rama as follows:

ਧਨਿ ਧੰਨਿ ਓ ਰਾਮ ਬੇਨੁਬਾਜੈ॥

ਮਧੁਰ ਮਧੁਰ ਧੁਨਿ ਅਨਹਤ ਗਾਜੈ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਅਗਗਸ,
ਨਾਮ ਦੇਵ, ਪੰਨਾ 988.

Blessed is that (ਓ - Oh) flute of Ram, which is played by him. Then pleasant but unbeaten sound vibrates. AGGS, Naam Dev, p 988 [1].

Moreover, according to Bhai Kahn Singh ਓ (Open Oora) also means 'and'. For example, ਝੜ ਝਖੜ ਓ

ਹਾੜ ਲਹਰੀ ਵਹਨਿ ਲਖੇਸਰੀ ॥ AGGS, M 1, p 1410.

Note: Bhai Kahn Singh keeps 'Open Oora' separate from 'O Haarh' ਓ ਹਾੜ but in the AGGS 'Open Oora' is not separated (padshaed) from 'Haarh'.

Faridkot Wala Teeka interprets the above phrase as follows:

(ਝੜ) ਮੇਰਿ ਰੂਪੀ ਐ ਲੇਭ ਰੂਪੀ ਪਵਨ ਕਾ ਚਲਨਾ ਐ (ਝਖੜ)
ਕਾਮ ਰੂਪੀ ਹੜ ਜਿਸਮੇ ਵਾਸਨਾ ਰੂਪੀ ਲਹਿਰਾਂ (ਲਖੇਸਰੀ) ਲਾਖੇ
ਹੀ ਚਲਤੀਆਂ ਹੈ ॥

Metaphorical Rain, storm and flood, thousands of waves are arising and subsiding. AGGS, M 1, p 1410.

Here open Oora (ਓ) has been used as ਐ meaning as ',' (comma) and also as 'and' as is done in English punctuation. According to Mahan Kosh: ਐ is an abbreviation of ਐਰ (and).

Nowhere else in the AGGS I could find that Open Oora (ਓ) used to show that it is an abbreviation of 'Oankaar' or 'Aumkaar' except the above example where it has been used as 'ਓਹ' (Oh) meaning 'Astonishing', 'That' and 'and' or ',' (comma).

I wonder why this explanation of 'ਓ' (Open Oora) in ਐ representing 'ਓਹ' (Oh) meaning 'Astonishing' and 'That' has not been used by Bhai Kahn Singh [23] to eliminate the influence of Vedantic philosophy introduced by Bhai Gurdas and by Nirmalas in Faridkot Wala Teeka?

I can imagine how difficult it is for some researchers to go against the well-established authorities in Sikhism, like Bhai Gurdas and the authors of Faridkot Wala Teeka because nobody likes to lose their prestigious status in Sikhism.

Therefore, the Faridkot Wala Teeka has become Prototype Teeka (exegesis) for further translation of the AGGS in Punjabi, English and other languages. Since the exegesis of Faridkot Wala Teeka has been done under the influence of Vedic and Vedantic philosophies by Nirmalas, therefore, the Vedic and Vedantic influence also became a permanent feature for future interpreters of Gurbani [6].

The irony is that Prof Sahib Singh [26] also followed Faridkot Wala Teeka that Open Oora in ਐ is Om (Aum) and further explains ਐ as ਇਕ + ਓ or ਓਅ or ਓ (Aum or Om) + ਕਾਰ (extended

end of Oora) and pronounces ੴ as 'ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ' (Ek Oankaar) or ਏਕੁ ਓਮਕਾਰ (Ek Omkaar).

The 'Extended End of Open Oora' has been declared as 'Kaar' by Prof Sahib Singh [26]. He further takes the aid of Sanskrit to explain that 'kaar' is a suffix of some Sanskrit words and it means ਇਕ-ਰਸ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਤਬਦੀਲੀ ਨਾਹ ਆਵੇ (The One that is unchangeable). Then he quotes some words with 'Kaar' as suffix from Gurbani to indicate that ਕਾਰ (kaar) means ਇਕ-ਰਸ. For example, ਨੰਨਾਕਾਰ (which means who refuses), ਨਿਰਤਿਕਾਰ (which means dancer), and ਧੁਨਿਕਾਰ (which means musician who makes the tune, melody) but none of these words indicate anything like, ਇਕ-ਰਸ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਤਬਦੀਲੀ ਨਾਹ ਆਵੇ, because 'kaar' in Punjabi Dictionary [13] and according to Bhai Kahn Singh [23] means 'work':

ਕਾਰ¹ ਕਮਾਵਹਿ² ਸਿਰਿ ਧਣੀ ਲਾਹਾ³ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥ Aggs, m 1, p-936.

One gets the reward³ from the Master for performing² work¹. AGGS, M 1, p 936.

Even Prof Sahib Singh himself [26] has shown 'ਕਾਰ' means 'work/service': ਮਾਇਆ¹ ਦਾਨੀ² ਭਗਤਾ³ ਕੀ ਕਾਰ⁴ ਕਮਾਵੇ⁵ ॥ Aggs, m 3, p-231.

Money¹ (Maya) is Servant², which performs⁵ work⁴ for devotees³. AGGS, M 3, p 231.

'ਕਾਰਿ' also means 'helpful' as in: ਗੁਰ¹ ਕੀ ਮਤਿ² ਜੀਇ³ ਆਈ ਕਾਰਿ⁴ ॥ Aggs, m 1, p-220.

Guru's¹ philosophy² became helpful⁴ for people³. AGGS, M 1, p 220.

The word ਕਾਰ ਸੇਵਾ (Kaar Sewa) (means work performed for Gurdwaras without any monetary benefit) also indicates that Kaar is work, not ਇਕ-ਰਸ (unchangeable) as coined by Prof Sahib Singh [26]. According to Bhai Kahn Singh [23] it also means a 'line' based on the verse: "ਦੇਕੈ ਚਰੁਕਾ ਕਢੀ ਕਾਰ" (They draw line around them after

plastering the ground with cow-dung (AGGS, M 1, p 472).

If the meaning of 'kaar' is taken as 'work' then it does not fit in the interpretation of Prof Sahib Singh [26]. Besides, if the meaning of 'kaar' is taken as a 'line' as explained above then, it means line is drawn to limit the area. Then, it again fails to convey 'openness' and 'infiniteness' attributes of 'Open Oora' shown graphically extended by Guru Nanak.

I do not understand why some scholars intentionally try to interpret Gurbani under the influence of Vedic and Vedantic philosophies.

Furthermore, such interpretations are used by non-Sikh scholars to portray that there is no uniqueness or originality in the philosophy of Guru Nanak. According to Parma Nand [16] 'Ek Omkaar' (Om) means 'One God'. 'Om' is a descriptive name for God and 'kaar' is grammatically a suffix added to denote the sound of 'Om'. But it is hard to understand that how 'kaar' can be considered as the sound of 'Om' by a Hindu scholar and on the other hand Prof Sahib Singh [26] interprets ਕਾਰ (Kaar) as: ਜੋ ਇਕ-ਰਸ ਹੈ; ਜੋ ਹਰ ਥਾਂ ਵਿਆਪਕ ਹੈ (One, Unchangeable, is prevalent everywhere). **How strange it is that two theologians of two different religions are interpreting ਕਾਰ (Kaar) according to their own whims rather than on any solid documentation.** Here again I wonder why Prof Sahib Singh is forcefully interpreting ਕਾਰ (Kaar) as ਇਕ-ਰਸ (unchangeable)?

The point is that no abbreviation of any word has been used throughout the Gurbani. Therefore, ੴ is not the abbreviation of 1 + ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ.

Nevertheless, Bhagat Naam Dev has used Open Oora (ਓ) which means 'that' as described above. However, this Open Oora is not an abbreviation of Oankaar. The only abbreviation used by Guru Arjan is 'ਮ:' (M) for ਮਹਲਾ (Mahla). Mahla is not

a part of Gurbani but introduced by Guru Arjan; it is used to indicate the succession number of the Guru to the 'House of Nanak' to identify the Guru, for example, ਮ: 1 (M 1) is Guru Nanak; ਮ: 2 (M 2) is Guru Angad, and so on.

USE OF ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (OANKAAR)

Some Sikh theologians and researchers claim that ਓ is pronounced as 'ਏਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ' (Ek Oankaar) because ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) is found seven times in the Bani of Guru Nanak called ਓਅੰਕਾਰ ਬਾਣੀ (Oankaar Bani) at pp 929-938 of AGGS. Similarly, ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) has been used one more time by Guru Nanak at page 1285; by Guru Arjan two times at page 885 and 1003; and by Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas only once at page 1061 and 1310, respectively. Here the word ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) has been used as a ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ (descriptive/specific name) for God, which means the 'Creator'. But nowhere in the AGGS it is evident that ਓ (Open Oora) is an abbreviation of ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) or ਓਮਕਾਰ (Aumkaar).

On the other hand, the word ਏਕੰਕਾਰ (Ekankaar) has been used extensively in the same sense as a descriptive name meaning the 'Creator – Who is One and Only'. This word has been used 13 times by Guru Nanak; 19 times by Guru Arjan; one time by Guru Amardas; and two times by Guru Ramdas. Since the attribute of 'Creator' has been used as 'ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ' (Karta Purkh) in the second part of the Commencing Verse, therefore, interpretation of ਓ as 'Creator' by many scholars cannot be justified. **Moreover, the 'Commencing Verse' is considered as a definition of God, therefore, the same attribute, 'Creator', cannot be repeated two times in a definition.** The irony is even then many Sikh scholars now have started to interpret ਓ as 'One Creator' since ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) means 'Creator' although the same attribute, 'ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ' (Karta Purkh) as 'Creator',

is already present in the same 'Commencing Verse'.

To pronounce ਓ as ਏਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ or ਏਕੰਕਾਰ (Ek Oankaar or Ekankaar) cannot be justified based on the fact that a Bani at pages 929-938 in AGGS is entitled as ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar). If Guru Nanak can use ਓਅੰਕਾਰ in this Bani then he would have used it also in the Commencing Verse in place of ਓ . Or ਓ (Open Oora) could have been used in place of ਓਅੰਕਾਰ in rest of the Bani, but it is not so. Therefore, ਓ (Open Oora) is entirely different than ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) or ਓਮਕਾਰ (Aumkaar) in meaning as well as in pronunciation. Besides ਓ cannot be pronounced as ਏਕ ਓਅੰਕਾਰ or ਏਕੰਕਾਰ (Ek Oankaar or Ekankaar) under any circumstances. ਓਅੰਕਾਰ (Oankaar) has been used as one of the many descriptive names as a metaphoric name for God only in the first stanza of this long Bani, ਓਅੰਕਾਰ. In the next 53 stanzas of the same Bani other descriptive names, e.g. ਕਰਤੇ, ਕਰਤਾਰਿ, ਓਨਮ, ਰਾਮ, ਹਰਿ, ਠਾਕੁਰੁ, etc. have been used as metaphoric names (ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ) for God. Moreover, in the Rahaoo (Pause) of the same Bani Guru Nanak has condemned the use of writing of Oankaar as descriptive name before any writing:

ਸੁਣਿ ਪਾਡੇ ਕਿਆ ਲਿਖਹੁ ਜੰਜਾਲਾ ॥
ਲਿਖੁ¹ ਰਾਮ² ਨਾਮ² ਗੁਰਮੁਖ³ ਗੋਪਾਲਾ⁴ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
Aggs, m 1, p-930.

Hey Pundit! Listen! What is in writing the ritualistic confused word (Om, Oankaar or Aumkaar)? Oh Gurmukh³! Understand¹/comprehend¹ the God^{2,4}. AGGS, M 1, p 930.

Note: ਲਿਖੁ¹ - Metaphor for understanding; ਰਾਮ² ਨਾਮ² - Metaphoric names for God; ਗੁਰਮੁਖ³ - One, who follows the philosophy of the Guru.

In fact, Guru Nanak has not coined any ਕਿਰਤਮ

ਨਾਮ (descriptive/specific name) for God because according to him God is ineffable, thus, no descriptive name can be assigned to God. Therefore, Guru Nanak has used nondescriptive names, e. g. ਓਹੁ, ਆਪਿ, ਆਪੇ, ਏਕੁ, ਤੂ, ਤੁ, ਤੁਹੀ, ਅਗਮ, ਬੇਅੰਤੁ, etc in the same ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ ਬਾਣੀ. Actually Guru Nanak does not even use non-descriptive name in many of his verses. For example,

ਆਦਿ¹ ਸਚੁ² ਜੁਗਾਦਿ³ ਸਚੁ ॥ ਹੈ ਭੀ⁴ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ⁵
ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥ ਅਗਗਸ, ਜਪੁ 1, p-1.

Was in existence² before the beginning of the time and space¹; Was in existence in the past³; Is in existence in the present⁴; Will remain in existence forever⁵ (in the future)." AGGS, Jap 1, p 1.

There is neither descriptive/specific nor non-descriptive/ non-specific name of God in the above phrase; importantly it is without any indication to who it is being addressed.

Guru Arjan has emphatically strengthened the principle of Nanakian Philosophy that no ਕਿਰਤਮ ਨਾਮ (descriptive/ specific name) can be assigned to God.

ਕਿਰਤਮ¹ ਨਾਮ² ਕਥੇ³ ਤੇਰੇ ਜਿਹਬਾ⁴ ॥
ਸਤਿ⁵ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਪਰਾ⁶ ਪੂਰਬਲਾ⁷ ॥
Aggs. M: 5, p-1083.

Your tongue⁴ recite³ the descriptive² names¹ of That (God). (Because) That (God) existed⁵ even before⁶ the beginning of the time and space⁷. AGGS, M 5, p 1083.

This verse implies how can one assign any descriptive/ specific name to God who existed even before the beginning of the time and space? But people still like to coin some descriptive/specific names for God for repeating again and again for meditation or for grant of a wish from God. [For details consult Ref. # 5.] I

would like to mention here that Oosho [18] described ਓ as follows: "...

ਨਾਨਕ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ ਉਸ ਇੱਕ ਦਾ ਜੋ ਨਾਉਂ ਹੈ ਉਹੀ ਓ ਹੈ, ਹੋਰ ਸਾਰੇ ਨਾਮ ਤਾ ਆਦਮੀ ਦੇ ਦਿਤੇ ਹਨ । ਰਾਮ ਕਹੋ, ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨ ਕਹੋ, ਅਲਾਹ ਕਹੋ, ਇਹ ਨਾਮ ਆਦਮੀ ਦੇ ਦਿਤੇ ਹਨ । ਇਹ ਅਸੀਂ ਬਣਾਏ ਹਨ, ਸੱਕੇਤੱਕ ਹਨ । ਪਰ ਇੱਕ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਨਾਉਂ ਹੈ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਅਸੀਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਉਹ ਓ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਓਮ ਹੈ ।" "...

Nanak says that the name of that One is ਓ, all other names are given by man, whether one says Ram, Krishan or Allah, are the names given by man. These are man-made descriptive (reference) (ਕਿਰਤਮ) names. But there is one name that has not been given by man that is ਓ. This is not a descriptive (ਕਿਰਤਮ) name.... "

In spite of the above fact explained by him, Oosho fell back to Vedic and Vedantic philosophies and declared that “ਓ is ਓਮ (Om) at the end of his statement.” 'Om' is a descriptive name as the sum of Brahma – the Creator, Vishnu – the Sustainer, and Shiva – the destroyer, reported by many non-Sikh and Sikh scholars.

Dr Sher Singh [27] accepted that Guru Nanak did not believe in the philosophy of Vedas, nevertheless, he (Dr Sher Singh) still compared ਓ with that of ਓਅੰ (Om) that it is composed of a, u, m representing Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, respectively. He said that Guru Nanak added numeral '1' before 'Om' to confirm that Brahma is One. Parma Nand [16] also says that 'Om' is a compound word of letters 'A' (Vaishvanara), 'U' (Tajjasa), and 'M' (Prajna) in Upanishads and are identified as Vishnu, Brahma, and Mahesh, respectively. Contrary to all the above description of ਓ, Guru Nanak does not accept the Trinity of God, i. e. Brahma - the Creator, Vishnu – the Sustainer, and Shiva – the Destroyer.

SEMINAR AT GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY

A seminar on ‘**Mool Mantra**’ was held at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, which was sponsored by the University Grant Commission (UGC), New Delhi, under Pritam Singh, Retired Professor and Head of Department of Guru Nanak Studies, in March 1973. The proceedings of the seminar were published in 1985 (after 12 years) under the title: Sikh Concept of the Divine [24]. I would summarize the outcome of the seminar from the paper presented by Pritam Singh as follows [25]:

‘O’ (ੴ) (with open end extended) is believed to be the initial Gurmukhi character of the age-old mystic Indian term Om. It is pronounced as O, Om, Oankar (Omkar), according to the predilection and cultural affiliation of the speaker. Swami Harnam Das quotes Taittiriyanopanishad to corroborate his view, but claims Vedic sanction for assigning the phonetic value of ‘O’ to ‘ੴ’.

Some readers, especially, those belonging to Udasi and Nirmla denominations, generally pronounce ‘O’ as ‘Om’: while most of the Sikhs pronounce it as Onkar. Normally, etymologists explain Onkar as the combination of Om + Kar or Oam + Kar (ੴਮ + ਕਾਰ ਜਾਂ ਓਅੰ + ਕਾਰ) but Sohan Singh Galhotra [10] believes that kar should be read as ‘akar’. Says he: Ikoankar = 1(Ik) + Oam + akar. Oamkar: The word has been explained in many different ways by many different writers. But as far as Sikh writings are concerned, the prefix Oam makes its meaning clear. Oam consists of three letters o, a, m – o stands for urdham, i.e. above; a for adham, i.e. below; and m for madham, i.e. between, i.e. the entire universe. The word akar means the visible expanse or simply the expanse. Taking the three components of Ik Oamkar together, then, we can say that it means **One Universal Being.**”

Pritam Singh [25] has also mentioned that:

1. The members of Udasis and Nirmalas accept ‘O’ as ‘Om’. (This was also reported by Joginder Singh [22].)
2. Bhai Santokh Singh expressed his view that Guru (Nanak) did not at all deviate from Vedas.
3. (Pundit Tara Singh) Narottam believes that the text beginning with ‘O’ and ending with ‘Prasad’ original revelation granted by Lord Vishnu to Guru Nanak to represent mystic essence of Veda.

Parma Nand [16] also in that Seminar defines Oamkar as follows: Ek Oamkar means ‘One God’. ‘Om’ is the proper name of God and kar is grammatically a suffix added to it to denote the sound of ‘Om’. According to the following Vartika Sutra of Panini, this suffix kara is added in the sense of nirdesa (denotation: “Varnatkarah: 2227). The examples are akara, Kakara which means the sound of ‘A’ and ‘K’, respectively. R. B. Prahlad C. Diwanjee explains the phrase Oamkara in his Critical Word Index to the Bhagavad Gita:

Oamkara: Om is the sound produced by the word (kar) while recited/pronounced during recitation. Again he says “the particular sound, produced by the pronunciation of the syllable OM”. Thus grammatically Oamkara means the sound Om.

Teja Singh [29] says that ਓਅੰ (Ohm) was already being used and Guru Nanak added 'kar' and a new word, 'ੴਅੰਕਾਰੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ' (Omkar), was coined: “*Sade des vich sargun rup lai Om sabad age hi prachalit si. Guru ji de vele ih, wadha kita gia ki 'Om' di than 'Oamkar' sabad banaia gia ate is da bhav ih ki uh wahiguru jisda prakash lagatar hunda rahe.*”

But Parma Nand [16] refuted his claim by saying that it is partly wrong: “The word Oamkar has not been created or introduced during the time of our great Gurus. I have already given a number of quotations containing the word Om as well as Oamkar, used in the same sense.” He further

mentioned that the only thing Guru Nanak did was to add numeral '1' to confirm the 'Oneness' of God but this characteristic is also accepted in Vedas and Upanishads. Moreover, the historical fact about the existence of Oamkar Temple thousands of years before Guru Nanak's visit to this temple in South India also supports that 'Oamkar' or 'Oankar' was not coined by Guru Nanak.

Bhai Vir Singh [from Ref. # 25] considers numeral '1' as an independent entity, not as adjective for 'Open Oora'. Pritam Singh [25] emphasizes that in spite of unmistakable figure 1 which precedes 'O' in the Mool Mantra, the commentators, who possess even a smattering of Sanskrit, do not forget to refer to the Trinity of gods. The Trinity is represented by the sounds, of which 'Om' is believed to be constituted, namely, a, u, and m. Bawa Hari Prakash, for example, explains that: akar (a), ukar (u) and makar (m), with half matra added to them, make Oankaar. Akar (a) means Brahma (the Creator), ukar (u) stands for Vishnu (the Sustainer) and makar (m) represent Shiva (the Destroyer), while the half matra is to be understood as the Fourth State. With this seminar held at the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar the pronunciation of logo, **ੴ**, has been permanently stamped as Om + Kar or Oam + Kar by the Sikhs and non-Sikh scholars.

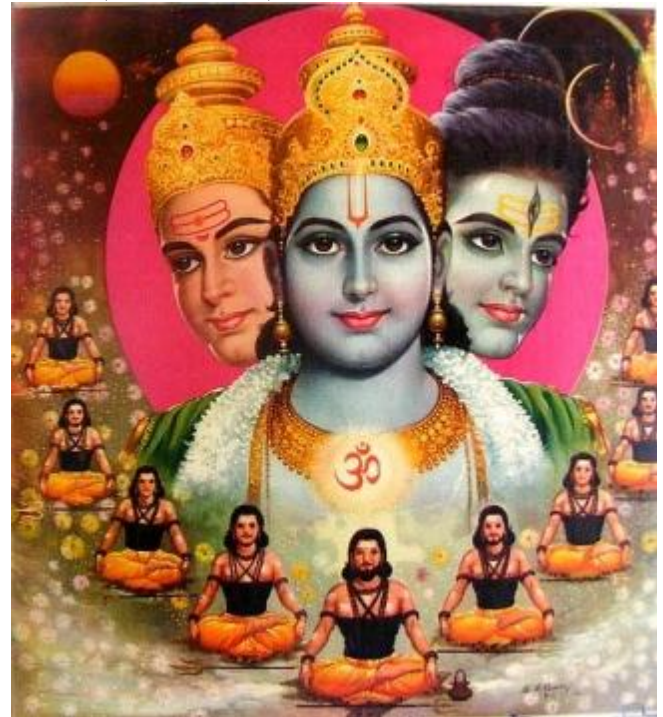
(Note: Different authors have used different spellings for 'Om' ('Oam' or 'Aum') thus their spellings have been maintained in this paper.)

Now it has become an established fact in the Sikh psyche that **ੴ** is Ek Oankar, Ek Onkar, Ek Omkar, Ek Oamkar, or 'Aumkaar, which originated from OM.

The following observation of Parma Nand [16] about the addition of numeral '1' is worth noting: "This figure '1' placed before 'Oankaar' serves another purpose also. In the common conception of the then current Hinduism, when Guru Nanak appeared on our soil, that there were many gods, and Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva formed the Trinity

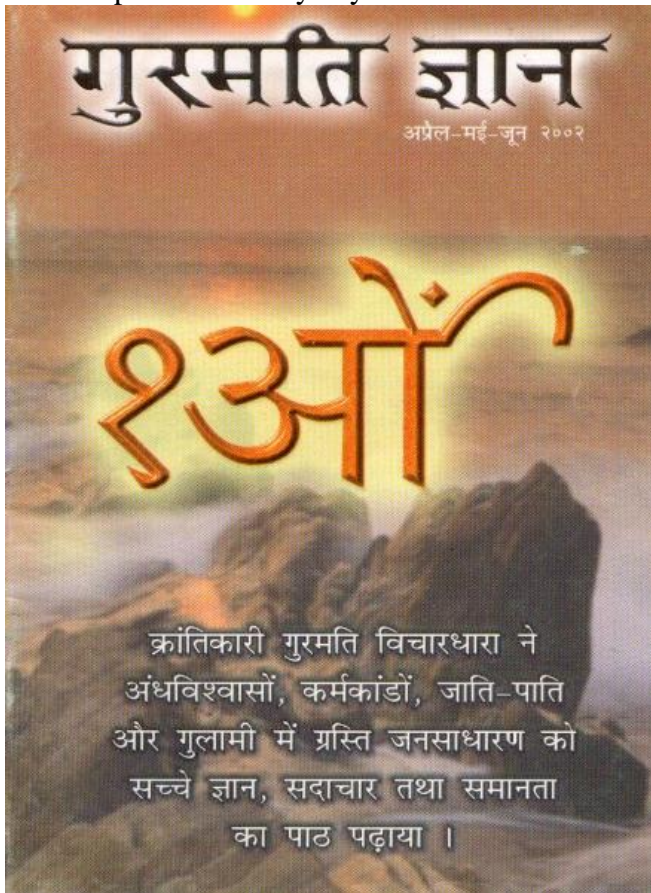
as creator, preserver and destroyer, respectively. It was also held that God took birth not only in human form but Himself comes into the world in various forms, such as, Matsya (shark), kurma (boar), nara-simha (partly human, partly tiger) and finally, in human forms. Twenty-four incarnations of God Vishnu were accepted, besides others, too many to be enumerated here. Some believed that Rama, the son of Dasharatha, was the incarnation of God, while others held Lord Krishna, the son of Vasudeva also to be so.

Countless male and female divinities were also regarded as gods and goddesses. Even Lord Buddha who did not believe in Vedic religion was accepted as one of the main ten incarnations of God. Thus, the total number of gods came to 33 crores (330,000,000)."



However, 'One and Only' God of Guru Nanak does not represent any of the above gods mentioned by Parma Nand [16]. The God of Guru Nanak neither represents the Trinity as represented by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in facing figure; nor comes into anthropomorphic form on this Earth.

From the above discussion it becomes very clear that even the members of Dharam Parchar Committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar are also under the strong influence of ancient philosophy and mythology. A monthly magazine, Gurmat Gian, in Hindi is published by the Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC. This committee is so much under the influence of Vedic and Vedantic philosophies that it had structurally misconstrued ੴ into 'Ek Aumkaar' by adding a line coming out of Aum as is found in 'Open Oora' in ੴ on the title page of the July 2002 issue of Gurmat Gian. Soon the Dharam Parchar Committee realized their blunder and issued a notice in its next issue of 'Gurmat Gian' that ੴ should never be misrepresented as by any writer or scholar.



ੴ to above

But still they are not aware of the fact that ੴ (Open Oora) does not represent 'Oankaar' or 'Aumkaar'. Nevertheless, I have noticed that it has already started to appear on some Web sites and in many writings in print form.

It is apparent from the above discussion that the Sikh theologians and scholars have encouraged some scholars like, Parma Nand [16] to declare that Guru Nanak had no originality in his philosophy of coining ੴ as a new term or word because it is already found in the form of 'Aum' (ੴਅੰਕਾਰ) in Upanishads and in declaring the 'Commencing Verse' as Mool Mantra according to Vedic formula for declaring a word or phrase as mantra or Mool Mantra.

And they have also encouraged other Hindus on Internet to say so as reported by Prem Sanjeev, the member of two popular Sikh Internet Discussion Groups (Sikh Diaspora and Gurmat Learning Zone) as follows: "Om is the essence of the Vedas. The Upanishads and the Geeta glorify it. With this one sacred syllable all Vedic mangalaacharans are considered done. By remembering and invoking the Lord as Om, Shri Guru Nanak Dev dutifully maintains the Vedic parampara or 'tradition', for that new philosophy which disregards age-old wisdom can never bear fruit. When new thoughts or ideologies are based upon the wisdom of the ancient, they have not only the fragrance and freshness of the new but also the strength and tenacity of the old. Saints never come into this world to destroy the link with the ancient; rather, they come to fulfill the wisdom of the past. Shri Guru Nanakji did the same. The approach was new, but the knowledge was not. The language was different, but the essence the same." Many of the members of both the Internet Discussion Forums accepted ੴ as Ek Oankaar.

WHAT DOES THIS LOGO, ੴ, STAND FOR?

I have been working with many scholars to understand what does this logo, **ੴ**, stand for? It was Dr Parminder Singh Chahal (my son) who gave very simple and convincing logic that **ੴ** is composed of two parts, i.e. numeral '1' and the first letter of Gurmukhi alphabet, **ੳ**, with an open end. The numeral '1' (One) should be pronounced as 'Ek' and the letter **ੳ** (Oora) with open end as 'Oh'. Our further research leads us to find that letter **ੳ** (Open Oora) means **ੳਹ** (Oh) in Punjabi-English Dictionary [13]. And also in Mahan Kosh of Bhai Kahn Singh [23] the letter **ੳ** (Open Oora) means **ੳਹ** (Oh). Besides **ੳ** (Open Oora) also means 'astonishing', 'marvellous' or 'wondrous' in Mahan Kosh as discussed previously. 'Oh' in English also means 'That' and strong emotional reaction such as surprise, shock, pain, extreme pleasure or used to introduce short phrases that express a strong emotion, such as anger, shock, delight, or triumph [9]. The open end of 'Oora' has been further extended to characterize it as **ਬੇਅੰਤ** (Beant - Infinite) or **ਅਨੰਤ** (Anant – Infinite).

In some verses in Gurbani the God has been addressed as One and Only, Oh, and the Infinite. These attributes are explained as follows:

1 (One)

The 'One' in this logo represents as 'One and Only' according to Guru Nanak:

ਸਾਹਿਬੁ¹ ਮੇਰਾ ਏਕੈ² ਹੈ ॥

ਏਕੈ³ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਏਕੈ⁴ ਹੈ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ Aggs, m 1, p-350.
My God¹ is One and Only^{2,3,4}, Hey Brother!
AGGS, M 1, p 350.

Guru Arjan has further strengthened this attribute as follows:

ਏਕੈ¹ ਰੇ ਹਰਿ ਏਕੈ² ਜਾਨ³ ॥

ਏਕੈ⁴ ਰੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਨ⁶ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Aggs, m 5, p-535.

Hey Gurmukh!⁵ Comprehend^{3,6} the God as One and Only^{1,2,4}. AGGS, M 5, p 535.

ਏਕ¹ ਮਹਿ ਸਰਬ² ਸਰਬ² ਮਹਿ ਏਕ⁴
ਏਹ ਸਤਿ⁵ ਗੁਰਿ⁶ ਦੇਖ⁷ ਦਿਖਾਈ⁸ ॥

Aggs, m 5, p-907.

The True⁵ Guru⁶ has shown⁸ (me) the vision⁷ that the One¹ is in everything² and everything² is the One⁴. AGGS, M 5, p 907.

Here ਸਤਿ⁵ ਗੁਰਿ⁶ (Sat Guru) means Guru Nanak since Nanak has been accepted as Guru by Guru Angad, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjan.

ਨਾਨਕ ਵਰਤੈ¹ ਇਕੋ² ਇਕੁ³ ਤੂੰ⁴ ॥

Aggs, m 5, p-966.

"Nanak Says: You⁴, the One and Only^{2,3}, pervade¹ everywhere. AGGS, M 5, p 966.

I may add here that some scholars may quote the following verse of Guru Nanak to justify that he himself says that God is 'One' in Veda:

ਬੇਦ¹ ਵਖਾਣਿ² ਕਹਹਿ² ਇਕੁ³ ਕਹੀਐ⁴ ॥
ਓਹ⁵ ਬੇਅੰਤ⁶ ਅੰਤੁ⁷ ਕਿਨਿ ਲਹੀਐ ॥

Aggs, m 1, p-1188-89.

But critical study of the above phrase shows here **ਬੇਦ/ਵੇਦ** means knowledge/wisdom according to Bhai Kahn Singh [24] and Dr Gurcharan Singh [19], although **ਬੇਦ/ ਵੇਦ** also means, sacred books in Hinduism. Therefore, the above phrase should be interpreted as follows:

Intellectual¹ deliberation² reveals⁴ that It (God) is 'One'³. The Oh⁵ (God) is Infinite⁶ and nobody⁸ has found⁹ its limit⁷. AGGS, M 1, p 1188-89.

Another example **ਬੇਦ/ਵੇਦ** means knowledge/wisdom to justify the above interpretation is found in JAP:

ਅਹਰਣਿ¹ ਮਤਿ² ਵੇਦੁ³ ਹਥਿਆਰੁ⁴ ॥ Aggs, ਜਪੁ 38, ਪ-8.

Wisdom² should be anvil¹ and knowledge³ be the

tools⁴. AGGS, Jap 38, p 8.

Therefore, it is wrong to say that Guru Nanak was following Vedic philosophy to address God as 'One'. The following verses of Guru Nanak further confirm that God to be 'One' there is no other like the God:

ਵੈਵੈ¹ ਨਦਰਿ² ਕਰੇ ਜਾ ਦੇਖਾ³ ਦੂਜਾ⁴ ਕੋਹੀ⁵ ਨਾਹੀ ॥
 ਏਕੋ⁶ ਰਵਿ⁷ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਭ⁸ ਥਾਈ⁹ ਏਕੁ¹⁰ ਵਸਿਆ¹¹
 ਮਨ¹² ਮਾਹੀ ॥ ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ 1, ਪ-433.

When blessed², I saw³ that there is no⁵ second⁴
 (other). The One⁶ pervades⁷ everywhere^{8,9} and the
 One¹⁰ also pervades¹¹ in my mind¹².
 AGGS, M 1, p 433.

Note: ਵੈਵੈ¹ is a letter of Gurmukhi script used just to start the phrase, a style of writing poetry.

ਜਿਨਿ ਸਿਰਿ¹ ਸਾਜੀ² ਤਿਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ³ ਗੋਈ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ⁴ ਬਿਨੁ
 ਦੂਜਾ⁵ ਅਵਰੁ⁶ ਨ ਕੋਈ⁷ ॥ ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ 1, ਪ-355.
 The One, Who has created², the same One can
 destroy³. For me there is no other⁶ (second⁵) than
 the One⁴. AGGS, M 1, p 355.

I may further add here that the attribute 'One' to God means that God is 'One and Only' and there is no other like it; and It (God) does not exist in Trinity and does not come into anthropomorphic form as is accepted in Vedic and Vedantic philosophies.

ਓ (ਓਹੁ - Oh) meaning 'That' ਨਾ ਓਹੁ ਮਰੈ ਨ ਹੋਵੈ

ਸੋਗੁ ॥ Aggs, m 1, p- 9.

Oh (That - God) does not die; thus there is no reason to mourn. AGGS, M 1, p 9.

Note: Here 'That' stands for God since Guru Nanak does not like to use any descriptive or specific name for God.

ਓਹੁ¹ ਬਿਧਾਤਾ² ਮਨੁ³ ਤਨੁ⁴ ਦਇ⁵ ॥
 ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ 1, ਪ-931.

Oh¹, (That - God)² blesses⁵ the mind³ and body⁴.
 AGGS, M 1, p 931.

'Extended End of Open Oora' represents the Infinity of God:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ¹ ਬੇਅੰਤੁ² ਧਿਆਈ³ ਅੰਤ⁴ ਨ ਪਾਰਾਵਾਰੁ⁵ ॥
 ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ 1, ਪ 936.

The Guru-oriented¹ contemplates³ the Infinite²,
 Who has no limit⁴ or end⁵. AGGS, M 1, p 936.

ਤਾ¹ ਕੇ ਅੰਤ² ਨ ਪਾਏ³ ਜਾਹਿ ॥
 ਏਹੁ ਅੰਤ⁴ ਨ ਜਾਣੇ⁵ ਕੋਇ⁶ ॥
 ਅਗਗਸ, ਜਪੁ 24, ਪ-5.

The infiniteness² of That¹ cannot be
 comprehended³. (In fact) Nobody⁶ knows⁵ its
 infiniteness⁴. AGGS, Jap 24, p 5.

If we examine the above phrases, it is clear again that in Nanakian Philosophy God has been addressed as **ੴ**: 1 (One) stands for 'One and Only', **ਓ** stands for 'Oh' ('That'), and Extended end stands for 'Infinite'. Therefore, **ੴ** can be pronounced as ਇਕੁ ਓ ਬੇਅੰਤ (Ek Oh Beant) in Punjabi. And as 'The One and Only, Oh ('That'), the Infinite' in English.

Now let us consider if this 1 (One) used in **ੴ** is 'Singularity' as understood by scientists? This 'Singularity' is also called 'Nothingness' by other scientists.

WHAT IS NOTHINGNESS OR SINGULARITY?

The following information about 1 (One) used in **ੴ** as 'Nothingness' or 'Singularity' would further strengthened our thesis that **ੴ** is an original and unique logo designed by Guru Nanak to represent God.

'Nothingness' has been defined by Kaup [14] as follows: "Nothingness Theory defines

nonexistence as being the absence of existence, the absence of nothingness, and the absence of absence. It is what is not being referred-to under any circumstances. Nonexistence by definition is that which cannot be referred-to, named, or defined. So referring to it in any way violates its strict definition. But this fundamental paradox is at the basis of Nothingness Theory and must be referred-to anyway. Despite it's not being, absolute nonexistence exerts a detectable force. We have proven through simple logic that the Universe has and always will exist. Therefore, the Universe must have existed before the "Big Bang" and will exist forever. This also means that the state of nothingness from which the Universe burst into existence must have existed relative to absolute nonexistence given that absolute nonexistence is not achievable. So space/time – matter/ energy can attain relative nonexistence by collapsing into infinite density, which is a uniform state of static equilibrium. Examples of this state of relative nonexistence can be seen throughout the Universe in the form of 'black holes.'" A black hole is the pinnacle of perfectly symmetrical uniformity of energy, matter, space, and time.

Therefore, 'Nothingness' does not mean 'without anything'. But it is in a so small volume that it appears to be 'Nothingness'. According to the 'Big Bang Theory' the energy was in such a small volume that has been termed as 'Nothingness' by some and as 'Singularity' by others. This 'Nothingness' is termed as ਸੁੰਨ (SUNN) by Guru Nanak. It is also termed as 'Jyot' (highly condensed energy) by him.

Will it be out of place to call the 'Singularity', from which everything originated, the state of the Universe before Big Bang, as '1' (One) placed before the **ੳ** (Oh - That) of **ੳ** ? Still another question: Is not this 'One' of Guru Nanak as the 'Singularity' of scientists in which space/time – matter/energy has attained relative nonexistence by collapsing into infinite density, which is a uniform state of static equilibrium? And this

equilibrium is represented by Guru Nanak in the form of a logo as follows: **ੳ = 1 + ੳ +, ੳ = Singularity + Oh (That) + Infinite** Could we infer from the above dismantled **ੳ** that the 'One' ('Singularity' = energy/matter - space/time) is 'That', which is 'Infinite' from which the whole Universe appeared after Big Bang. WAHT IS suMn (SUNN)? This '1' (One), accepted as 'Singularity' or 'Nothingness' by scientists is SUNN of Guru Nanak described as follows: ਸੁੰਨ ਸੁੰਨੁ ਕਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਅਨਹਤ ਸੁੰਨੁ ਕਹਾ ਤੇ ਹੋਈ ॥ ਅਨਹਤ ਸੁੰਨਿ ਰਤੇ ਸੇ ਕੈਸੇ ॥ ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਉਪਜੇ ਤਿਸ ਹੀ ਜੈਸੇ ॥ ਓਇ ਜਨਿਮ ਨ ਮਰਿਹ ਨ ਆਵਿਹ ਜਾਹਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਮਨੁ ਸਮਝਾਹਿ ॥੫੨॥ AGGS, M 1, 943. page 28 UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal In the first four phrases Guru Nanak is saying that everyone talks about Sunn. But where did Sunn come from? Everyone speaks about the Sunn (Nothingness). How did Infinite Sunn (Nothingness) originated? How5 can one understand the Infinite Sunn (Nothingness)? Then Guru Nanak answers it as follows: From which That (Nothingness) originated it becomes like That (Nothingness) again. Guru Nanak is explaining that when Nothingness became the Universe after the Big Bang then it will go back to Nothingness. There is evidence that Black Hole is appearing somewhere in our galaxy and possibly in other galaxies and these Black Holes will lead to the formation of Nothingness again. The philosophy in phrase "ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਉਪਜੇ ਤਿਸ ਹੀ ਜੈਸੇ

॥" has been strengthened by Guru Arjan as follows: ਕਈ ਬਾਰ ਪਸਿਰਓ ਪਾਸਾਰ ॥ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ

ਇਕੁਏਕੰਕਾਰ ॥ Aggs, m: 5, p - 276. The Universe came into existence many times but God remained 'One and Only' all the time. AGGS, M 5, p 276. Now in the last two phrases in the above verse # 52 Guru Nanak is indicating that this Sunn (Nothingness) is God for him, Who does not take birth or dies as follows: That It (Sunn) neither

takes birth nor dies nor come into cycle of lives. (Meaning it was always there in one or other form.) Finally, Guru Nanak advises that try to understand this God as Sunn (Nothingness): Oh Guru-oriented! Orientate your mind so that you understand the above fact. 52. AGGS, M 1, p 943. Guru Nanak further says that Sunn gave rise to Universe (everything including living and non-living): ਸੁੰਨਹੁਚੰਦੁਸੂਰਜਗੀਣਾਰੇ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਤਿਭਵਣ ਸਾਰੇ॥ ਸੁੰਨ ਅਲਖ ਅਪਾਰ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁਸੁੰਨ ਤਾੜੀ ਲਾਇਦਾ ॥੫॥ AGGS, M 1, p 1037. Sunn is Infinite and without any attribute was in Itself. This Sunn gave rise to stars, planets and space/time from the same source of Energy of Sunn. Guru Nanak has also explained that first elements were formed from the elementary particles from this Sunn (Nothingness or Singularity) which gave rise to Suns and planets and galaxies in this Universe: ਪੰਚ ਤਤੁਸੁੰ ਨਹੁ ਪਰਗਾਸਾ ॥ Aggs, m 1, p - 1038.

Five Elements appeared from this Sunn. AGGS, M 1, p 1038. It can be concluded from the above discussion on 'SUNN' of Guru Nanak that his 'SUNN' is 'Nothingness' or 'Singularity' as described by scientists in which space/time - matter/energy has attained relative nonexistence by collapsing into infinite density, which is a uniform state of static equilibrium. Therefore, this 'SUNN' (Nothingness/Singularity) after Big Bang gave rise to elementary particles then to protons, neutrons, electrons, neutrinos, and anti-matter. The combination of one proton and one electron formed first element, Hydrogen. By addition of one more each of proton and electron gave rise to second element, Helium. So with each addition of proton and electron more new elements were formed. The 'panj tatt' (five elements) mentioned in the above phrase of Guru Nanak means five elements as Hydrogen, Carbon, Oxygen, Nitrogen, and Phosphorus, which gave rise to the DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) molecule which is called 'Thread of Life'. There is no life without DNA on this Earth. On the contrary the five elements in ancient philosophy are: Earth, Sky, Water, Air,

and Ether, which are in fact either compounds or mixture of various elements. The above discussion of SUNN leads us to accept that '1' (One) of Guru Nanak in ੴ represents the 'Singularity' of scientists in which space/time - matter/ energy has attained relative nonexistence (Nothingness) by collapsing into infinite density, which is a uniform state of static equilibrium. ੴ -THE LOGO Now it is the time to sum up the description of the logo, ੴ designed by Guru Nanak, scientifically and logically. The logo, ੴ, has been dissembled for explanation as follows: ੴ = 1 + ਓ +, '1' represents 'Oneness' (Singularity) – the state of God. 'ਓ' (Open Oora) represents God as 'Oh' since there is no descriptive/specific name for God. ' , ' (Extended end of Open Oora) represents infinity (byAMq - Beant) of ਓ)Oh). January - December 2011 Vol. 13 No 1-2 page 29 Therefore ੴ = Singularity + Oh (That) + Infinity. If it is so then we may infer that God is OH (THAT) where space/time – energy/matter is in INFINITELY small ONE unite (SINGULARITY) which looks like 'NOTHINGNESS' but became the Universe after the Big Bang. The above analysis clearly indicates that the logo, ੴ, designed by Guru Nanak can be pronounced as ieku E byAMq (Ek Oh Beant) in Punjabi. And as 'The One and Only, Oh (That), the Infinite' in English. Is this description of ੴ described above correct or that where the earlier theologians like Bhai Gurdas and Faridkot Wala Teeka) have declared ੴ as Ek Oankaar or Ek Onkaar or Ek Omkaar, which represents OM (AUM) – the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh) according to Vedic and Vedantic philosophies? Now I would like to pose the following question to the theologians and philosophers of the world: Are the modern scientists and the philosophers not thinking about God on the same line as conceptualized by Guru Nanak during 15th and 16th centuries?

CONSEQUENCES Personal discussion with scholars of Sikhi indicated that they want to stick to their own conviction to pronounce ੳ as eyku EAMkwr u (Ek Oankaar) originating from AUM (OM). In that case they are strengthening the view of scholars like Parma Nand [16] in denigrating the originality and uniqueness of Guru Nanak as follows: “ੳ is not a new word coined by Guru Nanak but he borrowed it from Upanishads because 'Oankaar' or 'Omkaar' has been used in various Upanishads. The only thing Guru Nanak did was to add numeral '1' to confirm the 'Oneness' of God, which is also found in the Upanishads [16].”

CONCLUSIONS ੳ is being misunderstood since the time of Bhai Gurdas when he declared that ੳ)Open Oora) in ੳ as Oankaar, thereafter, ੳ)Open Oora) was interpreted as Om or Aum by Faridkot Wala Teeka. But our present research confirms that: 1. There is no evidence in Gurbani incorporated in the AGGS that ੳ)Open Oora) is a abbreviation of EAMkwr (Oankaar). 2. The 1 (One) in ੳ is in fact space/time – energy/matter highly concentrated in a Single Point, ‘Singularity’, which looks like ‘Nothingness’ for some scientists and ‘Sunn’ for Guru Nanak. 3. ੳ cannot be represented as ‘Ek Oankaar’ or ‘Ek Aumkaar’ or ‘Ek Omkaar’ since these words are ikrqm nwm (descriptive/specific names) which represent AUM or OM (Trinity of God). 4. In ੳ 1 stands for 'One and Only', ੳ stands for 'Oh' ('That'), and Extended end of ੳ)Open Oora) stands for 'Infinite'. Therefore, in Punjabi ੳ can be pronounced as ਇਕੁਓ ਬੇਅੰ ਤ)Ek Oh Beant) and in English ੳ can be pronounced as 'The One and Only, Oh (That), the Infinite'. Finally, it can be concluded that if we, the Sikh theologians and scholars, insist that ੳ is ‘Ek Oankaar’ or ‘Ek Aumkaar’ or ‘Ek Omkaar’

then we are establishing that Guru Nanak has no originality and uniqueness in coining ੳ, the Logo of his philosophy, rather he was preaching and teaching Vedic and Vedantic philosophies. THE CHOICE IS OURS.

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UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research
Journal

THE SPECTATOR

The Islamist war against Sikhs is arriving in
Europe
Hardeep Singh

Terror attacks in Germany are becoming remarkably unremarkable. So when a bomb went off in the German city of Essen, near Düsseldorf – and killed nobody – it barely registered. The three teenagers who detonated the device were all members of a Whatsapp group called 'Supporters of the Islamic Caliphate', so their intentions

seemed pretty clear: they wanted to wage war against the infidels of the West.



But their target – a Sikh temple – was striking. While initial reports suggested there was ‘no indication’ of a terrorist incident, any Sikh reading the news would have understood the motive, just as any Jew or Christian would have understood precisely why Islamic extremists target synagogues or churches. It was a religiously motivated attack, designed to remind Germany’s Sikh community that they should also be fearful. It’s a common claim that Christian persecution at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists is overlooked. But after the murder of the French priest Father Jacques Hamel in Rouen earlier this month, it’s hard to brush aside the fact that Europe is becoming a religious battleground. The persecution meted out by Islamic State to many minorities in Syria and Iraq is arriving on our shores – and it is a gruesome spectacle. Jews and Christians have felt the brunt, but the Essen bomb was a reminder that Sikhs are also facing up to the menace of Islamic extremism.

Sikhs and Muslims have a long, tumultuous history. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak was a peaceful man who engaged in interfaith dialogue. He campaigned for women’s rights, opposed caste discrimination, and spoke up against atrocities committed by the Mughals, India’s Muslim invaders. Nanak’s followers came from both Muslim and Hindu backgrounds. But

history took a turn when Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, was executed in 1675 for challenging an Islamic policy of forced conversion of Hindu priests. Foreseeing the difficulties ahead, his son Guru Gobind Singh decreed that Sikhs (who he called the Khalsa or ‘pure’) should always be ready to defend themselves and others against tyranny; India’s ‘sword arm’ was born, and to this day, Sikhs have a reputation for being good fighters.

The Guru’s supporters included individuals from Shia and Sufi minorities, sects within Islam. Yet his resistance to totalitarianism came at huge personal cost. Not only did he lose his father but his four sons were martyred, the younger two bricked alive for their refusal to accept Islam. Despite this, the Guru refused to vilify any adherents of Islam, but explicitly instructed Sikhs to ‘recognise the human race as one.’

But while Sikhism teaches that all religious traditions should be respected, Islam has a long history of targeting Sikh communities. Even today, persecution still exists. Prior to the collapse of the Kabul government in 1992, there were 220,000 Sikhs and Hindus across Afghanistan. Only 220 families now remain. Many have fled atrocities and have found sanctuary in the West, for the simple reason they are considered ‘Kafirs’, a derogatory term for non-Muslims. The remaining Sikhs have been forced to wear yellow patches to identify themselves in public, in a similar way to Jews being made to wear the Star of David under the Third Reich. Kidnappings, violence and compulsion to pay the jizya – a tax imposed on non-Muslims – have almost become societal norms.

Sadly, things aren’t much better across the border in Pakistan. While provision is made for Sikhs to make their annual pilgrimage to Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, pilgrims often require armed guards. In 2014, 500 or so Sikh families were forced to leave Peshawar due to a hostile environment and threats from extremists.

Worst still Sikhs have been beheaded in Pakistan's tribal northwest – there is little to separate this, and the abject barbarity meted out on Christians and Yazidis by Islamic State.

As Sikhs well know, they are not the only minority group in the region to be targeted by Islamists. Much of the religious brutality that Guru Tegh Bahadur railed against remains to this day. According to Amnesty International, Hindu women are frequently forced to convert to Islam in Pakistan's Sindh province, before being married off to Muslim husbands. Blasphemy laws are used as a tool to persecute minority faiths, including the Ahmadiyya sect, which faces criminal charges for simply practicing their faith.

Much of this has been ignored by the West. But echoes are now being heard across Europe, so it is becoming harder to turn a blind eye. Christians are targeted in Syria — and in France. Ahmadiyya Muslims are persecuted in Pakistan – and in Britain, as the sectarian murder of the Ahmadi shopkeeper Asad Shah showed. And Sikhs are attacked in Afghanistan — and in Germany. The pernicious force of radical Islam is seeping into Western culture and undermining religious freedom.

Faced with this, can Europe's political elite continue to guarantee the safety of church or temple-goers? There are, in reality no such guarantees. France's 40,000 churches can't all be protected. Nor can the thousands of Sikhs who reside in Germany. British counter-terror experts have just advised vicars that churches should ratchet up security measures with bouncers and CCTV. This follows the government's introduction of a security-funding scheme for places of worship, but with the best will in the world it is difficult, if not impossible, to prevent those bent on murder and mayhem from succeeding.

If any good is to come of all this, it could be found in a show of unity from the religious groups under attack from Islamists. In 2008, I attended an event

where the former Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks said: 'Sikhs and Jews share a lot in common. They tried to kill us, we survived, now lets eat.' The attack on the temple in Germany is a timely reminder that Islamists don't just see the West as their mortal enemy, but view all who don't subscribe to their warped ideology as fair game.

Hardeep Singh is a freelance journalist, not to be confused with the Glaswegian comedian Hardeep Singh Kohli. He can be found tweeting @Singhtwo2

[Contributed by Bawa Singh Jagdev, Australia]



ISIS INSPIRED ATTACK ON GURDWARA IN ESSEN, GERMANY