APPLICATION OF SCIENCE AND LOGIC IN INTERPRETATING GURBANI

Part I: Etymology

ABSTRACT
Although Guru Nanak has used definite Methodology to write his Bani, our pioneer interpreters of Gurbani have not paid any attention to look into his Methodology to interpret Gurbani. Therefore, it is not only important to understand that Methodology of 15th century and to use it for interpreting Gurbani but also to supplement it with modern Methodology. The present paper deals with the Application of Science and Logic for interpreting Gurbani. This paper has been divided into two parts. First part deals with “Etymology” along with the application of Science and logic. The second part discusses the use of “Ontology” to interpret the concept and existence of God.

INTRODUCTION
Guru Nanak composed his Bani (Bani has been used in both as singular and plural form) during 15th and 16th century in the language spoken by the people of the Punjab. I call this language as ‘Punjabi’. This language includes vocabulary from different languages spoken in rest of India and in Middle East. Moreover, the Punjabi spoken during 15th and 16th centuries was quite different than that of today’s Punjabi. Under those conditions Guru Nanak had great limitation about the availability of adequate scientific terminology to express his philosophy; therefore, he had to depend on allegoric, metaphoric and symbolic expression in his writings as noticed by Chahal {(3) p 64}. Besides, Guru Nanak also used other methods of representing his philosophy. For example, first posing questions then answering those questions; first describing the concepts accepted by people and then expounding his philosophy; and also using logic to explain his philosophy {(3) p 64}. In spite of this fact that Guru Nanak used certain Methodology for propounding his philosophy but no theologian and researcher ever tried to formulate any Methodology for interpreting Gurbani in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS).

Methodology for Interpretation
Although I have not come across any article on the Methodology to interpret Gurbani or any article in which Methodology has been explained. But when I talk to some scholars; some say that one must examine Gurbani through anubhav while others say that it should be based on the historical facts and tracing out meanings of the old words. Therefore, it becomes a very important step for a researcher to establish ‘Methodology’ before starting any research project. ‘Methodology’ is defined by Dictionary.com as follows:

A set or system of methods, principles and rules for regulating a given discipline as in the arts or sciences.

There can be many methods which could be of great help to interpret Gurbani, however, application of Science, Etymology, Ontology, understanding of Metaphors and Allegories, Modern Technology and Logic will be a great help to achieve interpretation of Gurbani as close to its real philosophy as meant by Sikh Gurus.

In the Part I of this paper Application of Science, Logic and Etymology to interpret...
Gurbani will be discussed. Somebody may pose a question: How application of Science could be logical when there was no Science at the time of Guru Nanak?

The answer is discussed as follows:

**Guru Nanak: Founder of Natural Philosophy**

Guru Nanak is generally accepted as a founder of Sikhism (sm). However, if we analyze his Bani scientifically and logically then it will appear that he was the founder of “Natural Philosophy” which revolves around Cosmos, Laws of Nature/Universe, God, Morality, Modus Vivendi and Service to Humanity. A separate article is under pen to justify “Guru Nanak deserves to be called as the “Founder of Natural Philosophy” by the author if we accept the following definition of Natural Philosophy:

‘Natural Philosophy’ is defined as: *The study of nature and the physical universe before the advent of modern science.*

(http://www.answers.com/topic/natural-philosophy)

In fact what was called ‘Natural Philosophy’ was the foundation of “Science”. For a long time, philosophers as diverse as David Hume (1711-1776), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Edmund Husserl (1859-1939) have seen the value of their work in the claim that they were making philosophy “scientific”. Those claims should have ended with Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who for the first time clearly provided a distinction between the issues that science could deal with and those that it couldn’t, but since Kant’s theory could not be demonstrated the same way as a scientific theory, the spell of science, even if it is only through pseudo-science, continued. The word “science” itself is simply the Latin word for knowledge: *scientia*. Until the 1840’s what we now call science was “Natural Philosophy.” so that even Isaac Newton’s great book on motion and gravity, published in 1687, was *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (Principia Mathematica Philosophiae Naturalis).*

Newton was, to himself and his contemporaries, a “philosopher.”(10)

Here I would say that Guru Nanak (1469-1539) laid the foundation of “Natural Philosophy” in the East by observing the events about Cosmology and Nature and behavior of people about 200 to 500 years before all the above philosophers of the West. The irony is that some Sikh theologians are still keeping the philosophy of Kant alive and profess that Science cannot deal with some issues of religion. They are forgetting that Guru Nanak was the founder of ‘Natural Philosophy’ which became ‘Science’. On the other hand something new (similar to that of Guru Nanak) was happening about ‘Natural Philosophy’ in Europe, and it was called the *nova scienza*, the “new” knowledge, which began with Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), a contemporary of Guru Nanak (10).

According to the facts explained above it becomes evident that application of current knowledge of Science and logic would be a great help to achieve interpretation of Gurbani in its real perspective.

**DISCUSSION**

**Application of Science, Logic and Etymology**

**Evolution of Universe**

Although the Big Bang Theory is widely accepted by many scientists, however, some have started to put new theories - String Theory, Anti-inflationary Theory, Quantum Theory, etc. against Big Bang Theory. Amanda Gefter, Consultant for *New Scientist*, puts this controversy as follows (7):

“Cosmologists are still digesting the new proposal, with some questioning whether the assumptions it makes are justified. Guth says that as yet no one is sure about the validity of the specific holographic correspondence Hertog, Hawking and Hartle have employed. “It’s certainly a worthwhile line of research, but what they are trying to establish is a very difficult thing”, she says.

The Evolution of Universe as described by Guru Nanak during the 15th century with the following single phrase (and rest of the expansion of the Universe has been explained in Raga Maru at pages 1037-1038 and other places) is very similar to that of widely accepted Big Bang Theory of 20th century:

"ਧਿਤਮ ਮੰਨੁਹੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ ਠੇਰੇ ਬਸਿੰਧੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ !"

Kīpū paśāvo eko kavāro.

"ਪ੍ਰੇਰਣਾ ਦੇ ਸੁਮਾਨ ਜਗਤਾਂਧੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ!"

Tis te hoṅe lākẖ ḍārīṅāo.

AGGS, Jap # 16, p 3(1)

However, our pioneer Sikh theologians have translated/interpreted this phrase as “Creation” rather as “Origin” or “Evolution” under the influence of ancient philosophy, for example:

**Faridkot Vala Tika (21) :**

"ਧਿਤਮ ਮੰਨੁਹੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ ਠੇਰੇ (ਬਸ਼ੀੰਧੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ) ਠੇਰੇ ਸੁਮਾਨ ਜਗਤਾਂਧੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ ਜਗਤਾਂਧੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ ਹੱਦ ਭਰੇ ਜਗਤਾਂਧੁੰਦ੍ਰਿ ਹੱਦ ਭਰੇ ਦੇ ਸੁਮਾਨ ਭਾਰੇ ਙੁਨੀ।"

("(God) expanded from one to many with a Word and by
doing so hundreds of thousands of rivers meanings world of living beings appeared.)

Mannmohan Singh (SGPC) in English (21):

With One Word Thou didst affect the world’s expansion. And whereby lacs of rivers began to flow.

Prof Sahib Singh (21):

You created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word!
Hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow.

The contemporary scientists working on Sikh (Sikhism) have interpreted this phrase as follows: Virk, a Physicist, (22) (p 37) in his book, Harmony in Science and Sikh Religion , said that the creation hypothesis is summed up by Guru Nanak as follows:

‘God created the Universe by uttering a word.’

On the other hand another Physicist, Devinder Pal Singh, had involved दुर्भ (Laws of Nature) in creation of the Universe as follows {[(13)- p 28-29]:

(3) God created the whole Universe with his Order (Will), and with the same Order hundreds of thousands of rivers (of lives) appeared.)

Sant Singh Khalsa (21):

You created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word!
Hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow.

The same theme has been kept without making any improvement by all the other famous Sikh scholars except Mannmohan Singh and Sant Singh Khalsa who have even failed to mention living beings. Thereafter, some Sikh scholars followed Prof Sahib while others followed Mannmohan Singh’s English translations.

Now the question is:
Why do modern Sikh scholars avoid interpreting Gurbani with application of Science and logic?

I am sure a new and more accurate interpretation representing the real theme of Gurbani will appear after the application of Science and logic. Einstein’s view about this approach is as follows:

“After religious teachers accomplish the refining process indicated, they will surely recognize with joy that true religion has been ennobled and made more profound by scientific knowledge.”
Now let us try to interpret this phrase of Guru Nanak by the application of Science, Etymology and Logic: 聶ਾਧੁ/ਸਕਤੀ।(ਖਠਾ/ਧਰਮ੍) ਜ਼ੰਢਾ।।
Kīṭā pasāro eko kavāo.
Tit te hoṁ lakhā dārīvakāo.

Our first attempt was as follows (3):
The Universe exploded with one sound (bang) and started to expand². Thereafter many things³ appeared.
AGGS, Jap # 16, p 3.

I have interpreted the word ਵਾਧੁ (Kawao) as ‘sound’; in fact, it means ‘Bang’ (the swift release of a store of effective force or energy). When the Bang occurred for the first time actually no sound was produced at that time. But our pioneer theologians have mostly interpreted ਵਾਧੁ (Kawao) as ‘Sabd’ (Word). Let us look into the etymological meanings of ਵਾਧੁ (Kawao):

ਵਾਧੁ (Kawao)
SGGS Gurmukhi-Gurmukhi Dictionary (21)
ਖ਼ਾਸ। ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ। ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ। (ਖ਼ਾਸ। ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ। ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ।)
Mahan Kosh Encyclopaedia (21)
ਖ਼ਾਸ। ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ। ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ।, ਧਾਰਮ੍ ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ। ਧਾਰਮ੍ ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ।
(ਧਾਰਮ੍ ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ। ਧਾਰਮ੍ ਧ ਤਤ ਸਕਤੀ।)

There is another word, ਵਾਧੁ (Kawao), which comes from ਵਾਠ (Kawa). For example,

Khūr (Kawao) in SGGS Gurmukhi-English Dictionary means ਵਾਠੁ (Kawao): ਖ਼ਾਸ, ਖ਼ਾਸ। ਹੱਥੰਤਕ ਦੇਵੀ ਵਾਠੁ (Kawao).
And in SGGS Gurmukhi-English Dictionary says that ਵਾਠੁ (Kawao) is from ਖਿਆਲ (Kawa),

Therefore, we have modified the above interpretation while keeping in view the meaning of ਵਾਠੁ (as ਖ਼ਾਸ) as ‘Energy’:
The Universe exploded from one source of energy (Singularity) and started to expand. Thereafter many things appeared.

Because:
1. ਖ਼ਾਸ (Pasao - Pasara) means to expand.
2. ਵਾਠੁ (Kawao) means ‘Energy’.

Therefore, ਖ਼ਾਸ means ‘From one source of Energy’ (ਖ਼ਾਸ) stands for ‘Singularity’, which is also called ‘Nothingness’. This ‘Singularity’ and ‘Nothingness’ has been discussed somewhere else in details. as SUNN (5).

ਧਰਮ੍ (Daryao) has been literally interpreted as rivers by many scholars. Keeping in view the methodology used by Guru Nanak to express his philosophy ‘ਧਰਮ੍’ has been used as a metaphor for ‘things’. What are those things? Scientifically what appeared after the ‘Big Bang’ was a large number of galaxies each composed of a large number of stars (Suns) and their planets? Therefore, the ਛਾਤਰਵੀਦੀਆਂ (Lakh Daryao) has been used to represent ‘many things’ because of limited vocabulary available at that time. However, one must understand that no water was formed immediately after the Big Bang. It took billions of years to form Earth and water in our Solar System. Therefore, ਛਾਤਰਵੀਦੀਆਂ (Lakh Daryao) is a metaphoric expression of ‘many things’ (that means starting from elementary particles to particles to nucleosynthesis of atoms which gave rise to many
galaxies.

The concept of ‘दर्याद’ (Daryao) in Nanakian Philosophy means ‘everything’ as explained by Guru Ramdas:

दर्याद मद दुःख ही माहि॥
Fûn ḍārī-vāo sabh tuḥī hī māhī.

You (God) are river since everything is in You (God).

AGGS, M 4, p 11.

The God has been compared metaphorically to river, which mean God has ’everything/many things’ when it was in the state of थें (One) or मुल (Sunn) or दर्याद (Nirgun) State (Singularity or Nothingness according to Physics) which has everything (from element particles to particle to atoms to galaxies to every living being).

Similarly, Guru Arjan has also explained metaphoric ‘दर्याद’ (Daryao) as ‘everything/many things’ not to be misunderstood as ‘rivers’ as has been understood by almost all scholars in the above phrase of Guru Nanak: थें बदराहै दे मणित रामें॥

Ek kavāvai te sabh hoā॥

From one source of energy¹ (Singularity) everything² appeared.

AGGS, M 5, p 1003.

‘सन्जोग’ in the above phrase is same as ‘थें बदराहै’ of Guru Nanak’s previous phrase. And बदराहै is from बद्व, बदत means ‘Energy’ according to Mahan Kosh.

The above discussion clearly leads us to believe that Guru Nanak had explained Big Bang in one phrase:

विदम धराहै दे दवराहै॥
(Kīṭā pasā-o eko kavā-o. Tis te ho-ye lakṣ ārā-vā.o.)

The Universe exploded from one source of energy² (Singularity) and started to expand³. Thereafter many things appeared.

Fusion and Fission

मन्िें (Sanjog) and विण्िें (Vijog) are two words in Gurbani which have not been interpreted properly keeping in view the context of the Sabd. For example, the following phrase from JAP, Stanza # 29 at page 7 has been interpreted differently by different authors as follows:

मन्िें विण्िें दले लह चलावेह लेहे अवदिव कदः॥

Sanjog vijog duve kår chalāvēh lekhe āvahi bhag॥

Faridkot Vala Tika

नेकीजै दे मध छेते छे दे दमु महादेव दासी छे दे नेमें वकले दल बधु दुःख छेते दे अदान दे। दे दमु महादेव दासी छे दे नेमें वकले दल बधु दुःख छेते दे नादः॥

जन्म दुःख काले वे महादेव मधु दुःख अदान नादः देवी॥

महादेव दासी छे दे नेमें वकले दल बधु दुःख छेते दे नादः॥

Prof Sahib Singh

मन्िें = में, अदान भूग दी दल दे दिह भोत किस्म ताह नीढ़ भिमल दे नादः।

जन्म दुःख काले वे महादेव मधु दुःख अदान नादः देवी॥

मन्िें दवराहै दे मणित रामें॥

जन्म दुःख काले वे महादेव मधु दुःख अदान नादः देवी॥

Manmohan Singh

Union and separation both regulate the world’s business and by destiny man obtains his share.

Sant Singh Khalsa

Union with Him and separation from Him, come by His Will. We come to receive what is written in our
destiny.

Examination of these interpretations indicates that all the four authors have interpreted ਸ਼ਾਨਜ਼ (Sanjog) and ਵਿਯੋਜ (Vijog) differently from each other. Faridkot Vala Teeka interpreted that according to Yogic philosophy one person receives bounties from God that is Sanjog and the other person gives it away that is Vijog and this way whole system goes on in this world and we receive according to our Karmas. Prof Sahib Singh followed Faridkot Vala Teeka and also includes meeting of family members because of karmas of past lives and then separation.

Manmohan Singh said that business in this world runs according to union and separation and man gets his share according to his destiny. But Sant Singh Khalsa interpreted it as the union with and separation from God by the Will of God and man gets what is written in his destiny.

The above phrase has been interpreted by all the four theologians according to their own whims and under the influence of ancient philosophy without keeping in view the theme in the first two sentences before it, which are as follows:

ਸੰਜੋਗਵ ਧਿਆਨਕਰਮ ਅਕਾਲਕਰਮ ਅਧਾਰ

Bhupat givān darīū bhandāran ghat ghat vājēh nād.

Let the knowledge be the food and compassion as your possession.

Then, the bells of contentment will ring in everybody.

ਅਪਨੀ ਰਾਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼ਾਂਤਿ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਸੌ ਨੌ ਦੀ ਕਲਾਈ ਸਚਿਆਨ

The first two sentences clearly indicate that Guru Nanak says that the knowledge, the food for thought, and compassion helps to achieve contentment; and the God Itself is the controller of every action and reaction in this Universe according to the Laws of Nature. The desire for possession of miracle power is a mere instinct.

Guru Nanak explains that two processes, fusion and fission (ਸ਼ਾਨਜ਼ (Sanjog) and ਵਿਯੋਜ (Vijog)) generate the energy required to carry out every action in the Universe. The scientific explanation of these sources of energy is as follows:

**Source of Energy**

There are two sources of energy in the Universe:

**i) Fusion:** The union of atomic nuclei to form heavier nuclei resulting in the release of enormous quantity of energy. (The simple meanings are union of two things into one.)

Technically it is explained as: Two hydrogen nuclei or protons smash into each other hard enough to fuse, forming a deuterium nucleus with one proton and one neutron. As the protons fuse, they release energy, partly in the form of a neutrino. Neutrinos are odd particles that seem to be able to penetrate almost anything, including Earth and us as if neither existed. Next the deuterium nucleus rams another free proton and fuses with it, giving off energy in the form of gamma rays. Finally, this clump of three particles smashes into another clump like itself and forms a helium nucleus. In this last collision two protons are knocked loose and the process begins again. At each step, energy is given off in the form of photons. It is this energy that keeps the Sun shining and Earth alive. And this is how a hydrogen bomb works. The Sun is an enormous hydrogen bomb that just keeps on exploding. Now this source of energy (Fusion) is being exploited in USA in collaboration with other countries.

**ii) Fission:** Splitting of an atomic nucleus resulting in the release of large amount of energy. The simple meaning is splitting of a thing into two parts. Atom bomb is the result of fission (splitting) of an element to release energy. This source of energy (Fission) is already being used in many countries.

Most of the interpreters express ਸ਼ਾਨਜ਼ and ਵਿਯੋਜ either a union or separation of families or union and separation of man with/from the God. But the above interpretation is based upon the fact that Guru Nanak is talking about the control (ਨਾਥੀ) of all the actions and reactions, i.e. the work (ਕਾਰ) and its control rests with the God (ਨਾਥ) according to Hukm (Laws of Nature) as explained in the preceding phrase:

ਅਪਨੀ ਰਾਸ਼ੀ ਸ਼ਾਂਤਿ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਸੌ ਨੌ ਦੀ ਕਲਾਈ ਸਚਿਆਨ

Therefore, the main phrase of Sanjog and Vijog is
Fusion of its own.

According the literature available it becomes clear that Guru Arjan has used fusion and fission to explain the combination or pairing of one set of n-number of chromosomes from the man sex cell (sperm) with the n-number of chromosomes of woman sex cell (ovum) resulting in a zygote of 2n-chromosomes. This zygote continues to divide resulting into a multi-cellular organism, which later develops into a new human being. This phenomenon has been described as follows:

Guru Arjan has also used fusion and fission in the same sense of Nanakian Philosophy as follows:

The interpretation of the above verses in their real perspective would have not been possible without the application of etymology of word Kawao from Kwa; and metaphorical meanings of Drayao as ‘many things’ beside the application of knowledge of Physics, Biology, and Genetics. However, at many other places in AGGS ‘sanjog’ and ‘vijog’ have been used in their simple meaning as meeting of a person with another person or God and separation of a person from other person or God, respectively. It also becomes clear from these phrases that interpretation of certain words should be done by keeping in view the context in which they have been used.

**Interpretation of** ॥

The ॥ is the first part of Commencing Verse (Mangalacharan but commonly called as Mool Mantra):

In fact the first part, ॥, of the Commencing Verse is a logo coined by Guru Nanak to represent the God as an Entity* or Reality**. ॥

*Entity: something that exists as or is perceived as a single separate object.
**Reality: actual being or existence, as opposed to an imaginary, idealized, or false nature.

The second and third parts of Commencing Verse represent the attributes of that God, ॥. Although ॥ as the unique logo has already been discussed extensively by Chahal (3 p 96), (4), here it will be discussed briefly with special emphasis on its etymological study. The first part is a logo coined by Guru Nanak by the combination of ॥ + ॥. It is hard to understand the reasons why the Sikh theologians pronounce it as ॥ or ॥ (Ek Aumkaar) or ॥ (Ek Aumkaar). It could be due to the heavy influence of Vedic and Vedantic influence on the minds of our pioneer theologians or researchers who have been trained at the highest educational School of Hinduism at Banaras (now Varanasi).

According the literature available it becomes clear that it was Bhai Gurdas, educated from Banaras, who has pronounced One (॥) as ॥ (Ek) and Open Oora (॥) as ॥ (Oankaar) as is evident from his Pauri 15 of Vaar 3 (16):
Mystery of Mulmantr

By writing 1 (one) it has been shown that God is One.

Oorha Oankaar Paas Bahalaliaa.

Then Oora (ਓ) has been placed besides One to represent Oankaar.

The first formal Tika of Sikh scriptures was written by Giani Badan Singh 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 was completed in 1883 CE. This Tika 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 tika 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 Tika was published by Maharaja Harinder Singh of Faridkot in 1928 (pp 205-206). Therefore, this formal Tika became available in printed form only in 1928 (about 324 years after the compilation of the Aad Granth in 1604). Giani Badan Singh belonged to Nirmalas who are experts in Vedas and Vedanta.

This Tika is known as the “Faridkoti Tika” or “Faridkot Vala Tika.” For all future attempts on interpretation of the AGGS it became an ideal Prototype Tika. In this Tika the ਓ (Open Oora) in ਓ 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 Tika that Bhai Gurdas has pronounced Open Oora (ਓ) as ਓਂ ਓਂ (Oankaar), which means Aum or Om (21). Then Bhai Kahn Singh (17) recorded in his Mahan Kosh that:

i) ਓ (Open Oora) with extended end; ii) ਓ (Aum); and iii) ਓਂ ਓਂ (Oankaar) all the three forms represent ਓ (Om / Aum) as in Faridkot Vala Tika and is pronounced as ਓਂ ਓਂ (Oankaar) as has been pronounced by Bhai Gurdas. Thereafter, Prof Sahib Singh (19) also followed Faridkot Vala Tika that ਓ (Open Oora) in ਓ is Om (Aum) and further explained ਓ as ਓਂ + ਓ or ਓਂ ਓ (Aum or Om) + ਓ (extended end of Oora) and pronounced ਓ as ਓਂ ਓਂ (Ek Oankaar) or ਓੂ ਓਂ (Ek Aumkaar).

Consequently, all other theologians and researchers pronounced ਓ as ਓਂ ਓਂ (Ek Oankaar) or ਓੂ ਓਂ (Ek Aumkaar) and it became permanent part and parcel of Sikh psyche.

We have discussed earlier that ਓ is a logo coined by Guru Nanak by the combination of ਓ + ਓ + ਓ to represent God. Let us discuss each part of ਓ etymologically, scientifically and logically:

ਓ (One)

Guru Nanak makes it very clear that the One is his God: ਓਂ ਓਂ ਓਂ (Ek Aumkaar) or ਓੂ ਓਂ (Ek Aumkaar). Sàhíb merà eko hai. Èko hai bhàtë eko hai. Èllì rahàõí.

Hey Brother! My God is One and Only. AGGS, M 1, p 350.

I may add here that some scholars may quote the following verse of Guru Nanak to justify that Guru Nanak himself says that God is ‘One’ in Vedas:

ਓਂ ਓਂ ਓਂ (Ek Aumkaar) or ਓੂ ਓਂ (Ek Aumkaar) - ii)

ਓੂ ਓਂ ਓਂ ਓਂ (Oankaar) or ਓੂ ਓਂ ਓਂ (Oankaar) - iii)

Bèd vakhàn kahèh ik kahiõí.
Oh beõñã ŏñ kin lahiõí.

Mahan Kosh, M 1, पृष्ठ 1188.

But critical study of the above phrase shows that here ਓੂ / ਓੂ means ‘knowledge/wisdom’ according to Bhai Kahn Singh (17) and Dr Gurcharan Singh (21), therefore, the above phrase should be interpreted as follows (Although ਓੂ / ਓੂ also means sacred books in Hinduism.):

Intellectual deliberation reveals that It (God) is ‘One’. The That (God) is Infinite and nobody has found Its limit.

AGGS, M 1, p 1188-89.

The above etymological, scientific and logical study of ਓ (ONE) from the Bani of Guru Nanak clearly indicates that the ONE is not numeral ‘One’ but the only ONE which represents ‘Singularity’ of Scientists and/or ਓੂ (Sunn) of Guru Nanak, which represents ‘Nothingness’ of scientists (5).

ਓ (Open Oora)

Although Bhai Kahn (17) has explained that ਓ (Open
Oora) represents Aum/Om as interpreted by Faridkot Vala Tika but etymology of ओ (Open Oora) has also been explained in his Mahan Kosh as ओ र में (abbreviation of ओह (Oh)). The open Oora (ओ) has been used as ओह ('Oh' meaning 'that') by Bhagat Naam Dev for the flute of Rama as follows:

धन धन ओ र में नानाते

The philosophy of the Guru is useful for everybody.

AGGS, M 1, p 221.

The word कार (Kaar Sewa) (means work performed for Gurdwaras without any monetary benefit) also indicates that Kaar is work, not निन्दित (unchangeable) as coined by Prof Sahib Singh. According to Bhai Kahn Singh it also means a 'line' based on this verse:

"देखूँ तवम निन्दित कार" (They draw line around them after plastering the ground with cow-dung (AGGS, M 1, p 472)).

If the meaning of कार (kaar) is taken as 'work' then it does not fit in the misconstrued interpretation as निन्दित, निम निन्दित उत्सवीक रचन अच्छे (The One that is unchanged) done by Prof Sahib Singh (19). 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 by graphically extended end of open Oora (ओ ) by Guru Nanak. I do not understand why some scholars intentionally try to interpret Gurbani under the influence of Vedic and Vedantic philosophies. By doing so they are undermining the lofty, scientific and logical philosophy of Guru Nanak.

Now it is the time to sum up the whole discussion about ओह as follows:

ओह is a unique logo coined by Guru Nanak by the combination of ॐ + ॐ + ॐ to represent GOD.

'ॐ' represents 'One and only' (Singularity).

'ॐ' represents ओह (Oh - That) meaning 'That' which has been added to represent 'ॐ'.

'ॐ' represents the infinity of That (ॐ) One (ॐ).

In ओह 'ॐ' stands for 'One and Only', 'ॐ' stands for 'Oh' ('That'), and 'ॐ' extended-end of (Open Oora) stands for 'Infinite'. Therefore, in Punjabi ओह
can be pronounced as ਸੈਕੀ ਅੰਕਾਰ (Ek Oh Beant) and in English ਅੰਕਾਰ can be pronounced as 'The One and Only, Oh (That), the Infinite'.

The above discussion clearly indicates that etymological study of Gurmani words is a great help to discover the proper meanings for right interpretation of Gurmani.

Observations about ਅੰਕਾਰ by other Researchers
I can imagine how difficult it is for some researchers to go against the well-established concept promulgated by the authorities in Sikhism, like Bhai Gurdas, the author of Faridkot Vala Tika and Prof Sahib Singh because of draconian sword of excommunication hanging on the heads of every Sikh scholar who would go against the well-established concepts.

It was Kalsi (9) who challenged that ਅੰਕਾਰ cannot be pronounced as ‘OM/AUM’ or ‘Ek Oankaar’ under any circumstances. He is of the opinion that to compare ਅੰਕਾਰ, an invaluable and unique gift, with ‘OM/AUM’ or ‘Ek Oankaar’, which is a Vedic Mantra, is injustice and disgrace to Gurmani and to do so is our ignorance. Although some friends may not agree for the time being they will accept this fact some day: “ ਅੰਕਾਰ ਦੋ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਤੇਰਾ ਵੀ ਦੇਖਣ ਲਈ ਮੇਂ ਸੀ, ਸੰਤ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਕੋਰ ਡੇਸ਼, ਸਕੁਰ ਮੁਗਡ ਦੀ ਵਾਹੀ ਸੇਟੀ ਅਮੀਲਿਕਾਂ ਅਨ੍ਹੈ ਵਹਾਨ ਸਮੂਹੂੰ ਰਾਹੁ ਦੇਸ਼ ਅਤਮਕੀ, ਸਕੁਰ ਸਕੁਰ ਵੀ ਫੀਸਕੀ, ਮੋਹਿਤਾਂ ਲੀ ਸੁਰਖਿਆ ਭਰੇ ਸਮੂਹੀ ਅਤਮਕੀਅਰਤੀ ਦਾ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਹੈ। ਵਰਤੀ ਮੇਂ ਮੇਂ ਸੀ ਕਾਲਿਗਾਰ ਨਵਾਬ ਤਨ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਸਚਾਈ ਕਹਿ ਕ੍ਰਮ ਅਮੀਲਿਕਾਂ (Reality) ਦੁਵ ਸਮੂਹੀ ਮੁਹੀਮਾਂ ਬਣਣੀ।

After lot of documentation he has suggested that ਅੰਕਾਰ should be pronounce as ‘Ek Oankaar’: ਅੰਕਾਰ ਦੋ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਤੇਰਾ ਵੀ ਦੇਖਣ ਲਈ ਮੇਂ ਸੀ ‘ਕਵਿਤਾਵਾਦੀ ਨਾਹੀ!’

He presented his book (9) to me when I visited him in 1997. After critical analysis of his argument I appreciated that he was the first to challenge that ਅੰਕਾਰ is not “Ek Oankaar” he was pronouncing only ‘One’ in the ਅੰਕਾਰ by extending the sound of ੰ (One) “Ek Oano...”. However, I suggested him that we need to explain the meanings of all the parts of ਅੰਕਾਰ i.e. ‘one’ (ੰ) ‘Open Oora’ (ੰ) and its extended end (ੰ).

Sandhu reported that (11): “According to Dr Ahluwalia atomization of integral concepts is another aspect of the methodology crisis under analysis; this is also the hangover of Vedantic approach... Ik is separated off from Oankaar; the latter is further divided into O(a)n and Akaar. O(a)n is equated with Vedantic Om, and hence deemed as the composed of three elementary sounds – A U M – each symbolizing a distinct aspect of the Hindu trinity.”

Sandhu further reported about the study of ਅੰਕਾਰ as follows: “(b) – IKOoh or IK Oankaar: for the first time, Nirmal Singh Kalsi revised the interpretation of word and symbol, ਅੰਕਾਰ as IKOoo-infinite, in place of Ik Oankaar; that has become most popular after Sahib Singh used it for about half a century. However, Kalsi suggested that ‘the Kaar leads to the sound and knowledge of ‘ੰ’ into endlessness, meaning infinity’. This is a corollary of the proverbial sound, attributed to AUM as the creator of the Universe in Hinduism. This proposal of Kalsi that the ‘sound of IKOoo goes to infinity’, creates a dilemma for those who are not ready to accept the concept of Om or AUM of Hindu religion.”

Sandhu further writes: “Dr Chahal (2) suggested an improvement over the suggestions of Kalsi by proposing that ਅੰਕਾਰ should be pronounced as IKOH-oo in which oo stands for infinite. Thus according to Chahal it should be written as ‘One and Only’.”

Later on it was Inder Singh (14) who recognized that the logo ਅੰਕਾਰ is not based on the Vedantic philosophy of OM. He says that it is matter of great concern that today’s scholars well-conversant with more than four or five languages that Guru Granth Sahib re-interprets the tradition of Oneness of OM through Ikoankaar. He accepts that it is not correct interpretation but is distortion and is absolutely incorrect and misleading. He continues to emphasize that ‘prima facie’ it looks like a well-designed philosophical approach to misguide the readers. ਅੰਕਾਰ (Ekoankaar) has not emerged from the word OM of Sanskrit. OM is Trinity of God – Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva) whereas ਅੰਕਾਰ has a prefix of 1 to ਅੰਕਾਰ which means creator God is One and Only one which does not come into counting.

The irony is that in spite of accepting that ਅੰਕਾਰ has not emerged from OM Inder Singh still falls back to Vedantic philosophy by declaring that ‘One’ has been prefixed before ‘Oankaar’, without understanding that ‘Oankaar’ is OM according to Upanishads. He further confirms that the genuine pronunciation sabad ਅੰਕਾਰ is ‘Ekoankaar’.
It looks like that although Kalsi, Sandhu and Inder Singh are ready to accept that ਤੂਂ is not Oankaar but Inder Singh still has a strong attachment to Oankaar in the back of his mind. It indicates that ਤੂਂ as Oankaar is stuck deep in the minds of Sikh theologians and it is a long way to convince them that ਤੂਂ has no relationship with Oankaar, which represents OM (AUM) the Trinity of God. And Trinity of God is not accepted by Guru Nanak.

CONCLUSIONS
The application of Science and logic; and etymological study of Gurbani words reveal interpretation which is quite different than that of the conventional interpretations which is mostly either literal or interpreted under the influences of Vedic and Vedantic philosophies. The right pronunciation and interpretation of the logo, ਤੂਂ, is as ਤੂਂ ਇੱਕੇਦ੍ਰਿਆ (Ek Oh Beant) in Punjabi and “One and Only That Infinite” in English. ਤੂਂ is the Energy in a state of ‘ONE’ (Singularity) which burst as a BIG BANG to become the Universe as explained by the following phrase of Guru Nanak: ਕੀਨਾ ਪਸੁੰਦੇੱਖੇ ਬੰਧੂ! || ਤੋਂ ਉੱਦੇ ਸਵੀਖਰੇਦੀਤੇ! || (Kīnā pāsundē ēkhē bandhū! || Toōṁ ēūdē swīkheēdīttē! ||)
The Universe exploded from one source of energy2 (Singularity) and started to expand1. Thereafter many things3 appeared.
To achieve such an interpretation was only possible through the etymological study that the word ਬੰਧੂ (Kawao) comes from ਬੰਧ (Kawa), which means ‘Energy’.
If the etymological meanings of words, ਸਞੱਖ਼ (Sanjog) and ਵਿਜੋਗ (Vijog) are taken as ‘Fusion’ and ‘Fission’, respectively only then interpretation of some phrase came out to be representing the theme as close to that meant to be explained by the Gurus.

In nutshell application of Science, logic and etymology proved to be a great asset in interpreting Gurbani close to its real theme. Although it may not be perfect one still it forms some bases to work on these lines to achieve best interpretation.

It may be very hard to accept such interpretations by many theologians and research scholars on one or other pretext. However, the application of Science, logic and etymological analysis of meanings of Gurbani words and application of the right meanings keeping in view the context in which these have been used will definite yield right interpretation of Gurbani.
21. Thind KS. In www.srigranth.org