ORIGINALITY AND UNIQUENESS OF BANI OF GURU NANAK*

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD
Institute for Understanding Sikhism
Laval, Quebec, H7W 5L9
Email: sikhism@iuscanada.com

INTRODUCTION
The bani (Words) of Guru Nanak is original since it proceeded independently of any other bani. It is unique since there is no like or equal and is unparalleled and incomparable with any other bani. The word ‘bani’ is used as singular as well as plural in this article. Guru Nanak himself discovered during his dialogue with various religious leaders and while preaching to the gathering that his bani was not easily understood by those leaders and the public. It is evident from his bani as follows:

ਫਾਣੀ ਬਫਰਲਉ ਫੀਚਾਰਸੀ ਜ੃ ਕ੅ ਹ੅ਇ ॥

ਇਹ ਫਾਣੀ ਭਹਾ ਩ੁਰਿ ਕੀ ਬਨਜ ਘਬਰ ਵਾਸਾ ਹ੅ਇ ॥

40 ॥

Baṇī birla▫o bīcẖārsī je ko gurmukẖ ho▫e.
Ih baṇī mahā purakh ki nij gẖar vāsā ho▫e. ||40||
AGGS, M 1, p 935 (Oankaar Bani)

Only rare persons, who are Guru-oriented, contemplate the Word (bani/sabd). This Word (bani/sabd) is of the pre-eminent preceptor, which is imbibed only in particular/special receptive minds.

In this article some of the bani of Guru Nanak which is original and unique are discussed. It is also indicated that how the originality and uniqueness of his bani has been interpolated, misinterpreted and misrepresented after Guru Nanak (after 1539).

DISCUSSION
SIKHI
My study of the bani of Guru Nanak, incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS), clearly indicates that the philosophy embodied in his bani includes all the characteristics of originality and uniqueness. The irony is that very little work has been done by the Sikh and non-Sikh scholars, Sikh philosophers or Sikh scientists to portray the philosophy embodied in the bani Of Guru Nanak in its real perspective. Instead they remained busy in interpreting Sikhi founded by Guru Nanak into an institutionalized religion, Sikhism, like others but with their own set of beliefs. Nevertheless, Guru Nanak has defined ‘Sikhi’ in one phrase, which has been interpreted by author as follows:

ਸਿੰਧੀ ਸਿੰਧੀਆਂ ਗੁਰ ਵਿਚਹਰ।
Sikẖī sikẖi▫ā gur vīcẖār.
Sikhi is that teachings which is based on the enlightening philosophy.
AGGS, M 1, p 465.

ABSTRACT
This article was first published in The Sikh Review, a special issue of December, 2019 dedicated to the 550th Birthday of Guru Nanak. It is being reproduced here for wider publicity. It discusses briefly that the bani (Words) of Guru Nanak is original since it proceeded independently of any other bani. It is unique since there is no like or equal and is unparalleled and incomparable with any other bani. It discusses the originality and uniqueness of SIKHI (philosophy), founded by Guru Nanak, a definition of a SIKH and the description of ਸਿੰਧੀ, the Logo, of the Eternal Entity in brief.

This type of Sikhi has not been disseminated by the followers of Guru Nanak. It is evident in old and current translations of the bani of Guru Nanak.

**Mish (Sikh)**

Mish (Sikh) has been defined by Guru Nanak as follows:

Aabhudh(2) hi(9) bhagat(1) bhag(1) nanak(1) are moved(6) di(13) meaning(1) Gurdas has pronounced it as such. It is not known who first started to pronounce it as such. It is not evident from his Paudi 15 of Vaar 3. Thereafter, other Sikh scholars followed Bhai Gurdas' pronunciation of it.

However, after Guru Nanak the Mish (Sikh) has been defined differently by Guru Ramdas and a number of rituals were assigned to be performed as follows:  

Gurup Mishna tob na mish apashe m ukshane.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commencing Verse in English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The above enlightening philosophy/teachings are like gems and jewels and the one who can research/discover is a Sikh and also practises it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AGGS, M 1, p 1328.

I would include all freethinkers, scientists and the students of sciences as ‘Sikh’, defined above. However, their number maybe a few millions in the world. The Mish (Sikh) defined by Guru Nanak is quite different than that of ‘Sikh’ in Sanskrit, which means, ‘Shish’ (disciple/follower/student) and that is also being defined differently by the custodians of Sikh.

However, after Guru Nanak the Mish (Sikh) has been defined differently by Guru Ramdas and a number of rituals were assigned to be performed as follows:  

Gurup Mishna tob na mish apashe m ukshane.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The above enlightening philosophy/teachings are like gems and jewels and the one who can research/discover is a Sikh and also practises it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The one who calls himself a Sikh of the Great True Guru should rise early and meditate on God's Name. He should make efforts early in the morning, take a bath, and have ablution in the tank of nectar. Afterwards, at sunrise he sings gurbani, and whilst sitting or standing, he meditates on God’s Name. The Guru's disciple, who with every breath and morsel contemplates over my Lord God, becomes pleasing to the Guru's mind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AGGS, M 4, p 305.
ਓ (Open Oora) with extended end, 
ਓਅ (Aum), and 
ਓ ਕਾਰੁ (Oankaar).

Prof Sahib Singh [2] (pp 44-46, Vol. 1) also followed Faridkot Vala Teeka that Open Oora (ਓ) in ਇਕੁ is Om (Aum) and further explains ਇਕੁ as ਇਕ + ਓ or ਇਕੁ + ਓ (Aum or Om) + ਕਾਰ.

Consequently, the whole Sikh world is pronouncing ਇਕੁ as 'Ek Oankar' ignoring the fact that 'Oankar' means 'OM' or 'Omkaar' according to Upanishad. Therefore, pronouncing ਇਕੁ as 'Ek Oankar' was the first step that lead the Sikh scholars to interpret bani under the influence of Vedic and Vedanta philosophy and Sikh founded by Guru Nanak started losing its originality and uniqueness.

WHAT DOES ਇਕੁ STAND FOR?

A casual look at the ਇਕੁ indicates that it is composed of three parts:
1. The numeral One (1),
2. The first letter of Gurmukhi script, ਓ (Oora), and
3. The Open end of ਓ (Oora) has been extended as ( )

The numeral ‘1’ (One) should be pronounced as 'Ek' and the letter ਓ (Oora) with open end as 'O' (That). Because the letter ਓ (Open Oora) means ਓ (0) in Punjabi-English Dictionary and in Mohan Kosh of Bhai Kahn Singh the letter ਓ (Open Oora) means ਓ (Oh). Here the meaning of ਓ (Open Oora) has been accepted as ‘Oh’ in Punjabi and ‘That’ in English. ‘The open end of ਓ (Open Oora) has been further extended ( ) to characterize it as ਫ੃ਅ ਤ (Beant - Infinite) or ਅਨ ਤ (Anant – Infinite). Therefore, ਇਕੁ is pronounced as: ਇਕੁ ਫ੃ਅ ਤ (Ek O Beant) in Punjabi.

One and Only, Oh (That) is Infinite in English.

Is ‘1’ (Ek – One) in ਇਕੁ ‘Singularity’?
The ‘One’ in ਇਕੁ is not a numerical ‘one’ but a Physical Singularity. Therefore, it will not be out of place to call the ‘1’ (Ek – One) in ਇਕੁ as ‘Singularity’, from which the Universe originated after Big Bang. The ਇਕੁ is represented by Guru Nanak in the form of a logo as follows:

ਇਕੁ = 1 + ਓ + 
ਇਕੁ = Singularity + That + Infinite.

Could we now infer from the above dismantled ਇਕੁ that the ‘One’ (‘Singularity’ = energy-matter and space-time concentrated in one small point) is ‘That’ (Eternal Entity) (Nirgun state), which is ‘Infinite’ from which the whole Universe (Sargun State) appeared after the Big Bang. The detailed explanation is found in Chahal’s eBook, JAP: The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy. [3]

REFERENCES