

# IK OH BEANT TO IK OM KAAR

< TO ੴ

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## ABSTRACT

*Nanakian Philosophy is being misinterpreted under the influence of ancient philosophy and mythology since a long. Now this process has been changed to undermine it. It has reached at its highest level to declare that there is nothing new in the Nanakian Philosophy but it is a philosophy barrowed from Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas. Recently the original and unique logo, < ੴ, to represent Transcendent (Abstruse / Abstract) Entity designed by Guru Nanak, has been misconstrued to ੴ*

## INTRODUCTION

**G**uru Nanak (1469-1539) laid the foundation of *Sikhi* during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Period of Renaissance (between 14<sup>th</sup> century and 17<sup>th</sup> century) when the scientists were challenging some of the concepts of the church in Europe. During this period Guru Nanak was busy in challenging the ancient mythology and rituals in which the peoples of South Asia were shackled for centuries and were unable to express their free will in any aspect of their lives because their lives were controlled by their religious mentors. Consequently, Guru Nanak gave a unique philosophy that is scientifically and logically very sound having universal acceptability. His philosophy is called *Nanakian Philosophy* [4]. It was preached and enriched by the nine succeeding Gurus to the **House of Nanak (Nanakian School)**. The follower of his philosophy is known as a '*Sikh*' and the philosophy is called as '*Sikhi*' in Punjabi. The word '*Sikhi*' (*Gurmat*) gave rise to the modern anglicized word '*Sikhism*' for the modern world.

Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak was for the benefit of the whole mankind. However, some scholars knowingly or unknowingly have presented it in such a way that it remained confined to the Sikhs only. It took about 239 years for Guru Nanak and next nine Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, to liberate the mankind from the shackles of Brahmanism and other systems based on mythology and superstitions. In these days some publications are appearing which are putting the Sikhs back into the shackles of mythology and superstitions and also bringing Sikhism into the fold of Hinduism.

Critical analysis of literature suggests that there have been consistent efforts by *Biprans* (Persons, who are

against the Nanakian Philosophy) through "*Janam Sakhis*" (biographies of Sikh Gurus) and other publications to equate Sikhism to Hinduism. This is attributable to those followers who could not understand Nanakian Philosophy (*Bani*) in its real perspective. Probably they could not clear their minds from the then prevailing mythology and superstitions. Guru Nanak himself noted this fact as he has pointed out in his following verse:

ਬਿਖਿ ਭਰਿ ਅਭਿਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਿ ਜਯੋਗਿਮਿਕ ਹੀਏ ]  
ਇਹ ਬਿਖਿ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਿਕ ਕੀ ਜਿ ਗਿਰਿ ਵਸਿ ਹੀਏ ]

AGGS, M 1, P 935

*"Only rare Guru-oriented will deliberate/contemplate on the Bani (Word).*

*This Bani (Word) is of the pre-eminent preceptor, that is to be imbibed in one's own mind (only through its deliberation)."*

Then Guru Amardas again pointed out the same message of Guru Nanak as follows:

ਸਚਿ<sup>1</sup> ਸਭਦਿ<sup>2</sup> ਸਚਿ ਹਿ<sup>3</sup> ਬਿਖਿ<sup>3</sup> ]  
ਗਿਮਿਕ<sup>4</sup> ਭਰਿ ਯਿਕਿ<sup>5</sup> ਪਿਕਿ<sup>6</sup> ]

ਸਚਿ<sup>5</sup> ਸਭਦਿ<sup>7</sup> ਰਯਿ<sup>7</sup> ਬਿਗਿ<sup>7</sup>  
ਅਿਖਿ<sup>8</sup> ਜਿ ਯਿ<sup>9</sup> ਰਿਹਿ<sup>10</sup> ਹਿ ]

AGGS, M 3, P 1044.

*"The Guru's philosophy<sup>2,3</sup> (word<sup>2</sup>, Bani<sup>3</sup>) is the truth<sup>1</sup> (that will exist for ever<sup>1</sup>).*

*(However, the fact is that)*

*Only a few followers<sup>4</sup> have comprehended that.*

*Those who integrate<sup>7</sup> themselves with the Guru's philosophy<sup>5</sup> get the salvation<sup>8,9,10</sup>."*

The above observations of the Gurus were so correct then and even now when we survey recent publications on Sikhism. If this trend continued Nanakian Philosophy would lose its originality, Sikhism will lose its identity as a universal religion, and the Sikhs will also lose their distinct nationality. More and more publications and interpretations of Gurbani are being presented in such a way that the day is not far off when it would be difficult to distinguish Sikhism from Hinduism. Such preachments and interpretations of Gurbani with emphasis on illogical code of conduct being taught in Gurdwaras are bringing the Sikhs closer to Hinduism. Such preachers and writers have failed to represent Nanakian Philosophy in its real perspective to the Sikh youngsters of the Science Age.

### UNDERMINING THE ORIGINALITY AND UNIQUENESS OF NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY

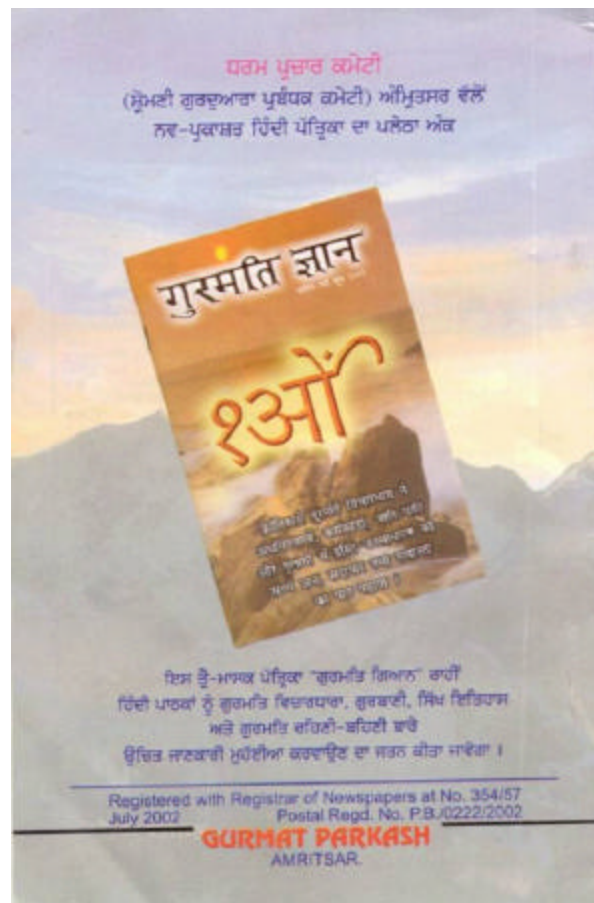
The first straightforward statement of Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji, President, Sahitya Akademi to undermine the originality and to belittle Nanakian Philosophy is found in the "Foreword" to the book, *Guru Nanak: Founder of Sikhism*, written by Dr Trilochan Singh and published by Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi [20]. It was written on the eve of celebration of the Fifth Centenary of Birthday of Guru Nanak. His denigrating statement is as follows:

*"The people of the Punjab (and along with them those of the rest of India) became immediately conscious of the value of Guru Nanak's advent and his teachings after he began to preach to them; and Guru Nanak built up and organised during his life time a very important religious persuasion which was broad-based on the foundations of Vedatic Monotheistic Jnana and Puranic Bhakti. The faith preached by Guru Nanak was nothing new for India, it was basically the old monotheistic creed of the ancient Hindus as propounded in the Vedas and the Upanishads - the Vedanta with its insistence upon Jnana or Knowledge of the One Supreme Reality. And this monotheistic basis was fortified, so to say, to put the matter in a simple form by Bhakti or faith as inculcated in later Puranic Hinduism. The Sikh Panth was nothing but a reformed and simplified Sanatana Dharma of medieval times."*

The irony is that Dr Trilochan Singh and Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi accepted the above statement. I have not come across any writing in which anybody has ever raised any objection to this statement so far. Most probably being encouraged by the tolerance of the above statement Dr Harjot Obroi [11] tried to present Sikhism as nothing but a Santana Dharama in his book, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*. Enough has already been written to refute his assertions in a book, *Invasion of Religious Boundaries* [9].

### MISCONSTRUING OF < TO ੴ

Recently it has come to my notice that the Dharam Parchar Committee of Shrimoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar has published the first issue (July 2002) of *Gurmat Gian* in Hindi for Hindi-speaking people. The title page represent IK OM with an extra extending line on OM as is found in the *Oora* of < , commonly called as *EK OANKAAR*.



Now the *Dharam Parchar Committee* has withdrawn this title. It has been replaced with original logo, < .

I could never imagine that the Dharam Parchar Committee of the SGPC will go to such an extent to undermine the originality of Nanakian Philosophy since they have accepted the title of *Gurmat Gian* showing misconstruing of < , which was especially designed by Guru Nanak as a unique logo of its own kind not found anywhere else to represent the Transcendent (Abstruse/Abstract) Entity (commonly called God). It represents the true attribute of God in Guru Nanak's concept. The concept of God in Nanakian philosophy is entirely different than that of others [3]. The Dharam Parchar Committee has done a greatest damage to the

originality and uniqueness of < by construing it into ॐ based on philosophy of Vedas and Upanishads.

Recently, Mr Kirpal Singh Badungar, President of the SGPC, has composed a new Dharam Parchar Committee, which is supposed to consist of highly educated members expert in Gurbani. Mr Badungar has assigned them a duty to look into blasphemous work in publications on Sikhism written by various authors. The first task of this committee should have been that it should had checked the misconstruing of < into 'Ik Om Kaar' on the title page of their new publication, *Gurmat Gian*, in Hindi before looking into the blasphemous work in publications of other writers.

### NAMING THE GOD

In some religions God is incarnated in human form with different names at different times and most of the times the incarnated god has a wife or a consort. Guru Nanak rejects the incarnation of the God into human form from time to time as accepted in Hinduism and some other religions. A number of names have been assigned to God in Hinduism, e.g., Ram, Krishan, Gobind, Thakar, Gosain, Jagjivan, etc.

After the advent of Islam another new name 'Allah' was assigned to the God. It has been mentioned in the Nanakian Philosophy as follows:

Awid prK kauAl hukhIAI sKw Awel vwrI ]

AGGS, M 1, P 1191.

"The Primal One is called Allah now since it is the turn of Sheikhs (Islam)."

In Nanakian Philosophy Allah and other names of God in Hinduism, have been used extensively in describing some characteristics of the God but it does not mean that Guru Nanak accept these names as the real names of God. Such names have been used as symbolic names for God. In fact in Nanakian Philosophy no descriptive or specific name (ikrqm nwm) has been assigned to the God because of Its Ineffability.

### WHAT IS < ?

The < is found in the beginning of the Commencing Verse of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1], which is commonly called as *Mool Mantar* by the Sikhs at large and by almost all the Sikh scholars under the Vedic system. The irony is that no such title was assigned either by Guru Nanak when it was composed or by Guru Arjan at the time of compilation of the AGGS. The Commencing Verse of the AGGS is as follows:

< 1  
siq nmmukrqw prKuInrBau  
inrvYuAkwl mltiq Aj hl sBm<sup>2</sup>  
gr pBuid<sup>3</sup> ]

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

1. The first part is < .
2. The second part is from siq to sBm.
3. gr pBuid as the third part.

In fact all the three parts make one unite of the Commencing Verse.

Complete interpretation of the Commencing Verse is given somewhere else [2], here interpretation of the first part, < is discussed.

< is generally pronounced by many theologians and scholars as *ekw EAlkuru (Ik Oankaar) or ekkuru (Ikankaar)*. The survey of the available literature indicates that this pronunciation might have been coined by the early Sikh scholars under the heavy influence of ancient philosophy because writing of 'Oankaar' or 'Om' before every writing was very common in the ancient literature [18].

The study conducted by Dr Joginder Singh [14] indicated that almost all early interpretations of *Jap* (Sodhi Meharban, Swami Aanad Ghan, Santokh Singh, Pandit Tara Singh, and many more) are dominated by Vedic and Puranic philosophy. Even some modern scholars like Dr Sahib Singh [18], Principal Harbhajan Singh [17], and Bhai Jodh Singh [in Ref. 14] are not free from the influence of Vedic and Puranic philosophy.

Since the word 'Oankaar' ('Om') was common in the ancient philosophy, thus these Sikh theologians erroneously started to pronounce < first as *Ik Oankaar (Ik + Oankaar)* then as *Ik Omkaar (Ik + Om + Kaar)*. Now it has become an established fact that < is *Ik Omkaar (Ik + Om + Kaar)* Recently it has been re-confirmed so by Sandhu [13]. He says that this confirmation has been written as inspired by Swami Swaroopanada's write-up, "*Shri Guru Nanak's IK ONKAAR – meditation on the One Indivisible Truth*", a 60-page booklet published by Central Chinnaya Mission Trust. It is evident from Sandhu's article that this misconstrued form (IK OM KAAR) has already become an established fact in Hindu writings.

Now it was easy for the Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC to misconstrue open *Oora* with an extended end to OM by attaching an extending line as shown in the picture

where logo < has been misconstrued into new logo with OM. This is a criminal act to change somebody's logo whether it belongs to an ordinary person or to a Great Guru, Nanak.

**Causes of Misinterpretation**

This misinterpretation happened because the words *Oankaar*, *Ikankaar* or *Omkaar* are found in a long Bani of Guru Nanak called *EAKKIRU* (*Oankaar*) Bani (AGGS, M1, Pp 929-938). These words have not been properly understood by these scholars. The fact is that there are 54 verses in this Bani. The word *Oankaar* has been used as a *ikrqm nwm* (descriptive name) of God only in the first verse. *EAKKIRU* (*Oankaar*) means the 'Creator'. Similarly, the word *Ikankaar* has been used in the same sense as a descriptive name meaning the 'Creator is One'. Since the attribute of 'Creator' has already been used as '*krqy prkhu* (*Karta Purkh*)' in the second part of the Commencing Verse, therefore, its interpretation as 'Creator' in the first part is not very logical. It means this attribute must be different than that of 'Creator' because the same attribute 'Creator' cannot be repeated two times in the same description of God.

Pronunciation of < as *ekhu* *EAKKIRU* or *ekkkiru* (*Ik Oankaar* or *Ikankaar*) cannot be justified based on the fact that a Bani at pages 929-938 in AGGS is entitled as *EAKKIRU* (*Oankaar*). If Guru Nanak can use *EAKKIRU* in this Bani then he would have used it also in the Commencing Verse. Kalsi [7] has also pointed out that if open 'Oora' in < is *EAKKIRU* then in the rest of the Bani open 'Oora with extended end should have been used in place of *EAKKIRU*. But it is not so. Therefore, < cannot be pronounced as *ekhu* *EAKKIRU* or *ekkkiru* (*Ik Oankaar* or *Ikankaar*) under any circumstances. *EAKKIRU* has been used as one of the many descriptive names as a metaphor for God only in the first verse of this long Bani. In the next 53 verses of the same Bani other descriptive names, e.g. *krqy krqwir*, *Enm*, *nwm*, *hir*, *Tukru* etc. have been used as metaphors of God. However, in the *Rahaoo* (Pause) of the same Bani Guru Nanak has condemned the use of descriptive names and this fact has been ignored by all the scholars in declaring the pronunciation of < as *IK OM KAAR*:

*six prfyika w il Khuj jil w ]*  
*il Kl nwm nwm<sup>2</sup> girmik<sup>3</sup> gpw w<sup>4</sup> ] rhwau ]*

AGGS, M 1, P 930.

(Note:1. Metaphor for understanding; 2,4. Metaphors for God; 3. One who follows the Guru's philosophy)

*"Hey! Pundit listen: What is in writing the ritualistic confused word (Om, Oankar or Omkar)? Oh Gurmukh! <sup>3</sup> Understand<sup>1</sup>/comprehend<sup>1</sup> the God <sup>2, 4</sup>."*

Note: *Ram Naam*: what is known as Ram (specific name assigned to God in Hinduism has been used as a metaphor), in fact, is just a Naam (meaning without any specific name, like Ram).

It is important to note that whenever '**Ik Oankar**' or '**Ikankar**' has been used in the Gurbani (AGGS pp: 916, 929,930, 1003, 1061, 1310) it represents metaphoric name of God, but it does not represent an abbreviation or the pronunciation of < .

In fact, Guru Nanak has not coined any *ikrqm nwm* (descriptive name) for the God because according to him the God is ineffable, thus, no descriptive name can be assigned to the God. Therefore, Guru Nanak in some verses has also used non-descriptive names, for example, *Ehu Awip*, *Awpy ekhu qh qu qhl*, *Agm*, *byAtu* etc. At many places Guru Nanak even did not use non-descriptive name. For example, in: *Awid scu j gwid scu ] h'Bl scu nink hsl Bl scu ]* (The second verse on the first page of the AGGS.) There is neither descriptive nor non-descriptive name; even it is without any indication to whom it is being addressed.

Guru Arjan has emphatically condemned the use of *ikrqm<sup>1</sup> nwm* (descriptive Names) for the Almighty:

*ikrqm<sup>1</sup> nwm<sup>2</sup> kQ<sup>3</sup> qry ij hbw<sup>4</sup> ]*  
*siq<sup>5</sup> nwmqru prw<sup>6</sup> pl'bl w<sup>7</sup> ]*

AGGS, M 5, P 1083.

*"Your tongue<sup>4</sup> recite<sup>3</sup> the descriptive names<sup>1</sup> of That (the God). (In fact the God is without any descriptive name) That existed<sup>5</sup> even before<sup>6</sup> the beginning of the time and space<sup>7</sup>."*

It is clear from the above verse that Guru Nanak is not in favor of giving any descriptive or specific name to the Almighty. According to him it is of no avail to write any descriptive name like 'Oankar' or 'Om' before any writing. The most important thing is to understand/comprehend the God. Thus, under no circumstances < could be considered as an abbreviation of '**Ik Oankaar**' or '**Ikankaar**' or '**Ik Om Kaar**', therefore, it should never be pronounced as '**Ik Oankaar**' or '**Ikankaar**' or '**Ik Om Kaar**'. In fact, it is a new logo (word, thought), < , i. e. '**One**' + '**Oora**' with an open end and that is **extended**, coined by Guru Nanak to explain the '**Oneness**' and '**Infiniteness**' of the '**Oh**', the God, to whom no descriptive or specific name can be assigned.

I may mention here that Oosho [12] described < as follows:

*"..nwmk kihlly hn ais iek du j o nwal h'ahl < h' hr swry nwm qu Awdml dy idqy hn [ nwm kh0 k'En kh0 Al wh kh0 ieh nwm Awdml dy idqy hn [ ieh Asll bxwey hru*

ਸਿਕ੍ਰਕ ਹਨ [ ਪ੍ਰਿ ਏਕ ਅਠ ਦਿ ਨਿਅੰਤਿ ਹਿੰ ਯ ਹਵਿ ਅਸਿ ਨਿਨਿ ਡਿਕ੍ਰ  
ਅੰ < ਹਿੰ ਅੰ ਏਮ ਹਿੰ ]"

"... Nanak says that the name of that One is < , all other names are given by man, whether one says Ram, Krishan or Allah, are the names given by man. These are descriptive (reference) (iKrqm) names. But there is one name that has not been given by man, that is < , that is Om."

In spite of the above fact explained by him, Oosho fell back to Vedic philosophy and at the end of the statement he declared that: < is 'Em' (Om). 'Om' is a descriptive name as the sum of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, reported by many Sikh scholars [14, 15, 17, 18, 19].

### Misinterpretation of Extended End of Oora

The irony is that the extended end of 'Oora' has been misinterpreted as ਕ੍ਰ (kaar) by Dr Sahib Singh [18] and by Parma Nand [10]. This misinterpretation of extended end of 'Oora' lead to the pronunciation of 'Oankaar' or 'Omkaar'. According to Dr Sahib Singh [18] 'kaar' is a suffix of some Sanskrit words and it means iek - rs, ij s ivc qbdll l nñh Añvy (The One that is unchangeable). Then he quotes some words with 'Kaar' as suffix from *Gurbani*, for example, ਨਿਕ੍ਰ (means to refuse), inriqਕ੍ਰ (means dancer, who dances), and ਡਿਨ੍ਰ (means musician who make the tune, melody), to indicate that 'kaar' means iek - rs.

In fact, these words do not convey any sense of iek - rs (unchangeable) because 'kaar' means 'work' or 'line'. Contrary to Dr Sahib Singh's [18] meanings, 'kaar' in Punjabi Dictionary (6) means 'work' and also according to Bhai Kahn Singh [15] 'kaar' means 'work': ਕ੍ਰ ਕ੍ਰਿਵਿਹਿ ਡਿਲਿ ਡਿਲਿ ਪ੍ਰਿਪ੍ਰਿਏ ] *Work for (serve) the Almighty and get the benefit.* (AGGS, M 1, P 936). Even Prof Sahib Singh himself [18] has shown 'ਕ੍ਰ' means 'work/service': ਮ੍ਰਿਏਅੰ ਦ੍ਰਿਨਿ ਡਿਗ੍ਰਿ ਕ੍ਰਿ ਕ੍ਰਿਵਿ] *Servant money (maya) does service for Bhagats.* ( AGGS. M 3, P 231); and 'ਕ੍ਰਿ' means 'useful' as in: ਗ੍ਰਿ ਕ੍ਰਿ ਮਿਕ੍ਰਿ ਜਿ ਲਿਏ ਅੰਏਲਿ ਕ੍ਰਿ ] *Guru's philosophy become useful for mind.* (AGGS, M 1, P 220). The word ਕ੍ਰਿ ਸ੍ਰਿ (Kaar Sewa) (means work performed for Gurdwaras without any monetary benefit) also indicates that Kaar is work not iek - rs (unchangeable) as coined by Dr Sahib Singh [18]. According to Bhai Kahn Singh [15] it also means a 'line' based on the verse: "ਦ੍ਰਿਕ੍ਰਿ ਚਾਕ੍ਰਿ ਕ੍ਰਿ ਕ੍ਰਿ" in *Asa Raag*.

If the meaning of 'kaar' is taken as 'work' then it does not fit in the interpretation of Dr Sahib Singh [18]. Beside this, 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 'Oora' shown graphically by Guru Nanak.

### Undermining the Originality of <

Finally, Dr Sahib Singh [18] explains < as iek + E or EAllor Eñ (Oam or Om) + ਕ੍ਰ and pronounces < as 'ੇਕ੍ਰਿ' or 'ੇਕ੍ਰਿ 'EAllਕ੍ਰਿ or ੇਕ੍ਰਿ ਅਨ੍ਕ੍ਰਿ. Then he interprets it as: ਜੋ ਏਕ-ਰਸ ਹਿੰ ਜੋ ਹਰਿ ਠਿ ਏਵਾਯਕ ਹਿੰ (One, Unchangeable, is prevalent everywhere.)

His interpretation clearly takes us back into the ancient philosophy that < originated from 'Oankar' then became 'Omkaar', and finally became 'Om' + 'Kaar', which are ancient descriptive or specific names for God. However, this interpretation is contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy since 'Om' represents Trinity. And Guru Nanak does not accept the Trinity of the God, i. e., Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (AGGS, Jap 30, P 7). It appears that most of the Sikh scholars including Bhai Kahn Singh [15], Dr Sahib Singh [18], Dr Sher Singh [19], etc. are under the strong influence of ancient philosophy and mythology as they put aside the logic while equating < with 'Om', the sum of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva

Although Dr Sher Singh [19] accepted that Guru Nanak did not believe in the philosophy of Vedas, nevertheless, he still compared < with that of ਅੰਠਿ(Om) that it is composed of a, A, m representing Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, respectively. He said that Guru Nanak added numeral '1' before 'Om' to confirm that Brahma is One. It is hard to understand the philosophy of Dr Sher Singh that how < is composed of a, A, m and how can these letters stand for Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, respectively? Parma Nand [10] also says that 'Om' is a compound word of letter 'A' (*Vaishvanara*), 'U' (*Taijasa*), and 'M' (*Prajna*) in Upanishads and are identified as Vishnu, Brahma, and Mahesh, respectively.

Strangely to all the above descriptions of < , Pritam Singh [16] describes the open 'Oora' with extended end to the normal propensity of calligraphist to be more ornamented with opening letters but not to any doctrinal or mystical importance. This statement of Pritam Singh [16] brings Nanakian Philosophy down to the lowest level.

### < Not a New Word But Barrowed from Upanishads

Parma Nand [10] goes a step further from Pritam Singh's [16] statement to undermine originality in the philosophy of Guru Nanak by declaring that < is not a new word coined by Guru Nanak but he borrowed it from Upanishads because 'Oankaar' or 'Omakar' 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.

Parma Nand [10] has also tried to portrayed 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 if repeated again and again under certain condition forces the deities to perform miraculous work to fulfil the desires of the performers (devotees).

According to Parma Nand [10] '*Ik Oamkaar*' (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 the sound of 'Om' since '*kaar*' means 'work' as discussed earlier. Moreover, if 'Om' is a descriptive name of God, then it is against the philosophy of Guru Nanak because he has not assigned any descriptive name to the Almighty (God). Although in his Bani Guru Nanak has used Ram, Gobind, Gopal, Har(i), Raghunath, Allah, Rahim, etc. as the metaphoric names for God, it does not mean that he accepts these names as the real names for God. Although the words '*Ik Oankaar*' or '*Ikankaar*' are descriptive names for the God that have been used in the Gurbani by Guru Nanak, it does not support in any sense that open '*Oora*' with extended end can be pronounced as '*Ik Oankaar*' or '*Ikankaar*' or '*Ik Omkaar*'.

Teja Singh (from Ref. # 10) says that 'EAM was already being used and Guru Nanak added '*kaar*' and a new word, 'EAKar' was coined. However, Parma Nand [10] refuted this claim of Teja Singh saying that 'EAKar' was already used in various Upanishads; therefore, 'EAKar' was not created or introduced during the time of the Sikh Gurus.

### Om is a Compound Word

Bhai Vir Singh [from Ref. # 16] considers numeral '1' as an independent entity, not as adjective for 'Open Oora'. Pritam Singh [16] emphasizes that in spite of unmistakable figure 1 which proceeds '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 of a, u, and m. Bawa Hari Prakash [from ref. # 16] explains that: *akar* (a), *ukar* (u) and *makar* (m), with half *mantra* added to them, make *Oankar*. *Akar* (a) means Brhma (the Creator), *ukar* (u) stands for Vishnu (the Sustainer) and *makar* (m) represents Shiva (the Destroyer), while the half *matra* is to be understood as the Fourth State.

### Natural Pronunciation (Pronounced as Written)

I have been working with many scholars on the pronunciation of < and interpretation of the Commencing Verse since a long. It was Dr Parminder Singh Chahal (personal discussion) who gave very simple and convincing logic that < is composed of two parts, i.e. numeral '1' and the first letter of Gurmukhi alphabet, E, with an open end. The numeral '1' should be pronounced as 'Ik' and the letter E (Oora) with open end as 'Oh'. Our further research lead us that the letter open 'Oora' means 'Oh' in Punjabi-English Dictionary [6] and in *Mahan Kosh* of Bhai Kahn Singh [15]. 'Oh' of Punjabi and 'Oh' of English means 'That' in English. The open end of '*Oora*' has been extended to characterize it as **byA᳚ (Beant - Infinite)**. Thus, it should be pronounced as **iekūE byA᳚ (Ik Oh Beant) (Ik + Oh + Beant = One and Only, Oh, the Infinite)**. This pronunciation is supported by the following verses from Nanakian Philosophy:

#### i) Oneness:

᳚ihbu᳚y᳚ e᳚oh᳚ ] e᳚oh᳚B᳚el e᳚oh᳚ ] r᳚h᳚ai᳚

AGGS, M 1, P 350.

"The Almighty is One and Only, Hey Brother!"

e᳚᳚ry᳚hir e᳚᳚j᳚᳚ ] e᳚᳚ry᳚g᳚mi᳚k j᳚᳚ ] r᳚h᳚ai᳚

AGGS, M 5, P 535.

"Hey Gurmukh! Comprehend the Almighty as One and Only."

e᳚k mih srb srb mih e᳚᳚ e᳚᳚ siq gir djK <sup>1</sup> idK᳚el <sup>2</sup> ]

AGGS, M 5, P 907.

"The True Guru has shown <sup>2</sup> me the vision <sup>1</sup> that the One is in everything and everything is in the One."

n᳚nk vr᳚q᳚᳚ie᳚᳚ie᳚᳚q᳚᳚ ] AGGS, M 5, P 966.

"Nanak Says: " You, the One and Only, pervades everywhere."

#### ii) Oh:

E᳚᳚<sup>1</sup> ibD᳚᳚᳚<sup>2</sup> m᳚᳚<sup>3</sup> q᳚᳚<sup>4</sup> die<sup>5</sup> ] AGGS, M 1, P 931.

Oh <sup>1</sup>, Destiny-Scriber <sup>2</sup> blesses <sup>3</sup> the mind <sup>4</sup> and body <sup>5</sup>.

#### iii) Infiniteness:

g᳚mi᳚k byA᳚᳚i᳚DA᳚el A᳚᳚ n p᳚r᳚᳚᳚᳚ ] AGGS, M 1, P 936.

Gurmukh (the Sikh) contemplates the Infinite, Who has no limit or end.

q᳚᳚ kyA᳚᳚ n p᳚᳚᳚j᳚᳚ih ] e᳚᳚᳚A᳚᳚ n j᳚᳚xy᳚k᳚ie ] (AGGS, Jap 24, P 5.)

"The infiniteness of That cannot be comprehended.

(In fact) Nobody knows Its infiniteness."

(Meaning the Almighty is Infinite).

**iv) No Other:**

\N\Yndir kryj ॥ dK ॥ dj ॥ khl nwhl ]  
 ekOriv rihA ॥ sB Qwel ekUvisA ॥ mn mwhl ]

AGGS, M 1, P 433.

Nanak says: "When blessed, I saw that there is no second.

*The One pervades everywhere and the One also pervades in my mind."*

ij in isir sij l iqin Pin gel ]

iqsuibnwdj ॥ Avrin kael ]

AGGS, M 1, P 355.

*"The One, Who has created, the same One can destroy. There is no other than the One."*

**v) Finally,** Guru Nanak used the letter Oora (a) to describe the God as 'Oh' and 'Infinite' as follows:

a\Wapm ॥ q ॥ kl klj Yj ॥ k ॥ Aqun pwieA ॥ ]

AGGS, M 1, p 432.

*Oorai - Sing the Praises of the One whose limit cannot be found.*

Here Guru Nanak used *Oora* to represent infiniteness of the One rather than as creator or Oankaar or Omkaar. The One here is represented as *Taa* and *Jaa* means the OH in Punjabi as well as in English.

If we examine the above phrases, it is clear again that Guru Nanak has addressed the God as 'One and Only', 'Oh', and 'Infinite'. He did not use any descriptive or specific name for the God.

Kalsi [7] has done a lot of research to find out the real pronunciation of < . His views about the pronunciation of < are as follows:

"< n\Em j ॥ Ekir, khr ॥ ik vpl ॥ dw mdr h\ n\ q\ n\ d\l, gr\l swihb dl bKSI vsq\ n\l bjens\PI, grb\xl dl nrdr\l, siqgr\ ॥ dl AvgX ॥ Aqy s\rf\ AigA\mq ॥ dw sbl\ h\ kel sj x Swied iPI h\l sihmq n\ h\ p\q\ AKIr ivc ah ASI IAq (reality) n\l zr\ svlkr krngy["

*"To equate < as 'Om' or 'Oankaar', which is a Vedic Mantra, is to do injustice to the priceless and unique thing given by Guru Sahib, is blasphemy of Gurbani, is defiance of Satguru and is proof of our ignorance. Perhaps many friends may not agree now but finally they will accept the reality. "*

After thorough investigation from Gurbani he [7] has come to the conclusion that < should be pronounced as iek + 0 0 0 0 ..... i. e. 'Ekooooo'. His idea is commendable but it is the pronunciation of numeral '1' rather than of the complete word, thought (logo), < . The

explanations of Nirmal Singh Kalsi [7] and Dr Chahal, appears to be the most logical to pronounce < as **Ekooooo** or **Ik Oh Beant**. As the pronunciation, **Ekooooo**, covers the numeral '1', therefore, < can more accurately be pronounced as **Ik Oh Beant**, thus it can be interpreted in English as **'The One and Only, Oh, the Infinite'**.

If we examine the concepts of the God given in the other religions of the world it would indicate that many religions believe in Trinity of God and polytheism having many descriptive names. Although in Islam God is One but it has specifically been named as Allah: **"There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the apostle of Allah."**

Finally, it can be concluded that the < can be pronounced as **Ik Oh Beant ('The One and Only, Oh, the Infinite')** that portrays the characteristics of **Oneness and Infiniteness of Oh**, the God.

In the context of **Ik Oh Beant** it is important to quote a thought of Einstein (1879-1955), **"If he had a God it was the God of Spinoza."** [5]. {Spinozism: (1728) The philosophy of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) who taught that reality is one substance with an infinite number of attributes of which only thought and extension are capable of being comprehended by the human mind.} I am proud to say that this is very close to < of Guru Nanak, prophesied about 200 years before Spinoza. After about 450 years Einstein, a scientist, realized the same concept of God defined by Guru Nanak, whereas, many Sikh theologians and scholars failed to understand the original and unique concept of God represented in a new logo, < by Guru Nanak.

**CONCLUSIONS**

From the above study it becomes clear that the interpretation of < by the Sikh scholars as *Ik Oankaar* or *Ikankaar* or *Ik Omkaar* has been done under the influence of philosophy given in Vedas and Upanishads. The irony is that the most learned Sikh scholars like, Bhai Kahn Singh [15], Dr Sahib Singh [18], Dr Sher Singh [19], and Principal Harbhajan Singh [17] failed to understand the characteristics of open '*Oora*' with extended end. They jumped into bandwagon of scholars of ancient philosophy and mythology given in Vedas and Upanishads and accepted the open '*Oora*' as '*Oam*' or '*Om*' and extended end as '*kaar*' and started to pronounce < as *Ik Oankaar* or *Ikankaar* or *Ik Omkaar*. **Consequently, they have encouraged Parma Nanad [10] to declare that Guru Nanak had no originality in his philosophy of coining < as a new term or word or logo because it is already found in the form of 'Oam' ('EAKurh) in Upanishad.**

Finally, the Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC took a



great leap in undermining the original and unique log, < , designed by Guru Nanak by misconstruing it into 'IK OM' by putting 'One' before 'OM' in Hindi and added an extra short line at the top as is shown in the picture. **It is a pity that Dharam Parchar committee has confirmed that < is not a new logo designed by Guru Nanak to represent Ineffable Entity and has undermined the originality and uniqueness of Nanakian Philosophy.**

**The fact is that < is a special logo designed by Guru Nanak to represent his concept of the Ineffable, Entity, commonly called God. The logo < should be pronounced as ੲੲ ੲਹੁ ੲਯੰ (Ik Oh Beant) (The One and Only, Oh, the Infinite) that portrays the characteristics of Oneness and Infiniteness of Oh, the God.**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recent misconstruing of < into IK OM KAAR should be taken as serious warning from the Bipers and it should also be taken as a starting point to stop further misconstruing, misinterpretation of Gurbani and misrepresentation of Sikhism.
2. Immediate attention should be paid to the scientific and logical interpretation of Nanakian Philosophy, enshrined in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, in its real perspective without any influence of ancient philosophy and mythology by the Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC, by the individual scholars and scholars of all the Sikh Institutes and Sikh Research Centers in the world.
3. Critical analysis of the old literature published during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is needed to be tested with Nanakian Philosophy, science, and logic - the touchstones of truth to find the truth. In this respect King has rightly said that [8]: "*The fire of critical method can burn away whatever is gross in a religious tradition, and enable the believers to retrieve the pure metal.*"

The *Institute for Understanding Sikhism* is already dedicated to carry on the above objectives seriously. The Institute appeals to all the Sikhs and Gurdwaras for financial support to carry out the above cause successfully for the benefit to the humanity of this planet, the earth.

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