

ORIGINALITY AND UNIQUENESS OF BANI OF GURU NANAK*

ARTICLE

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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:

ਬਾਣੀ ਬਿਰਲਾਉ ਬੀਚਾਰਸੀ ਜੇ ਕੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥੪੦॥

Baṇī birlaṁ bīchārsī je ko gurmukh hoṁe.

Ih baṇī mahā purakh kī nij ghar vāsā hoṁe. ||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).

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 ੴ, the Logo, of the Eternal Entity in brief.

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:

ਸਿਖੀ¹ ਸਿਖਿਆ² ਗੁਰ³ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ⁴ ॥

Sikhī sikhīā gur vīchār.

Sikhi¹ is that teachings² which is based on the enlightening³ philosophy⁴.

AGGS, M 1, p 465.

* Reproduced with permission from: CHAHAL, D. S. (2019) Philosophy - Originality and Uniqueness of 'Bani of Guru Nanak', *The Sikh Review*, 67 (12), p 15.

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.

ਸਿਖੁ (Sikh)

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

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ¹ ਨੀਰੁ² ਗਿਆਨਿ³ ਮਨ⁴ ਮਜਨੁ⁵
ਅਠਸਠਿ⁶ ਤੀਰਥ⁷ ਸੰਗਿ⁸ ਗਰੇ ॥

Amrit nīr giān man majan aṭhsaṭh
ṭirath sang gahe.

The one⁴ who bathes⁵ in the life-giving¹ water² of wisdom³ gets⁸ the benefit of bathing at sixty-eight⁶ sacred places⁷.

ਗੁਰ⁹ ਉਪਦੇਸਿ¹⁰ ਜਵਾਹਰ¹¹ ਮਾਣਕ¹² ਸੇਵੇ¹³

ਸਿਖੁ¹⁴ ਸੁੇ ਖੇਜਿ¹⁵ ਲਰੇ ॥੧॥

Gur updes javāhar māṇak seve sikh so
khOj lahai. ||1||

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 1328.

The above enlightening⁹ philosophy/teachings¹⁰ are like gems¹¹ and jewels¹² and the one who can research/discover¹⁵ is a Sikh¹⁴ and also practises¹³ it.

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 ਸਿਖੁ (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 Sikhi.

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

ਗੁਰ ਸਿਤਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੇ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ

ਉਠ ਹਿਰ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇ ਭਲਕੇ ਪਰਭਾਤੀ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ਕਰੇ
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁਸਰਿ ਨਾਵੈ ॥

ਉਪਦੇਸਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਹਿਰ ਹਿਰ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪੈ ਸਿਭ
ਕਿਲਿਵਖ ਪਾਪ ਦੇਖ ਲਿਹ ਜਾਵੈ ॥

ਫਿਰਿ ਚੜੈ ਦਿਵਸੁ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਗਾਵੈ ਬਹਿਦਆ
ਉਠਿਦਆ ਹਿਰ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

ਜੇ ਸਾਸਿ ਗਿਰਾਸਿ ਧਿਆਏ ਮੇਰਾ ਹਿਰ ਹਿਰ
ਸੇ ਗੁਰਿਸਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਿਨ ਭਾਵੈ ॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 4, ਪੰਨਾ 305.

Gur satgur kā jO sikh akhāve so
bhālke uṭh har nām dhīāvai.

Uḍam kare bhālke parbhāṭī isnān
kare amrit sar nāvai.

Updes gurū har har jap jāpai sabh
kilvikh pāp dokh leh jāvai.

Fir chārai dīvas gurbāṇī gāvai
bahḍiā uṭh dīā har nām dhīāvai.

JO sās girās dhīāve merā har har so
gursikh gurū man bhāvai.

Manmohan Singh (SGPC) translates this as follows: [1]

He 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.

By repeating the Lord God's Name under the Guru's instruction, all his sins, misdeeds, and accusations are wiped off.

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.

AGGS, M 4, p 305.

ੴ : THE LOGO OF SIKHI MISUNDERSTOOD

The ੴ, first part of the ਅਰੰਭਿਕ ਵਾਕ (arambic vaak) in Punjabi and Commencing Verse in English (erroneously called Mool Mantra), is generally pronounced by many Sikh theologians and scholars as ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ (Ek Oankaar) or ਏਕੁ ਓਮਕਾਰੁ (Ek Aumkaar). The survey of the available literature indicates that the early Sikh theologians under the heavy influence of Vedanta and ancient philosophy have pronounced it as such. It is not known who first started to pronounce ੴ as ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ (Ek Oankaar) or ਏਕੁ ਓਮਕਾਰੁ (Ek Aumkaar). However, I have noticed that Bhai Gurdas might be the first Sikh scholar who has pronounced ੴ as ਏਕੁ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ (Ek Oankaar) as is evident from his Pauri 15 of Vaar 3. Thereafter, other Sikh scholars followed Bhai Gurdas' pronunciation of ੴ.

ਏਕਾ ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੇਖਾਲਿਆ।

Aykaa Aykankaaru Likhi Daykhaaliaa.

ਉੜਾ ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ ਪਾਸਿ ਬਹਾਲਿਆ

1151 ਵਾਰ 131

Oorhaa Aoankaaru Paasi Bahaaliaa.

In the Faridkot Vala Teeka the Oora in ੴ has also been equated with ਓ (Om / Aum), the Trinity of God. It is mentioned in this Teeka that Bhai Gurdas has pronounced open Oora (ੳ) as ਓਅੰਕਾਰੁ (Oankaar), which means Aum or Om. Nevertheless, Guru Nanak is against the concept of Trinity of God.

Further Bhai Kahn Singh (Mahan Kosh) describes ੴ as follows:

ੳ (Open Oora) with extended end,
ੳਅੰ (Aum), and
ੳਅੰਕਾਰੁ (Oankaar).

Prof Sahib Singh [2] (pp 44-46, Vol. 1) also followed *Faridkot Vala Teeka* that Open Oora (ੳ) in ੳੳ is Om (Aum) and further explains ੳੳ as ਇਕ + ੳ or ੳਅੰ or ੳ (Aum or Om) + ਕਾਰ. Consequently, the whole Sikh world is pronouncing ੳੳ as 'Ek Oankar' ignoring the fact that 'Oankar' means 'OM' or 'Omkaar' according to Upanishad. Therefore, pronouncing ੳੳ as 'Ek Oankar' was the first step that lead the Sikh scholars to interpret bani under the influence of Vedic and Vedanta philosophy and Sikhi founded by Guru Nanak started losing its originality and uniqueness.

WHAT DOES ੳੳ STAND FOR?

A casual look at the ੳੳ indicates that it is composed of three parts:

1. The numeral One (1),
2. The first letter of Gurmukhi script, ੳ, (Oora), and
3. The Open end of ੳ (Oora) has

been extended as (ੳ).

The numeral '1' (One) should be pronounced as 'Ek' and the letter ੳ (Oora) with open end as 'O' (That). Because the letter ੳ (Open Oora) means ੳਹ (O) in Punjabi-English Dictionary and in *Mahan Kosh* of Bhai Kahn Singh the letter ੳ (Open Oora) means ੳਹ (Oh). Here the meaning of ੳ (Open Oora) has been accepted as 'Oh' in Punjabi and 'That' in English. 'The open end of ੳ (Open Oora) has

been further extended (ੳ) to characterize it as ਬੇਅੰਤ (Beant - Infinite) or ਅਨੰਤ (Anant – Infinite).

Therefore, ੳੳ is pronounced as:

ਇਕੁ ੳ ਬੇਅੰਤ (Ek O Beant) in Punjabi.

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

Is '1' (Ek – One) in ੳੳ 'Singularity'?

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

$$ੳੳ = ੧ + ੳ + ੳ$$

ੳੳ = Singularity + That + Infinite.

Could we now infer from the above dismantled ੳੳ 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]

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3. Chahal, D. S. (2018 (Revised Version)) *JAP: The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy (a scientific and Logical Interpretation)* <http://iuscanada.com/books/2018/JAP-2018-%20Final-filtered.html>