



Sikhism: A Symbol of Global Peace and Harmony

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20111767>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 22-04-2026

Published: 10-05-2026

Keywords:

Sikhism, Global Peace, Harmony, Universal Brotherhood, Equality, Justice

ABSTRACT

Sikhism is the youngest religion of the world founded by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century. The fundamental principles of Sikhism have been enshrined in the Holy Scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS). These principles includes; faith in one universal God, unity of all mankind, striving for social justice for all, emphasis on selfless service, honest livelihood and ethical conduct, which are the bedrock of universal peace. Global peace and harmony is an ideal state of benevolence or goodwill, mutual care, love, freedom, human unity for the welfare of all and happiness among all people and nations. The modern world is saturated with conflicts and sufferings. The contemporary issues like war, terrorism, nuclear weapons proliferation, racial killings, xenophobia, poverty, economic inequality and religious intolerance are the major threats to global peace. The doctrines of Sikhism such as *Sangat* (holy congregation), *Pangat* (equality), *Wand Chhakna* (sharing with others), *Sarbat da Bhala* (universal welfare), universal brotherhood, peaceful co-existence, liberty and fraternity, offers a realistic approach to attain our well-cherished goal of global peace and harmony.

Introduction

There is persistent upheaval and unrest in the modern world due to religious strife, terrorism, racism, political antagonism, wars and economic disparities. These evils are biggest threat to global peace and harmony. Sikhism, which is widely accepted as a modern philosophy and the most cherished



religious scripture of Sikhs i.e., Sri Guru Granth Sahib personifies concepts and doctrines which promotes the ideals of peace, equality, and universal brotherhood. Rooted in the principles of compassion, humility, and selfless service, Sikhism promotes harmony among all humans regardless of caste, creed, or religion. The core teachings of the Sikh Gurus emphasize the oneness of God and humanity and pave the way for the establishment of an egalitarian society based on love, benevolence and tolerance. The concept of *Sarbat da Bhala* — the well-being of all—captures the essence of Sikhism’s global vision for peace. Sikh places of worship, known as Gurdwaras, are open to all and offer free meals (*Langar*) to promote unity and eliminate social barriers. Sikhs have historically defended the rights of the oppressed, exemplifying courage grounded in morality. At its heart, Sikhism seeks not only inner spiritual peace but also social harmony through active engagement and mutual respect. In a world that is divided by differences and conflicts, Sikhism emerges as a beacon of hope, advocating unity through love, service, and understanding.

War and Terrorism

In contemporary times, war and terrorism are the gravest threats to global peace and stability. Armed conflicts disrupt nations, displace millions, and cause immense human suffering, often leaving long-lasting scars on societies. Terrorism, driven by hatred and extremism, spreads fear and violence across borders, undermining security and trust between communities. The teachings of Sikh Gurus emphasized on that Ego is the root cause of all these problems and conflicts. The Sikh philosophy expounds that man can overcome from this egoistic consciousness by linking his consciousness with God.¹ The Guru proclaims

ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀਰਘ ਰੋਗੁ ਹੈ ਦਾਰੂ ਭੀ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ॥

ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰੇ ਜੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਤਾ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਕਮਾਹਿ॥²

(Ego is a chronic disease, but it contains its cure as well. If the Lord grants His Grace, one acts according to the Teachings of the Guru's Sabd.)

In order to maintain peace with others one should get rid from the nature of egoism. As Guru Amardas says:

ਆਪੁ ਵੰਞਾਏ ਤਾ ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਏ ॥



ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ ਸਚੀ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਏ॥³

(By destroying egoism one can achieve everything. This can be achieved by contemplating on the teachings of Guru)

It is the self-centeredness of a man which is the major reason behind the distrust, violence and disharmony. If everyone treats each other as brothers and sisters and adopts the principle of non-violence then war and terrorism can be eliminated. The cultivation of politeness and humility is the first and foremost characteristic of Sikhism.

ਮਿਠਤੁ ਨੀਵੀ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਗੁਣ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਤਤੁ॥⁴

(Politeness and humility are the essence of virtue and goodness.)

Sikh philosophy advocates that in order to secure one's own identity, one should never threaten the identity of others. Gurbani proclaims:

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ॥⁵

(Neither threatens others nor be afraid of anyone.)

Religious Intolerance

While religion is often viewed as a source of love and compassion, but in present world religious fundamentalism becomes the primary cause of divisions and conflicts among people. Religious differences between those of different faiths are a significant source of discomfort and intolerance which can be conquer by interfaith interaction.⁶ Sikh Gurus had a profound respect for the other religions and their religious texts. Guru Nanak said to the Muslims and Christians that it is not enough to read the Quran and the Bible, rather they have to own the teachings of these Holy Scriptures in their hearts and their daily lives. Those who criticized the Holy books of other religion were strongly opposed by Guru Nanak. He advised his followers: Do not say the Bible, the Vedas and the Quran are false. Those who do not envisage them are false.⁷ Sri Guru Granth Sahib's philosophy is to build a healthy and harmonious society based on the principle of peaceful co-existence. As Gurbani States:

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ॥



ਏਕ ਨਰੁ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ॥⁸

(First Allah created the light, and then by his creative power, he made all mortal beings. From the one light, the entire universe welled up, so who is good and who is bad.)

The Guru Granth Sahib was compiled with the writings of 36 contributors and only nine of the contributors were the Sikh Gurus. Some were from Muslim tradition and some were from Hindu tradition. Kabir was a weaver; Sadhna was a butcher, Namdev was a tailor, Dhanna was a farmer, Sain was a barber, Ravidas was a cobbler, Farid was a Muslim Sufi. Here is shown the catholicity of Sikhism to give equal status to all men irrespective of their caste or religion.⁹ Guru Nanak says:

ਨਾ ਕੋਈ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ॥

(There is neither Hindu nor Muslim) Through this utterance, his message was Hindu and Muslims are not dissimilar. Both of them are children of God. Everyone should spread the message of kindness and humanity.

Racism and Xenophobia

Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance all occurs on a daily basis. Racism and xenophobia are distinct phenomena, although they often overlap. While racism generally implies distinction based on difference in physical characteristics, such as skin coloration, hair type, facial features, etc, xenophobia denotes behaviour specifically based on the perception that the other is foreign to or originates from outside the community or nation. By the standard dictionary definition, xenophobia is “the intense dislike or fear of strangers or people from other countries.”¹⁰ So the ideal of universal brotherhood of all and the universal parenthood of God enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a key to settle all the conflicts of humanity. As Gurbani asserts:

ਏਕ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ॥¹¹

(One God is the father of all and we are his children)

The primary message of Gurbani is to recognize the identity and dignity of each culture on equal basis and it discourages animosity, discrimination and violence. Gurbani promotes communal tolerance, racial harmony and inter-cultural dialogue which are the crucial ingredients of multiculturalism. Religious, cultural and political pluralism is the core message of Sikhism to all mankind.¹²



The goal of the Gurus was to establish a casteless, classless society in which everyone had the right to free speech, religious tolerance, observance and allegiance, and social equality, and where rights and obligations were given equal weight. In such a multi-culture society, adherence to one's religion and faith is no crime but disrespect and intolerance to other religious faiths is certainly a sin.¹³ Guru Nanak Dev ji emphasizes on the equality of all men as he states:

ਫਕੜ ਜਾਤੀ ਫਕੜ ਨਾਉਂ॥

ਸਭਨਾ ਜੀਆ ਇਕ ਛਾਉ॥¹⁴

(The pride of caste and status is worthless. All human beings have the same soul.)

Guru Nanak preaches harmony and brotherhood among all humans. He wrote: No one is my enemy, No one is a foreigner, with all I am at peace, and God within us renders us, incapable of hate and prejudice. Gurbani emphasize on the oneness of humanity. Guru Arjan Dev ji states:

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਮੇਰਾ ਦੁਸਮਨੁ ਰਹਿਆ ਨਾ ਹਮ ਕਿਸ ਕਈ ਬੈਰਾਈ॥¹⁵

(No one is my enemy, and I am no one's enemy.)

In order to create equality and fraternity between individuals of various castes and religions, Guru Nanak established two powerful organizations: *Sangat* and *Pangat*. These two ideas embody the actual core of brotherhood and love. *Pangat* refers to sitting in the same row, while *Sangat* is the assembly of individuals from various castes or religious backgrounds. People from every community gather as equals in *Sangat* to sing the worship of the Lord, their all-powerful Father, and to address Him with equal love and by all names. Regardless of caste or religion, high or low, wealthy or impoverished, prince or farmer, people in *Pangat* gather at the *Guru-Ka-Langar* (common kitchen) to share their sense of fraternity. People from different religions are still brought together by these institutions.¹⁶

Poverty and Economic Inequality

The widespread economic inequalities and poverty is a big hindrance in the building of peaceful and conflict free world order. According to World Bank report, 2023 was the year of inequality. Approximately 700 million people around the world live in extreme poverty today. The gap between rich and poor countries is increasing day by day which results in growing external debt on the poor countries.¹⁷ So, it is the need of the hour to check these ever increasing economic disparities. The core of



teachings of Sikh Gurus such as *Kirat Karo* (the honest labour) and *Wand Chhako* (Sharing of earnings) can solve these problems. Guru Nanak Dev Ji proclaims:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ॥¹⁸

(He, who earns his living by the sweat of his brow and shares his earnings with others, has discovered the path of righteousness, says Nanak.)¹⁷

Guru Nanak Dev Ji even strongly prohibited to taking away the rightful belongings of others as he states:

ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੁਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ॥¹⁹

(It means to take what rightfully belongs to another, is like a Muslim eating pork or Hindu eating beef).

Sikhism also motivates everyone to donate up to 10% of their income in the form of '*Dasvand*' to the house of God. Further, these funds are used for the upliftment of poor and downtrodden people. Furthermore, Sikhism encourages the all the humans to earn their livelihood through honest means and used it for the welfare of all.

Conclusion

Sikhism stands as a profound embodiment of world peace and harmony, rooted in the teachings of equality, compassion, and selfless service. The faith emphasizes the oneness of humanity and rejects all forms of discrimination, fostering a spirit of unity among people of diverse backgrounds. Through the principles of *Naam Japna* (meditating on God's name), *Kirat Karni* (honest living), and *Vand Chakna* (sharing with others), Sikhism inspires individuals to lead meaningful and ethical lives. The tradition of *Langar* (community kitchen) exemplifies inclusivity and selfless giving. Sikh Gurus have consistently advocated for justice without violence, promoting peaceful coexistence. Even in the face of adversity, Sikhism encourages resilience, forgiveness, and love. Its timeless values serve as a guiding light in today's conflict-ridden world, offering hope for a more compassionate and united global society.

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