

Philosophy and Progress

Vols. LXIX-LXX, January-June, July-December, 2021

ISSN 1607-2278 (Print), DOI : <https://doi.org/10.3329pp.v67i1-2.60189>

THE ROLE OF SIKH LIBERALISM IN PROMOTING COMMUNAL HARMONY IN TODAY'S WORLD

Md. Mohshin Reza*

Abstract

This study examines the role of the principle of Sikh liberalism in promoting communal harmony in today's world. Communal harmony has been under threat in almost all countries for decades, and bigotry, distrust, and animosity prevail among the followers of diverse faith-based communities. Individuals need to be whole-hearted, liberal in approach, and tolerant toward the followers of other communities to reduce such inconsistencies in our society. The paper explores that the ideology of Sikh liberalism can be a role model for establishing peace in today's world of communal violence. This work is a sincere effort to deal with several issues, e.g., humanism, tolerance, fraternity, equality, freedom, secularism, religious pluralism, and accessibility to and honor for contrasting opinions, based on the principle of Sikh liberalism, which are the root of Sikh

* Assistant Professor, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000
Email: m.reza@du.ac.bd

liberalism. The qualitative research evaluates the all-embracing aspects of Sikhism, where the liberal notion of Guru Granth Sahib and the liberal attitudes of the Sikh Gurus, especially Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhism, have mainly been highlighted. It discovers the role of Sikhism in promoting communal harmony by analyzing the idea of Sikh liberalism. Thus, the study aims to make the states, governments, and the general people aware of their responsibilities and duties towards promoting communal harmony through comprehending the Sikh approaches to liberalism.

Keywords: Sikhism, liberalism, Sikh liberalism, communal harmony, pluralism, equality, freedom.

1. Introduction

Sikhism is one of the five major religions in the world. Guru Nanak is the proponent of this socio-religious movement which originated in Punjab of India in the last of the 15th century AD. All the religions of the world teach human beings to love each other, preach the messages of peace for the betterment of all humankind. Thus, in the history of human civilization, religion has been playing a vital role in establishing peace in society since time immemorial. Simultaneously, the shedding of blood in the name of religion is also a reality. Humanity is under threat due to worldly desires and the egoistic nature of human beings. The acceleration of ethnic, racial, regional, and communal conflicts is rising in different parts of the world. In this respect, liberal approaches of Sikhism inculcate the spirit of pluralism, secularism, democracy, brotherhood, catholicity, equality, justice, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, contributing to the rise of communal harmony.

The theory of liberalism is a modern political and ethical philosophy. Hence, almost all contemporary scholars do not consider different religious doctrines compatible with these philosophical ideas. However, religions encompass many principles that lead the followers to a uniform platform, where individuals

from diverse faiths ultimately live in peace and amity. Universal love and brotherhood is the prime concern of Sikhism, which is the precondition for establishing racial harmony in a society. All these values are compatible with the modern ideas of liberalism.

Additionally, the idea of liberalism occupies a distinctive position in Indian thought. Sikhism is a religion with the spirit of liberalism and humanism, which keenly supports all the humanitarian components related to the overall betterment of any society. Moreover, from the beginning of his childhood, Nanak received liberal and egalitarian teachings from the multicultural society of Punjab. So, the geographical location of Punjab also contributed to the development of the Sikh ideology of liberalism. Besides, Guru Granth Sahib is widely considered one of the best scriptures for ensuring interfaith harmony. It is an essence of dignity and mutual respect for all religious faiths. Besides the writings of Sikh Gurus, it comprises holy words of many Sufis and Bhaktas belonging to different religions and castes. Sikh liberalism also incorporates the principle of religious pluralism and equality of all human races. Besides, Sikhism gives utmost priority to human freedom that fosters the ideals of liberalism. The current paper is a humble effort to discover the Sikh ideas of liberalism and their relevance to promoting communal harmony in today's world.

2. Methodology and Data Collection

The qualitative method is popular for analyzing a social problem. So, the qualitative method has been used in this research for describing, explaining, and analyzing collected data. This qualitative research is purely conceptual, where both primary and secondary sources have been used to collect relevant data and information regarding the research problem. Primary data in this article has been collected from Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture. Available books, journals, and online articles have been used as secondary sources to update the doctrinal method of the study. In this study, the researcher would like to give a delicate look at how Sikhism is compatible with the modern political and ethical doctrine of liberalism in the

present global context and how can the Sikh values of liberalism be a role model for promoting communal harmony? The researcher has followed the discourse analysis of different related books and journal articles to find the answer.

3. Understanding Liberalism

Liberalism is a modern political and philosophical theory that seeks the welfare of humankind, encompassing several norms and values. It focuses on the welfare of human beings, not just addressing human interests, wants, and desires but making them the absolute measure of morality (Wissenburg, 2006). It inculcates liberal attitudes in human nature and thus plays a role in ensuring the natural rights of humans. Liberalism strongly prohibits interference in the liberty of others. Conversely, intolerance is the opposite view of liberalism. It does not mean a particular type of discrimination or religious freedom violations. It prescribes human attitudes that prompt such type violations. Intolerance refers to conduct, manifesting hatred or prejudice based on religion or belief and a state of mind underlies descriptions of various human rights violations (Sullivan, 1988). Therefore, toleration is the most vital component of liberalism, without which communal harmony is not possible. The doctrine of toleration originates from reasonable pluralism, which is the core principle of political liberalism (Galston, 1995). Diversity in religious and political ideals is another dimension of modern liberalism. The theory of liberalism does not advocate monolithic tradition but promotes moral pluralism in different sectors of human life and respects human dignity and liberty.

There have been several variants within the philosophy of liberalism. It can be said to be a highly flexible doctrine. With many modifications, the notion of liberalism changed with the time that incorporated many features of human life. Liberalism can be any principle that is rational, compatible with contemporary times, and practically addresses authentic and relevant issues. The appeal of liberalism to practical life carries the idea of constant reform of the principle of individuality and human freedom (Dewey, 1935). It is

a neutral and all-embracing tendency that includes diverse current thoughts, judicial defense, timely human thinking, and way of human life.

Neutrality and secularism are two vital aspects of liberalism that address the idea of friendship, harmony, freedom, love and universal humanity. Freedom is the foundation of liberalism. Freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and religion are fundamental human rights. These human freedoms are a prerequisite for ensuring communal harmony. Liberalism, however, often leads to controversy in society because individuals do not have a proper understanding of the relationship between social order and freedom. Many scholars and philosophers consider liberalism just as the entire submission and respect towards social order for a better society. Others uphold that the right to human freedom is violated whenever any rule or social order is enforced, no matter how important it is in socio-economic, religious, or political life. The researcher rejects both of these extreme positions to be called liberalism. Absolute submission to any social order can restrict justice and human freedom because sometimes citizens are obliged to follow defective and authoritative rules and social orders. Similarly, it is unreasonable to think that enforcing any rule or social order violates individual liberty because this view makes individuals indifferent to their responsibilities and uplifts injustice and social anarchy. Thus, both of these aspects of liberalism can hinder harmony in society. Fundamentally, one of the goals of liberalism is to establish tolerant and benevolent relations between individuals and society.

4. Sikh Liberalism

There are considerable similarities between Sikhism and the theory of liberalism. Sikhism is considered a secular religious faith due to its several liberal principles, e.g., tolerance, secularism, democracy, open-mindedness and respect for opposite opinions. Guru Nanak emphasizes self-reliance, compassion, interior devotion, and economic security. He advised treating all humankind as one nation obeying the values of love and humanity instead of venerating gods

and deities (Juss, 2010). The theory of liberalism consolidates several principles, and among them, secularism, democracy, pluralism, humanism, religious freedom, justice, and equality are remarkable. Sikhism, as a humanist religion, encompasses all these principles (Waldron, 1987). In order to understand various aspects of liberalism in the light of Sikhism, an elaborate discussion is needed. This section presents some pivotal liberal approaches of Sikhism that are fully compatible with the doctrine of liberalism and contribute to promoting communal harmony.

4.1 Mission of Guru Nanak

Sikhism was originated and developed under the 10 Sikh Gurus. Nanak was the founding Guru who was genuinely a religious pluralist. The central vision of the socio-religious movement started by Guru Nanak was the 'liberty of human beings' (Thapar, 1904). He considered diverse religions as just different paths to reach the same Supreme Being. Nanak was born in Punjab in northwest India. During that period, Punjab was a place of diverse cultures, and many traders and officials from other regions and states had regular visits there. He was born in a Hindu family, but from the very beginning of his childhood, Nanak was keen to know the religions and cultures of other communities. In his youth, he made himself well-versed in popular customs of both Islam and Hinduism, and he gained a general knowledge of the Quran and Brahmanical Shastras (Center, 1990). Additionally, because of the mixed culture of Punjab, Nanak's childhood teacher was a Muslim, and he had a profound influence on Nanak (Hopfe, 1991).

Nanak observed human suffering and repression all around him from his boyhood only because of racial and ethnic differences. His vision was to eliminate this racial discrimination. Accordingly, after his divine enlightenment in 1496, to complete his mission, Guru Nanak started his travels with two of his companions, one of Hindu and the other of Muslim background, and held interfaith dialogue at numerous places in South Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East (Lal & Attre, 2019). Consequently, he had the opportunity to be

introduced to many people belonging to other faiths, teach them and learn from them, and thereby make bridges with them. He took the positive aspects of all religions without any hesitation and often told his disciples to embrace the positive qualities of others, avoiding their negative aspects (Dhillon, 2004). In this way, he became a devotee of both Hinduism and Islam and realized the truth that Hindus and Muslims were not different, but both were the creation of one God.

4.2 Secularism

An outcome of Guru Nanak's liberal outlook, Sikhism advocates the messages of secularism and humanist faith, which address the ideas of equality, common humanity, love and friendship. Secularism, from a religious perspective, can be realized as an attempt to address all human beings with equality, mutual respect, goodwill, morality, equal opportunity, religious tolerance, and openness in administration (Sidhu, 2006). Secularism rejects differences among people based on race and religion and that is a prerequisite for upholding communal harmony. Sikhism asserts that all human beings are the children of the same Supreme Being. Guru Nanak stated: "I am not a Hindu, nor am I a Muslim. My body and breath of life belong to Allah to Raam, the God of both" (GGS, p. 1136). Two expositions can be deduced from this announcement. One is, Guru Nanak may have meant by this statement that both Hindus and Muslims have strayed from the roots of their religion. Another interpretation is, from the very beginning of human civilization, all men were brothers and sisters; hence, the essence of Hinduism and Islam was identical, and the only differences are in their external rituals.

Many claim that scriptural and doctrinal knowledge makes individuals conservative and extremist, but we can notice that sacred texts of different religions, especially the Sikh Holy Scripture Guru Granth Sahib prescribe secularism, modernity and liberalism. This Holy Text promotes the dignity and value of personal autonomy. It is a unique scripture centering on secularism and communal harmony, which incorporates the writings of devotees belonging to

other religious and cultural backgrounds.

4.3 Democracy and Education

Besides secularism, democracy and education are two integral aspects of Sikh liberalism. A democratic society is developed based on the essence of pluralism, tolerance, and open-mindedness. Democracy is a system of government that emphasizes the views and decisions of all individuals in a state and thus promotes communal harmony. In this regard, collective decisions for the overall betterment of human society are esteemed in Sikhism, and democracy entrusts all decisions to the elected Sikhs (Singh, 2011). All principal decisions in times of crisis are taken by the anonymous discussions of these elected bodies of Sikh Tradition. Guru Nanak determines that in every case, one needs to have self-determination in every country of the world to run a smooth federation (Sikka, 1972 and Bhat, 2019). In addition, an effective dialogue among citizens is essential for securing a liberal democratic rule in a country. The Sikh Holy Scripture is a model for securing interfaith understanding among diverse multicultural and multi-religious societies, and its idea about a multicultural society is inherent in the principle of modern liberal democracy.

Sikhism proclaims that democracy as a system of government can be fruitful only if the people and especially the representatives are well educated, honest, just, democratic, God-fearing in approach, and are verily spiritual in personal life and verily secular in public life (Sidhu, 2006). Education aims to promote harmony in society through enlightening human minds. Without education, it is difficult to realize the responsibility, duty, and purpose of humans as the best creatures of creation.

4.4 Good Governance

Strong democracy fosters the ideals of good governance. As a political and philosophical doctrine, liberalism encompasses the nature of good governance as well as the quality of leaders. Democracy and good governance must prevail in a state where the

elected representatives are just and compassionate, and the state laws are enacted with the full consent of the citizens. Similarly, a just ruler and his/her well-treatment of citizens irrespective of color, caste, or religion can stimulate racial harmony. Sikhism has a deep concern with political life, and Guru Nanak prescribes several norms and values to the rulers to perform their administrative duties properly. It affirms that the rulers must be “fair and Just” (GGS, p. 1240). Besides, Sikhism prescribes the highest possible standards for governments and leaders that the subjects deserve. Guru Nanak prescribes, without the full consent of *Sangat* (congregation of people of the state), state laws should not be made by rulers (Bhat, 2019). He criticized the rulers for their cruel and unjust rule, misuse of power, and ill-treatment of subjects. He rejects the reigns of those kings whose failures in their duties and responsibilities of providing for basic human needs have resulted in misery in the way of the lives of the general people (Sangha, 2020).

4.5 Religious Pluralism

Sikhism is reflected by the principles of socio-political, economic, religious and cultural pluralism. Due to its origin and development on Indian soil, it is inspired and influenced by the then prevalent religions of India, in particular, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism. It received some philosophical and ideological views from both the Indian and Semitic religions regarding its terminology and ethical ideals (Singh, 2010). Religious extremists do not believe in pluralism and religious diversity because they consider it anti-religious. The recognition of pluralism is an acceptance that an individual’s faith is simply a different path among many other truths, thus securing, interfaith harmony. By contrast, the resistance to pluralism and diversity causes communal violence. The principle of religious pluralism, designed in Sikhism, offers a strong foundation not only for the coexistence of diverse religious faiths in dynamic collaboration with each other but also for the co-equality of different faiths and ethnic communities and their co-participation in all the sectors of their respective countries (Ahluwalia, 2003).

Guru Granth Sahib is one of the best living instances of pluralism, widely known for its teachings of catholicity and interreligious harmony. Hence, it is considered the ambassador of the interfaith movement (Singh, 2012). Besides the writings of 6 Sikh Gurus, Guru Granth Sahib includes the hymns of 23 Hindu Bhaktas and 7 Muslim Sufis. Thus, it encompasses the words of a total of 36 authors who were from different cultural and geographical backgrounds in India (Lal & Attre, 2019). To demonstrate the idea of religious pluralism, it contains verses of Dhana, a farmer from Rajasthan; Sadhna, a butcher from Sindh; Sain, a barber from Rewa; Ravidas, a cobbler from Benares; Namdev, a calico printer from Maharashtra; Jaidev, a Brahman from Bengal and Farid and Kabir who were Muslims (Sidhu, 2006). In order to introduce a harmonious society, such a kind, unthinkable and sagacious outlook of Sikhism is immensely praiseworthy.

4.6 Right to Freedom

Human freedom is the most vital component of the theory of liberalism, without which communal harmony is not possible. Every man has innate freedom of will, unlike the animals, that has enabled him to choose his actions (Singh, 1989). Sikhism highlights freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, freedom of deeds, and freedom of religion which are vital natural human rights. Guru Nanak claims that even in the most arduous circumstances, a person should not be deprived of these inalienable rights (Thapar, 1904). Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru of the Sikhs, was the first to have openly proclaimed liberty, equality and fraternity for everybody, and the famous slogan then was “live and let live” (Alam, 2018, p. 50; Sidhu, 2006, p. 155).

Therefore, Sikhism attempts to establish an ideal social structure and, finally, a global human society in which the collective ideas of individual freedom, security, and equality will prevail ideally. It opposes developments that intend to restrict and destroy the ability and self-sufficiency of individuals. The destiny of individuals depends on their responsibilities and duties because they get results

according to their actions. Guru Granth Sahib declares, “O man, you are superior in God’s creation, now is your opportunity, you may fulfill or not fulfill your destiny” (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 913). Such examples clarify the position of Sikhism in ensuring human freedom.

Religious freedom is a fundamental right of every living being which is the most vital aspect of ensuring communal harmony. Sikhism recognizes all religious faiths for attaining spirituality and salvation. Guru Nanak has sharply criticized those who call other religions false and claimed that those who cannot tolerate the religion and scriptures of others are false (Islam, 2011). In Sikhism, everyone is suggested to be a better human being following his/her own religious ideology. Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, is a unique example of establishing religious freedom. He sacrificed his life to uphold the country’s honor, the dignity of human beings, and the free practice of others’ faiths (Singh, 2017).

4.7 Equality and Justice

Without equality and justice, freedom of religion cannot bring communal harmony. The principle of equality and justice is a secular liberal value that is one of the regulators of ensuring communal harmony. The problem of social equality can be understood from four aspects: caste equality, relations among the economic classes, relations among the followers of different religions and nationalities, and the status of women in society (Singh, 2009). Sikhism properly experienced all these aspects of equality. Guru Nanak banned the concept of superiority by birth. Declaring “there is neither Hindu nor Muslim,” he advised not to differentiate people based on diverse religious faiths but consider all nations and tribes as one human race (Singh, 2005). He himself introduced every dress, every kind of diet, all ways that lead not only to one God but also to one humankind (Singh, 1988; Kaur, 2005). Inspired by Guru Nanak’s teachings on liberalism, Guru Tegh Bahadur said that an ideal person is the one who can keep his mind calm even amid joys and sorrows and treat all his enemies and allies equally (Islam & Islam, 2016).

Gender equality and women's rights are also the prime concern of the theory of liberalism. Women were the victim of persecution and discrimination, and they had no proper rights in India. Sikhism has emphasized equal rights and dignity for both males and females in Indian society. Today, women play a very influential role in the Sikh community. They can participate in social, political and religious congregations. They contribute to reciting Guru Granth Sahib at Gurdwara for their religious programs. Guru Nanak warns those who think that women are sinful and inferior by declaring:

From woman, is our birth; in the woman's womb, we are shaped. To the woman, we are engaged and married. Woman becomes our friend; through woman, the future generations come. If one woman dies, we seek another woman; to whom we are bound. So why call woman evil who gives birth to kings and all (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 473).

Apart from him, various laws were enacted during the tenure of other Gurus to establish women's rights. Guru Amar Das, for example, appointed many women for missionary work, and the religious congregation of Sikhism is also open to all where both men and women can sing and preach without any distinction (Alam, 2018).

Sikhism underlines the principle of justice, which is the precondition for establishing a justifiable peaceful society. The arbitrariness of the rulers destroys peace, and in many states, the subjects consider the rulers as divine and representatives of God. According to the Sikh view, rulers are not divine, and in terms of justice, they are subject to the same rules of punishment as the general public (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 417). Neutrality is another paramount aspect of the philosophy of liberalism. Coercion, fear, and favoritism are the obstacle to securing justice. Therefore, Sikhism asserts that justice must be dispensed impartially without fear or favor (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1240). Non-violence, tolerance, peace, family relationship, and respect for human rights are the strong aspirations of the modern world. All these elements are an integral

part of Sikhism that inculcate the principle of equality and justice. Additionally, equality and justice were grounded on the principle that there is only One Creator Who pervades in all individuals. Hence, all people have the same status before God, and nobody has any superiority over others. No doubt, such a view promotes racial harmony in any society.

4.8 Humanism

The concept of humanism is needed to realize the true spirit of liberalism. Humanism is at a view that considers the welfare, happiness, and prosperous life of human beings in this material world. So, the central theme of humanism is ‘man’ rather than divinity. The question may arise, does the nature of humanism contain the same meaning for everyone? The justification of humanism may vary from person to person, place to place and time to time. The very essence of humanism is to give utmost priority to human well-being, spiritual and mundane, above rites, rituals, ceremonies and other arbitrary interdictions which restrict social and religious tradition in a complicated web (Joshi, 1980).

Since Sikhism is deeply concerned with the well-being of all human beings, humanism is the center of Sikh beliefs and practices. It promotes the idea of equality and asserts humanity as the best religion for all humankind (Nishter, 2015). Sikhism proclaims that every human being should be entitled to equal political, social and religious rights. Guru Nanak was a remarkable instance of humanism because he wanted to establish a peaceful society irrespective of caste, creed, and nation based on equal status. Humanism encompasses the principle of ethical norms, justice, human dignity, and equality, and Sikhism advocates all these ideals very sincerely.

Egoism is a psychological aspect of human behavior contrary to liberalism and humanism. Individuals dominated by egoism engage in various conflicts, including communal violence. As reported by Sikhism, the nature of man usually suffers from this

human (self-centeredness) (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1092), which is the source of evil and suffering (Singh, 1997). Generally, egoism is a philosophical doctrine that claims self-satisfaction as the sole ultimate purpose of any human being (Feinberg, 2007). Due to self-centeredness, one cannot wish for the overall happiness of all human beings. To build a peaceful society, we have to come out of the culture of egoism. The Sikh ideology of liberalism keeps individuals away from a culture of self-centeredness.

4.9 Service (*Seva*) and Welfare

Religion deals with two aspects, divine and human. Both of these aspects ultimately lead individuals to the road to salvation. Sikhism is well known to the people of the entire world due to the selfless activities of its followers. In Sikhism, one can attain spiritual excellence through *seva* (selfless service) to humanity. Guru Nanak's religious philosophy enunciates the humanist vision of religion, which makes no distinction between spiritual life and social service (*Seva*) (Singh, 1997). Inevitably, the concept of selfless service (*Seva*) is one of the leading religious duties of Sikhism. This *Seva* is not ordinary unpaid service; instead, it is voluntary selfless service without motive or hope for reward. The Sikh Holy Scripture advocates: "He who performs selfless service without thought of reward, he alone attains to God" (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 286). Subsequently, the Sikhs are involved in selfless service in different political, social and religious organizations. It is highly admirable that even the elite citizens of Sikh society usually take part in food distribution in Gurdwara for people from different communities.

Religions sometimes claim the material world as unreal and illusions, but Sikhism considers the world as real (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 463) and a suitable working place for moral and spiritual development. Every living being has its life task in this material world. So, refraining from condemning others, everybody should play a role in selfless service for humanity. Guru Nanak says, as cited in (Das, 2012) that "Why do you blame others, I blame

my own work; The way I work, the way I get results” (p. 130). Nevertheless, we can notice in recent times that different political and religious groups blame each other by using silly and abusive words that accelerate the tendency of communal violence.

Furthermore, Sikhism does not support celibacy and renunciation of worldly activities, and it emphasizes attaining salvation and self-purification through performing good deeds on the earth. In this regard, charity has a great value in Sikhism. The accumulation of wealth is considered a great sin in Sikhism, and the poor and destitute have a share in the wealth of the affluent. Accordingly, Sikhism asserts that “They, that seem big and affluent, are afflicted by the disease of care. No one becomes great by being rich” (Guru Granth Sahib, p.188). Guru Nanak always encouraged his followers to engage in human welfare through selfless service or financial assistance. That is why, the Sikhs are enjoined to give at least one-tenth of their earnings to charity for the welfare of society and underprivileged people (Juss, 2010).

4.10 Love and Brotherhood

The concept of love and fraternity is the foundation of liberalism. Sikhism is a humanist, liberal, and scientific religion that professes all the positive and benevolent aspects of human life. Guru Nanak aimed to establish universal love and brotherhood. He used to compose several songs that contributed to promoting interfaith harmony and expanded those in different parts of the world. He was often accompanied by a Hindu devotee named Bala, and his Muslim devotee Mardana was always assisted with the instrument in his songs (Islam & Islam, 2016). Besides, Sri Guru Granth Sahib dignifies God as ‘love’ in several places. Nanak’s idea of ‘God is love’ leads towards completely different life guidelines, i.e., announcement and acceptance of social responsibility where the way to God is through virtuous deeds, and the goal is to establish the brotherhood of humans (Singh, 1997). So, Sikh gurus believe that to love God’s creatures is the way to love God. This human life, gifted to us, is to love people and realize His presence everywhere. In order

to love God, one is to love God's children, that is, all humankind.

Sikhism has a profound love and respect for the leaders and the Holy Texts of other faiths. Hazrat Mian Mir, a renowned Muslim Qadiri Sheikh of Lahore, laid the foundation stone of the *Harimandir* (Golden Temple) (Islam, 2017). He had a good relationship with Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Hargobind, and Mughal Emperor Akbar had a good relationship with Guru Amar Das (Dhillon, 2005). Sikh Gurudwaras are open to all regardless of any religion or caste. There is a famous Gurdwara inside the campus of the University of Dhaka. Every Friday, it is kept open to the followers belonging to any religious communities, and food is served to the visitors. Precious words of Muslim and Hindu saints like Baba Farid, Naamdev, Kabir, Rabidas are incorporated in Sikh Scripture, and Guru Tegh Bahadur lays down his life for Hindu symbols (Dalawari, 2005). All these are some instances of love and devotion of the Sikh community towards the people of other faiths.

Guru Nanak founded two effective institutions- *Sangat* and *Pangat*, to establish equality and brotherhood among the people of different castes and faiths. These two concepts represent the true essence of love and brotherhood. *Sangat* is the congregation of people from different castes or religious backgrounds, and *Pangat* means sitting together in the same row. In *Sangat*, people from all communities sit together as equals to sing the praise of the Lord, their universal Father, addressing Him by all names with equal love. In *Pangat*, to share their feelings of brotherhood, people take food together in *Guru-Ka-Langar* (common kitchen) without any distinction of castes or religions, high or low, rich or poor, and prince or peasants (Dhillon, 2005; Singh K., 1996). These institutions still play a vital role in uniting people of different religious communities.

5. Concluding Analysis

The principles of Sikh liberalism can be comprehended by the universal and multidisciplinary messages of Sikhism. This research

is an outcome of the objective analysis of Sikh religious and cultural roots of liberalism from a universal perspective. It concludes by arguing that all of the above ideologies explained and analyzed in the light of Sikhism are closely linked with the principles of liberalism. Secularism, democracy, pluralism, freedom and equality are principal aspects of liberalism. Sikhism, as one of the youngest religions in the world, is fully compatible with all these principles. It can be concluded from the above discussion that the Sikh view of liberalism has universal acceptability. The analysis of the Sikh ideology of liberalism in promoting communal harmony leads to the following conclusions:

- Sikh liberalism can be one of the dominant ideas in promoting communal harmony.
- Sikhism is a humanitarian and modern religion that demonstrates the idea of secularism, democracy, good governance and religious pluralism.
- All Sikh Gurus aimed to establish the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humankind that promulgate the dictum of communal harmony.

More clearly, Sikhism advocates the messages of truthful living and gives utmost importance to selfless service, humility, equality, tolerance, compassion, love, contentment, humbleness, and prosperity for all humanity, which are the foundation for ensuring harmony in any society.

Sikhism has a liberal outlook that inculcates the spirit of brotherhood, catholicity, equality, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. It believes in the fundamental oneness of all religions where we all are the children of One Supreme Father, and this liberal message can play a unique role in promoting communal harmony in today's world. The paper has tried to reach its findings based on the doctrinal foundations of the principle of Sikh liberalism. It is a vast area of research, and it is impossible to decipher all aspects of this issue in such a short study. On the other hand, the careful analysis

of the relationship between different principles of liberalism and the ideology of Sikh liberalism can be a significant aspect of this work.

The conflict between liberalism and religious extremism has fueled racial tensions and intolerance in today's multicultural and multi-religious global society. Religious-based intolerance is one of the key obstacles to the potential harmonious relations among the followers of diverse faith communities. Unfortunately, religion has been a chief source of human conflict and disruption throughout history. This paper explores that religion, especially Sikhism, is not an obstacle to development and peaceful coexistence. It presents Sikhism as a religion of liberalism and humanism. It discovers that Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Sikh Scripture, and the liberal teachings of Sikh Gurus can play a unique role in securing communal harmony in today's world. The primary vision of all Sikh Gurus was to remove hatred and hypocrisy from the mind of the people of all communities. Today, hatred, bigotry and distrust prevail among the people of different communities. Various steps should be taken to improve this situation. All people are supposed to be tolerant, whole-hearted, and liberal in approach to the people of other faiths. After an in-depth analysis of the collected data, the current study makes some recommendations for the enrichment of the state system and human behavior in ensuring communal harmony, e.g., to grow a humanitarian and compassionate attitude towards all humankind as a creation of One Creator, not to consider one's own religion as the only truth, to regard the selfless service (*Seva*) to humanity as a great religion, to ensure equality and the rule of law at all levels of state and social life, and emphasizing individual freedom.

References

- Ahluwalia, J. S. (2003). *Liberating Sikhism from 'The Sikhs'*. Punjab: Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Alam, M. J. (2018). Understanding Humanism: The Sikh Perspective. *The Arts Faculty Journal*, 8-9(12-13), 41-54.
- Bhat, K. A. (2019). Political Thought of Guru nanak. *International*

Journal of All Research Writings, 2(6), 39-43.

Center, S. M. (1990). *Sikh Religion*. Michigan.

Dalawari, B. S. (2005). Guru Granth Sahib, Religious Tolerance and Universal Brotherhood. In D. B. Dhillon (Ed.), *Interfaith Study of Guru Granth Sahib* (pp. 218-222). Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.

Das, S. C. (2012). *Sri Guru Grontho Shahib Parikroma (A Critical Survey on Sri Guru Grontho Shahib)* . Dhaka : Ramon Publishers.

Dewey, J. (1935). The Future of Liberalism. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 32(9), 225-230.

Dhillon, D. J. (2004). Guru Granth-The Universal Scripture. In S. Singh (Ed.), *Guru Granth: A Perspective* (pp.186-197). Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.

Dhillon, D. J. (2005). Humanism of Guru Granth Sahib and World Peace. In D. B. Dhillon (Ed.), *Interfaith Study of Guru Granth Sahib* (pp. 87-98). Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.

Feinberg, J. (2007). Psychological egoism. In R. Shafer-Landau (Ed.), *Ethical theory: An anthology* (pp. 167-177). Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Galston, W. A. (1995). Two Concepts of Liberalism. *Ethics*, 105(3), 516-534.

Hopfe, L. M. (1991). *Religions of the World*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Islam, K. N. (2011). Guru Nanaker Sampreetir Dashana. *Dev Memorial lecture*. University of Dhaka.

Islam, K. N. (2017). Guru Grantha Shahib: A Model for Interfaith Understanding in Today's World. *Philosophy and Progress*, 61-62, 1-14.

Islam, K. N., & Islam, A. (2016). *Tulonamulak Dharma, Naitikota O Manab Kollyan (Comparative Religion, Morality and Welfare of*

Human being). Dhaka: Sangbed.

Joshi, L. (1980). *Sikhism*. Patiala: Panjabi University.

Juss, S. S. (2010). The secular tradition in Sikhism. *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion*, 11(2), 270-357.

Kaur, G. (2005). Guru Granth Sahib and Interfaith Dialogue. In D. B. Dhillon (Ed.), *Interfaith Study of Guru Granth Sahib* (pp. 239-245). Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.

Khalsa, S. S. (n.d.). *English Translation of Guru Granth Sahib*. Tucson, USA: Hand Made Books.

Lal, H., & Attre, R. (2019). *Guru Nanak's Religious Pluralism and Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. New Delhi: Guru Nanak Foundation.

Nishter, N. S. (2015). *Sikh-Muslim Relations*. Hyderabad: International Sikh Centre for Interfaith Relations.

Sangha, S. S. (2020). The Political Philosophy of Guru Nanak and Its Contemporary Relevance. *Sikh Research Journal*, 5(2), 23-39.

Sidhu, G. S. (2006). *Sikh Religion and Science*. Sydney: Austral Gurdwara.

Sikka, D. A. (1972). *Facets of Guru Nanak's Thought*. Ludhiana: Bee Kay Publications.

Singh, A. (2009). *Ethics of the Sikhs*. Patiala: Punjabi University.

Singh, A. (2012). The Idea of Multicultural Society in Sikhism. *Understanding Sikhism-The Research Journal*, 14(1-2), 71-75.

Singh, D. (1989). Concept of Haumain. In J. S. Mann, & H. S. Saron (Eds.), *Advanced Studies in Sikhism* (pp. 89-97). Irvine, USA: Sikh Community of North America.

Singh, D. (2010). *Sikhism and Religious Pluralism*. Patiala: Panjabi University.

Singh, D. G. (1988). *A History of the Sikh People (1469-1988)*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited.

- Singh, D. I. (1997). *Guru Nanak: A Global Vision*. Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.
- Singh, D. J. (2011). *A Complete Guide to Sikhism*. Ludhiana: Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Singh, K. (Ed.). (1996). *Current Thoughts on Sikhism*. Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies.
- Singh, K. (2005). Peace: The Sikh Perspective. In D. B. Dhillon (Ed.), *Interfaith Study of Guru Granth Sahib* (pp. 211-217). Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.
- Singh, P. P. (2017). *Saga of Supreme Sacrifices*. Rajasthan: Bodhi Prakashan.
- Sullivan, D. J. (1988). Advancing the Freedom of Religion or Belief Through the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Religious Intolerance and Discrimination. *American Journal of International Law*, 82(3), 487-520.
- Thapar, S. S. (1904). *A Critical Study of the Life and Teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev*. Rawalpindi: The Commercial Union Press.
- Waldron, J. (1987). Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism. *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1950-), 37(147), 127-150.
- Wissenburg, M. (2006). Liberalism. In A. Dobson, & R. Eckersley (Eds.), *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge* (pp. 20-34). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.