

Possibility of Sustainable Peace and Harmony Through Religious Places of Worship: The Case of Sikh Gurdwara and Guru Ka Langar

Rahima Akhter¹

Injamam Mahbub Mojumder²

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ABSTRACT

Guru ka langar and Gurdwara represent the central institutions of Sikhism. These institutions are deeply connected to the mechanisms of community welfare and social integration. This article has explored how Gurdwara and Guru ka langar work as a system of engaging sects and faiths. In this article, it has also been explored that Guru Ka langar worked as a social reformer in 15th-century India, when different religions and castes were at odds. Gurdwara and Guru ka langar have a practical impact on social norms, which can lead people towards a sense of community and sensibility. Through this article, it can also be identified how a religion, through its religious place of worship, could contribute to a whole society and operationalize religious activism for peacebuilding. In this article, a historical background has been provided to understand the formation of Sikh theology by Guru Nanak. Based on the historical and contemporary activism of the Gurdwara and Guru ka langar, it has been explored that these two systems of Sikhism can effectively serve as a platform for sustainable peace, community development, and inclusive governance.

¹ Lecturer, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka. Email: rahimamukta@du.ac.bd (Corresponding Author)

² Lecturer, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka. Email: injamamwrc@du.ac.bd

Introduction

Situating Sikhism in the Discourse of Social Reform

In the 15th century, Sikhism emerged in Punjab around Guru Nanak (1469- 1539), and was developed and continued under the nine successive Sikh Gurus (Teachers) (McLeod, 2009). This religion is also known as *Gurmat*, commonly Sikh Dharma. The word Sikh originates from the *sishta*, a Sanskrit word meaning ‘disciple’ or ‘learner’. It is also connected to *sikhsha*, meaning “teaching” in general (Singh, 2010). From its inception, Sikhism posited itself in response to the entrenched extreme caste-based discrimination and gender biases.

Globally, Sikhism ranked as the fifth-largest organised religion with an estimated 25 to 30 million followers around the world.³ That signifies it has growing impetus and impactful activities, which are making this religion an influential religious tradition. Sikhism has gained immense popularity and acceptance in India from its very inception. Sikhism advocated its philosophy and doctrine through its activism and action and forms the very beginning. Historical analyses suggest that the expansive role played by Sikhism covered both religious and socio-political dynamics of that period. It was an utmost necessity of the time when Indian society was trembling with religious dogmatism and systematic marginalisation. It followed the way of integrating people from all the sectors of society without any discrimination. This Sikh policy was unique and, of course, was a turning point in the history of this Indian subcontinent. It was also a time of deep introspection for the adherents of Hinduism and Islam in India, who were devoid of their respective teachings of generosity and humanity (Alam & Mojumder, 2023).

Sikhism has faced many obstacles and persecution in different phases of history, but has survived and become more visionary and active in social work. The Sikh concepts of egalitarian society and its practical activism through the Gurdwara have had and still have a significant effect on society. Gurdwara is sometimes translated as the Sikh Temple, and the literal meaning goes as the “door or house of the Guru” is open to all, and anyone is welcome to enter into Gurdwara by following some decorum to show respect. It not only functions as a spiritual space but also as a locus of civil engagement, community service, and social mobilisation even among the diaspora Sikhs. One of the central parts of a Gurdwara is *Guru ka langar* (free community kitchen).

Sikh social work through the Gurdwara and Guru ka langar attracted the world’s attention. This is no longer confined to India, but it is now globally known. Through

³ Retrieved from World Population Review, accessed in 30 April, 2024. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/sikhism-by-country>

this, it can be asserted that religious places of worship have a significant impact on society. It is time to re-conceptualize the religious institutions as instruments of social development. This study argues and posits Sikhism as a case study of faith-based humanitarianism where the Gurdwara and Guru Ka Langar have increasingly been recognized as an organized agent of multiculturalism, pluralism, interfaith harmony, and social welfare. It has also transnational impact in strengthening diasporic Sikh identity and solidarity.

No doubt, almost all the religious places of worship and prayers serve a two-fold purpose: religious activities and social work. Sikhism undoubtedly promoted this practice in an unprecedented manner. From the historical point of view concept of Gurdwara and *Guru ka langar* worked as a social revolution and reformation. In this modern era, Sikhism is still propagating and practicing this system. This paper analyses the Sikh social activism through the Gurudwara with special focus on Guru ka langar. Since religion as a social phenomenon has various social connections and effects, it has become an integral part of academia and policy-making. That is why the Sikh concept of social work through the Gurdwara and Guru ka langar has been taken into consideration. Through this study, the method, impact, and relation between Guru ka langar and social harmony will be outlined. Though extensive works on Sikhism and a few on Gurdwara-based activism, specific work on the intersection between sustainable peace and Guru ka langar has not gained much attention. Hence, this paper seeks to address the gap and offer insights valuable to the researchers, students of religions, social work, and peace, and of course to the policymakers.

Sikh Conceptions of Universal Humanity: Rethinking Identity, Caste, and Religion

A significant breakthrough in the practice of interreligious harmony is the Sikh concept of religious plurality. The idea of religious harmony and the veracity of every faith worldwide were taught by and spread by all of the Sikh Gurus. Guru Nanak insisted that, to become a *sisya* (Sikh), one must demonstrate empathy and tolerance for the faiths of others. It is also imperative that conditions be met to allow followers of all religions to observe and practice their respective faiths free from oppression and fear (Islam & Islam, 2016). The development of the Sikh sacred texts, the *Adi Granth* and, later, gained the full form as the *Guru Granth Sahib*, provides insight into the diversity and concord of religions advocated by Guru Nanak.

The Sikh tradition articulates a normative structural society that transcends radicalism in all its forms. For this reason, he aimed to create a worldwide religious text that would include harmony, spirituality, and a philosophy of love pertinent to multicultural ethics and interfaith relations. The followers of Guru Nanak fulfilled his dream, and

in 1603, the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, called the book the *Adi Granth*, which means literally “the first book.” The Sikh scriptures were collected in the *Adi Granth*. Later, the writings of the ninth Guru were added to the *Adi Granth*, giving the book the new name *Guru Granth Sahib*. The compositions of the ninth Guru were completed during the reign of Guru Govind Singh (1666–1708).

The formation and development of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is another remarkable and unprecedented event in the history of religions. This is a sacred book compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, but it comprises the writings from people from different faiths and sects! In addition to the hymn of the Sikh Gurus, he included the works of up to thirty men of wisdom from other castes, creeds, sects, and professions to reflect the philosophical commitment to equality. They included Farid from Multan, from Rajasthan, Dhanu from Bengal, Jaydev, Surdas from Awudh, Namadev, Pipa, Sain, Kabir, Rabidas, and Bhikhan from Uttar Pradesh. Among the mystic poets were Kabir, who was a weaver, Sadhna, a butcher, Namdev, a seamstress, Dhana, a Jath, Sain, a barber, Rabidas, a dalit cobbler, and a few more Muslim Sufis. It should be noted that in order to bring the Indian people together via their literature and culture, Guru Govind Singh hired fifty-two poets to translate a variety of ancient Indian classics at his court (Islam, 2017). This inclusivity boldly stood as a syncretic and decentralized spiritual canon countering the intentional hegemonic religious authoritarianism and the practice of Brahminical “sacred” monopoly. It can also be termed as one of the proto-multifaith and multicultural models of spiritual inclusivity.

The scripture was placed in the *Harimandir Sahib*, the main temple in Amritsar that later gained notoriety as the *Golden Temple*. Following the passing of the eleventh Guru, the *Golden Temple* came to be recognized as the everlasting residence of *Guru Granth Sahib* (McLeod, 2009). The *Guru Granth Sahib* is regarded as a philosophical and intellectual treasure trove. The Sikhs’ sacred text is the *Guru Granth Sahib*. By giving the Sikhs a living Guru who provides them with eternal guidance, it completes their human Guruship.

From its foundation, Sikhism has adhered to a different path centered on justice, peace, harmony, and humility. The ideas of ritualism, conversion, and the egotistical creation of unique standards and regulations were unimportant to Sikhism, which is why it has welcomed the positive aspects of all faiths without distinction.

The foundational emphasis on human dignity and ontological understanding of humanity in Sikhism can be found in the biographical narratives of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak was strict against the caste system and social stratifications. Since his childhood, he had the instinct of showing equal respect and affection for all irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. One day, Child Nanak came back to his home after playing with his mates.

When it was time for the evening meal, he declared that he was not hungry. His mother got worried and checked his forehead to see if he had a fever. Nanak replied that he was completely fine. He then said, 'I was passing by Shambhu's house and saw him eating his meal. I was hungry too, and when Shambhu offered me to join him, I joined him and shared his meal. My stomach is full now and cannot eat more' (Dhillon, 2013).

Shambhu's mother was from the Sudra caste, and her profession was sweeping and cleaning. At that period, having food with a so-called lower caste was considered transgressive and even criminal within the orthodox Hindu caste frameworks. Since Guru Nanak was born to a Kshatriya family and Kshatriya was among the top two higher castes of the Hindu society, his mother and father were surprised and worried about his behavior. Guru Nanak's mother was afraid that if that continued, they might be outcasts from society. She began to explain the caste rule to young Nanak that he (Nanak) must not eat in Shambhu's house again. Nanak was calm but puzzled. He asked: 'Why? He (Shambhu) eats here when his mother comes to clean and sweep.' 'That is different. But you cannot do this. They are Sudras, untouchables. Their food is polluted and unclean. You are Kshatriya, you will defile your caste if you share their food' his mother replied (Dhillon, 2013).

Nanak promptly protested and said, 'But the food was not unclean.' Nanak's mother was perplexed and became very concerned about the future of Nanak, as it would be very difficult to teach Nanak the caste rules. The society made her composed by saying that Nanak will learn it automatically when he grows grown-up (Dhillon, 2013). This was a symbolic rejection by Guru Nanak of the imaginary religious and social stratification. He raised his voice against the false formalism and injustice and strictly maintained it through his works throughout his life. When he was about eleven, he reached the age of the sacred ceremony of *Upanayana*, or wearing the sacred thread. Nanak's father made great arrangements for the ceremony and guests to attend. Nanak was seated, and the priest, after reciting the Sanskrit verses from the Veda, was about to put the sacred thread on the shoulder of Nanak. Guru Nanak told him to stop and asked the priest about the thread (Singh, D. & Singh, J., n.d., p.11).

'What is this cotton thread? Why is it worn, and what advantages does it give to the wearer?' He asked. The priest replied that the thread is the symbol of high lineage and high birth. Nanak asked again, how it was made, who made it, and how long it lasts, and how it carries the spiritual and high lineage. The priest was confused but replied that the thread is special and sacred because a Brahmin made it and endowed it with the power of the mantras. When it decays, it is replaced by a new one. Then Nanak again asked, 'Why are goats killed to arrange the feasts?' The priest again replied: your father is a Kshatriya, and the guests are Kshatriyas, and it is lawful for you all to have goat meat (Singh, D. & Singh, J., n.d. p.11).

Nanak boldly spoke, “What is this strange ceremony?” The Brahmin spins a thread out of cotton and twists it; it decays over time, and a new one is replaced. If the thread had any supernatural or extra power, it would not fray or decay. The ceremony is centered on a feast where the killing of innocent goats is justified. Only eating is real, and the guests incessantly demand more (Singh, D. & Singh, J., n.d. p.11). Guru Nanak then stared at the priest and said that he would not wear that thread. The entire assembly was stunned and tried to persuade him to wear the thread. But he was strict and refused to be persuaded.

The congregation was astonished, at the same time shocked by hearing such deep philosophical realities from a boy who was only eleven years old. He disclosed the illusion of aristocracy, which depends on a mere thread. He unveils the reality of life, which is love, compassion, and empathy, not only for human beings but also for sentient beings. He rejected wearing the ‘thread’ as a sacred symbol of the higher class because he believed that wearing this thread may cause the rise of pride and arrogance in one’s mind.

It is tremendously amazing that at this very young age, Nanak could realise the temporariness of this materialistic world, and he stressed the contentment and truth. From a young age, he was enough conscious to distinguish the differences among false aristocracy, empty ritualism, ancient blind faiths, and real spirituality. He was rationally strong enough to question the priest bravely about the applications and usefulness of the meaningless ritualism. His theories and practices might be described as an early stance on subaltern religiosity, where traditional orthodoxy is contested through alternative epistemologies rooted in ethical practice and logic rather than generational vague formalism and rigidity.

Guru ka Langar: A Multidimensional Lens on Sacred Hospitality and Social Reform

To establish and strengthen a casteless society, Guru Nanak took practical steps by initiating *Guru ka langar*. It was unique and, of course, revolutionary. *Guru ka langar* made it possible for all to sit and eat together without any class, gender, or religious prejudices. It is a part of parcel of the Sikh temple, Gurdwara. Every time a Gurdwara is opened, an orange flag (Nishan Sahib) bearing the Sikh symbol for a *Khanda* (a symbol of two swords) is raised, signifying that it is a Sikh establishment that welcomes everyone and serves as a light of hope and hospitality. It was in the history of Sikhism, both spiritually important and socially revolutionary as a concept.

The “*langar*” and the Guru Granth Sahib are essential components of every Gurdwara, regardless of external architectural variations (Sikh House of Worship: The Gurdwara and Tradition of Langar, nd). *Guru ka langar* follows a tradition of cooking together,

eating together, and even washing the used utensils together. This practice has a very practical impact on the minds of the common people. It symbolizes a sense of unity and cooperation. It also strengthens the sense of oneness and fellow feelings, irrespective of religions and castes. It can be mentioned that pure vegetarian food is served in the *langar* to maintain the standard of common kitchen which ensures that it is not against or violating one's religious beliefs and practices (Singh, 2009). In 'Guru ka langar', there is also another central concept or practice of Sikhism, i.e., *pangat*. "Pangat" means a line or long row, which is maintained by the *Sangat* in *langar*. *Sangat* is the gathering place for the community where everyone unites for prayer and spiritual reflection (Islam, 2017). It is crucial to follow *Pangat* since this straight line promotes the practice of non-caste (McLeod, 2009), and it has symbolic importance too. *Pangat* spiritually and practically removes the complexities and hierarchies of class, religion, and colour. At the same time, sitting in a long row of *Pangat*, no one can claim superiority by sitting in front of the *Sangat*, and no one can feel inferior by sitting backward. It promotes mutual respect and a sense of shared identity.

The Sikh concept of "Sangat," which means "being together," is one of its main tenets. It is the assembly of the Sikh congregation or local community with other people. *Sangat* is necessary for Sikhism's ethical and spiritual motivation. Guru Nanak marked the importance of *Sangat* by saying that "Through *Sangat*, one obtains the treasure of the Divine *Nam* (Name). Just as iron rubbed against the philosopher's stone turns into gold, so does dark ignorance transform into brilliant light in the company of the good." A prominent Sikh saying about *Sangat* is: "One disciple is a single Sikh, two form a holy association, but where there are five, there is the Ultimate Reality Itself" (Singh, 2009, p. 33).

Sangat is also open for all, like *Pangat*. Members of Sikhism sit on the floor together, engaging themselves in listening to the readings of the holy texts, singing hymns, reciting verses, and praying. Thus, *Sangat* provides an inclusive, harmonious congregation. During the time of Guru Nanak, the *Sangat* was open to all who wished to follow him (Singh, 2009). The ideology of establishing *Sangat* was to rethink the imposed prejudices of social stratification. Guru Nanak institutionalized his visions of unity and equity through establishing *Sangat* and *Pangat*, and it was a bloodless revolution led by Guru Nanak (Islam, 2016).

There is a very popular historical account regarding the *Guru ka langar* and Emperor Akbar. As it is well-known that Emperor Akbar was an admirer of interreligious dialogue and harmony, and he had a great interest and affection for the Sikh community. On the way to Lahore from Delhi in 1569, Emperor Akbar visited Guru Amar Das in Goindwal, a place in Punjab not very far from Amritsar, accompanied by the Raja of Haripur. When he reached the Gurdwara, he was welcomed warmly. When Emperor

Akbar entered the Gurdwara, he was astonished to see that a myriad of men and women were dining together in a row. It was very unusual for all because at that time in Indian society, different castes and classes eating together was unbelievable, and unfortunately, even today in some cases! Emperor Akbar saw that Brahmins were eating with the Sudras and even with the people from different faiths, such as Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. The Emperor explained about the essence of langar that in the langar, there is no caste, upper class, or lower class; even there is no conflict between the religions of two contradictory faiths. All are received with equal respect and have to share the same place, the same food, at the same time. Then the Emperor was offered to accept the hospitality of the langar by sitting on the ground just the same as the others were doing (Islam, 2016)!

All the accompanied fellows of the Emperor were very shocked at the gestures from the *langar* authority, and they felt that it was an insult to the mighty Emperor Akbar. But the Emperor was different from the others; he was delighted by the groundbreaking philosophy of the *langar* and Sikhism. He accepted the offer, and he was served on the ground, and foods were served on a plate made of leaves. He realised the significance of the *langar* for any society because this free kitchen provides food to the poor and travelers. And people from miles away came to eat at the *langar*, and no one was sent back on an empty stomach. Emperor Akbar wanted to contribute to the *langar* and offered the Guru some local property that he owned so that they could arrange food from the taxes of those villages. Guru Amar Das refused that offer politely by saying that the *langar* must be operated by voluntary work, *seva*, and “each day’s collections are spent on the same day and for the next day I trust in God” (Islam, 2016; Islam, 2019; Bigger, 1990).

Emperor Akbar again proposed that he wanted to give those lands to the daughter of the Guru, Bibi Bhani. According to some Sikh versions, this proposal was also being rejected. But some mentioned that it was accepted and the city of Amritsar (city of the nectar) was founded upon the land gifted by Emperor Akbar (Bigger, 1990). According to some historians, the Sikhs demanded a small piece of land for the Gurdwara, but the emperor was so pleased by them that he donated 500 bighas of land to the Guru (Das, 2006). Under the supervision of Guru Amar Das, his son-in-law, Guru Ram Das, dug a pool and a tank for the ritual washing and water supply. In the centre of this pool, the famous Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple is now located (Islam, 2016; Bigger, 1990).

The praxis of Sangat and Pangat was a nonviolent grassroots revolution. It was initiated by Guru Nanak but carried out by the common people because they were looking forward to a platform to challenge the ongoing evil practices in the name of cast and gender. It was a symbolic protest from the common people to the authoritarian religious rigidity and socio-political hierarchy under the banner of Sikhism. Undoubtedly, Sikhism guided and motivated them spiritually and ethically.

The Social Dynamics of Giving: Charity and Inclusion through Guru ka Langar

Sikhism has included the notion of charity and community service in its theological core, also, most notably ‘Sarbat Da Vala’. ‘Sarbat Da Vala’ is a Punjabi phrase that means “welfare to all,” “may good come to all”. It is the concluding term of the Sikh prayer called “Ardas”. This phrase is the core concept of Sikh principles, and it is repeated in Sikh scriptures with absolute significance (“Sarbat Da Bhala”, n.d.). The full couplet reads: Nanak nam chahrdi kala tere bhane sarbat da bhala (May God’s Name, May the human spirit forever triumph, Nanak: And in Thy will peace and prosperity come to one and all) (“Sarbat Da Bhala”, n.d. para. 3).

Sikhism is suited to the needs of modern life on the basis of logic and justice. Scholars have termed Sikhism a ‘this-worldly,’ ‘modernistic,’ and ‘pragmatic’ tradition (Prill, 2015, p. 215, Singh, 2010, p. 28) because Sikhism does not encourage reluctance to the world and denouncing the duties but emphasizes on non-attachment to lust, greed, pride, anger, and other worldly-ills.

According to Sikhism, mankind has certain duties to the community (Sangat). This is called “Seva” (selfless service), which is an integral part of Sikhism. Guru Nanak says: You shall find peace, doing *seva* (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 25, line 19), “Amid this world, do *seva*” (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 26, line 1). “Seva” reflects the Sikh concepts of universal love, justice, and morality. It is a charity, selfless work for the community. The upkeep of the Gurdwara and such activities is funded by donations from Sikhs. To make the charitable work more active and encourage the Sikhs to be more committed to community and society, the Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, instituted a system of taxes in which Sikhs had to pay a tithe (Dasvand) of their earnings to fund acts of Seva (Nesbitt, 2016).

Sikh morality has been summed up by the maxim: *kirat karni, vand chhakna, te nam japna*, meaning dedication to honest earning and living, sharing, and to the practice of the chanting of the Beatific Name repeatedly. In Sikhism, the Punjabi word *kirat* means effort, that is, physical labour for earning one’s daily living. This is the basis of Sikh ethics and marks the dignity of all labour. Sikhism believes that those who do not work despite being able to work offend the faith. Honest earning and living enable a positive attitude towards life and responsibility. Sikhism does not promote renouncing worldly duties. At the same time, Sikhism disproves overconsumption because overconsumption leads to selfishness, and this is against the concept of fraternity and harmony of Sikhism.

Contemporary Activities of Gurdwara and Guru ka Langar

The Delhi Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (DGPC) supervises ten Gurudwaras, including Gurudwara Shishganj, Rakabganj, and Bangla Sahib come under the

jurisdiction of. DGPC administers the finance, management, and governance of these institutions. While DGPC controls the administrative monetary affairs. Shiromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) appoints *Granthis*, the religious officiates/ (priests) employed on a salaried basis. They are exclusively appointed for religious or spiritual duties, not involved in the financial or administrative decision-making process of Gurdwaras. Office bearers of the DGPC are nominated by the SGPC. DGPC monitors and centralizes cash collections and donations, etc. A substantial portion of these donations comes from Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Sikhs, particularly living in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Although the Gurdwaras attract a diverse group of devotees, volunteers from different religious groups, donations are predominantly from the Sikhs. Contributions are mainly made for the religious functions, where charity and social initiatives are not the main concern in most cases, but DGPC relocates a portion of these funds for social welfare and community development efforts. It is noteworthy, DGPC does not issue any No tax-exemption certificates to the contributors, which is unique from many other religious and charitable organisations (Sundar, 2001).

Donations from the people are spent on charitable works such as establishing schools, colleges, and hospitals. A portion is spent on running langars to feed devotees, maintenance of Gurdwaras, and a good portion is donated to those individuals who are in economic crisis. In addition to financial contribution, devotees are active in voluntary service known as “Kar seva”, which reflects the Sikh ethos and selfless service. These acts include such as managing footwear areas, shoes or cooking, serving, and cleaning in the langar, etc. Periodically, DGPC issues a special appeal for particular activism in which devotees often contribute above their routine offerings. The DGPC eschews any formal collaboration with NGOs, preferring its own. It has its infrastructure, values, and standard of service (Sundar, 2001).

During the early 1900s, Teja Singh, who was a Cambridge student at the time, largely initiated the founding of the first Sikh organisation, Khalsa Jatha (central gurdwara) of British Isles (KJBI), which was founded in 1908 as London became a major hub for Indian education. Teja Singh was the driving force behind the 1911 idea to purchase a property in London and utilize it as a gurdwara. A Putney home was rented for this purpose (Sing, 2006). For the project, the Maharajah of Patiala contributed £1000. Consequently, the Maharajah of Patiala performed a 63-year lease agreement for 9 Sinclair Road in Shepherd’s Bush (Darshan, 2004). The Shepherd’s Bush Gurdwara swiftly rose to prominence as the center of the tiny British community. The Shepherd’s Bush gurdwara was the first place most Sikh visitors from India went after arriving in Southampton. The gurdwara and its congregation assisted many students in acclimating to life in Britain (Singh, 2006).

Roughly 1% of Canadians are Sikhs, which is now equivalent to the percentage of Jews living in this nation. Seventy percent of Sikhs in Canada reside in Vancouver and Toronto, while ninety percent are in British Columbia and Ontario. At the beginning of the 20th century, males from the Sikh community immigrated to Canada on the West Coast. For Sikhs in Canada, the langar is not just significant, but also a unique part of their existence. The langar's role in fostering a sense of community among Sikhs in Canada is remarkable. Especially those attending universities and the diaspora Sikhs are now well connected through the Gurdwara and langar. Based on the census data from 2021 revealed that the Sikh community in Canada has increased by 30% over the last decade. Notably, this has increased the importance of Gurdwaras and Langars in Canada as a social, cultural, and spiritual hub of community formation in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022).

It is noteworthy that langar cuisine preparation is typically accessible to anyone. As participant observers who identified as a non-Sikh couple, in almost every Gurdwara, it has been seen that the volunteers have been happy to assist in langar (Desjardins and Desjardins, 2009)! Recent studies have highlighted that the Langar has a multifaceted impact on society beyond its religious and communal commitments. For instance, a qualitative study in Northern England explored the role of Langar in Health promotion among the Sikh communities through its dietary health intervention (Daffu-O'Reilly et al., 2024).

If we take the case of Bangladesh, there are some Gurdwaras in Bangladesh run by the Sikh Community in India. One of the prominent Gurdwaras in Bangladesh is Gurdwara Nanak Shahi at the Dhaka University campus. There is no single Sikh citizen in Bangladesh; notwithstanding that, hundreds of people from different denominations gather at this Gurudwara every Friday for Pangat and Sangat. This promotes interfaith understanding in our nation (Akhter, 2025). Not only in Bangladesh, where there are Gurudwaras, but also, especially in Europe and America, the Sangat and pangat have enhanced the Sikh community's reputation and contributed to the advancement of interfaith cooperation (Islam, 2017). Updated surveys have identified that the interfaith activism of Gurdwaras has increased by 25% in the last five years, which includes interfaith dialogue, community dialogue, and social integration efforts (British Council, 2023)

Conclusion

Religious institutions like the Gurdwara and Guru ka langar have been established as an instrumental social mechanism. It is a significant finding for understanding the pragmatic role of religion in society. Guru ka langar has historical importance, overcoming the boundary of merely ritualistic and spiritual phenomena, which makes

it a social system among the Sikhs. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, and the later Gurus were visionary about their approach and religion. That is why they dragged the faith from theory to practice. Gurdwara and Guru ka langar gave Sikhism an identity and paved the way for Sikhism to reach more people without converting them to Sikhism. It was a revolutionary approach by the Sikh community and attracted the masses, irrespective of religion and caste. Guru ka langar single-handedly rose against the existing caste system of 15th-century India. It also establishes the example that people can be at peace if they want. The formation of Sangat and Pangat can be categorized as a socio-psychological action in Sikhism. It can also be identified as a watershed in the history of religious and social harmony. Over time, Guru ka langar and Sikhism crossed the boundary of India and made their places in different countries in the world. It is contributing to social advancements through its charitable work. Besides, it is also significantly contributing to interfaith understanding. That is why it can be said that to ensure sustainable peace in society, religious houses or places of worship can work as a center of social integrity. The Sikh concepts of Gurdwara and Guru ka langar can be a practical model of becoming a religion as a pragmatic intersection of social welfare and communal development for sustainable peace and tangible development. These Sikh paradigms can be incorporated into the broader framework of peacebuilding and social cohesion. It can be a valuable insight for social scientists, religious scholars, and government stakeholders who are aiming to leverage faith-based approaches to address contemporary social problems.

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