Demonstrating the Sikh Ideals of Harmlessness and Universal Lovingkindness

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Sikh ethics, as derived from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (the Sikh holy scriptures, abbreviated as “SGGS”), are focused on broad moral principles (e.g., compassion, justice, mercy), rather than strict rules (including dietary rules).

While eating meat is not forbidden in either Sikh scripture (paraphrased as “Gurbani”) or in the Sikh code of conduct (the Rehat Maryada), core Sikh ethical principles, as seen in Gurbani, support a vegan diet.

PART I: FIVE SIKH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES THAT SUPPORT A VEGAN DIET

1. Having a vegan diet is a compassionate practice, and the Sikh Gurus placed great importance on compassion.

SGGS Page 51 Full Shabad

Saṭ saṅtṛkh ḍarīṛ kāmṛgānī ḍē kāṛnī sgr. Āp chẖod sabẖ hōe rēṅg jis ḍēṛ ḍarīṛ nīṛṅkṛ. Practice truth, contentment and kindness; this is the most excellent way of life. One who is so blessed by the Formless Lord God renounces selfishness, and becomes the dust of all.

SGGS Page 272 Full Shabad

Barahm giṅī kī sabẖ ēpar maṅū. Bārahm giṅī tē kāẖẖ būṛg na bẖaiṅ. The God-conscious being shows kindness to all. No evil comes from the God-conscious being.

SGGS Page 508 Full Shabad

Jī ḍaiṅ maṅū sarbaṭār ramṇāṅ param hansah rīṭ.7 Show kindness and mercy to all beings, and realize that the Lord is pervading everywhere; this is the way of life of the enlightened soul, the supreme swan. 7

SGGS Page 1354 Full Shabad

Sabẖṉ raṭāṁ hitāṅ maṅū kīṛṭāṅ kāḷī karm kṛīṭuṅ. To be imbued and attuned to the Shabad; to be kind and compassionate; to sing the Kirtan - these are the most worthwhile actions in this Dark Age of Kali Yuga.
2. A vegan diet entails no killing of animals, and the Sikh Gurus valued life.

You kill living beings, and call it a righteous action. Tell me, brother, what would you call an unrighteous action? SGGS 1103

Jao sabh meh ek khud a khaat hao ta kio murgi marai. ||1||
You say that the One Lord is in all, so why do you kill chickens? ||1|| SGGS 1350

3. A vegan diet does not involve any exploitation of animals, and the Sikh Gurus and shaheeds (martyrs) throughout Sikh history devoted themselves to fighting exploitation.

PART II: STEPS TOWARDS A VEGAN LANGAR (SIKH FOOD SERVED IN THE TEMPLE AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF WORSHIP)

Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) have historically been lacto-vegetarian. The transition to an almost entirely dairy-free gurdwara is within reach.

1. Invite a dietician or other health professional with familiarity with Punjabi food and the state of health of Punjabis to address the sangat (congregation) and discuss some of the health challenges (diabetes, heart disease) facing the community and the health benefits of a vegan diet.

2. Substitute gheo (clarified butter) with vegetable oils (ideally, olive oil) in the preparation of:
   A) Daal (lentils)
   B) Sabzi (vegetables)
   C) Chapati/Parshada (Indian flatbread)

3. Substitute cow’s milk with almond milk
   A) Kheer (rice pudding)
   B) Chai (tea)
PART III: RESOURCES AND WEBSITES


“Guru Granth Sahib on Kindness,” Sikhiwiki.


“Vegetarianism,” Sikhiwiki.

Explanation of Sikhism

“Cowspiracy” and “What the Health” are on Netflix.

“Earthlings” is a very intense video that shows the unbelievable cruelty endured by animals at human hands. If you plan to show it, you need to give people fair warning. While it has caused many people to go vegan on the spot, it can be traumatic to watch, and viewers need to be given great compassion and care while watching it.

“A Life Connected” is a short, 11 minute, but powerful and feel-good video online.

“The Metaphysics of Food,” by Will Tuttle.

“Peaceable Kingdom” and “The Witness” can be watched free online.

“A Prayer for Compassion,” by Thomas Jackson.

PART IV: RECIPES

Vegan kheer

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