Diasporic Identity of Sikh Youth Among Jakarta's Multicultural Society

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The presence of the Sikh religion in Indonesia, particularly in Jakarta, is a group of ethnic minorities among Jakarta's multicultural society. Recognizing Sikh followers is seen in their identity, which is distinguished by the use of 5K. In Jakarta, the young Sikh diaspora also creates communities to maintain their sense of identity. The Sikh diaspora must be able to maintain their identity discrimination in order to continue practicing the Sikh religion as taught by Guru Nanak Dev and the other nine Sikh Gurus.

**Methodology:** the method used in this research is qualitative type by using literature study method and interviewing sources. Data from literature study are taken from books, journals, proceedings and articles related to history, traditions, religious activity and current issues related to Sikh religion, position and identity of Sikh youth in Indonesia, especially in the city of Jakarta.

**Findings:** Sikhism faces several challenges and issues that may affect young people, including questions of identity, belonging and meaning, as do all faith communities. The use of social media and digital podcasts has certainly been effective in capturing the attention of Sikh youth, as has the building of a Sikh online community using the Gurdwara as the primary venue for delivering Sikh religious enrichment programmes for youth.

**Implications:** The strategy for strengthening beliefs and self-identity in Sikh youth is to begin using social media with the goal of being easily accepted by Sikh youth in this digital era.

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**Introduction**

Sikhs are a religious group that has lived and thrived in the world for over 500 years. They are a very peaceful people and have many followers around the world. The Sikh faith is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and has spread across the world ever since. They follow the teachings of their holy book called "Guru Granth Sahib" which is written in Gurmukhi script. The words of this scripture are taken from the scriptures of other religions such as Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity (Ismail, 2017).
Sikhs are followers of Guru Nanak Dev, which means "disciples, followers, seekers of truth." He was succeeded by nine other enlightened Gurus during his lifetime, culminating with Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) (Fisher & Rinehart, 2017).

![Guru Nanak Dev](Figure1.jpg)

Figure 1 Guru Nanak Dev engages in dialogue with religious leaders in Punjab (Fisher & Rinehart, 2017).

It is said that Sikhism was brought by Guru Nanak Dev. After Guru Nanak's death, his teachings were passed on through nine Gurus. The development of the religion and its teachings was contributed to by each Guru. Beginning with Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, then the 10th and last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (Esha, 2006) (Who are the 10 Gurus, 2022).

Guru Gobind Singh was also a key figure in the development and refinement of the earlier religious scripture of the Sikhs, the Adi Granth, into what is now known as the Guru Granth Sahib. After Guru Gobind Singh died, the Guru Granth Sahib was declared the last Sikh Guru and came to be held in high esteem by the Sikh community. Guru Gobind Singh is also remembered for his contributions to the development of the religious and cultural identity of the Sikhs.

Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred book of the Sikhs. It was written by Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das have contributed to this book. Among other writings, Guru Granth Sahib contains hymns, poems, stories and teachings of these Gurus. The Indian city of Amritsar (now belonging to Pakistan) is the birthplace of the Sikh religion.

Since the 1920s, during the conflict between the British government (British Columbia) and the partition of India in 1947, Sikhs have been taken out of the Punjab region and expanded globally by their followers (Chatterjee, 2018). The Sikhs themselves entered the territory of the Republic of Indonesia through Aceh and North Sumatra, eventually migrating to DKI Jakarta (Parlindungan & Manwarjit, 2022). The existence of their places of worship, namely the Gurdawara in the Tanjung Priok area, which was officially used in 1925, in the Pasar Baru, Ciputat and Ciledug areas, is also said to be evidence of the presence of Sikhs in Jakarta.

The Sikh Diaspora is the group of Sikhs who live or have lived outside of the Punjab region. According to Esman (1986) in (Jathol, 2019), the term "diaspora" refers to a group of ethnic minorities with migrant
backgrounds who have sentimental or material ties to their country of origin. The conflict that took place forced the Sikh diaspora to leave its home region.

According to the characteristics mentioned in (Jathol, 2019), the Sikh population in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta, the country's capital, is a group of ethnic minorities of Indian origin who are part of the multicultural society. They are mainly from the region known as the Tamil and the Punjab. The 1945 Constitution of Indonesia guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace and worship in accordance with his or her respective religion or belief. As a result, the Sikh diaspora does not face any real form of racism or discrimination.

Figure 2 Governor Anies B. (in office) visits the Sikh Gurdwara in Pasar Baru, Central Jakarta (Kumparan, 2017)

Recognition of Sikhs is not difficult, in contrast to other religions whose identity is less visible, with the exception of Islam, which can be recognised by the use of the hijab for women, but there are no specific signs for men. Sikh identity is characterised by the use of 5K, namely Kirpan or ceremonial sword, Kesh or commitment not to cut hair and require turban (for men and women) or veil (for women) to cover it, Kachera or known as underwear for men, Kanga or comb and Kara or iron bracelets (Esha, 2006) (Adhitama, 2022).

The existence of the Sikh youth diaspora in Indonesia is not guaranteed by the Indonesian constitution; the existence of Sikh adherents is similar to that of other minority religions and beliefs. Justification, intolerance of diversity, and negative prejudice among Jakarta’s and their neighbors (Parlindungan & Manwarjit, 2022). Can the conditions that occur in the city of Jakarta affect Sikhs in living their beliefs, which are taught to respect each other and love peace, especially the commitment of Sikhs and become their identity in Jakarta?

Method
In writing this research, the method used in this research is qualitative type by using literature study method and interviewing sources. Data from literature study are taken from books, journals, proceedings and articles related to history, traditions, religious activity and current issues related to Sikh religion, position and identity of Sikh youth in Indonesia, especially in the city of Jakarta.

Data collection in this research uses several data collection techniques, including by searching for scientific literature used in the analysis of literature studies from various authentic sources, observation to the research location in the Jakarta gurdwara, and interviews with sources as adherents and leaders of the Sikh religion.

The literature study method searches for primary data sources using keywords and conducts content analysis relevant to the research area and domain. While the interview method collects primary data from
sources closely related to the Sikh religion, PS is a Giani or Sikh religious leader, and DS is a Sikh believer who still falls into the category of Sikh youth. Observations and interviews were conducted in one of Jakarta's Gurdwaras, or places of worship for Sikh youth.

**Result**

The Sikh faith has become a widely accepted religion in today's world society, with more than 27 million followers worldwide, according to word data sites. Sikh populations are significant in several major countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and even Southeast Asia, including Malaysia and Singapore. Sikhs in major countries and elsewhere typically practice their faith through communal prayers and rituals at their local gurdwara (Sikh temple).

Sikhs continue to follow the teachings of the Sikh Guru and try to live their lives according to the principles of Sikhism, including commitment to justice, equality and service to others. Being Sikh has always been associated with the representation of the identity of Sikh, which distinguishes them from other cultures, ethnic groups or religions. As a diaspora of Sikh people in a foreign land, the faith and identity of young Sikh people becomes part of the dilemma.

The assimilation of life with the culture of the new place of residence, while at the same time the maintenance of faith, is a consideration or a problem. The Sikh diaspora in the global community, for example, what happened to the Sikh diaspora in the United States (Ghazzawi & Sharma, 2017) described the situation that occurred between Sikhs and the law enforcement agencies over the possession of Kirpans or Sikh knives and gave a negative opinion. On the other hand, the Malaysian Sikh community, both old and young, does not adhere to the amrit sankar/baptism that Guru Gobind Singh prescribed for Sikhs to join the Khalsa. Although this is a sacred part of the practice of the Sikh faith and the beginning of the identity of the Sikh youth by completing the 5K.

In Indonesia, there is also a population of Sikhs who migrate and reside in Indonesia, generally from Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, generally Sikh migrants who work as guards or security guards from the Dutch or foreign invaders. According to the data provided by the source PS, the total population of Sikhs in Indonesia is around 10,000 people, this number is a cumulative number of Sikhs of different age demographics and regions in Jakarta, Medan, East Java and various regions or major cities throughout Indonesia.

**Discussion**

Sikhs in Indonesia have made important contributions to the country's economic and cultural development and are an integral part of the country's diverse and multicultural society. A large number of Sikhs in Indonesia are involved in business and trade, and they are known to be hardworking, entrepreneurial and service-minded to the community. With a long and rich history in the country, the Sikh community in Indonesia is made up mainly of people of Indian descent.

There is a small but long-standing Sikh community in Indonesia, some of which are located in the capital city of Jakarta, numbering around 2,000 to 3,000 people. The Sikh community in Jakarta in conducting its worship is scattered in several Gurdwara located in North Jakarta City in Tanjung Priok, Central Jakarta City in Pasar Baru, South Tangerang City in Ciputat, and most recently in Bogor City Gunung Sindur. The condition of the Sikh youth themselves who live in the city of Jakarta also feels like what is felt by the Sikh youth diaspora in foreign countries, a minority group among a pluralistic society of culture and religion.

**The Diaspora Life of Sikh Young**

According to (Juergensmeyer, 2014), while Sikhs are a global faith due to their large geographical spread, Sikhs in the UK are living alongside cultural diversity and have become a thriving faith, trying to maintain the teachings of Guru Nanak in their everyday life. In addition to the preservation of their teachings, Sikhs
also maintain their sense of nationalism through the remembrance of the holy golden temple. Guru Nanak Dev himself lived among the two major religions of Punjab, Islam and Hinduism, so the existence of Sikhism among diverse religions is not a new condition (Cole, 2013).

Similar to (Juergensmeyer, 2014), (Fisher & Rinehart, 2017) also found that the Sikh diaspora emphasises a sense of nationalism that extends from the teachings of the Sikh religion to the culture that emanates from Punjab and Amritsar to Sikh youth. In interviews with Sikh diaspora, it was conveyed that while the diaspora was still in Kenya, the Sikh community maintained their faith and nationalism by maintaining community circles and educating their children at the local Gurdwara. The Gurdwara continues to be a place that unites the Sikh youth diaspora even today (Tatla, 2014). The Gurdwara does not only function as a place of worship for the Sikh youth diaspora. The Sikh diaspora in Kenya, Hong Kong, Penang, Vancouver and even the UK have made the gurdwara a centre for education, diaspora socialising and political activities for different Sikh communities. Language has also developed in gurdwaras outside of India and the Punjab, with English or local languages accompanying the worship sessions in addition to the Gurmukhi language or script that has developed in the Punjab.

From the use of Gurumukhi, the language of the Guru Granth Sahib, to the tradition of sacred music in Sikh religious activities, to the formation of small community circles among fellow diaspora members, the cultivation of nationalism in various Sikh communities begins. The proliferation of Sikh youth diasporic communities is an attempt to maintain a form of cultural and religious identity in the diverse socio-cultural and religious environments where the Sikh diaspora resides. Assimilation activities towards the culture brought as an individual identity of the young diaspora towards the Punjab region and the identity of the young diaspora as adherents of the Sikh religion become a dilemma felt by the migrants, strong nationalistic values make assimilation activities take place behind closed doors and aim to maintain the faith of the Sikh religious adherents through the use of 5K religious attributes in everyday life.

The Challenge of Today’s Young Sikh Diaspora

According to (Fisher & Rinehart, 2017), a young Sikh diaspora who was born in Kenya and moved to London with his family has a different experience with Sikhs in Punjab or India. Living in a small Sikh community in Kenya made him less familiar with the Sikh religion due to the use of Gurumukhi in worship. In contrast to the current situation, there is a young people’s organization that encourages them to learn more about Sikhism.

The limitations described by (Fisher & Rinehart, 2017) as challenges for young Sikhs in Kenya would be different from those experienced by young Sikhs in London, for example. The challenge in the city of London is described as maintaining long hair (kesh), as the water in the city of London is perceived as damaging hair, requiring hair to be cut rather than left long. It is not only the use of Sikh symbols of identity, whether in the form of maintaining hair and wearing a turban or carrying a kirpan or knife-blade, but the acceptance of Sikhism as a whole amongst the cultures and religions that have developed in a place.

As (Singh J., 2020) explains, the biggest challenge for Sikhs is the growing attitude of radicalism in society, whether in India or elsewhere, and not just that which is specifically directed at the Sikh religion. Anti-Sikh radicalism emerged in Britain in early 1984, the year Sikh activists clashed with the local government over equal human rights and social justice in employment and housing. The existence of this radical attitude is due to the ignorance of the general public about the practice of religious doctrines that differ from those of the majority religion.

In addition to ignorance of various religious practices, the role of mass media in public acceptance, particularly of the Sikh religion, is a determining factor. This is a condition shared by followers of the Sikh religion in Indonesia, despite the fact that in Indonesia, religious and cultural diversity has become
The Life of Young Sikh Community in Multicultural and Multi-religious Jakarta

According to (Fadhli, 2014) states that Indonesia is a constitutional state with the principle that the rights of every citizen must be protected, including the right to freedom of religion. In reality, even though freedom of religion is included in the first principle of Pancasila, the foundation of the Indonesian state, the conditions experienced by religious minorities are still not in line with the mandate of the implementation of the constitution. The existence of minorities is a necessary condition that cannot be denied amid the hegemony of the majority, be it cultural, religious or ethnic.

The multiculturalism that exists in Indonesia is due to its geographical shape as an archipelago located between two oceans and two continents, as well as the presence of foreign nations who came, either as colonisers or traders. The portrait of cultural diversity can be seen in Jakarta, one of Indonesia's provinces that has become a metropolitan city. According to (Mubit, 2016), the multicultural condition in a region does not contradict the concept of a religion, but rather because of people's beliefs that religious elements are sacred and absolute, whereas sociocultural elements are considered more worldly.

The same point, that cultural pluralism or diversity is seen as the emergence of new problems in the midst of society, is also conveyed by (As, 2016). The research of (Abidin, 2015) also provides an overview of the Sikh religion itself in Jakarta, which is described as subaltern, or in other words, the Sikh religion is present in a public space of the Indonesian society, but it is not recognised by the government. Sikhs themselves use Hinduism in the registration of their religious beliefs and teachings in civil registration documents.

As stated by (Adhitama, 2022), that there are Indonesian values that are implicit in Sikhism and that can be observed as a citizen of Indonesia. The Indonesian values are the values contained in the foundation of the Indonesian State, namely in the form of the principles of Pancasila, beginning with the value of Divinity, the value of Equality, the value of Humanity, the value of Unity, the value of Nationalism, the value of Consideration, the value of Equality. Under these circumstances, Sikh religious teachings are easily integrated into Indonesian society.

The solemn worship of the Sikhs in the Ciputat Gurdwara is proof that the surrounding community has been able to accept the existence of the beliefs and teachings brought by Guru Nanak Dev and nine other gurus. Giani, the religious leader of the Sikhs, was reciting the words of the Sikhs as written in the Guru Granth Sahib to the Sikhs present in Punjabi. At the end of the recitation, which was a solemn occasion for all present, there was another Giani who did a translation of the sacred words of the Guru Granth Sahib into Bahasa Indonesia.

This effort was made so that the young Sikh believers attending, who were no longer original migrants from Punjab, could better understand the sentences being read and improve their own form of faith. The interviewee of this research, PS, a Giani who translates the sacred phrases written in the Gurumukhi text into Indonesian, also said that the translation of the phrases of the Guru Granth Sahib has been going on in the Ciputat Gurdwara for a long time. Besides being more understandable to seniors and elders, it is also meant to be inclusive of Sikhs classified as children, youth and teenagers.

The Difficulties of Young Sikhs in Jakarta

Sikhism faces several challenges and issues that may affect young people, including questions of identity, belonging and meaning, as do all faith communities. Some issues specific to the practice of Sikhism that may be of concern to Sikh young people include:

- Maintaining a connection to their faith in the face of competing cultural and social influences: Sikh youth may be under pressure to conform to mainstream cultural and social norms that may be in conflict with the values and practices of their faith, in particular globalisation and secularism.
Finding ways of expression of their Sikh identity: Sikh youth may have difficulty finding ways to express their Sikh identity in a way that is meaningful and authentic to them.

Discrimination or prejudice based on Sikh identity: Sikh youth may face discrimination or prejudice based on their appearance, such as uncut hair or the use of religious symbols such as the turban. This can occur not only in friendship settings, but also in school settings, particularly in schools that do not tolerate both Kesh and Kirpan.

Juggling their commitment to their faith with the demands of school and other activities: It can be difficult for Sikh young people to find the time and energy to participate in their faith community and at the same time meet the demands of school, extra-curricular activities and other commitments.

Identifying role models and mentors within the Sikh community: Sikh youth may have difficulty finding role models and mentors within the Sikh community who can support them in their spiritual and personal development in ways that are relatable to young people.

These are some of the difficulties that Sikh youth may face at work or in their living environment. According to the interviewees, the main concern from the development of faith and piety in the youth is the basic role models who are used as real examples for them. The parents present at the Ciputat gurdwara were seen wearing the Guru Gobind Singh attributes, but upon closer inspection, there was a shift in the wearing of the 5K attributes.

The general condition seen that only some male parents wear turbans and maintain hair (kesh), DS said that this is the result of cultural assimilation between Sikh culture and Indonesian culture and the cause of this condition is still allowed because they have not performed Amrit Sankar baptism ceremony. Language is also one of the obstacles that needs to be faced and given a definite solution especially here in Jakarta, as an illustration through research by (Singh & Kaur, 2021) which conducted in Malaysia as comparison stated that the limitations of the Punjabi language used in Sikh religious practices are not necessarily all Sikhs directly understand every sentence of the Guru Granth Sahib, especially Sikh youth in Malaysia.

Media and The Beliefs of Sikh Diaspora Youth
The Giani have also taken note of this situation and are attempting to use or employ preaching tools that are appealing to youth and teenagers. The interviewee, Giani PS, is using social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and podcasts to increase Sikh faith and religious belief. In running the digital podcast, Giani PS also involves the active participation of young people to create a sense of desire to learn the teachings of Sikhism.

The use of social media and digital podcasts has certainly been effective in capturing the attention of Sikh youth, as has the building of a Sikh online community using the Gurdwara as the primary venue for delivering Sikh religious enrichment programmes for youth. These programmes take the form of sports activities such as table tennis or futsal, camps and other activities of general interest to young people. They are interspersed with Sikh worship practices.

These activities are distinct from Sikh religious worship activities in general and are conducted in collaboration with other youth communities in North Sumatra and elsewhere.

Conclusion
The Sikh youth diaspora in Indonesia, especially in the Special Capital Region of Jakarta Province or in other parts of Indonesia, try to live and interact with the environment in which they live. Some are successful in cultural assimilation, some are closed and reject other cultures and try to maintain the culture of their country, some accept the culture of other countries and still show their cultural identity and Sikh religion to be accepted, like the Sikh youth diaspora in other countries. Different perspectives and acceptance of young Sikh diaspora towards surrounding environment, but there are similarities in challenges or obstacles experienced among young Sikh diaspora community, namely steadfastness in
maintaining the main Sikh identity to use 5K attributes.

Kesh, Kara, Kanga, Kirpan, and Kachera are not just attributes for the Sikh Religion, but become part of faith and piety, identity, philosophy of life, and part of the teachings of the ten Gurus for the followers of the Sikh Religion like the use of the cross for Christians or various attributes from other religions that are part of the sacredness of worship. The use of the 5K attribute in Indonesia by Sikhs is not much different from that experienced by Sikhs in Malaysia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other countries.

This challenge is felt not only by the senior Sikh diaspora, but also by the youth or teenagers. Sikh religious leaders, or Giyani, use gurdwaras and digital media such as Instagram, Facebook, and even podcasts to foster Sikh faith and identity in a multicultural and religious society like Jakarta. Online meeting platforms such as Zoom Meeting have become one of the tools for daily prayer services by reading the Guru Granth Sahib to the Sikh diaspora who are far away from the local gurdwara, in addition to social media.

The effectiveness of the use of social media can be seen in the number of young people participating as collaborators and participants in the follow-up activities of the activities carried out online, according to the information from the informant PS who is also a Giani who actively uses social media in preaching.

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