

Proposal for Emoji: SIKH KHANDA

To: Unicode Consortium

Submitter: Lillian Passmore

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1. Identification

CDLR Short Name: Khanda

CDLR Keywords: Sikh, Khanda, Faith, Religion,

2. Images



3. Sort Location

Sort Location: Category 'religion', after 'OM', before 'STAR OF DAVID'

Abstract

This proposal requests the addition of the SIKH KHANDA/KHANDA to the Unicode Emoji Library, the Khanda being the symbol of the Sikh Faith. The Sikh Khanda is currently not represented in the Emoji Library and there is no alternative emoji available that can be used as an alternative. As other religions already have their symbol within the Emoji Library, this proposal asks for the addition of the KHANDA to allow all Sikhs to fully communicate their thoughts and beliefs through messaging.

Introduction

Sikhism is an Indian religion which originated in the Punjab region of India at the end of 15th century by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, in response to him experiencing a spiritual revelation. Based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors (nine Gurus), Sikhism teaches its followers to adhere to long standing practices and traditions to strengthen their faith. The word 'Sikh' means 'seeker' or 'learner or truth' and Sikhs practice the ideals of honesty, compassion, and generosity in everyday life.

Despite being one of the youngest major religions, Sikhism is the world's ninth largest religion with approximately 30 million Sikhs worldwide at the beginning of the 21st century. 76% of all Sikhs live in the state of Punjab, forming the majority of the population. Substantial communities of Sikhs live elsewhere with 1.54% (500,000 people) of the Canadian population being a follower of the religion. Significant numbers of Sikhs are found in English speaking countries with 700,000 Sikhs living in the United States of America and over 450,000 here in the United Kingdom.

Sikhs have undertaken important roles in history and must be credited. Sikh troops undertook a key role in the British army in both World Wars – they played a crucial role of the First Battle of Ypres in 1914, yet this contribution was not widely rewarded. 83,000 Sikhs were killed in the World Wars; the Allied Forces were impressed by their fighting skills and subsequently awarded them 14 Victoria Crosses.

Today Sikhs continue to hold important roles in society. In the 2015 Canadian election, 26 Sikh MP's were elected. Jagmeet Singh has led the New Democratic Party since 2017, the fourth largest party in the House of Commons in Canada. Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi became Britain's first turbaned MP in 2017 and received praise and applause from his colleagues and on social media after questioning the Prime Minister on a history of racist comments. Anita Rani, a BBC television and radio presenter, has hosted many popular shows and after appearing on an episode of *Who Do You Think You Are*, provoked an interest in Sikhism amongst the British public.

5. Selection Factors for Inclusion

A. Compatibility

The symbol *Adi Shakti* was approved as part of Unicode 1.1 in 1993. However, this Unicode character has no emoji version. This symbol should be updated to become KHANDA, which is more relevant today and more well known to the Sikh and general population. The unique opportunity to create a new religious symbol invites more people to use emojis in everyday use.

B. Expected Usage Level

1. Frequency

The expected frequency usage of KHANDA will vary over the year but will be used around the world every day.

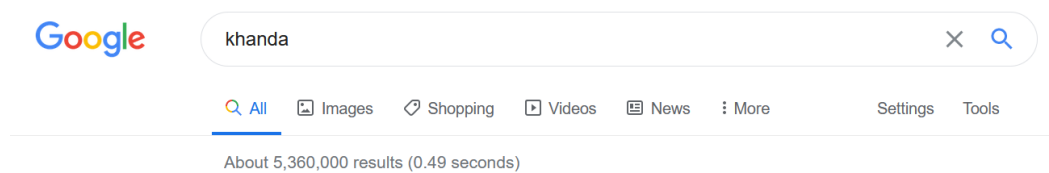
During Sikh celebrations, the usage of the proposed emoji is expected to increase. This is because people will be wishing others well and will use the emoji as it relates to the religious event. An example of this is Vaisakhi (held in April), the day to celebrate the birth of the Khalsa brotherhood; here the usage will increase by not only members of the Sikh community but others outside the community to wish those celebrating the day gratitude and happiness. Sikhs also celebrate the birth of the ten Gurus, the biggest celebration being Guru Nanak Gurburab – the day the founder of the religion, Guru Nanak, was born. This day in November is important for all Sikhs and like Vaisakhi, is mentioned on social media platforms. Religious events and celebrations prompt the use of this proposed emoji.

Weddings and funerals are frequent events that will always happen. These events are often religious and within the religion of Sikhism, traditional rituals are followed. When events are

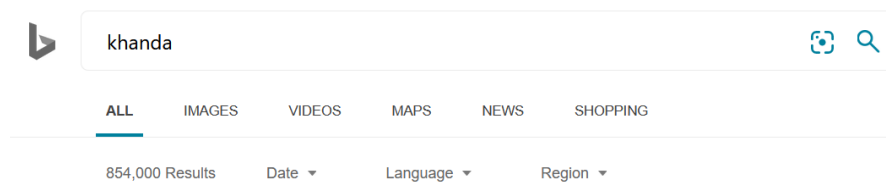
shared on social media, the proposed emoji is likely to be added to show others the religious side of each tradition. As these are big events, people will use this emoji to show that we are still connected as a community with the faith in God, despite the separations that we experience.

As people continue to learn about Sikhism, it is inevitable that people will comment on their newly learnt information online. Being one of the youngest religions and with people able to learn anywhere in the world, the information about Sikhism will continue to spread. In today's age people are quick to share their thoughts and feelings online – the proposed emoji can be added at the end of the tweet for instance.

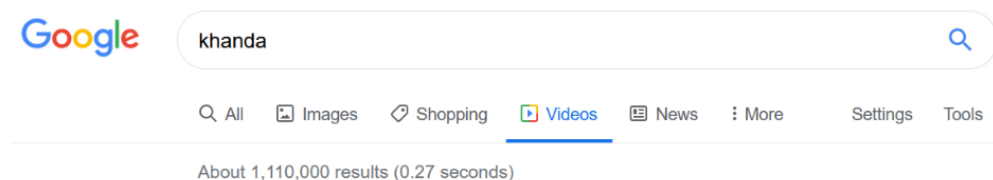
B.1.a Google Search



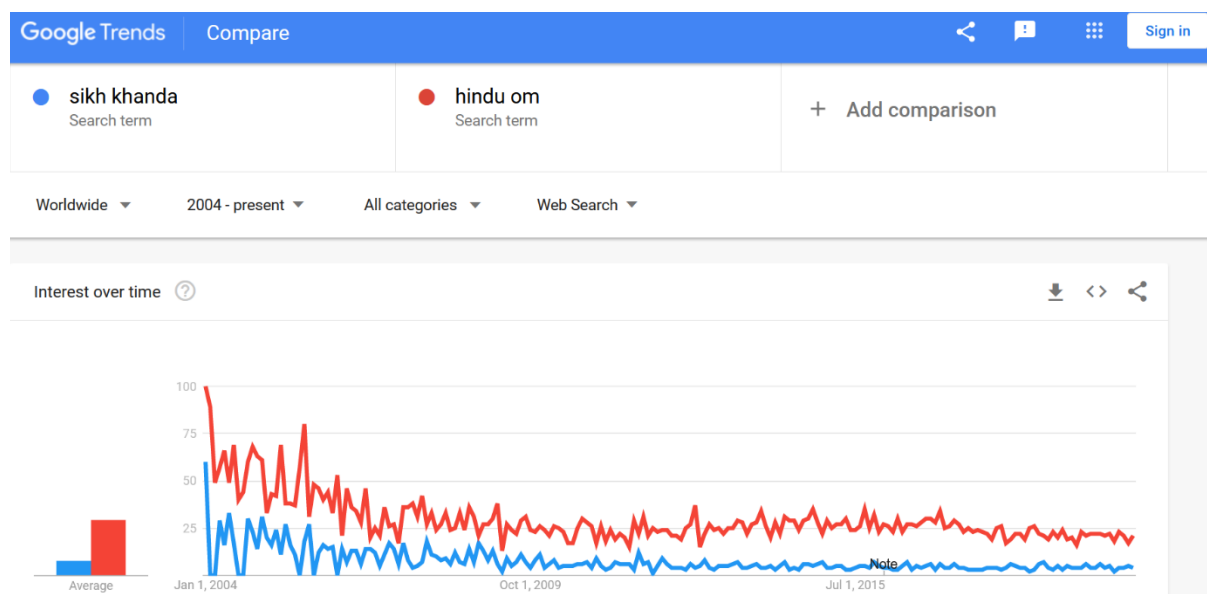
B.1.b Bing Search



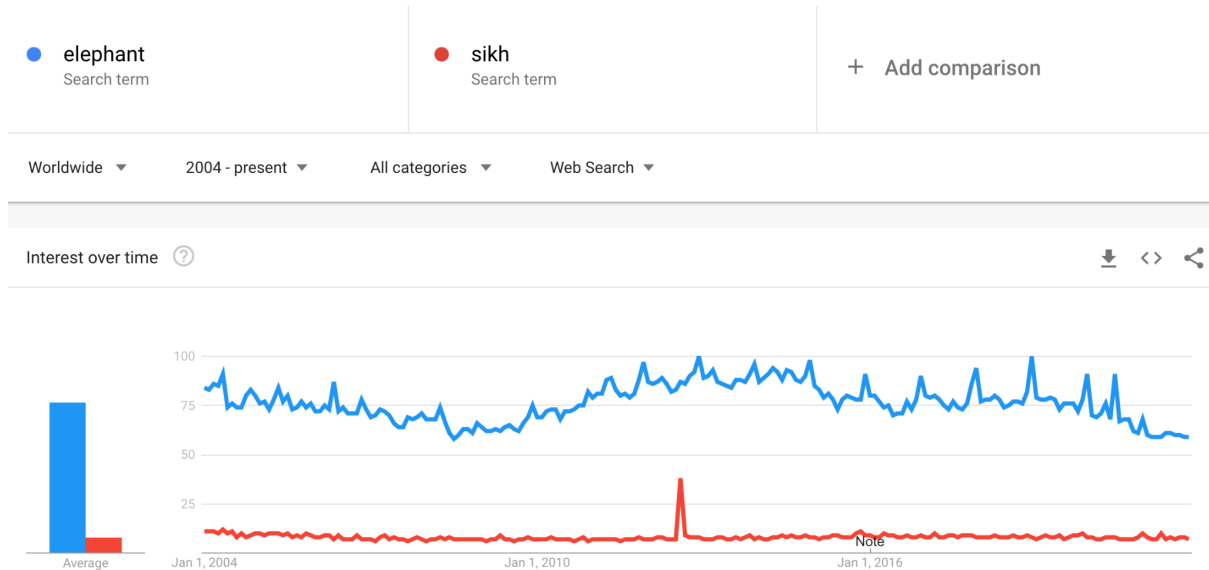
B.1.c Google Video Search



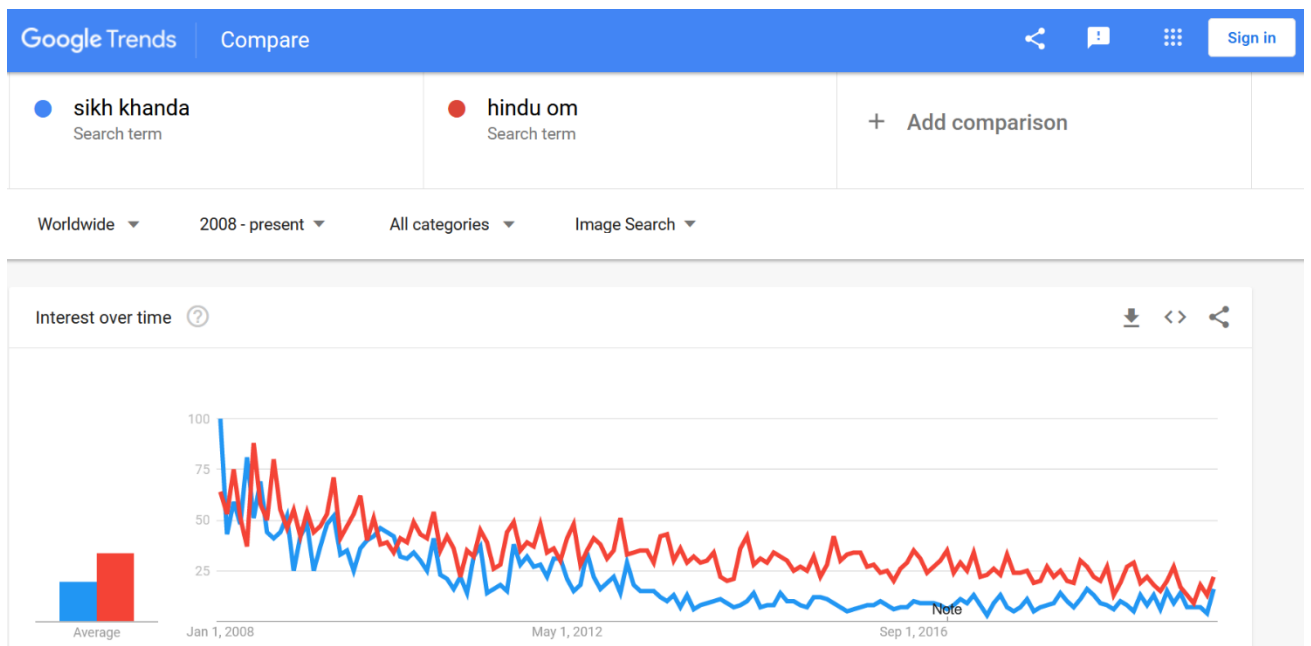
B.1.d Google Trends: Web Search



The data shows that the searches for 'Sikh Khanda' have been consistent in the last few years and goes through undulations when Sikh celebrations occur. Although the searches for 'Sikh Khanda' are less than 'Hindu Om', this is expected as Hinduism has more followers worldwide. Despite this, both follow the same trends, and this should be expected to continue.

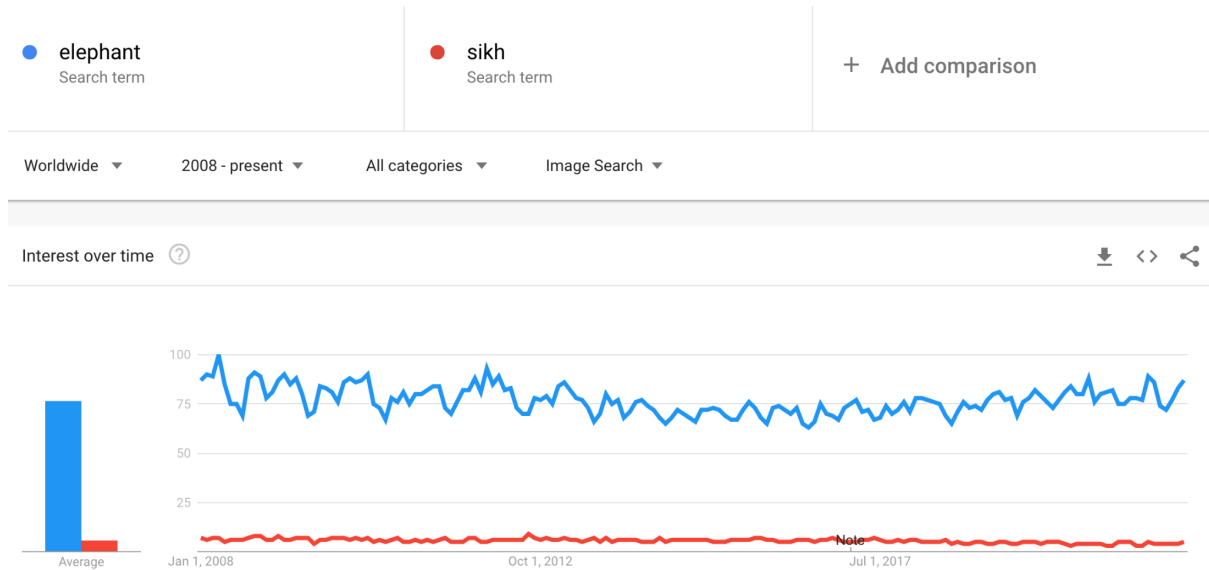


B.1.e Google Trends: Image Search

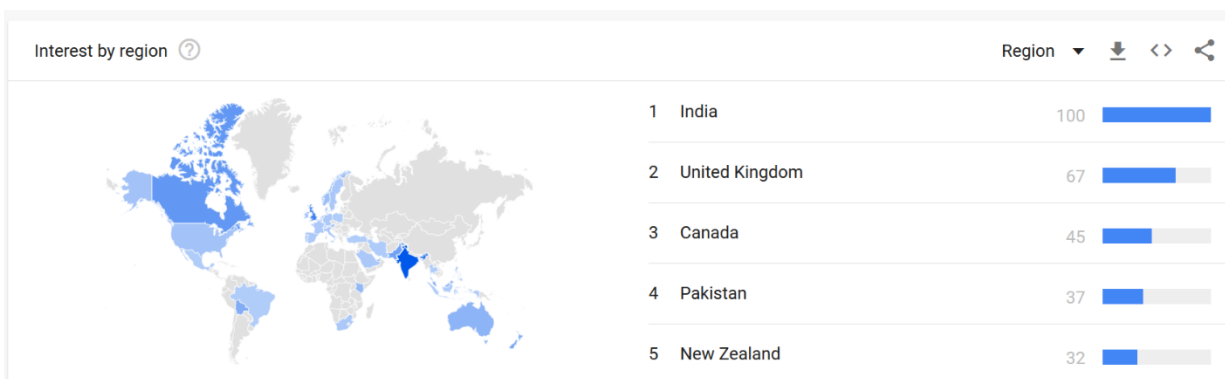


Once again, the searches for 'Sikh Khanda' are lower than 'Hindu Om' – the reason being that Sikhism is a smaller religion than Hinduism. However, in recent years, the searches for

'Sikh Khanda' have been rising and are nearing the number of searches of 'Hindu Om'. This is positive as the number of searches between the two religions is becoming similar, despite the significant difference in number of followers.



Frequently Requested



People are actively searching for 'Khanda' across the world but most notably in India, the UK, Canada, Pakistan, and New Zealand. This is understandable as large populations of Sikhs reside here. The demand is shown by people having an interest in their religion's symbol.

This is a screenshot of a social media post for the hashtag #sikh. It shows a profile picture of a Sikh temple, a 'Follow' button, and the text '1.9M posts'. Below the post, there are 'Related' hashtags: #sikhi, #sikhism, #sikhismfeed, and #sikhism_fee. At the bottom, there are two tabs: 'Top' and 'Recent'. The 'Top' tab shows a collage of images including a temple, a Khanda, and a person in a blue turban.

This is a screenshot of a social media post for the hashtag #khanda. It shows a profile picture of a Khanda, a 'Follow' button, and the text '45.1K posts'. Below the post, there are 'Related' hashtags: #tajiki, #raptj, #prikoltj, #помир, and #точикона. At the bottom, there are two tabs: 'Top' and 'Recent'. The 'Top' tab shows images of Khanda weapons and a group of people.

On Instagram, there are almost 2,000,000 posts related to #sikh and #khanda. This number will continue to increase with time. (information correct as of 23.06.2020)



Surinder Sapal
@SurinderSapal

@GetEmoji need a #sikh #emoji all religious symbols there, no #Sikh #symbol #FixIt



On Twitter, multiple users have asked for a Sikh emoji to be added to the list of religious symbols.

2. Multiple Usages

The KHANDA has many uses beyond being the symbol of the Sikh religion. It can provide solidarity for those part of the community who have faced suffering and injustice or to show that we all support one another.

Another use is for people to use this emoji when providing a short description of themselves, a commonplace thing to do in the 'bio' section of Instagram and Twitter. This allows others online to easily learn information about another person and see if there are other commonalities in their lives, helping to form an online community.

A fundamental part of the Sikh religion are the Five K's. Sikhs who have been initiated into the Khalsa wear these 5 physical symbols to show that they have dedicated their lives to one of devotion and submission to the Guru. The lack of representation of the 5K's in the Unicode Emoji Library forces users to choose the proposed KHANDA emoji – this lack of representation and choice will increase the expected usage frequency of the proposed emoji, furthering the case for it to be added to the Library.

3. Use in sequences

KHANDA can be used in many sequences. For example:

- Showcasing somebody's religion:
 - o Sequencing with PERSON WEARING TURBAN can easily showcase that this person is a follower of the Sikh religion, especially as they are wearing a turban
 - o Sequencing with any face (of any skin tone) on the Unicode Emoji Library can demonstrate the person's religion and possibly distinguish stereotypes and

misconceptions (a person of white skin tone is not assumed to be a Sikh, compared to a person with a brown skin tone)

- Destinations
 - There is currently no Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) emoji available, yet there is a temple. Sequencing the KHANDA with HINDU TEMPLE would communicate that the person is going to a Gurdwara and not a Hindu temple – important as Hinduism and Sikhism are different religions
 - The Gurdwara is commonly referred to as the ‘House of God’. Sequencing KHANDA with HOUSE can also suggest that the person is referring to a Gurdwara.
- Love and admiration for the religion
 - Sequencing with RED HEART (or any other colour heart) next to KHANDA communicates a love for Sikhism
 - Sequencing with PARTY FACE can be used for the Sikh celebrations Vaisakhi and Guru Nanak Gurpurab. Vaisakhi celebrates the birth of the Khalsa and Guru Nanak Gurpurab celebrates the birth of the religion’s founder.

4. Breaking new ground

The proposal of KHANDA successfully breaks new ground by creating further accessibility within the Emoji Library. Being inclusive of another religion invites more users to use emoji in everyday conversation. It also allows other emojis to be utilised further, mentioned above in *Sequencing*.

C. Image Distinctiveness

The Khanda is a symbol of the Sikh faith and exclusive to the religion of Sikhism. The Khanda is an amalgam of three symbols: a double-edged sword in the centre (the Khanda), a Chakkar and two single edged swords (Kirpans), crossed either side of the other weapons. These different components form a unique symbol that is easily recognised, either from afar or in miniature.

D. Completeness

The proposal for the KHANDA emoji is a much-needed representative for the Sikh community. There are currently religious symbols for those following the faiths of Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The *Atom Symbol* has been adopted by atheists with the *Yin Yang* representing Taoism and Chinese philosophy. The addition of the KHANDA allows the 30 million Sikhs worldwide to express their faith via technology in the format of a small icon. Currently with no emoji, the Sikh community have no appropriate emoji to use when discussing their religion with somebody else. With no picture representation, users are forced to use more words than necessary which is inefficient, especially on social media platforms like Twitter.

6. Selection Factors for Exclusion

F. Overly specific

KHANDA is specific to being the symbol of the Sikh faith. Nothing about the specific image would limit usage for multiple meanings described earlier in this proposal in *Sequencing*. Instead, the addition of KHANDA allows other emojis to gain further interpretations and meanings, generating further usage.

G. Open-ended

There are no previous KHANDA emojis that are similar to the image in this proposal.

H. Already representable

The KHANDA would be added to a group of other religious symbols. Currently no other emoji represents the Sikh faith. Whilst the PERSON WEARING TURBAN is a physical depiction of a typical Sikh male, it does not represent the community and would be inappropriate to use in a discussion about the generalities of Sikhism. The KHANDA is inclusive of everybody without making assumptions on gender, race or appearance.

I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, specific landmarks, deities

A KHANDA is not confined by logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, specific landmarks, or deities. While the proposed emoji is the symbol for a religion, it does not portray an image of a God.

J. Transient

Sikhism was founded 500 years ago and since then the population has increased to 30 million Sikhs worldwide. It is expected that the population will continue to grow, and that Sikhism will continue to be a practiced religion by millions. As more people are immersed in technology and dependent on a mobile phone, the need for a KHANDA emoji will become greater.

K. Faulty comparisons

There are currently no similar emoji to KHANDA and the differentiation (both visually and its meaning) of the Khanda to other religious symbols justify its existence.

7. Other Information

Every Gurdwara has a Nishan Sahib outside, a fabric flag. The Khanda is rendered in blue on a saffron background. Whilst the KHANDA would be more realistic if it were blue and enclosed in an orange square, it is preferable for this not to be the case. Following the other emojis, the Khanda itself should be white and enclosed in a purple square so that it is uniform with the other religious symbols.