

tion on dating in Sikhism and indeed getting to know someone over a period of time is a wonderful way of finding out whether they share the same qualities, interests and life goals as yourself.

ONLY MARRYING AN AMRITDHARI

Amrit or Sikh Baptism is for the individual, and so having taken Amrit does not mean an Amritdhari is unable to marry a non-Amritdhari individual. It may be that the individual's potential partner is slowly wanting to follow a spiritual lifestyle, so marrying a non-Amritdhari would be an excellent way of helping another soul with their spiritual evolution to become a devotee of God.

EATING FROM A TABLE OR A FLOOR?

The debate about eating food on chairs or eating on the floor is something that was started by Indian Sikhs and is a good example of a trivial, non-important issue. It really doesn't matter how or where we eat our food, so long as we just thank God for the food!

"With each breath and morsel of food, do not forget the Guru, the Embodiment of Fulfillment." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.53)

Many Sikh temples or Gurdwaras outside of India have tables in the Langar halls and generally offer a mixture of floor and table eating facilities.

DEFINITION OF A GURMUKH

Some Sikhs mistake the word Gurmukh to refer to only a baptised Sikh. However, this is a complete misunderstanding. A Gurmukh is anyone who obeys with Will of God and would include Amritdhari Sikhs, but is not limited to Amritdhari Sikhs. For example Bhai Gurdaas Ji refers to the author of the Yoga Sutras as Gurmukh Patanjali. Also, Guru Nanak Dev Ji was respected and followed as a Guru, Messiah, Prophet and Lama by Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Yogis. Therefore, whosoever follows, accepts and practices the Guru's teachings contained within the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a Gurmukh, irrespective of their religion, caste or any other division.

DANCING

You may hear some Indian Sikhs say that dancing is against Sikhism. This is untrue as the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji teaches that anything a Gurmukh (devotee of God) does with a pure heart is considered worship.

"The Gurmukh laughs, and the Gurmukh cries. Whatever the Gurmukh does, is devotional worship. Whoever becomes Gurmukh contemplates the Lord. The Gurmukh, O Nanak, crosses over to the other shore." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.1422)

"The Gurmukhs sing, the Gurmukhs dance, and focus their consciousness on the Lord." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.124)

CONCLUSION

The above entanglements are just some examples of the way materialism or Maya will even take practicing members of spiritual communities and deny them union with God. The spiritual ego is the biggest ego to overcome.

When a person takes Sikh baptism, Amrit is sprinkled in their eyes and on the head to highlight the importance of pure thoughts and the power of seeing what is truly important in life.

Sikh Khalsa Misconceptions

INTRODUCTION TO SIKH KHALSA

Sikhism is a spiritual lifestyle, in which human beings aim to achieve liberation through selfless service to humanity, family life, honest living and meditation. The opportunity to take Amrit, or Sikh Baptism, is an incredible blessing and a humbling experience which expands our awareness and provides a guarantee by Guru Gobind Singh of divine union and spiritual enlightenment.

So it is sometimes a little disheartening to see some Sikhs who have taken the formal vows, called Amritdhari, to be lost in self-made rules which are not based on the truth, contentment and divine wisdom enshrined within the Sikh Holy Scripture, the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Guru Granth Sahib). This info-bite aims to highlight some of the pitfalls and misconceptions of some Sikh Khalsa.

DO I NEED TO BE PERFECT BEFORE I TAKE AMRIT?

Some Sikhs who want to take Amrit feel that taking Amrit is the last step in spiritual evolution and that we should be perfect before we take it. This is simply untrue. It does not matter how many mistakes we make in our journey of life so long as we learn from them and keep walking in the right direction. If you have a desire to take Amrit, then you should take it as it is one of the greatest blessings you can have.

IS TAKING AMRIT THE HIGHEST ACHIEVEMENT?

Some Sikhs think that simply by being baptised they have completed their spiritual evolution. This is incorrect because living as a Sikh requires a commitment to improve yourself and your community throughout your life. Amrit delivers a promise of spiritual growth with the condition that the prescribed discipline is maintained as much as possible.

ATTACHMENT TO 5K'S

Amritdhari Khalsa Sikhs are enjoined to wear five articles of faith, the 5K's. The 5K's include long hair (kesh), under garments (kachera), sword (kirpan), comb in the hair and a wristlet (kara). These are not merely symbols, but provide a physical function to

either maintain the body temple (comb, under garments, wristlet), serve and protect others (sword) or enhance one's intuition (long hair). However, as Sikhs we should not be attached to anything except the Name of God, the Naam, and that includes the 5K's because they only have the capacity to be useful within the physical earthly plane. Wearing 5K's does not make you a Sikh. The internal qualities like discipline, compassion, humility, love for Gurbani and God are the things which define you as a Sikh and a Khalsa (pure heart).

So one should not think that it is "sinful" to remove a kirpan when e.g. boarding a plane as this legal requirement is designed to protect people and the kirpan is also there for the same purpose. Also when taking your daily shower or going for a swim or even sun bathing on a beach you don't commit a "sin" by removing your kirpan or under garments for a bathing suit or swimming trunks.

So with this in mind, Sikhs with or without 5K's are to focus their consciousness only on the Name of God, the Naam.

"You may perform religious rituals, and still never obtain the Naam, the Name of the Lord." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.33)

EATING WITH NON-AMRITDHARIS

Some Amritdhari Sikhs feel that they are not allowed to eat food prepared by non-Amritdhari people. This form of ritual purity has no place in Sikhism. Guru Nanak Dev Ji ate food with many different people from different countries, cultures and religions.

JUDGING OTHERS

Some Amritdhari Sikhs may think that they are better than other people because they are doing their meditation, keeping a healthy lifestyle and doing good deeds. But if this is exhibited as pride then this will be destructive for the individual. Sikhism teaches to always remain humble and never to judge someone else in a negative way.

"I am not good; no one is bad. Prays Nanak, He alone saves us!" (Guru Granth Sahib, p.728)

"Pride in social status is empty; pride in personal

glory is useless. The One Lord gives shade to all beings." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.83)

MAKEUP, JEWELLERY & PERFUME

This is another one of those aspects of personal choice that some Amritdhari people will criticise.

If we look at Sikh history then we notice that some Gurus lived very simple lifestyles and others lived like royalty. So make-up, jewellery, fine clothes and perfume are a personal choice for the individual. The important thing is to remember God for all the blessings He has given.

"O my companion, I have prepared everything: make-up, garlands and betel-leaves. I have embellished myself with the sixteen decorations, and applied the mascara to my eyes. If my Husband Lord comes to my home, then I obtain everything. O Lord! Without my Husband, all these adornments are useless. Very fortunate is she, within whose home the Husband Lord abides. She is totally adorned and decorated; she is a happy soul-bride." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.1361)

WEALTH CREATION

Some Amritdhari Sikhs say that they are not allowed to become involved with wealth creation like property investment or share trading because it is greed. However this is missing an important point in Sikh philosophy. Sikhs can actively create wealth so long as they always remember that this knowledge is a blessing from God and that a small portion of the wealth (10% is recommended) should be donated for the greater benefit of humanity. Also, Sikhs should never forget that all wealth, property and riches belong to God.

"Wisdom, honour and wealth are in the laps of those whose hearts remain permeated with the Lord." (Guru Granth Sahib, p.15)

MARRIAGE, DATING AND RELATIONSHIPS

Some Amritdhari Sikhs feel that it is inappropriate to go on a date and that is an acceptable position to take at a personal level.

But it should be mentioned that there is no prohibi-