

Sikh Dharma is a philosophy which believes in equality and acceptance for all, and Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru, declared that "The whole of mankind should be viewed as one".

The Guru Granth Sahib does not mention homosexuality. However, the ten living Gurus were aware of homosexuality at the time that the Guru Granth Sahib was compiled as there were a number of openly gay saints during the 16th and 17th Centuries in the Indian Subcontinent.

One openly gay saint is Sarmad, who was a follower of Mian Mir, the Muslim Pir who is believed to have laid the foundation stone of the Hari-mandir Sahib (Golden Temple), the most important of Sikh gurdwaras, in 1588.

If the ten living Gurus believed homosexuality to be sinful, then they would have addressed the subject within the Guru Granth Sahib, and the fact that it has been ignored suggests that the Gurus considered it to be inconsequential because the primary function of dharma is to unite the individual soul which is genderless with the supreme soul which is also genderless.

The Lavan are non-gender specific, and so same-sex marriage is possible within Sikh Dharma.

However, most gurdwaras in the current time (Sikh places of worship) would be reluctant to conduct a same-sex marriage because of an edict made by the Jathedar (Head Priest) of the Akal Takht in 2005 which banned gay marriages. It should be noted that Sikh Dharma as a philosophy does not support a priesthood system, and many such edicts have been ignored by the Sikh community as a whole such as eating on floors vs eating on tables.

Sikh Dharma Vs Indian Culture



Although Sikh philosophy is a liberal and all-encompassing, Punjabi and Indian culture is extremely conservative. This can lead to instances where some Sikhs hold conservative views which stem from Punjabi culture but which the individual may believe to be a part of Sikh philosophy.

An area where this disparity is evident is that of sexuality, with Punjabi culture being very homophobic whilst Sikh philosophy teaching the idea of oneness, respect and tolerance of all people.

Gristhi Jeevan, or living the life of a householder, applies equally to same-sex relationships as it does to heterosexual relationships. There are no barriers to maintaining a family lifestyle within a same-sex relationship, for example, by adopting children.

It is possible to be Sikh and have a monogamous same-sex relationship, as long as one ensures that the relationship does not become filled with 'Kaam' and one maintains a Sikh lifestyle in accordance with all of the various tenets of the religion. Although marriage is the ideal, it may not be possible to get married due to the reluctance of the gurdwara, and so a monogamous relationship is to be preferred as an alternative.

WWW.SARBAT.NET

Sarbat.Net is the website for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Sikhs.

Established in 2007, it takes its name from the final line of the Ardas (the congregational Prayer of Supplication), and it refers to the Sikh concept of happiness and well-being for all mankind

Sikh Views on Same Sex Relationships



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Sikh Dharma - The Basics



Sikh Dharma (Sikhism) is the youngest of the major world religions, and has only been in existence for the past 500 years. It originates from the northern region of the Indian sub-continent known as Punjab, a region which is now shared between India and Pakistan.

- The founder of Sikh Dharma, Guru Nanak, was born in 1469, and the last of the ten living Sikh Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh, died in 1708.
- Sikh Dharma teaches tolerance, equality and acceptance of all people, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexuality.
- The holy scripture of the Sikhs is called the Guru Granth Sahib, and it contains teachings in the form of verse written by Hindu and Muslim saints as well as some of the Sikh Gurus.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is a Guru in its own right, and it is accorded the same respect as a living being.
- Sikhs believe in one God who is without form and without gender, and Sikhs also believe that all other religions are merely different ways of worshipping the same God.
- There are almost 25 million Sikhs around the world, and male Sikhs are largely recognizable by their uncut hair (usually covered by a turban) and uncut beards.

Sexuality within Sikh Dharma



Sexuality is seen to be something which is part of the natural human state. However, excessive or uncontrolled sexual activity is referred to within Sikh Dharma as lust or 'Kaam', and Kaam within the Sikh context is deemed to be one of the Five Thieves of the human body (the equivalent of the Seven Deadly Sins in Christianity).

Kaam is considered to be a destructive force and as such it is to be overcome.

Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Guru, has referred to Kaam within the Guru Granth Sahib (at p.1358):

"O Kaam, you lead mortals to hell, you make them wander through many reincarnations. You cheat the mind and pervade the three worlds. You destroy meditation, penance and virtue. You give fleeting pleasure, you make mortals weak, and you afflict both the highest and the lowest of people".

It should be noted that Sikh Dharma does not believe in heaven and hell, and that the Guru Granth Sahib only makes reference to hell in a metaphorical sense.

Sex outside of marriage is discouraged within Sikh Dharma, although no reference to that is made within the Guru Granth Sahib.

Homosexuality is not mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib. However, the Guru Granth Sahib considers all life and existence to be created by the grace of God, and scientific research has shown that homosexual behaviour is common within nature and amongst animals.

Marriage within Sikh Dharma



Sikh Dharma teaches that all individuals should strive to live the life of a householder or 'Gristhi Jeevan', and life within the family unit is highly encouraged, as is marriage.

Guru Nanak believed that celibacy was a rejection of society and the world. Therefore, celibacy is not encouraged within Sikh lifestyle, whereas a monogamous relationship within marriage is considered the ideal.

The Sikh marriage ceremony comprises of a hymn known as the 'Lavaan' and was composed by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Guru. When each of the four verses has been read aloud, the couple walks around the Guru Granth Sahib whilst the hymn is then sung. At the end of the fourth verse and circumambulation, the marriage is complete.

The four verses of the Lavaan are non-gender specific. The only references made to gender are of the two human souls of the people entering the marriage as being the bride and God as being the bridegroom. The use of gender within the Lavaan is metaphorical.

Although the Lavaan was composed over 400 years ago, the practice of Sikh marriage by following the Lavaan was only institutionalized in 1909 when the Anand Marriage Act of India made the ceremony a legal act. Prior to that, the Hindu ceremony of circumambulation of a fire was the only legally recognized marriage ceremony for Sikhs in India.