
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 being the bridegroom. The use of gender within the Lavaan is metaphorical.

As the Lavaan are non-gender specific, it is entirely possible for same-sex marriage within Sikhism.

Misconceptions about Sikhism and homosexuality

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

An area where this disparity is evident is that of sexuality, with Punjabi culture often being homophobic whilst Sikh philosophy teaches 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' (lust) and one maintains a Sikh lifestyle in accordance with all of the various tenets of the religion. Although marriage is ideal, it may not be possible for a same-sex couple to get married due to the current reluctance of Gurdwaras, and so a monogamous relationship is to be preferred as an alternative.

However, attitudes are changing and we expect that, in future, same-sex marriages within Sikhism are fully accepted in the same way that heterosexual marriages are.

We should follow in the tradition of the Gurus' teachings and continue on a path of tolerance and social revolution.

For further information and resources on issues affecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Sikhs, please visit the website

WWW.SARBAT.NET

Sikhism and same sex relationships



www.sarbat.net



info@sarbat.net



facebook.com/LGBTSikh



twitter.com/SarbatSikhs

Sarbat - Who we are

Sarbat was founded in 2007 as a means of promoting the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) Sikhs in Britain and globally.

Sarbat is a social, political and support group for LGBT Sikhs. We offer a platform for like-minded Sikhs from all walks of life and aim to promote the LGBT Sikh cause in a fair and courteous manner.

We also want LGBT issues to be discussed openly within our communities without the taboo or any awkwardness attached to it.

We hold regular social events in London, and as often as possible in other UK cities. These events provide opportunities for LGBT Sikhs to meet others in a safe and friendly environment.

The Sarbat website - www.sarbat.net - also hosts a discussion forum, where members can meet and interact as well as post articles of interest.

The name 'Sarbat' is taken from the final couplet in the Ardas or the Sikh congregational prayer of supplication, where Sikhs pray for the happiness and goodwill of the whole of mankind.

LGBT Sikhs form part of that mankind for whom prayers are given on a daily basis, and we do not consider ourselves to be distinct from the Sikh faith solely because of our sexuality.

Sikhism - The Basics

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 subcontinent known as Punjab.

- The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, was born in 1469, and the last of the ten living Sikh Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh, died in 1708.

- Sikhism 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.

Homosexuality within Sikhism

Sikhism has no specific teachings about homosexuality.

The Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, does not explicitly mention homosexuality.

Views on homosexuality tend not to be a primary concern in Sikh teachings.

Sikhs are not to have hate or animosity to any person, regardless of race, caste, colour, creed, gender, or sexuality.

Had the ten living Gurus believed homosexuality to be sinful, 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.

Discriminating against people or groups, including the gay community, would be going against Sikh teachings. Any form of prejudice is not tolerated in Sikhism.

Same sex relationships within Sikhism

Sikhism is an all-encompassing religion, with the principle of equality at its very heart.

It does not speak against homosexuality, and there is nothing in the Holy Scriptures that states that marriage must be between a man and a woman.