

VIEWS OF A YOUNG SIKH

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Growing up in Canada, and by attending English schools, a great deal of my childhood was spent, learning about Western culture and the majority religions. The first religion that I was properly taught was Christianity. ...Regardless of this, I have always been interested in Sikhism and truly believe in it's concepts; however, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the culture of Sikh people today, which has been greatly influenced in its native land by the religions that surround it. (Hinduism for instance...) and of what is believed to be true Sikhism, for instance the concepts that were revealed to us through Guru Nanak in the Guru Granth Sahib. ...Today, I seem to have many debates or arguments, with either relatives or other Sikh people... Most of these situations are the cause of the questions and opinions that I have today. For instance people are made to understand the fact that all saints are appointed by God, however, I do not understand why people, Sikh people for that matter, worship them, give them money and blindly follow all their commands, whereas the Gurbani, incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, teaches us to follow 'Sabd Guru'.

Also it is quite clear that in Sikhism there are to be no meaningless rituals, fasts...etc. yet numerous Sikh people continue to practice these rituals and fasts. I do not understand why, especially since they happen to do *paath* everyday, therefore, they should understand that their actions contradict the contents of the holy text that they read daily! For some reason I see these things more prevalent in the Montreal Sikh society. In January I moved back to Montreal, after living in Ontario for many years. And what I have realized is that, despite the fact that the Sikh population is greater in Ontario, there are more misconceptions within the Sikh society of Montreal.

Another concern that I have is the caste system, we all know that one of the reasons Sikhism was created was to diminish the caste system, and to create equality for women, yet none of these aspects are practiced today. I get so frustrated when someone says that they are looking for a spouse for their child and he or she has to be of this caste. Or when boys walk around saying "I'm *jatt*, man!" or *jatt* this and that... in my opinion *jatts* are a bunch of alcoholics who beat their wives. I don't mean to be rude, but if someone likes the caste

system that much, why not convert to a religion that actually has one, instead of pretending to be Sikh.

A basic Sikh is someone who believes in the concepts and rules of Sikhism and follows them or at least tries to follow them. I understand that many of you may disagree...however I believe that is what constitutes a basic Sikh. One of the things that make Sikhism different from other religions is the tolerance that Sikhism promotes towards other religions and thoughts, as well as the way it encourages one to live one's life.

There are many things I would like to get a better understanding of. For one, I would like to learn more about the basic principles, because I see many people today, (as I mentioned earlier) who will religiously pray everyday and go to the Gurdwara, however, they do the opposite of what some of these principles say.

Also, I would like to know what Sikhism believes in, in regards to the creation of human kind and Heaven and Hell. Also what does it say about evil, for we all know it exists. It is very hard to get *Gutkas* that are translated to English interpreted in its real perspective, but just sounds translated into English letters, or literal translation into English words and sentences... The first time I read Jap-Ji Sahib, I understood that God created all that is, God existed before earth and will exist after earth. I understood that we will be judged in the court of God, and our next form will be based on our past deeds. I understand that we do not believe in a real type of heaven and hell, etc. However, I do not understand why certain people who do *Paath* everyday, still do not understand these concepts, maybe I am interpreting them wrong.

What most people today consider as a problem is youth not attending the Gurdwara. I have been told numerous times that I am not a "good" child, because I do not attend often enough. There are many reasons why I do not attend often. One is that I find many people, who do go there, are there more for the socialization aspect then the prayer aspect. Many women just speak about what others are wearing, who came with who, etc. many people go there to catch up on missed gossip. Its not just the women, either...I'm sure the men have other topics than prayer that they are discussing. Another reason is lack of

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understanding. I would like to understand what is being said; however, I do not. Also, it states in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, that one does not need a certain place or building to pray. It can be done anywhere the individual feels comfortable; therefore I do not consider it necessary to attend the Gurdwara on a regular basis.

I believe that Sikhism is suited to the conditions of modern society, for it allows for many changes in ones lifestyle. Therefore, letting one adapt to the changing ways of society.

The last thing that I would like to stress is that Sikh society needs to make more information available easier. Many people just think of Sikhism as another part of Hinduism. When people find out that I am Sikh, they ask if I worship elephant god (Ganesh) since it has become very popular god in India and so in Punjab in these days. We need to have more seminars like this of today or small group meetings. When I transferred to Concordia University, I was very disappointed that there was no Sikh Students Association. That shows the lack of interest on the parts of Sikh students, for in Ontario almost all universities have Sikh Student Associations, with numerous members. More pamphlets/flyers need to be distributed... I think that more awareness should be promoted.
