

## WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN SIKHI?

Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

I was always an atheist - I still have poems I wrote when I was sixteen which were my attempt at trying to make sense of how 'a God' could kill my father when I was only 8 years old...It wasn't until much later that Guru Sahib helped me understand.

From the age of 17 through to 21 or so, my life was dominated by the following: the need to be the most popular, the most funny, the biggest weed smoker, biggest meat-eater, biggest partier and that guy who always goes the furthest to shock and attract attention. From A-Levels through to university, this was me.

I had had the same girlfriend from the age of 17 and she was the only steady influence upon me; coupled with this was the fact that while at University, I started developing an interest in Spirituality and all the various different schools of thought. I was still a plonker and a mash-head though!

Then halfway through my second year of Uni lots of strange stuff happened, the most important of which I will try to convey in a chronological order. I was smoking lots of weed and reading lots of spiritual stuff. I had rent problems with the place I was staying at and started feeling lonely...eating less, becoming more reclusive and going through strange bouts of euphoria and despondency. My mum went to India and stayed there for a few months - I felt really lonely...I wasn't going into Uni much and my work really suffered. My girlfriend who lived miles away from me (at this point we had been conducting a long distance relationship for more or less around 4 years) had in a moment of rebellion against her already very suspicious father declared that she had a boyfriend from Slough (where she had been mysteriously spending the last three summers at her cousins' house). He gave her a real good beating.

And then I do not remember as clearly...I basically started to deteriorate really badly - saying strange things and feeling really scared and paranoid all the time...my uni friends realised something was up and became scared. One particular incident I clearly remember is borrowing my flatmate's samurai sword because I was convinced that someone was coming to kill me...When I would come home on the weekends my brother and uncle (my dad's brother who had always been a father-figure) were really worried but told me to snap out of it. I didn't want to return to uni and instead wanted to stay at home (smoking lots of weed on the sly).

One of my friends was told by my uncle that he knew I was smoking weed at Uni and if he found out I was doing it with them, they'd be in trouble - if they didn't tell him there would be repercussions...one of them grassed me up and my uncle came to get me and we packed away all my stuff - I think at that point I really wanted to leave that place anyway - my paranoia was really bad. There are other incidents, which I am not sure about in terms of when they happened - I remember having a real dark, scary, spaced out trip to Amsterdam with some uni friends where they had to keep reassuring me that everything was ok. I even remember trying to touch three female friends; one later broke down crying when she told me what I had done...and then there was an incident where I kissed a stranger...I was going through Nark BIGTIME....

I can't remember exactly but I think the doctor diagnosed me with depression, anxiety and psychosis - I was put on the pills. I started thinking that my uncle (who I was staying with for a while) wanted to kill me and so did my Grandma...that the pills were poison. I remember thinking that she had done black magic on me...one night I jumped out of the bedroom window (about 15 foot) onto their front lawn to get away.... on another occasion, I clearly remember lying on the bed trying to hold my breath in order to suffocate myself...I had real bad delusions; thinking that I was receiving messages through the television, that there was a conspiracy to kill me which many of the public were part of...and at one point I actually thought that I was some sort of Divine Being!

My uncle agreed to leave me at home with my brother because I didn't want to stay with him, and had stopped taking the pills he wanted me to take...I would be alone all day thinking someone would kill me or my brother...then one evening, I ran out of the house and headed for the Gurdwara - there was an urge; the only thing I remember about that now is an old man whose face was familiar looking at me in the Langar hall - I felt at the time that he was somehow helping me...I also remember sitting their crying, thinking that I had something evil inside me. My uncle arrived and took me away.... I later realised who that old man was and found out that he had passed away not too long afterwards. I remember feeling that no-one in this world was the support or the helper of another - I even phoned my girlfriend and told her it was off (to the shock of her parents who had agreed that we could marry not so long ago!).

And then I seemed to get better; I can't remember exactly when I started improving...I was reading lots and lots about different faiths looking for hope - ready to accept that there was something greater.... I seriously considered converting to another faith if only I was given some sort of proof/inspiration. For some reason, I never really considered Sikhi until I had considered most if not all the others - even Radhasoamis!

And then, Guru Sahib unfurled His wonders - wow - I read about this lonely world and how ultimately we were alone without Waheguru...my illness, from which I had now (through Gur Kirpa) recovered from had helped unveil these deeper realisations...Vairaag started mounting.

I then gave up alcohol...then pork, then beef, then lamb, then chicken, then egg. Then I gave up cigarettes...then on January 1st 2000, I smoked my last spliff - from that day I kept my Kesh. Guru-Kirpa was working BIGTIME! I somehow got into my Uni work and started hanging around with some Uni Singh's who took me to Sikhi Week etc. At this point I had stopped wearing a hat to cover my Kesh and was wearing a patka. It wasn't too long before I started wearing a dastar...but I still got up to other Kurehats...I somehow rationalised my 'sexual relationship' with my fiancé. I then had to decide whether to marry her and as time went on and she sensed me distancing myself physically, she was faced with me saying; "If you don't take Amrit, I can't marry you". Then I finally softened my stance and accepted that Guru Sahib had given her the strength to stand firm and at my side through all this - if I was destined take Amrit in this life, it would be with her by my side and me by her side...if not, then that was Guru's Hukam too.

But still, I only really got into Sikhi when Guru Sahib decided to give me really good Sangat...I was introduced through a Singh to some local Singh's who played Keertan in such a way that I could not turn back...the tears flowed and the projector translations only solidified my feelings and thoughts. This is the Sangat I get to spend time with nowadays.

So, hopefully Guru will awaken His Love in her and get us both onto that road to Amrit...may it be a short road.

Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

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