

# In Terms of Human Relationships

**The Baha'i Faith believes that human relationships are divine in nature and that their bonds last beyond the scope of this world.** They have the potential to uplift the human soul, as well as oppress it. The relationship of the husband and wife is particularly special because it is designated as a bond that will last, if the two are truly unified, throughout all their spiritual journeys in other spiritual worlds. This relationship is an extremely important responsibility and its health and foundations are crucial to the spiritual and physical lives of the participants.

Abdu'l-Baha, the son of the Prophet Founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah said *"What a power is love! It is the most wonderful, the greatest of all living powers. Love gives life to the lifeless. Love lights a flame in the heart that is cold. Love brings hope to the hopeless and gladdens the hearts of the sorrowful."* This love is the love that is between man and God, God and man, between God and His own nature, and finally,

*"...the love of man for man. The love which exists between the hearts of believers is prompted by the ideal of the unity of spirits...Each sees in the other the Beauty of God reflected in the soul, and finding this point of similarity, they are attracted to one another in love...This love will bring the realization of true accord, the foundation of real unity...."*

*But the love which sometimes exists between friends is not (true) love, because it is subject to transmutation; this is merely fascination...Today you will see two souls apparently in close friendship; tomorrow all this may be changed...When that which has caused this 'love' to exist passes, the love passes also; this is not in reality love" (Abdu'l-Baha)*

**Baha'is liken a relationship between any two human beings, in this case a romantic relationship, to a triangle.** Imagine a triangle that has, at its topmost point, God, and at its lower two base points, husband and wife. The idea is that if they each grow closer to God—each on their own path, strengthening their individual relationships with God—not only do they close the distance between themselves and God, they close the distance between each other. This is a concept that is at the core of Baha'i inter-relationships, and even further, the Faith itself. Baha'is believe that each individual has a divine covenant with God. They must each abide by their individual agreement to know and worship God, abide by the laws of God and nurture their relationship with God. All Baha'i relationships reflect this concept. The administration of the Faith reflects this belief that the individual members have a divine responsibility to their individual relationships with God, as a means of ensuring that the collective decision making process is divinely powered and driven. Communities must support the individual and his/her divine nature and aspirations and the foundation for this is found in the institution of the family and the marriages they spring from.

We have been discussing Baha'i relationships in terms of marriage. This is essentially because there are no provisions directly dealing with what we know as the dating process, especially if it is an end in itself. "Dating", in terms of the sacred writings of the Faith, is at best a means for identifying a marriage partner and at worst it is a distraction for loneliness and an emotional and unnecessary impediment to achieving an understanding of one's own capacities and goals, as well as finding a suitable mate. Since the Baha'i laws prohibit sexual relationships outside of marriage you can hardly imagine promiscuity would be deemed an effective means of finding one's marriage partner. Now this is all very confusing, but what this means is that seeking out another human being to fulfill your personal, superficial need, to find the "perfect person" who will best accommodate your every whim and insecurity, is not the purpose of human relationships of any sort. By investigating the intellectual and spiritual capacities of another human being, avoiding the superficial fantasies of wealth and physical beauty, which are transitory and fleeting, you can find a helpmate and comrade. **Together, you can support each other to achieve your spiritual and mental potential.** There is a very physical element to this as well: by being celibate until marriage the value and sacredness of sex is even further heightened to being a physical bond only shared by the two with each other. *"Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds"* (Abdu'l-Baha)

—Maryam Ishani

# Dreaming...

August 8, 1998, Montréal, hot

A dream of rubbing cold water  
Down the rocky back of a strong woman.  
In the sweat of a summer evening  
She is stretched over so that the water and my  
hands flow from waist to neck, lifting her stuck  
muscle-shirt. I try to find her breasts, but the  
dream changes. I am wetting back her thick curly  
hair with my hands. She is smiling. I know and  
love her face. I don't know if she loves mine.

Later, in the moonlight, I negotiate something  
vaguely sexy with another strong, rocky woman.  
Not sure (still) whether she digs men or not;  
Another known and loved face and body,  
But in an unaccustomed openly erotic place

She goes to the iridescent payphone across the  
room. It flashes nervously that line two, down-  
stairs, is in use.

I sit apprehensively on one arm of the couch,  
tipping it up on two legs.

A robber in the skylight has climbed up the  
scaffolding outside and points a flashlight at my  
underwear.

I am shocked, and think of hiding my fading de-  
sire.

911.

In the wake(ing) of this unnerving scene,  
(in Jesus' name, Amen)  
an angel sits outside my open window,  
playing a saxophone.

I want it to leave, since I've always thought an-  
gelic music was cheesy when played  
on the saxophone.

It persists. I sweat in my bed

—Loren Carle



Aryen Hart and Picasso, via



## Assume Nothing

**I am a religious Jew. I also happen to be gay.** But I am not here to go into a deep explanation of the Jewish religion and law, nor am I writing for the sake of personal narrative. I warn that I will make broad generalizations here, fair or unfair, from personal experience and the simple knowledge that I have, and I apologize in advance for that. But I do have a brief message, and perhaps there is some truth in what I have to say, so I hope you can bear with me.

Religious people are not automatically homophobic or close-minded, nor are secular or liberal individuals, by definition, accepting or open-minded. Those who claim that all religious people are intolerant are wrongly prejudiced. Those who believe that all modern, intellectual individuals are rational and tolerant are also fooled.

One can be gay and believe in G-d. One can love G-d without understanding everything He (or She, etc...) does. I have faith in G-d and I love my religion. Not every aspect of Judaism or this universe makes sense to me, but faith is more than having a logical explanation for everything. I do not choose to be gay. I like to think that I choose to be Jewish. No man or woman forces me to follow the Jewish religion, for I am my own person, and I choose to follow the Jewish commandments as I can. And I love my religion. The fact that I am gay is not reason enough for me to stop loving my religion or to stop believing in G-d. And the fact that I am gay has not stopped my religious, observant friends, to stop loving or respecting me

**Orthodox Jews are aware of the laws of their religion. Yet this does not stop them from loving people as fellow Jews or as fellow human beings**—whether such human beings are gay or not, whether they partake in certain gay acts or not, or whether they even keep kosher (Jewish dietary laws) or not. Perhaps I cannot explain entirely the reasoning behind people’s acceptance or unconditional love, and I don’t think I even have to. And I’d bet that most caring people don’t even need to explain to themselves why they continue to care for their friends and comrades. And their Jewish beliefs, as they see it, do not tell them that they must stop respecting their friends, in any way or in any form. We are not going to accomplish anything if we start ostracizing people or cynically judging others. We are all here in university, we are all growing and learning together, and most know that not one of us is perfect. I have found the student Jewish community to be extremely warm and open, and looking back on my experiences, I could not see it any other way

It is true that some religious individuals use their religion to defend homophobia, or at least their “unacceptance”. It is true that some not-so-religious individuals may still turn to their religious laws as reason to turn their back on a gay person, or at least their “lifestyle” (and at the same time ignore other religious laws when it

comes to the lifestyles of others or even themselves). It is true than an entirely secular person can find some reasoning, whatever it may be, to reject a homosexual individual (for often *they* are certainly unlike those homophobic, medieval religious people, as they claim). And it is also true in these cases that people deny accusations of homophobia, for they all too often have their own reasons for shunning an individual. Hypocrisy is often king.

I have seen some incredible strength and courage on the part of those who have gone through religious conservative education, have heard sermons of fire and brimstone, and still show the most uplifting and unconditional support. I have also seen the weakness and cowardice of those supposedly “modern” liberal individuals (who “should know better”) who, in the end, do not have the courage and power to accept he or she who is different.

One does not need to be religious to be intolerant. One need not be secular to be forgiving. It is often precisely the opposite. Peo-

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ple of all sorts can be afraid of what they do not know or do not comprehend. Some people admit “there is nothing wrong with that”—until it closely affects them. Then there are others who cannot think twice about rejection, when it comes to their friends or those they truly revere and care about.

One does not have to be nonreligious if one is gay. I *choose* to be Jewish and to be religious. Here we are all free to choose, believe as we choose, accept and reject as we choose. So perhaps we should think twice about our assumptions, our choices, our reasoning, and our understanding. Some things are hard to understand, like faith, love, fear, rejection, religion, friendship. Some things are more powerful than our mere understanding.

—Levi



# Hope—The Nature of Love

I have been dating my boyfriend Justin for a year. He lives in my hometown in Vermont, and I attend university at McGill. We see each other as often as we can, which usually amounts to one day on the weekends if we are lucky. Usually Justin drives to Montreal to be with me, or I take a bus home to visit. We snatch our time together between classes, work, chorus, band practice, and the numerous other commitments that keep us from our commitment to each other. Our time together is precious. We often talk about how much we miss each other.

It is definitely a challenge to keep a relationship going when you cannot see the person you love. This is true for my human relationships, as well as my relationship with Christ. It takes effort, and sacrifice. It will sometimes involve tears, and always involves a certain longing that cannot be completely fulfilled while the lovers are apart. The effort and sacrifice and tears and longing are all worth it, though, because “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails” (1 Cor 13: 6-8).

St. Paul is placing his reputation on the line with this guarantee. **Love never fails.** He does not say that *most* of the time love does not fail, or that *technically* love should never fail. He makes no qualifications. He states that love *never* fails. It is clear, however, that St. Paul is speaking of a specific kind of love: it bears, believes, hopes and endures all things.

I believe that this is the way Christ loves me: He bore my sins on the cross, and He believes in my ability to use the gift of free will wisely. He hopes that I will spend eternity with Him in Heaven, and He endures all the mistakes I make as I try my best to get there. I accept this love from Christ. I expect it of Him. But I had never accepted it from another human being, and I had never expected it of myself until I started dating Justin. Christ loves perfectly, because He *is* love. Through His example, I am slowly learning how to love my boyfriend, and how to be loved in return. I now expect myself to love to the best of my ability—though imperfectly—because Justin is worth bearing, believing, hoping and enduring all things. I accept Justin’s love for me because I see in his eyes that he believes I am worth it too.

Separation makes that perfect love all the more difficult. I often get frustrated that I cannot sit down and talk with Jesus face-to-face. The same frustration hits me when I cannot hug my boyfriend goodnight. I do not like to be cut off physically from the ones I love. **I often need reminding that love hopes, and that it hopes all things.** I have Jesus present to me in the Eucharist, and when I am finished with this life I will be reunited fully with Him in Heaven. I have Justin only on weekends now, but when I am finished with university I will find him waiting for me in Vermont so we can spend the rest of our lives together. These are my hopes. They are not easy to sustain, but I believe in them with all my heart. Such is the nature of love—it never fails.

—Emily A. Bessette, U2 Education



You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection



Heart of A Buddha



—Shireef Darwish

# Freedom...and Responsibility

There is arguably no other bond more compelling than the bond that can be established between a man and a woman, and marriage for centuries has been the basis for such a bond to flourish. However, **in the past several decades we have seen the concept of marriage constantly being diluted** to the point where an individual might consider it to be *possible* eventually, but not inevitable. We can attribute much of this dilution to the emphasis that has been placed on sex and sexuality by the society in which we live, and the rapid acceptance of dating and premarital sex. So, where are we today? And what does Islam say about this?

Well, for centuries a common custom was that any type of sexual activity between a man and woman prior to marriage was forbidden, whether by religious standard or not. The sexes were encouraged to control their urges until marriage became an option, at which time lawful sexual activity was acceptable under the sanctity that marriage offered. With time, exploration outside of marriage went from being a serious taboo to simply the norm. Much of this can be attributed to the extensive role of dating. According to Lenor and Ventrone from the *Journal of Family Issues*, dating offers an environment of “...open sexuality, intimacy, and varying dating norms.”

With the onset of dating the idea of marriage became unclear. Men and women could freely associate and interact intimately and sexually, without having to commit to a long-term relationship. In such a relationship, the responsibilities were obviously minimized and any pressure could be relieved by simply “breaking-up.” With obvious benefits, however, come obvious consequences. Dating, since its emergence into mainstream culture, has been the source of countless emotional and psychological problems as well as social disputes. Moreover, the “freedom” it offers to its adherents, has brought to light a line of medical issues ranging from sexually transmitted diseases to the ever-growing debate over abortion. People often argue in favor of dating based on the assumption that it provides a foundation for marriage;

however, divorces in this dating-driven society have been continuously on the rise, and the single-parent family is now the most dominant family composition.

Islam, on the other hand, regards marriage as much more than a mere result of the interaction between men and women. In fact, its importance lies in marriage being the main objective of such an interaction between men and women. So important is marriage, that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: *“Marriage is my sunna [teachings/tradition], whosoever keep away from it is not from me.”*

This saying quite clearly indicates that any practice that encourages celibacy or monasticism, likewise, is not encouraged in Islam. Muslims are required to get married for a variety of reasons, procreation being the natural reason. Other reasons follow, such as the need for the establishment of families, since the family institution is central to an Islamic society.

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Families are institutions that offer support and a solid foundation for children and provide the root for one’s proper upbringing.

For the Muslim, marriage also offers a shield from promiscuity, adultery and fornication which, if not avoided, could lead to a dreadful degradation of society. In this sense, marriage is ultimately the responsibility of both a man and a woman, towards each other. However, at the same time Islam allows and encourages the Muslim man and woman to fulfill their sexual needs, within the bounds of marriage. This permission, with the condition of marriage, is one of the reasons why intercourse out of wedlock is seen as a horrendous sin and carries with it severe punishment. This is evident quite clearly in the Qu’ran: *“Successful indeed are the believers; who are reverent during their prayers. And they avoid vain talk. And they give their obligatory charity. And they maintain their chastity. Only with their spouses, or those who are rightfully theirs, do they have sexual relations; they are not to be blamed. Those who transgress these limits are the transgressors.”* (23:1-7)

Finally, **marriage in Islam is the ultimate bond between the man and the woman.** It offers a great bounty for those who adhere to its practice. Unfortunately, the society in which we live is coming close to forsaking it altogether. While striving for the seemingly pleasurable “freedom” we forget the growing need of “responsibility”—responsibility to ourselves, to others, to the opposite sex, and to the generations that will come after us.

*“Among His proofs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, in order to have the tranquility and contentment with each other, and He placed in your hearts love and care towards your spouses. In this, there are sufficient proofs for people who think.”* (30:21)

—Khurram Ahmad, U3 Management  
Khurram also goes by the name “Kujam” and enjoys eating biryani after hockey



## Current Events: Festival of Lights

**T**he beginning of November is holiday season for Hindus around the world, as both Diwali (the festival of lights) and the new year are celebrated. Diwali is one of the most significant Hindu festivals of the year, and although it has become increasingly secularized in India and parts of the world (akin to Christmas), its religious importance remains central to followers of Hinduism. It is an auspicious period for reflection and celebration; a time for the reaffirmation of faith and a renewed quest for knowledge and enlightenment.

This year marked only my second year away from home during Diwali and, as such, the burden fell on me to make sure I could celebrate properly. Growing up in New Brunswick, with no large Hindu community, the celebration of Diwali was a personal affair, commemorated at home with my parents and brother—an intimate occasion that year after year seemed to me simply a chance to decorate the house, eat lots of sweets, and pray at home. I relied on my parents to take care of the appropriate traditions and to maintain a sense of cultural continuity that often seemed unimportant to me, in comparison with understanding the real meaning of Diwali. The clothes, food, ornaments—all were second nature to me and I never bothered to think much about either their origins or purpose.

As Diwali rolled around this year, I faced the prospect of being away from family and bearing the responsibility of re-creating the festive atmosphere I’d taken for granted each year. **As a student living away from home I’ve found it both more difficult and easier to practice my religion in a meaningful way.** It is more difficult because most of my knowledge and insight has come from family, and they have always been the ones to maintain cultural and religious traditions. Yet it also easier in the sense that the student community at McGill has provided opportunities to explore other aspects of faith and culture that were not available at home. Through dialogue and the exposure to worldwide perspectives, inter-religious sharing has enriched my own understanding of my personal religion.

An example of this sharing occurred at an event in October to mark another Hindu festival, Navratri. The function was attended by a diverse group of students, including many from the McGill Inter-Religious Project\*, who had come to learn more about the Hindu culture. I personally garnered more satisfaction from the religious occasion, through the act of sharing it with both Hindus and non-Hindus alike. The student atmosphere at McGill is in this respect an exciting thing to be a part of – it makes the practice of religion a communal activity. Similarly, I look forward to attending other events with friends of different faiths as part of the learning process and spiritual growth involved with being at university.

For Diwali I was also able to mark the occasion with fellow students, rather than family, and it was memorable in its own way. Whereas in previous years I’d been inclined to take the family traditions for granted, as a student I found myself wanting to make the effort to continue those same customs on my own. Perhaps it’s symptomatic of growing older, or perhaps it’s the influence of a university environment where students of all cultures and religions are encouraged to express themselves, but I am increasingly finding solace in the familiarity of tradition. This year, although I celebrated Diwali in a different manner than ever before, it was rewarding to be part of a new group of students coming together for a common purpose. It was comforting to know that the younger generation of students can still follow age-old customs and yet maintain a healthy scepticism towards them that allows for the evolution of their own religious beliefs.

—Esha Bhandari

*\*The McGill Interreligious project offers students an opportunity to visit different faith communities and to host people of other faiths in one’s own community. For more information and to find out about upcoming visits, email [religioustolerance@hotmail.com](mailto:religioustolerance@hotmail.com)*



# Book Review: The Illuminated Rumi

Come

Come, whoever you are! Wanderer, Worshipper, Lover of Leaving,  
Come. This is not a caravan of despair. It doesn't matter if you've  
broken your vow a thousand times, still

Come, and yet again

Come!

Thus begins *The Illuminated Rumi*, a book of "Rumi's passionate, playful poems [that] find and celebrate sacred life in everyday existence" (as the inside flap professes). *The Illuminated Rumi* is a page-turner, a coffee table must-have, and a book that belongs in every poetry lover's collection. For those who have read the other texts of Rumi, *The Illuminated Rumi* is a hard-cover version that may not be as thick as other translations, but redeems itself by beautifully weaving the art of word and image.

If you've never experienced the wonder that is the poetry of Sufi philosopher Jelaluddin Rumi, this book is the expensive sampling of some of the loveliest poems by Rumi. A brief history, for the Rumi-newcomer: In the thirteenth century, Rumi befriended a wandering dervish named Shams of Tabriz, and from this friendship mushroomed mystical, passionate poetry. The poems of Rumi often deal with relationships, be they interpersonal (such as love and friendship), the relationship with one's own self, or the relationship of individuals with nature and the world surrounding them.

Translated by Coleman Barks, the book also has occasional commentary pages that are not only inspiring, but explain ideas in such a way that Rumi's poems become more understandable and thus easier to appreciate. Michael Green, the "illuminator" (or illustrator, if you're not into the jazzy title) has adorned each page of poetry with stunning artwork and photographs, making *The Illuminated Rumi* not only a pleasure to read, but also to look at. *The Illuminated Rumi* is the picture-book for the spiritual grown-up.

"Rise up nimbly and go on your strange journey to the ocean of meanings..."...and curl up in your coziest socks with a cup of Yogi Tea, and prepare for the best way to pamper your soul.

—Erykah Zelfand

hardcover edition: \$39.95 CDN

Coleman Barks and Michael Green

Broadway Books, New York, 1997

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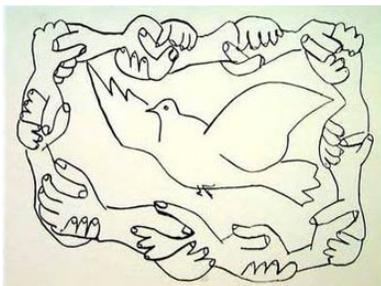
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# Guarding the Touch

"Sorry, I'm preserving my hormones," I feel like replying whenever I am subjected to the embarrassing *handshake* phenomenon of Jewish Observant life. According to Jewish Law, members of the opposite sex (aside from spousal units, and a few other within-family exceptions) are prohibited from having any sort of direct physical contact with one another – not even a *handshake*. Sounds a little *extreme*, no?! Well, to really understand what this is all about, let's conduct a preliminary examination of who exactly we are in essence (always a good starting point in discussions such as these).

A being was created on the 6th day named *Adam*. *Adam*, we are taught, was both *male and female* in gender. The Creator had created two of every being, aside from this one. Shortly thereafter however, The Creator saw that it was "not good for *Adam* to be alone", and so *Adam's* female side was extracted, thus splitting *Adam* in half. This is why we are all naturally attracted to members of the opposite sex.

These (now) two humans, were then given their first commandment: "*Pru Urvu*" (be fruitful and multiply). Basically, *reunify*. Kinda circular, no? Here's the deal: While still unified, the female and male, unable to become any closer, still remained somewhat unfulfilled. Only their separation and subsequent reunion could allow them to unite in the *fullest* sense, culminating and resulting in an entirely *new* creation.

We are all descendants of Adam and Chava (Eve). Their souls contain all of ours combined. Every female soul has a corresponding male soul. Thus our purpose remains the same even today: to seek out and reunify with our other half. A simple task for someone who is incredibly in tune with the spiritual realms; however, for the rest of us it ain't that easy. Since we all share the same root, distinguishing between our true soul mates, and others with similar spiritual make-ups can sometimes be tricky.

What makes this whole business all the *more* difficult, is our ongoing interactions with members of the opposite sex who are *not* our soul mates. To use a rather crude, yet illustrative example, imagine you walk into a store to buy a pair of shoes with no plan, no strategy. You have no idea what you are looking for. The more shoes you try on, the longer it takes. You compare, and retry, and if the other shoes are appealing enough, even after the final purchase is made, you remain somewhat unsatisfied, or unsure that you made the right decision. If, instead of rushing to try on every shoe in the store, we first stepped aside and observed the situation objectively—measuring our foot size, deciding what type of shoe we need, considering both ascetics, comfort, and indeed, our budget—we would probably end up with far less shoes to choose from.

In pre-marital relationships, abstaining from direct physical contact is essential if any level of objective thinking is hoped for. This is because the physical parallels the spiritual realms. **When we physically connect with someone down here, our soul interacts with his or her soul in the spiritual world, stimulating our inner longing to be with our true soul-mate.** Like a puzzle piece, we check to see if we fit. Even if the match is not perfect, at times our longing is so intense that we fool ourselves, at times even into absurdity. So proceeds the vicious cycle of confusion and hurt, and more confusion still. This is why I choose to take the clearer path, of preserving my hormones for the sake of clarity, love, and light.

—Sarede Switzer

Sarede is a documentary filmmaker, fountain of information, and a U3 Psychology student





## Response: Activist Art

I was encouraged to read “The Artist’s Way” by Alisha Ruiss in the November issue of the Radix. Like her, I feel the same struggle to reconcile my own personal necessity of being a serious and professionally-oriented musician with many people’s conceptions of what it means to be a faithful Christian. To me, that faithfulness to my spirituality is bound up with Jesus’ challenges to care for those on the margins, to seek peace and justice within and without, in myself and in the world. It also involves my commitment to better myself as a performing and creating artist—to invest diligently the resources that God has given me, as Ruiss illustrated with Jesus’ parable of the talents. As I involve myself in various “activist” sorts of activities on campus, I feel an increasing demand on my time and energy. I find that many in activist circles, as well as in specifically religious circles, do not understand that my first commitments of time must be devoted to private practice, rehearsal, rest, eating well. This is a spiritual practice in itself. I participate in peace-building and other activist activities because I believe them to be vitally important to a better life for many people around me. I also believe that music and other creative activity is vitally important. Furthermore, if religious and activist activity ignores, sidelines, or even belittles (yes, it does happen) that creativity, then the point is lost. I have been asked more than once what my music-making contributes to the pursuit of social, economic, and environmental justice—isn’t it just elitist? It’s a good question that has taken me a long time to find a confident, if perhaps incomplete, answer for.

To me the entire point of the endless quest for justice and peace, and the purpose of religion, is to create space for people to live out the creative beauty of their lives in fullness and joy. Thus, I am confident of my ethical choice to pursue a committed professional artistic life. As for elitism, in a certain sense, I’m all for it—if more people are empowered to embrace, with passion, the things that they want to be truly good at, life is improved. I don’t believe in creativity as the privilege of a chosen few. It is part of the essence of every life, absolutely necessary in the struggle against poverty, war, ecological destruction, and essential to the nature of God Herself.

—Lou Clarke

*Did something in this issue get you thinking? WRITE A RESPONSE for the next issue of the Radix! Send comments to [radix@yours.com](mailto:radix@yours.com)*

## Recipe for Happiness

The words “sex” and “relationships” are words that we hear almost on a day-to-day basis. Whether on TV, in a mainstream song or in everyday conversation, sex and relationships play a big part in our society, and in many of our lives. What is the significance and impact of these words on each of us and particularly on our spirituality?

What I would particularly like to address is the connection that is being made between sex and relationships, and happiness. **It seems more and more that the way to fulfillment in Western society is through romantic relationships.** This “fulfillment” is based on the idea that only through another person, can we feel whole and good about ourselves. But what happens when these relationships don’t work out? Do we not feel empty, alone and miserable? Many of us do. So, perhaps we are seeking a path of fulfillment that will give us temporary fulfillment but not *true* fulfillment.

Sikh doctrine does not explicitly say anything about sex, be it premarital or not. This may be for several reasons: maybe it was deemed unimportant compared to the egalitarian ideology behind the religion, or maybe it was understood in those days that Sikhs were not supposed to engage in premarital sex. Whatever the reason behind not mentioning it, I believe that it was beneficial for Sikhs not to focus on sex, but on spiritual fulfillment and being one with God. Maybe through those channels, one will not feel empty, alone or miserable.

—Reena Kaur Baweja



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