

how to become a rasta

how to become a rasta is a question that encompasses more than just adopting a hairstyle or following a particular lifestyle. Rastafarianism is a spiritual and cultural movement that originated in Jamaica in the 1930s, deeply rooted in African heritage, religion, and social justice. To truly embrace the path of a Rasta involves understanding its religious beliefs, cultural practices, and philosophical outlook on life. This article explores the essential steps, beliefs, and lifestyle changes involved in becoming a Rasta. It will cover the history and core principles of Rastafarianism, spiritual practices, dietary habits, and the significance of symbols such as dreadlocks and the use of natural herbs. By gaining insight into these areas, one can appreciate the depth of the Rastafarian way of life and how to authentically integrate it into daily living.

- Understanding Rastafarianism: History and Beliefs
- Embracing the Spiritual Path
- Adopting the Rastafarian Lifestyle
- Symbols and Practices of Rastafarianism
- Community and Social Engagement

Understanding Rastafarianism: History and Beliefs

To learn how to become a rasta, it is crucial to first understand the origins and fundamental beliefs of Rastafarianism. This movement began in Jamaica during the early 20th century, inspired by the coronation of Haile Selassie I as Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930. Rastafarians view Haile Selassie as a messianic figure, the returned messiah who will lead people of African descent to freedom and liberation. The religion emphasizes African identity, pride, and resistance to oppression, often referred to as "Babylon," symbolizing Western colonialism and injustice.

Historical Background

Rastafarianism emerged as a response to the social and economic struggles faced by Afro-Jamaicans under British colonial rule. It draws heavily on biblical themes, particularly from the Old Testament, interpreting them in the context of African diaspora experiences. The movement gained momentum through influential figures such as Marcus Garvey, who prophesied the rise of a black king in Africa, which many Rastafarians associate with Haile Selassie.

Core Beliefs

The core beliefs in Rastafarianism include the divinity of Haile Selassie, the importance of repatriation to Africa, and living in harmony with nature. Rastafarians reject the materialism and corruption they associate with Western society, advocating for a peaceful, just, and spiritually fulfilling life. The concept of "I and I" expresses the unity between the individual and the divine, emphasizing equality and interconnectedness.

Embracing the Spiritual Path

Becoming a Rasta involves adopting a spiritual framework that guides daily behavior and worldview. Rastafarian spirituality is deeply personal and communal, focusing on inner awareness, meditation, and connection with Jah, the Rastafarian name for God.

Faith and Devotion

Faith in Jah and reverence for Haile Selassie are central to the Rastafarian spiritual path. Devotees often engage in prayer, chanting, and reading from the Bible, particularly the Psalms and other Old Testament books. Spiritual gatherings, known as "reasoning sessions," facilitate communal worship, discussion, and reflection.

Meditation and Mindfulness

Meditation is an integral part of Rastafarian practice, helping individuals to cultivate peace, clarity, and spiritual insight. The use of natural herbs, such as cannabis, is traditionally incorporated in some communities to enhance meditation and spiritual connection, although practices vary among individuals.

Adopting the Rastafarian Lifestyle

How to become a rasta also means embracing a lifestyle that reflects the movement's values of natural living, social justice, and respect for life. This lifestyle extends beyond religious belief to include dietary choices, personal habits, and social attitudes.

Dietary Practices

Many Rastafarians follow an Ital diet, which emphasizes natural, unprocessed foods and often excludes meat, dairy, and artificial additives. Ital cuisine promotes health, vitality, and spiritual cleanliness, aligning with the broader Rastafarian principle of living in harmony with the earth.

Personal Conduct and Ethics

Rastas strive to live ethically, promoting peace, love, and respect for all people. They reject violence, greed, and exploitation, instead advocating for equality, community support, and environmental stewardship. Personal conduct is influenced by the idea of righteousness and maintaining a positive vibration.

Symbols and Practices of Rastafarianism

Understanding and adopting the symbols and cultural practices of Rastafarianism is essential when learning how to become a rasta. These symbols carry deep spiritual significance and represent the movement's identity and philosophy.

Dreadlocks

Dreadlocks are one of the most recognized symbols of Rastafarianism. They signify a natural, unaltered state of being and spiritual strength. The hairstyle is inspired by the Nazarite vow in the Bible and reflects a commitment to living according to divine will. Growing and maintaining dreadlocks is often seen as a spiritual journey.

The Colors of Rastafari

The colors red, gold, and green are emblematic in Rastafarian culture. Each color holds symbolic meaning: red represents the blood of martyrs, gold symbolizes wealth and the treasures of Africa, and green stands for the land and hope. These colors are prominently displayed in clothing, flags, and art within the Rastafarian community.

Cannabis Use

While not universally practiced, the sacramental use of cannabis is common among many Rastafarians. It is considered a holy herb that aids meditation, spiritual insight, and connection with Jah. The use of cannabis is approached with respect and moderation, primarily within religious contexts.

Community and Social Engagement

Rastafarianism is not only a personal spiritual path but also a communal movement that emphasizes solidarity, social justice, and cultural pride. Becoming a Rasta involves engaging with the community and contributing to the collective well-being.

Participation in Reasoning Sessions

Reasoning sessions are gatherings where Rastafarians come together to discuss spiritual, social, and cultural topics. These meetings foster unity, education, and mutual support. Participating in reasoning sessions helps deepen understanding and strengthens communal bonds.

Advocacy and Social Justice

Rastafarians actively promote social justice, human rights, and the fight against oppression. They often engage in advocacy for racial equality, environmental protection, and cultural preservation. This commitment to activism is a vital aspect of living as a Rasta.

Living with Purpose and Respect

Community life in Rastafarianism encourages living with purpose, respect for others, and a commitment to uplifting marginalized groups. Sharing resources, supporting one another, and honoring African heritage are key components of this communal ethic.

Practical Steps to Begin the Journey

For those seeking to understand how to become a rasta, practical steps can help initiate the transformation into this spiritual and cultural way of life.

1. **Study Rastafarian Teachings:** Read foundational texts and listen to teachings from respected Rastafarian elders and scholars.
2. **Adopt Ital Living:** Begin incorporating a natural, plant-based diet and reduce consumption of processed foods.
3. **Grow Dreadlocks:** Consider growing dreadlocks as a physical expression of commitment to Rastafarian principles.
4. **Join a Community:** Participate in local or online Rastafarian groups to engage in reasoning sessions and communal activities.
5. **Practice Spirituality:** Incorporate prayer, meditation, and reflection into daily routines.
6. **Promote Social Justice:** Get involved in advocacy and community support aligned with Rastafarian values.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does it mean to become a Rasta?

Becoming a Rasta means embracing the Rastafari movement, which is a spiritual and cultural way of life that originated in Jamaica. It involves following the teachings of Haile Selassie I, promoting peace, love, unity, and living in harmony with nature.

Do I need to follow specific religious beliefs to become a Rasta?

Yes, Rastafari is a spiritual movement based on the worship of Haile Selassie I, whom Rastafarians consider the returned messiah. Belief in this and adherence to the movement's values and principles is essential to being considered a Rasta.

How important is the use of cannabis in Rastafari culture?

Cannabis is considered a sacrament in Rastafari culture and is used during religious ceremonies to aid meditation and spiritual growth. However, its use is not mandatory, and becoming a Rasta is more about adopting the spiritual and cultural beliefs than the use of cannabis alone.

What lifestyle changes are common when becoming a Rasta?

Common lifestyle changes include adopting a natural and simple way of life, eating an Ital diet (natural, clean, and vegetarian), growing dreadlocks as a spiritual expression, rejecting materialism, and promoting peace, love, and social justice.

Is it necessary to grow dreadlocks to be a Rasta?

While dreadlocks are a significant symbol of Rastafari identity representing a covenant with Jah and a rejection of Babylonian norms, not all Rastafarians grow them. The spiritual beliefs and lifestyle are more important than physical appearance.

Can anyone become a Rasta regardless of their background?

Yes, the Rastafari movement is open to people of all races and backgrounds. It emphasizes unity, equality, and respect for all humanity, so anyone who genuinely embraces its principles can become a Rasta.

Where can I learn more about Rastafari teachings and community?

You can learn more by reading books on Rastafari history and beliefs, listening to reggae music (which often incorporates Rastafari themes),

joining local Rastafari communities or cultural centers, and engaging with online resources and documentaries about the movement.

Additional Resources

1. Rasta Roots: Understanding the Spiritual Journey

This book delves into the origins and foundational beliefs of Rastafarianism. It explores the spiritual practices, symbolism, and the significance of Haile Selassie in the Rastafari faith. Readers will gain insight into how to embrace the Rasta lifestyle with authenticity and respect.

2. The Rastafarian Way: A Guide to Living with Purpose

An accessible guide for those interested in adopting Rastafarian principles, this book covers topics such as dietary laws, meditation, and the importance of community. It emphasizes the holistic approach to health and spirituality inherent in the Rasta way of life. Practical tips help readers incorporate these values into daily living.

3. From Babylon to Zion: The Rasta Path to Liberation

This title offers a historical perspective on the struggle against oppression and the quest for freedom central to Rastafarian ideology. It provides context for the movement's emphasis on repatriation and resistance to Babylonian systems. The book serves as an inspiration for those seeking to understand the deeper meaning behind becoming a Rasta.

4. Living Jah Life: Embracing Rastafarian Culture and Faith

A comprehensive introduction to Rastafarian culture, music, and rituals, this book helps newcomers appreciate the vibrant expressions of the faith. It discusses the role of reggae music, dreadlocks, and sacramental use of herbs in spiritual practice. Readers learn how to live in harmony with Jah's teachings.

5. The Herb and the Spirit: Rastafari Herbal Practices

Focusing on the natural healing traditions within Rastafari, this book explains the spiritual and medicinal use of herbs like ganja. It discusses the cultural significance of herbalism and how it supports mental and physical wellness. Ideal for those wanting to understand the sacred relationship between nature and spirituality.

6. Dreadlocks and Devotion: The Symbolism of Rasta Identity

This book explores the powerful symbolism behind dreadlocks, colors, and other Rasta identifiers. It guides readers through the process of adopting these symbols with reverence and meaning. The text also addresses common misconceptions and promotes a respectful approach to Rasta identity.

7. Rasta Roots Meditation: Finding Peace through Jah

A practical manual on meditation techniques grounded in Rastafarian spirituality, this book encourages mindfulness and connection to Jah. It offers step-by-step exercises to cultivate inner peace and spiritual awareness. Suitable for beginners and those looking to deepen their meditation practice within the Rasta framework.

8. Rastafari and Reggae: Music as a Spiritual Path

This book highlights the integral role of reggae music in spreading Rastafarian messages and inspiring faith. It explores the lyrics, rhythms, and history of reggae as tools for spiritual growth and social change. Readers will learn how music can be a transformative part of becoming a Rasta.

9. *The Rasta Diet: Nourishing Body and Soul Naturally*

Covering the Ital diet and other nutritional practices, this book emphasizes eating natural, clean, and plant-based foods. It explains how diet supports spiritual clarity and physical health in Rastafarianism. Practical recipes and meal plans help readers adopt an Ital lifestyle aligned with Rasta beliefs.

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