

The Sikh Message: Back To the Future!

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A crucial question for the Sikhs to ponder is: **how can the universally applicable teachings of Guru Nanak become truly beneficial for all the people of the world who are yearning for spiritual tidings and are truly hungry for spirituality, regardless of gender, creed, faith, or nationality?** Before we come to grip with this question it is necessary to know where we are going, **where we were during Guru Nanak's times, where we are now, and how we arrived there.**

Most scholars of Sikh religion and the Sikh doctrine agree that Guru Nanak's Message clearly spells out, how to acquire **a just social, ethical, moral, and spiritual lifestyle, and thus acquiring oneness with God.** Yet if we examine the current trends we find that the noble and virtuous values associated with such a lifestyle are utterly lacking, if not almost completely absent. Where have we gone wrong? Each Sikh has a life long contract with Guru Nanak's beliefs and practices. When any Sikh violates this trust, our Sikh religion and Sikh image suffers.

So the first question a Sikh must ask himself/herself when making a decision about his/her personal behavior or action, **is it morally right and honorable behavior or as action.** This is being honest to oneself. This is being a true follower of Guru Nanak. It is a basic requirement of your belief in your Guru's message. Only then you can serve as a role model or a mentor for other aspiring Sikhs and our youth.

Perhaps we Sikhs have not been able to serve as good role models for others to emulate. **It is crucial for all the Sikh men and women, to faithfully honor the contract with Guru Nanak, we adopted or inherited when we were born into Sikh families.** It is not uncommon to observe that there seems to be little or no passion among us, in regards to learning the true Sikh beliefs and Sikh faith.

Our belief and faith seem to be just limited to attending Gurdwara on Sundays. Although physically we may be in Gurdwara, but our mind is wandering or is mostly not attentive and not focused on the Divine Spirit permeating everywhere. This situation is even worse for our young people, especially in western countries, because of their inability to grasp the message from the services conducted in a language they do not understand. No wonder, the young people attend Gurdwara once in a while, perhaps on important occasions such as Guru Nanak's birthday.

We need to motive our youngsters so that they would feel enthusiastic in practicing Sikh faith. Therefore our approach has to be two-fold, **first, we need good role models for our youngsters to look up to, and second, we need to spread the Message in the language our youngsters can comprehend.** It has been suggested that perhaps the Sikh youth should learn Gurmukhi, a laudable approach, but in practice it has only been marginally successful. It is therefore prudent that these young Sikhs be taught the Sikh beliefs and practices in the language they can readily understand. But still the big question remains about the good role models. Unfortunately, our Gurdwaras are increasingly becoming battlefields, instead of prayer grounds. The incessant turmoil in our Gurdwaras resulting from management elections, and the continuous struggle for control of Gurdwaras by ambitious coteries, has led to terrible verbal and physical infighting. The result is that many of our current generation Sikh role models portray a very dismal picture of practising Sikh. Is it any surprise then that the Sikh youth are disheartened, disenchanting, and

disinterested from attending Gurdwaras?

One of the most important ways in which we can infuse a high level of enthusiasm among our young people is for us, the present generation of Sikhs including, but not limited to the management of Gurdwaras, to become decent living examples, based on fundamental Sikh beliefs and practices, otherwise it would be a disservice to our Gurus. A deep soul searching may be required to accomplish this objective by keeping in mind the needs of our budding youths. However, we must first ensure that **our Gurdwaras are able and willing to offer ways and means to implement the following practices, in addition to our basic Sikh principles, during and/or after Gurdwaras services:**

- Expand our **vision and horizon spirituality** so as to bring, especially our youth, closer to Gurbani, our Gurus, God and spirituality.
- **Stimulate, propagate, direct and guide** each one of the congregant to lead a truly righteous lifestyle (in a language s/he can understand) as instructed in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
- **Explore, suggest, devise, design, and open up newer ways, newer vistas, and newer reflections** including seminars, retreats, workshops and open discussions through discourse and inner contemplation pertaining to the Sikh Message. It is here that the fundamental **Sikh triad of “Naam Japna”, “Vand Chhakna” and “Earning honest Livelihood”** can be best applied in one’s daily lifestyle.
- Devise a completely new method **for the Selection (NOT Election) of the management** of our Gurdwaras.

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