

# Let the world know of Sikhism

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“WE CAN WRANGLE AND PREACH for religion; fight for it; die for it; do anything but live it.”

I had read these lines long ago and always related it to the situations happening in real life. Whenever we turn the pages of newspapers, or click any T.V channel, we find examples of people doing so. We see the people fighting, killing and dying in the name of religion. Then there are preachers doing their duty with pomp and show. We also see debates on the subject. There are only few examples where we are shown people actually following the preaching.

Our Sikh religion is like a huge structure and distinctive entity given by our Tenth Guru as its image. This huge structure is made by sacrifices of Sikh Gurus, especially the sacrifices made by our Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh ji. This was followed by lakhs of men, women and children sacrificing their lives to save self - respect, religion, country and society as a whole. Guru Granth Sahib is the final authority that gives shelter, assurance, that binds co-religionists under one roof. Through *Gurbani* we are taught how to live, but most of us seem to be intrested in reading only.

I would like to share a personal experience with my brothers and sisters and hope to explain what I want to say or put across:

It was on 28.09.02. I left for Punjab via Shane-Punjab in the morning. At around 12.15, the train stopped at Phillour railway station. It was declared that the train might not leave for a long time as some political party workers had started “*Rail-Roko Andolan*” in support of their demands. Since the coach No.C2, in which I was traveling was parked opposite a tea stall on the platform, there was a big rush at this stall. People were discussing about politics and grievances being meted out to commoners due to such agitations. There was a group of four middle-aged Sikhs like me who were discussing the religious state of affairs of our community .They were having good knowledge of *Gurbani*. of which I am bereft but I was sure that their discussion was fruitful.

At around 2.30 p.m, standing near the tea stall I saw a lady with a weeping child in her arms, hardly an year old, making some enquiry from some group of Sikhs and others. She seemed quite upset and was looking here and there as if in need of help. I enquired from her and came to know that she urgently required some hot water to make milk for her hungry child and was asking about the location of the pantry car. The only help given to her by my so called religious brothers and others was the information that there was no pantry car in the train. She informed me, “The tea stall owner is having a very good business due to the long halt, and is not interested in helping me and even the utensil he is, using for making tea seems unhygienic. I took the bottle of water from her and told her to concentrate on calming down the child and to take care of my briefcase since I was also travelling alone .On enquiry, I found out from one of the policemen on duty that outside the station there was a tea stall and shop and the same can be managed from there. In spite of

knowing that the train could leave any moment my internal strength and faith propelled me to do something for the child without any hesitation.

I jogged out of the station and at the tea stall encountered the same problem of hygiene. I sighted a steel tiffin in the stall. The tea stall owner told me that it was not clean, as he had just finished his lunch. I washed the utensil with the available ash and gave him to make water hot. I offered him money but he refused and thereafter I rushed towards the train after crossing the over-bridge. As I reached near my compartment, so many people who had noticed me leaving with the bottle out of the station, came near by, and the lady was so thankful that she could not utter a word in anxiety. I reminded myself, "One should not expect thanks for any help rendered to someone in need."

I once again joined my religious brothers in discussion. One of them said that I had done a very good job. Suddenly, a Sikh with trimmed beard passed by. One of the men commented that these Sikhs have tarnished the image of Sikhism. Then it was my turn to say something. I said that I agreed with him but asked him as to what he personally had done to improve the image. I also asked him that was it enough as religious duty for him to condemn a trimmed bearded man. What good they, the fully bearded men, were doing when they did not respond to the lady with a child in a problem? You just passed the information she enquired but did not look beyond in terms of helping her to solve her problem. This is not what our religion teaches. How can we talk of reaching to *PARAM-ATMA* (Waheguru), when we are not in a position to interact with *AATMA*, as we were not responding to the cries of an infant. I agreed with them that the Sikh men with trimmed beards had indeed tarnished the image of Sikhism and we, with full beards - symbol of our religion's image, should take initiative in improving the image or TELL THE WORLD the MEANING OF *SIKHI*?

The distinctive identity given by our Tenth Guru was surely to let the world know that the Sikhs are saint-soldiers! One could never think that with these symbols or articles of faith, or the 5K's, that one adorns, one would dare to tread the wrong path.

Merely condemning a wrong can't help, as we require putting right into action. For that we require to act when the situation demands. Had that trimmed bearded Sikh helped the lady in her distress, then, to her, who could have been more religious? The discussing group did not have any answer but wanted to talk to me further on that matter. I told them that it's not time to discuss but to act on whatever has been conveyed to us by our Gurus through messages given through *Gurbani*.

Finally, the train had given its signal to move. I was invited to join in their coach to discuss, but to me the train resuming its journey was like a God sent signal to end the talks. I was sure that I would be no match to them for discussions being aware of my lack of knowledge of *Gurbani* and with very little knowledge I feared of uttering something, which I should not.

The train left Phillour at around 3 P.M. In the train I could see the child happily playing with its mother. I did not know to which religion she belonged, but was sure that whatever I had done was what my religion taught me. I had been to Punjab for a purpose and right from Delhi I was thinking and was under stress on the subject, but after this episode I became calm as if my purpose had been fulfilled.

I am neither a preacher nor a so-called religious man but a small-time businessman who is trying to do justice to the cause. I admit having very little

knowledge of *Gurbani* but I am sure of one thing: 'knowledge' without implementation is not fruitful." When we pray in the morning *SARBAT KA BHALA*, we pray to *Waheguru* for the well being of society as a whole, but implementation is to be done by ourselves. *Waheguru* blesses those, who collect courage and are willing to help others.

These small efforts, whenever chanced upon, if done by lakhs of Sikhs are going to help us in enhancing the image of this huge structure - our religion, for which we have lost unaccountable number of lives, as much as wealth. Let the world know what our religion is, and the wrong perceptions about it would be removed. We should not use religion as a stepney only; approaching in times of distress but as a Steering Wheel - something in front of us guiding our movements daily in life's each and every moment!

