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**Jain Media Team**

Recently, we came across a video by 'Jain Media' triggering a Twitter campaign in which Government is being asked to declare 'Shikharji as Holy City'.

Two years back, 'Jyot' had started 'Save Shikharji' campaign for same tirth demanding government to issue a notification to declare Shikharji as a '**Place of Worship of Jains**'. The same demand has not been fulfilled due to the last minute unsolicited intervention by 'Anandji Kalyanji Trust' who negotiated poorly with the concerned Government authorities. Because of this, we had to stall the campaign midway with just a solitary gain of an office memo which is nothing but an internal circular issued by the Government without any strong legal bindings.

Coming to the 'Holy City' campaign, we feel that the demand made from the government is untimely, misleading, lacks vision, clarity and is ambiguous. On the contrary, there are several incidents of the past where in many Jain organizations had presented issues precisely to protect the sanctity of Shikharji and placed before the government authorities from District Collector's office to the Chief Minister's office who in turn had also acknowledged their concern for this religious place. During that period the Government authorities had promised that meat and liquor would be completely banned in these areas and those who are found selling meat and liquor on the roadside shops will be put behind bars. The need of the hour is to get those words of authorities followed so that prohibitory orders are implemented soon. Without knowing the facts of the earlier endeavors and the state of current ground situation any attempt to initiate a fresh campaign would seem like beating around the bush.

Hence this campaign which raises issues ambiguously is out of the blue and may annoy the Government authorities and tarnish the image of Jain community at large.



Arguably, even if you succeed in getting the status of Holy city for Shikharji it may hardly help in achieving the desired results of prohibition of liquor and meat in the city. There are several cities across India like Ajmer, Dwarka, Allahabad, Jammu, Banaras, Haridwar, Ayodhya, Vrindivan etc which are already tagged or recognized as holy cities by the High courts of the respective states. Are the prohibition orders fully implemented in the entire areas of the cities? But in effect the ground realities are nowhere close.

A campaign to declare the city of Ujjain as Holy city along with the prohibition of meat and liquor started around 2 years back but it has still not fructified.

Dwarka, Ambaji, Dakor, Somnath in Gujarat were though declared as holy in 1997 was only for the objective of gaining fast development and betterment of facilities in the cities but there is no mention of banning of meat or meat products there.

Muktasar, Kiratpur Sahib, Bhaini Sahib- cities of Punjab were declared as holy cities to avail restriction on sale of liquor but not meat.

The Kurukshetra in Haryana is declared as holy city and prohibition order on sale and purchase of meat and meat products were issued. However, it was challenged and currently stay has been granted by the high court for the same.

Even in Jharkhand, where Shikharji is situated, the city of Deoghar is granted the status of Holy city but meat, liquor etc is freely available there. On the contrary, attempts have been made in Lok Sabha to promote tourism in the same city.

Palitana was declared as holy in 1997, yet the resolution to ban fishing activities in the pious Shetrunji river dam was taken only in 2005. In Palitana there is a specific notification for prohibition on selling of meat, eggs and fishery products. However, that notification is restricted only to the extent of 250 meters on either side of the road leading to the foothills of sacred mountain. Again, the implementation of this order in reality is a task.



In conclusion, the declaration of Shikharji as a holy city campaign does not seem to reap any desired benefits. Furthermore, we emphasize that what we need to do is to focus on widening the scope and actual implementation of the orders already achieved.

One should recognize that demand of 'Save Shikharji' campaign initiated by Jyot to declare Shikharji as a 'Place of Worship of Jains' is most appropriate and utmost essential. For such demands, there are established precedents in India in the form of 7 Hills of Tirupati, Mt. Narsing and other Sikkim hillocks etc. have been declared as 'Place of Worship'. Many other instances are quoted on Save Shikharji website, wherein the religious sites are declared as 'Place of Worship' by respective state governments. The notification declaring Shikharji as 'Place of Worship of Jains' would surely help to bring about the sanctity of Shikharji entirely.

In the 'Save Shikharji' campaign initiated the entire Jain community across the world united, could reach out to the concerned government authorities. Considering the relevance of and convinced with the benefits of demands of 'Save Shikharji' movement, numerous religious institutions and most importantly, all 4 Sects of Shwetamaber Murtipujak Jain Sangh, backed this movement. Support letters were received from the Acharyas of many Shwetamaber Gacchs and even from the Anandji Kalyanji Trust. The campaign was wholeheartedly supported by Sthanakvasi, Terapanti and Digambar saints too. But for petty reasons Anandji Kalyanji Trust had withdrawn the support later on. However, the movement continued and the campaign not only could gain patronage from all sects of Jains in India but also from Jain Diaspora and their institutions across globe. With this huge mandate and wide support, the movement was escalated to top levels at central and state government. Even after receiving multiple instructions from ministers to tone down the campaign, we continued with a resolve to stop only at victory. Later on, we were called for negotiations by the then CM of Jharkhand, Shri. Raghuvir Das. During the negotiations, all sects of Jains had unanimously requisitioned before the CM for declaring entire Shikharji Hill as a 'Place of Worship of Jains'. But, when the success was at arm's length, the Anandji Kalyanji Trust, claiming that they are the representatives, interfered. They lead and negotiated in the meeting with the CM of Jharkhand, and to our utmost dismay, they settled with them to shut the



'Save Shikharji' campaign in return for just an 'Office Memo'.

We had such a huge mandate, these demands were sidelined and a consolation grant was given for name sake which was accepted by Anandji Kalyanji Trust. After this fiasco, we were instructed to call off the campaign which we didn't but only paused because of a promise was given to us from Anandji Kalyanji Trust that they will strive hard to get the gazette notification which till today they could not. This is the history behind the curtains.

Therefore, the necessary campaign at this point of time from your side should be to wake up and demand from the Anandji Kalyanji Trust to fulfill their promise given to the Jain Sangh. Here we should really give up our 'Napunsakatva' (Impotency) and ignite our "Paurusatva" (Valor). This will really lead to "Tirthraksha" in form of protecting its sanctity.

**We make an earnest appeal to you to rectify this campaign which is misleading and focus on appropriate issues raising the existing demand. Highlighting other less crucial issues of Tirth by diverting the core issues will only affect the cause of 'Tirthraksha'.**

Today Jains are in such a situation that working for even a small cause at government levels is a herculean task. Those were the days, when Anandji Kalyanji Trust could fight against Darbar for an issue of 'aashatna' of our Shatrunjay Hill by making them pay heavily for wearing shoes while climbing hill. Today, the same Anandji Kalyanji Trust is not even successful of solving the tiny issues of harassments by Doliwala to pilgrims or prohibits them from consuming non veg, cigarettes, pan masala etc inside the gadh (Rampol) on the hill top near our main temples. Basking in the glory of past is not a task of winners.

Let us unite and be powerful for the cause of Tirth Raksha, with one voice and one demand in the interest of Shashan; which is to declare Shikharji as the "Place of Worship of Jains"

**For Save Shikharji Team & Jyot Team.**

