



Press Release

A JYOT INITIATIVE – “SAVE SHIKHARJI” **AN UNITED CAMPAIGN OF JAIN CONTINUES** **THE SPEARHEAD OF THE CAMPAIGN-FIRST TIME BEFORE PRESS**

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‘Save Shikharji’ is an united endeavor of Jains to protect the sanctity of the most sacred Jain Tirth ‘Shikharji’ also called as ‘Parasnath Hill’. The campaign is organized by ‘Jyot’, a non-profit organization, driven under the auspicious guidance of Jainacharya Shrimad Vijay Yugbhusan Suriji (Pandit Maharaj).

The movement, started a month ago, has awakened the entire Jain community across the world, with support and letters pouring in from organisations in the US, Canada and New Zealand and will continue as long as the government doesn’t officially declare the entire Hill as a “Place of Worship”. Jain diaspora across the globe have united for the cause as major figurehead monks of all four different Jain denominations including Shwetambar, Digambar, Terapanthi and Sthanakvasi have come together.

Shikharji Hill, the most revered Hill for Jains, is a place where 20 of 24 Tirthankaras performed their ultimate sadhana and achieved Nirvana. Crores of other Jain monks too followed this nirvana path. This entire Hill is charged by the reverberations emanating from the Top most purified souls having unparallel resolute and determination, making its every inch sacred. It is now impossible to re-create such sanctity.

When asked about the campaign, Acharya said, "What distinguishes India from rest of the World is it’s rich religious and cultural heritage. MahaTirths like Shikharji are the epitome of the spiritual wealth of religiously prolific India. Hampering the purity of such places is no less than sabotaging the pride of our nation."

Today Shikharji is under threat to lose its sanctity by government’s intention to promote tourism in the region. Liquor, meat and other vices that come with tourism will destroy the sanctity of the pilgrim and trample faith and beliefs of Jains, who are known to perform Shikharji pilgrimage bare foot and avoid intake of food and water on the hill to maintain its sanctity. Jainism also fundamentally bans commercialization and recreational use of religious property.

Against such anti Jain religious activities, the delegation of Jain religion had personally met Chief Minister of Jharkhand time and again and expressed their concerns, yet the oral promises given by him to preserve the sanctity then, remain unfulfilled even today. The Government further announced intentions to construct other religion’s temple that might altogether change the name of the Hill. The government has also constructed helipad said to be for security purpose but it remains unconfirmed officially which gives rise to rays of suspicion of it being used for tourism purpose.

Thus the Save Shikharji Campaign launched a movement to give vent to the agitated feelings of the Jain community and to register their concern in the ears of the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Jharkhand.



Mr Hemant M Shah, Director of Public Relations has said, "Jains have united unprecedentedly and have resolved not to contain themselves just by oral promises but keep moving ahead until their final goal is achieved. Considering the looming threats of present and future, 'Save Shikharji' campaign, as a once and for all solution, is appealing government to officially declare entire Hill as 'Place of Worship' for Jains. I would mention that that Shikharji is for Jains what Mecca-Medina is for Muslims, Aydhoya is for Hindus and the Golden Temple is for Sikhs."

There are many ponds, rivers, caves and hills in India like Tirumala Hills, Narsingh Mountain in Sikkim, Niyamgiri Hills in Odisha, etc. which are officially recognized as holy place of worship. Even in very developed countries of the world, the mountains are considered sacred, like the Grand Canyon in the US, Uluru Red Rock in Australia. In those regions, the local governments have not only provided legal protection, but also framed policy and rules for their maintenance and preservation. Considering these precedents the demand of Jains are well within scope of the Government.

Currently a small fraction of society celebrated success of this campaign based on oral promises of the Chief Minister of Jharkhand, that sanctity of the hill will be preserved and temple of other religion won't be constructed. But, these are oral promises and are nowhere near to the goal of "Save Shikharji" Campaign. The message to Jain community is, that the movement is on, they should not be influenced by messages of such oral assurances and protests will continue till the goal is achieved.

The Save Shikharji Campaign also clarifies that the Jains adore the noble intentions of Government to construct temple of other religion but the same can be constructed at a place which is not a 'Dharmasthal' of another religion. Also the government shall fulfill the promises given before of developing the region as an International Centre of Spiritual Enlightenment based on Jain principles instead of promoting tourism.

This campaign has received huge response of getting more than 4 lakh petitions signed, several public rallies in Mumbai, Pune, Vijapur etc and women protests in Pune and Bengaluru with public participating in large numbers. Considering such sentimental attachment of Jains over the hill and widespread awakening, we hope that the government which is sensitive to the public sentiments will positively support the cause and apprehend the demand.

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