

Looking for a Quick Fix?

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Human life can be an uncertain and, at times, a desperate proposition. It would seem that, in the words of the poet e.e. cummings, we 'stagger banded with terror' through much of our lives seeking an ever-elusive transcendency in the time we spend here on the earth plane. But nothing in the human experience is frivolous; everything has its place and purpose. To deny that form has no meaning strikes at the very purpose of human flesh – Guru has given us our bodies to refine and purify our souls, otherwise why flesh? Form can never be separated from spirit – the fact that consciousness is cradled within our bodies is the ultimate proof that our external and internal worlds are irrevocably conjoined. To bifurcate the two or to deny their intrinsically complementary relationship is to deny that humans are both flesh and spirit – it cannot be done.

In the same way, it is only by overcoming the limitations of our flesh that one may purify their spirit. In order to get up at amrit vela to do nam simran, one must master the body's drives in the same way that an actualized visible Sikh has overcome their biologically hardwired drive to not be conspicuous in crowds – a trait that is, in all likelihood, a product of evolution having selected against animals that, because they stood out in herds, became the prey of predators. Indeed, our experiences and our responses to them as flesh and blood beings mold, refine and test our spirits.

This leads us back to transcendency. Surely it is not to be found in judging others; neither can it be found in seeking faults – in order to diminish – people whose courage and conviction baffle us. Will it be found then in questioning and raising doubts about those who have assumed the Sikh uniform and whether their spirits reflect their forms when each one of us has so long a way to go toward our own personal godhead? Does it bring us closer to transcendence to evaluate whether a Sikh who wears his uniform is false or true and if we dare not wear it ourselves are we not armchair critics who, because we do not or will not make the attempt, smugly find every fault and flaw in those who do? Sikhism and its way is Guru, we need not accept, we need not follow, but if we claim to follow and announce our allegiance, why should we seek to argue and reason away the requirements of a path if we find it to be difficult? How can we eviscerate Sikhe and those who get up every morning making the utmost effort to follow it with subtle attacks and sophistry and, in the process, deny those who will proceed us a chance at the transcendency in experience that walking the unadulterated path of the Guru offers? Sikhism belongs to none of us, it was given by the Guru and none of us have had a hand in determining the path, we can only humbly self-reflect in order to grow and do our best. Tests in human experience are unavoidable, but there is no test that a Sikh doesn't share with every single other human being on the planet except the test of the Sikh form and what it demands from its adherent in terms of thought, belief, courage, conviction and love for others – it is the unique genius of the Sikh way.

I am a Sikh and I can say with certainty that my form has constantly – throughout my life – brought me into extreme and often painful situations where much has been demanded of me. I have grown tremendously in spirit and character from these experiences and I can say that were I not a Sikh I would not have encountered such growth. In the truest sense, the Sikh form has served as a quickening for my spiritual and ethical development because it has brought me into challenging circumstances that I would never have opted to put myself in, it has taught me a great deal about others, about how to forgive and love despite the pain I have often experienced merely for the fact of my appearance, it has taught me the meaning of personal sovereignty, it has taught me to walk proudly down a street like a prince while hundreds of astonished heads turn in my passing and, most importantly, keeping the Sikh form has taught me that every moment of my life I must fuel my heart and spirit with the strength and love to wear it in a way that is worthy of its grace and blessings.

Waheguru.