

Nanak Singh Nishtar

At a time when the Sikh community is celebrating events like the Mr Singh competition and the newspapers have carried pictures of young Sikhs sporting dazzling turbans, it is all the more necessary that we focus the debate on why an increasing number of Sikh children, particularly young ones, are preferring to lose their hair. Why do our youth cut or destroy kesh or prefer pigmentation?

Some of the less informed Sikhs are carried away under the influence of dominant trends in society or fashions and deprive themselves of this most invaluable boon by God and become apostates and irreligious in the eyes of other, religious persons irrespective of any faith.

Unmindfully they become instrumental in degrading the sanctity of Sikhism. Surely there must be some purpose of nature in endowing the highest creation on earth, the man, with longest hair on the scalp coupled with biggest brain (cerebrum). No other animal living being has such a big cerebrum in its skull. Nor this crown of glory to adorn its head, as well befits the King of all creation of this globe.

The man is decidedly a hairy animal with distinctive and specific regional distribution of his hairy coat. His whole body surface is studded with hair excepting only palms and soles. It is the human being alone who possesses the longest hair over his head and so on his face, among the whole animal world. There is little hair on face to the fair sex but she has got longer and denser hair on her scalp than her counter-part, the man.

Baldness is the usual of man whereas females seldom get bald.

Here, I am discussing the essentiality. And indispensability of growing uncut hair of whole body without doing any harm to them in any way and without changing their natural colour by dyeing according to the decree of "Sikh Rehat Maryada" (Sikh Code of Conduct). I will try to focus on the importance of wearing, caring, protecting and preserving the wholesome existence of naturally grown hair.

According to Sikh belief and practice, it is the long hair which is essential coupled with turban, and as you all know, the Sikh apostasy begins with cutting, trimming or shaving hair, and then the turban on the head disappears. The long hair and turban on head speaks volumes of the identity of a Sikh, just on sight even from a distance.

God has been attributed with thousands of descriptive names in Hinduism (Sanatan Dharam) and with ninety nine descriptive names in Quran. Sikhism believes that God is without name and has innumerable Names. Sikhism endorses all the names and has given another name as numerical One. That is how, Shri Guru Granth Sahib starts with the digit One for God, but not with any particular name of God.

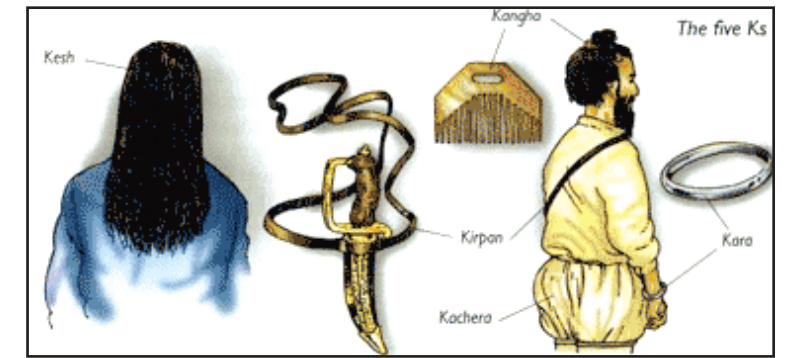
Kesh is the Sanskrit word for hair. Keshava is also one of the names of God in Hinduism, which means "having beautiful hair." In Hinduism, hair has been attributed as the most important part of the body, which could be sacrificed instead of offering sacrifice of the self. Now a days, hair is kept to be sacrificed at the occasion of pilgrimage of temples.

Only in Andhra Pradesh, there are three famous temples where men and women devotees from all over the world come to offer their hair: 1-Shri Vekateshwara Swamy Temple at Tirupati, in Kadapa district; 2- Shri Narsimha Swamy Temple at Bhongir in Nalgonda district; 3- Shri Raja Rajeshwara Swamy Temple at Vemalwada in Karimnager district. These temples get an annual foreign exchange income of crores of rupees by exporting the offered hair. This indicates the sanctity and worth of keeping and sacrific-

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The winners of Mr Singh International contest earlier this month. The delightful young men underline what beauty long hair, turbans and well kept beards can lend to youth.



Whereas it is established that it is the religion relevant for all circumstances and ages and that its tenets are the most scientific and helpful for healthy, secured and dignified life.

Founders of other religions

We have to admit that there are certain disparities in all religions and their ideology. But at the same time, there is a much similarity between founders of all religions that they kept long hair and flowing beards. For example, take Zoroaster the founder of Zoroastrianism, Abraham founder of Judaism and Moses, Jesus Christ founder of Christianity and Hazrat Mohammad founder of Islam and his Khalifas were having long hair and flowing beards. The images of Gautam Buddha founder of Buddhism and Mahavir founder of Jainism are also seen with long hair tied as a knot over the head. All the Greek philosophers, rishis, munis, sadhus, saints, all religious and pious persons of every religion throughout the world including Tolstoy and Rabindra Nath Tagore kept long hair. We can observe on television screen everyday, female and male with long flowing hair moustache and beard are taking part in thrilling fights of Free Style Wrestling and other games and the hair do not cause any inconvenience or obstruction in playing their games and making them victorious.

Hair - not a mere identity

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One of the main cause of today's stressful life is an individual's desire to artificially look good. And the tragedy of today's fashion is that it is carved by the businessmen for promoting their income. By any means they want to make money. They mould the men folk to look like a woman and women to look like a man for meagre gains, destroying their separate identities blessed by God. They are trying to become wiser than the God by interfering with the nature.

Sikh - a role model

The Sikhs do not have any problem with the people of other faiths, who do not follow the footsteps of their founders in keeping hair and destroy the God given gift. Sikhs do not question the matters of the faith of other religion, whatever they may be. The behavior of the civilized society

The Muslim invaders faced a problem as the conquerors and the conquered both were keeping hair and wearing turban. To distinguish by appearance they ordered that no Hindu should keep the hair and wear the turban. This had made the high caste Hindus to keep a bunch of little token hair over the head, hidden in the shaved hair of the head as Choti.

demands that they in turn should learn basic ethics not to interfere, question or create problems for the Sikhs, who vehemently follow their founders in keeping hair and Kirpan. Actually speaking, the Sikhs should have been taken as a role model.

If anybody asks me, why I keep hair? I say you are asking a wrong question. We neither keep nor it is in anybody's reach to keep hair. It is the law of nature, and we faithfully abide by it. It is better for you to see the mirror and ask yourself, what has made you destroy the God given gift? You will get the answer that the Sikhs' appearance is God Made, and not barber made.

Hair are a boon and this body coverage could not be a meaningless exercise for God. He is our creator and caretaker. Nobody else could be more concerned for our betterment than Him. When He has given this body, He takes care of it for proper maintenance and upkeep to meet the physical requirements. This is His fool-proof mechanism. He is not a manufacturer of any commodity or car, where the responsibility of maintenance lies with the purchaser. God takes care of each breath and every moment of our life. He is not negligent of His creation. Our problem is that, we do not have full faith in Him and His Will for keeping this body healthy in every manner. This is because of deficient knowledge that, we do not understand the importance of His boon, nor we ever tried to know something about it. On the other hand, we take it as a bane and curse on our body. We work on a simple formula, "Whatever is beyond our understanding is wrong and useless."

You might have observed ships sailing in the water with the wind.

Hair Today, Hair Tomorrow

Keeping unshorn hair is akin to abiding by the Will of the God. If He has given hair, must we intervene?



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Sikhism - a new way of life

Sikhism is a new way of life based on humanism and enhanced with spiritualism. It is the latest religion which got recognized among world's major religions. Sikhism does not

believe in any segmentation of human race in the name of caste, creed, religion, country, race and gender.

It believes that Humanity is one religion. Shri Guru Nanak Sahib initiated this mission about five centuries ago and it was collectively

structured by the genius and living of the Ten Gurus during a span of their Guruship tenure of 239 years. Sikhism stood for protection of religious freedom by sacrifices and even by using force. It believes that all religions and scriptures are equally good and different paths to approach to God. It does not believe in converting people into its folds, and do not refuse to entertain if any person wants to embrace Sikhism. Even then it has attracted more than 30 million people as staunch followers. This is a new record that during such a short span of time no other religion could voluntarily attract so many followers. The reason is obvious and simple because it has the potential to meet and overcome the challenges of human life in all adversities. As any innovation is the result of the experiences and shortcomings of the prevailing practices. It does not infer that all the other religions are in any way inferior or incomplete. The basic teaching of

Sikhism is that all the religions and their Scriptures are equally true. A person who does not reflect over it is false. (Page No. 1350 - Shri Guru Granth Sahib)".

At the same time we cannot deny the thumb rule that every later innovation is improved and advanced in concept and advantages in all respects. That is why people always may opt for the later superior commodity.

Modernisation

For example, take liquor and gambling. It is banned in some religions. But Sikhism has developed the idea by prohibiting intoxication in any form and earning without doing any earnest labors. No religion prohibits tobacco, but Sikhism strictly banned consuming of tobacco in any form. I need not remind that today tobacco has been proved to be the most deadly killer of the human race through cancer, hypertension and a number of cardio respiratory diseases

requiring most expensive treatment. No religion of the world gives equal religious and social status to women. Whereas Sikhism, grants complete equality at par with men. It also allows them to perform religious rites in the Gurdwaras even during the period of menstruation which is a natural biological process. Shri Guru Nanak Sahib has declared her supremacy saying that how do you call her impure, who gives birth to saints and kings and responsible for growing the human lire. Only God exists without a woman. It has abandoned all religious rituals and liberated the masses from the clutches of priestly class and any need of mediators between human being and God.

Pilgrimages and fasts for a few days a year are prescribed in most of the religions. But Sikhism does not endorse pilgrimages and advocates forever remembering God, minimum eating and minimum sleep throughout the year and all through the life. Wearing turban over the

head protects from hot and cold weather and fatal head injuries for which helmet is invented now and made necessary for the riders of horses and two wheelers all over the world. But the Sikhs are exempted, because they already possess ways and methods earlier than this technology.

Take a weapon. Only responsible officers of the government agencies are allowed to carry a weapon, that too on official duties. But in the air-crafts, no body is allowed to carry any weapon, whereas the Sikhs are allowed to carry a Kirpan of six inches blade in the domestic flights. This keeping of Kirpan (weapon) for men and women is another glorious tenet of Sikhism for maintaining self-respect and self-confidence as a sovereign person of Wondrous God (Wahguru Ji Ka Khalsa) to serve the society.

Some three years ago, on 23-9-2006 at Madurai in Tamil Nadu State, a person met the President of India Dr.

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at Circuit House. The women sub-inspector was suspended for allowing him to see the President along with a plastic razor in his possession on the charge of "dereliction of duty. In contrast, on 2-11-1996 at Rashtrapathi Nilayam at Hyderabad this author though at that time undergoing trial under TADA, was allowed to carry Kirpan for receiving the State Literary Award to be given by the President of India. When the security people objected, the Military A.D.C. to the President HE Shankar Dayal Sharma, came to receive me at the entrance.

This is an example of a bearded Sikh commanding the dignity and respect from the First Citizen of the Country which no other citizen is entitled to. My intention in quoting these examples is just to project that Sikhism is not an orthodox or outdated religion as told by the people who want to condemn Sikhism without giving any justified reasons.