

UNSHORN HAIR – THE DEFINING EMBLEM OF SIKHISM

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Keeping in view the discussion going on in the press, public and High Court regarding the definition of a Sikh and importance of unshorn hair in Sikh religion, I give below, in verbatim and in chronological order, some relevant quotations (alongwith their rendering into English) from the earliest available contemporary or near-contemporary historical writings about the Sikhs and Sikhism for the information of all concerned.

According to these documented assertions, unshorn hair is the basic defining emblem of Sikhism and is an integral aspect of its faith. It is the most essential ingredient for a Sikh and is the first and foremost requirement to be a Sikh.

1. From *Hazuri Rehatnama* (code of conduct) by Bhai Chaupa Singh, Anandpur, 1702, injunction no 138:

ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਸਾਸਾਂ ਕੀ...

The Sikh faith lies in remaining steadfast in its cause to the last hair of one's body and to one's last breath...

2. From *Parchian* by Sadhu Sewa Dass, Nanded – 1708 AD, *parchi* no 18:

ਜ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਹਵੈਗਾ, ਸ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਅਰ ਸਤ੍ਰਾਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਨ ਰਹੇਗਾ ।

ਕੇਸਾਂ ਸਤ੍ਰਾਂ ਬਿਨ ਆਧਾ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਹੈ, ਸਾਰਾ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਹਤਾ ਹੈ ਜਬ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਸਤਰਾਂ ਸਹਿਤ ਹਤਾ ਹੈ ।

“Whosoever is or shall be my Sikh, he or she shall not be without unshorn hair and weapons.

Without long hair and weapons a person is only half a one.

He or she is complete only when he or she bears unshorn hair and

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wears weapons.”

3. From *Sri Guru Sobha* by Chandar Sain Sainapat, Wazirabad – 1711 AD, Chapter V, st 30:

ਮਾਨੇਗਾ ਹੁਕਮ ਸ ਤ ਹਵੇਗਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਹੀ ,
ਨਾ ਮਾਨੇਗਾ ਹੁਕਮ ਸ ਤ ਹਵੇਗਾ ਬਿਹਾਲਸਾ
ਹੁੱਕਾ ਨਾ ਪੀਵੈ, ਸੀਸ ਦਾੜੀ ਨਾ ਮੁੰਡਾਵੈ,
ਸ ਤ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ, ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ, ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਾਲਸਾ ।

He who will obey my orders, will be a true Sikh

And he who disobeys these, will be a rogue...

He who abstains from the polluting *bookab*

And never cuts his hairs and beard,

He alone will be a Sikh of the Guru's own Khalsa.

4. From *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshabian ka* by Bhai Kesar Singh Chhiber, Jammu – 1769, ch 10, st 290-92:

ਅਤੇ ਪੰਥ ਕੀਤਾ ਜੁਦਾ ਨੀ ਨੀ ਕੇਸ ਲਾਏ ।

Guru Gobind Singh made the Khalsa Panth distinct and independent. He fixed unshorn hair as its distinctive feature.

ਨਾਈ ਦਾ ਹੱਥ ਸੀਸੀ ਚਿਹਰੇ ਨ ਲਗਾਣਾ ਪਾਵੈ,

ਕੇਸਾਧਾਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾ ਪੰਥ ਕਹਾਵੈ ।

A Sikh is not to let a barber touch his head and face.

His religion is to be called the 'Kesadhari Panth.'

(That is, the faith of such followers who keep and respect unshorn hair.)

5. From *Makbis-e-Twarikh-i-Sikhan* ed. by Dr Ganda Singh, Amritsar, 1949, p 89:

ਨਿ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਈਂ ਪੰਜ ਹਰੰ ਕਾਂ,
ਹਰਗਿ ਨ ਬਾਂ ਦ ਈਂ ਪੰਜ ਮੁਆਫ ।
ਕੜਾ, ਕਾਰਦ, ਕੱਛ, ਕੰਘਾ ਬਿਦਾਂ,
ਬਿਲਾ ਕੇਸ ਹੇਚ ਅੰਦ ਜੁਮਲਾ ਨਿ ਠ ।

These five Ks are defining emblems of Sikhism:

Kara (steel bracelet), *Kard* (sword), *Kachh* (breeches),

Kangha (comb) and *Kes* (unshorn hair).

Their omission is not at all pardonable;

But without the unkeep of the unshorn hair

All other emblems are of no significance.

6. From *Guru Kian Sakbian* by Bhatt Sarup Singh Kaushish, Bhadson-

1790 AD, Sakhi no 59:

After administering *Amrit* (Nectar of the double-edged broadsword) Guru Gobind Singh, mentioning the four grave breaches of the Khalsa Discipline, forbade firstly the trimming or shaving hair of the body in the following words:

ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੇ ਚਟੀ ਸੇ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਪਾਉ ਕੇ ਅੰਗੂਠੇ ਤੀਕ ਰਮਾਂ ਕੀ ਬੇਅਦਬੀ

(That is, sacrilege of the hair from the top of the head to the toe of the foot.)

7. From *Gur Bilas Patshahi 10* by Bhai Sukha Singh, Anandpur-1797, Canto 23, st 35:

ਬਿਨਾਂ ਸਤ੍ਰ ਕੇਸੰ, ਨਰੰ ਭੇਡ ਜਾਨ ।

ਗਹੈ ਕਾਨ ਤਾਕ ਕਿਤੇ ਲੇ ਸਿਧਾਨ ।

An unarmed and hair-shorn person is like a miserable sheep,
Liable to be led to any place, by any one who chooses to hold it
by the ears.

□

*With sacred marks on their foreheads
And their loin-cloths tucked in behind
(In the manner of pious Hindus)
They are relentless butchers
With daggers in their hands.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 471

ਮਥੈ ਟਿਕਾ ਤੇੜਿ ਧੋਤੀ ਕਖਾਈ ॥
ਹਥਿ ਛੁਰੀ ਜਗਤ ਕਾਸਾਈ ॥