

that when people have respect and reverence for martial arts and weapons, people will never abuse their power. Sikhs are peace loving and do not wish to harm or kill anyone, or allow others to harm or kill anyone. The second function of the Kirpan is to infuse the blessings of God into Food and Parshad (a sweet pudding).

[5] KESH (HAIR)

The keeping of long hair is given a great deal of importance in Sikhism. But what is so special about long hair?

Historical significance

The history of long hair goes back to the Bible. The Bible talks of a man called Sampson who obtained supernatural powers through his long hair. His hair was later cut and consequently he lost his powers. It is also a fact that most of the world's prophets and saints including Jesus, the Sikh Gurus and Hindu prophets kept uncut hair.

Meaning

G. A. Gaskell writes, "*Hair of the head is a symbol of faith, intuition of truth, or the highest qualities of the mind.*" (Dictionary of all Scriptures)

Sikhs believe God to be a perfect creator. It therefore follows that whatever God creates is perfect. The keeping of long hair is therefore, recognition of God's perfection and the submission of a Sikh to the Will of God.

FUNCTIONS

The functions of hair can be divided into 4 categories which are detailed below:

Male-Female energy balance

The energy of a man is a steady energy like the light of the sun, whereas the energy of a female is always changing like the light of the moon. The female has a 28 menstrual cycle synchronised with the changing lunar cycle. So nature has decorated a man with a beard and a moustache to insulate the lunar nerve which meets at the chin and which carries a feminine energy from the moon energy.

Vitamin synthesis

Just like the skin, the hair helps to synthesize vitamin D from sunlight and other more subtle forms of cosmic energy. It also helps to supply the pituitary gland (located in the head) with phosphorous. Phosphorous is an element which is used in meditation.

Psychic energy enhancement

When our bodies are not required to devote constant energy to re-growing hairs we would daily cut from our face, legs, head, and under arms, etc. (depending on gender) we have greater psychic energy reserves and resources at our disposal.

Physical function

The hair on our body regulates body temperature and our eye lashes, nostril hairs and ear hairs help to keep out dust particles.

Psychological function

People generally cut their hair to look good for other people, and look youthful. However, Amritdhari Sikhs choose to follow a discipline which gives them the confidence and courage to present themselves to the world in the way that God has designed them.

Focused creative energy

Sikhs maintain long hair by coiling them up into a knot (joora/rishi knot) at the top of the head above the crown chakra (7th chakra). This helps to focus the creative energy of the body and spirit on the 7th chakra, which is our link to divinity. The channelled energy helps to provide better mental focus, and brings a meditative mind to everything we do. By pulling the hairs together at the crown, it also decreases the movement of the skull bones, creating a natural cranial adjustment, which increases mental equilibrium.

CONCLUSION TO FIVE KS

Wearing five Ks does not automatically make a good Sikh but wearing them without understanding is nonsensical. The five Ks are not meaningless symbols, but instead are consciousness activation tools which help one to live a life revolving around God and His Will.

Five Ks

INTRODUCTION TO FIVE KS

Sikhism stresses the concept of involution, which is the development of ones inner-self and living in the will of God. The tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, created the institution of Sikh Baptism called Amrit, which has a code of conduct that enjoins those Sikhs who have chosen to take Amrit (called Amritdhari Sikhs or Khalsa Sikhs) to wear five items of faith called the five Ks.

So how do the five Ks help to achieve the development of ones inner-self? Are they still relevant for this modern world? This question is examined by highlighting the historical significance, meaning and functions performed by the five Ks.

[1] KARA (IRON/STEEL BRACELET)

This is a steel bracelet usually worn on the right hand by right handed Sikhs and vice versa.

Meanings

It is circular in shape reminding Sikhs that God has no beginning and no end. It is also made of steel/iron symbolising strength as well as humility, since steel is affordable. In addition to this, both men and women wear a Kara, representing equality. The circle is also associated with unity and a good example of this is the Olympic flag with its five circles representing the unity of mankind and that of the five continents.

Functions

A Kara is firstly a consciousness activation tool. For example if a Sikh was to try and steal something, he/she would see their Kara and their consciousness would remind him/her to not perform the wrong deed. It is essentially a handcuff given to Sikhs, by God. Secondly, metal around the wrist affects the ions in the electromagnetic field, aligning them and reducing harmful free radicals known to degenerate cells. Thirdly a large Kara is used in Shastar Vidya (Sikh martial arts) and can be used as a defensive instrument if the need should arise.

[2] KACHERA (SIKH UNDER GARMENTS)

This is underwear worn by Sikh women and men that is made from white cotton and is secured with a drawstring.

Historical significance

The history of long underwear goes back to the Old Testament which states, *"Once they enter the gates of the inner Court, they are to wear linen vestments, They shall wear linen turbans, and linen drawers on their loins."* (Ezekiel 44: 18-19)

For the Sikh community, long shorts enabled Sikhs to run freely in the battlefield. It was better than the restrictive garments like the dhoti, worn by the other communities, and therefore provided a military advantage.

Meanings

It represents the commitment of a Sikh to chastity and sexual restraint. A Sikh is not allowed to have a sexual relationship before marriage or commit adultery after marriage. So wearing a Kachera, is a continual reminder of this commitment.

Functions

A Kachera creates a pocket of air around the thighs and pelvic area which strengthens the nervous system and helps to balance the internal temperature. The knot tied at the navel maintains a pressure over the diaphragm or solar plexus which can improve digestion. The 'Knot of the Guru' which secures the Kachera, also provides the wearer with a final conscious action in the situation where the opportunity for illicit sex may cause temptation.

[3] KANGHA (SMALL WOODEN COMB)

This is a small comb made of wood, which is kept just behind the knot of hair (joora) on the head.

Historical significance

In the past, the Sikh community have had to live in jungles due to a continual threat of extermination. The possession of a comb ensured that every Amritdhari Sikh had the ability to maintain their long hair in a good, clean condition. It is also a good hygiene rule for everyone to have their own comb.

Meaning

It represents the importance of discipline and cleanliness.

Function

Amritdhari Sikhs comb their hair twice a day to keep them clean and to thereby maintain their body temple. Combing the hair also massages the scalp which relieves stress. Finally, combing with a wooden comb smoothes the electrical charge around the hair, creating a calming effect.

[4] KIRPAN (SACRED SWORD)

This is usually a small single-bladed sword worn by Amritdhari Sikhs.

Historical significance

Richard Burton says, *"The history of the sword, is the history of humanity"*. Indeed the history and heritage of the sword goes back to Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The Old Testament reads, *"For the Lord accepts the service of the people, He crowns His humble folk with victory...let the high praises of God be on their lips and two-edged Sword in their hands."* (Psalms 149, 3-6)

In the past, the Sikh community along with many other Indian communities have been ruthlessly persecuted. As a practical solution to this problem, the 10th Sikh Guru said, *"If all other means of exhausting injustice have failed, then it is indeed righteous to use a sword."*

It is this practical ideology which ensured the survival of Sikh philosophy and many other religions and cultures. A sword was kept by every Khalsa Sikh to ensure that they had the ability to protect themselves and anyone else from tyrants and oppression.

Meaning

The Sikh Gurus, have used the sword as a metaphor for God, divine knowledge, strength and justice. Guru Arjan Dev Ji wrote, *"Humility is my spiked mace, and to be the dust under everyone's feet, is my Double-Edged sword. None of the wicked can withstand this weapon. The perfect Lord has taught me this."* (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.628)

Function

The function of the Kirpan is to serve humanity in the form of protection. Guru Gobind Singh taught Sikhs