

Freedom is: Letting you Hair grow!*

Beards are in! Do not fight Nature

Charlie Porter

Men's Fashion has long been in search of its own true model, always on-trend. It seems to have found one in Daniel Craig, who walked out of the ocean in James Bond film *Casino Royale*, that was released amid a lot of debate about the star's acceptance by Bond fans.

Recently released are the first shots of Craig in the movie adaptation of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, which was scheduled to be released in December last year. On the trend-creating actor's face is an unashamed, manly, identifiably 21st century beard. Craig's facial distinction is at the forefront of, well, a new trend: Beards are suddenly seen everywhere. There are so many beards around that facial hair could well become the defining male fashion of the century. "I'd say 40 per cent of the men who shop here seem to have some sort of beard or the other," says Kirk Beattie, the co-owner of B-Store, the Savile Row boutique that has recently been adjudged the Best British Shop at the British Fashion Awards. Beattie sports a beard, as do other members of the staff. Their store champions the more cerebral designers, such as Bernhard Willhelm and Siv Stoldal, and Beattie says he finds that **facial hair gives men the confidence to make fashion choices that they might not otherwise**. "It gives it a nice mixture," he says. "Rather than being shaven and boyish when they're wearing something that could be classed as feminine, you get a masculinity, clarifies the store owner.

What makes the new beards so contemporary is that they are somehow neat without being too tidy. On Craig's face stray hairs creep from his lower cheeks and his is definitely a beard rather than stubble, because you cannot see the skin underneath.

So why is the beard back? Why is there a mass liberation from the blade?

One reason for this is the increasingly realistic nature of the workplace: Dress-down offices allow young men to wear facial hair to work without fear of censure. "I don't shave, I just let hair grow," says David Walker-Smith, the head of men's buying at Selfridges. "It's totally acceptable to do that," he says.

About 40 years ago, a beard was a potent expression of the free-living, free-loving radicalism of the Sixties' counterculture. For a while this has been the sign of the slacker. Now it's no stranger to the Power-Point presentation. Until web 2.0 companies crash, old-fashioned business will have to get used to the natural hair.

Shaving itself, meanwhile, is having some serious problems. The market for electric shavers has collapsed totally - some people in the industry say that they'll soon be as obsolete as video recorders.

A dermatologist recently told me that, for the average man, shaving takes up six months of life. Who wouldn't want to take a break?

I've teetered on the edge of a beard for a few years, but only let the growth fully overrun my face this past summer. I am lucky to have the sort of job - as a style journalist - where grooming is presented as a challenge: as beards became more popular, it seemed a sham to write about them without growing one myself. So it came, and since it has stayed.

Beards in themselves can only be good. A beard grown for choice can be treated with flippancy; **a beard worn because of belief should be respected. Both must be**

allowed to grow in peace.

[Courtesy: The Guardian, London.]



Wake-Up Call

*Jagdev Singh**

* Dept. of Atomic Energy, Kolkata. Email: jagdev3215@yahoo.co.in

My dear young brothers and sisters,
Guru Fateh.

Wish you all a very happy Vaisakhi.

May Vaisakhi bring peace and prosperity to you all.

May you all succeed in your mission and exams with full honours - in letter and spirit.

By the Grace of God, I am trying to learn the reality of life. I have known some facts which I want to share with all of you on the occasion of the new year ie, 2008. Whatever I have learnt by becoming a Sikh, is given below for the kind information of all the readers.

We cannot teach anything to a man about Sikhism. We can only help him to recall from his memory because it is already programmed in his mind, body and soul.

Being a man of science, I have learned that GOD cannot be believed by verification/justification but BY FAITH ie, IK OANKAAR SATGUR PRASAD

The only reality of life in this materialistic world is that truth is ageless. We are all perishable. We are born in pangs of great pain of our mothers. IMAGINE THE PAIN WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN FELT BY THE ALMIGHTY - Supreme Creator AT THE TIME OF BIRTH OF THIS UNIVERSE. Are we to perish in our own pain?

Only one thing is certain in this world, and that nothing is certain. Everything is transient and temporary.

We are full of pride and others with vanity. We want to make our sons and daughters very solid and strong, what for nobody knows?

If a person is exposed to EVEN ONE shabda of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the desire for *Bana* will come automatically - deep out of our faith.

But if he is exposed to Gurbani, then desire for Five insignia (Kesh...) will also appear in his mind and body for the purification of his soul.

The distance between God and me is under construction. It can be either "0" (zero) or infinity.

The love with God is joyful only if it is a secret. The moment this secret is out, everything will perish as a whole. So meditate on Naam continuously.

Sikhism is under seige. We have started discriminating between Sikhs and others. We are preaching only to the Sikhs - instead of the people of the world. We think that by taking *ishnaan* (bath) in a Gurdwara sarover it is sufficient to dissolve our sins, is not true!

We don't know the exact meaning of "*Ishnaan*". *Ishnaan* in Gurbani is for the purity of mind, body and soul.

Ishnaan

is for the purification of our immediate environment.

Ishnaan

is very much connected with the hygiene of our daily life.

Gurbani is for the total realisation of our life. It is for enlightening of an individual. It helps in the right formation of our character and value based life. It is the total guidance as to how an individual should conduct himself in the different frames of reference.

Bana

is a dress which is used for the identification of individuals belonging to the Sikh traditions. It is the emblem of Sikhism. It is the permanent Identity Card and a safe passage to heavens (God). But it has become the licence of the corrupt and unhealthy people of our society. Beware of them.

It is not the name of a community which is important but the BRAND. WE SHOULD STRIVE TO BELONG TO THE SIKH BRAND OF TRADITIONS.

We are SINGH'S and Kaur's right from our birth. We have to develop and nurture faith in whatever we do and whatever we worship.

Gurbani our Guide, Sikhi our Goal:

We are living under great social pressure. This is the only reason why our fellow brothers and sisters are opting to join faceless mass of dominant religion simply out of convenience. Indeed lethargic convenience has become the root of the problem. Everybody wants to feel easy. They have forgotten the sacrifices made by our Gurus. They are trying to become non-Sikhs by way of life. They don't want to be left out of the main stream (this is their thinking) while in foreign countries and even shunned. The hidden idea as to how the universe was created and for whom, is the talk of the town. Our Preachers and Kathakaars are totally out of sync with our younger generation about the importance of Sikhism. Self education is missing in almost all of them. Everybody is trying to hit the target in the dark. People are simply ignorant about the teachings of our great Gurus and the Sikh way of life. People don't want to know about Gurbani. They don't want to depend on value based life, a life full of character and sacrifice. And that is why all are suffering!

My young brothers and sisters:

Khalsa is a symbol of discipline, *chardi kala* and sacrifices. He should not be underestimated. Guru Gobind Singh Ji brought the Nanak Mission into culmination. He infused total power and spirit in his Khalsa through *Bani* and *Bana* and made him all powerful. They were to be baptised to the core of their mind, body and soul. But please have a mission which is practical and obtainable. Defend the weak and the oppressed (which is very difficult). The sword is not to be used as a symbol. Practice love and non-violence. Don't get attached to anything. Attach yourself to Gurbani.

Let us be friendly to all, enemy of none. Khalsa is not simply a religion but a tradition and moreover a pledge to help anyone and everyone in need.

Waheguru, the symbol of the Formless, will help you at all costs.

Gurbani says....

sB mih joiq joiq hY soie]
iqs dY cwnix sB mih cwnxu hoie] [
[SGGS:13]

"The nature has two hands, the hot and the cold through which it works. Its hands are always in motion.

The Jot of the Almighty is passing from time to time through all of us. What we see with that jot is God and what we feel is also God.

Khalsa is the one in whom the Jot of the Lord burns ceaselessly, otherwise he is not a TRUE KHALSA.

Why the word "JOT" is used in Gurbani is like this.....

Everything in this world is perishable except TRUTH.

Truth is ageless, ie, 'Sat Sri Akal'. Mass and energy can change forms. They can take any number of forms but everything can be burned but the total system is conserved. The only thing in this world which cannot be burned is "FLAME". Flame is nothing but Jot or light means Truth.

SO TRUTH IS PERMANENT. JYOT IS PERMANENT.

This is the main reason why the word "JYOT" is used again and again in Gurbani.

JOT NEVER DIES. TRUTH NEVER DIES. TRUTH IS IMMORTAL.



Valour with a Difference: Story of a Good Cop

Yashwant Raj



IN UTTAR Pradesh, it hardly matters whether the Chief Minister is Mayawati or Mulayam Singh Yadav. They are all the same for a police officer like Jasvir Singh. He is 40, in-corruptible, single, diabetic and has suffered two facial-paralysis attacks. Another, and possibly a lesser man, would have made his peace with his conscience and crossed over. Not Jasvir. He continues undeterred and unafraid. It's a little over the top, his zeal, but every bit real.

After 15 years in service he takes home Rs 17,000 a month. He drives a Bolero, an official car that he has received after years of going to work on a motorcycle with his bodyguard riding pillion. Not quite what the recruitment ad promised.

"I am happy," he says, "except for the fact that I have an old mother to look after." **All the land owned by his family in Punjab is lost, most of it mortgaged to pay lawyers engaged to fight his cases against the government.** Jasvir has seen too much and done too much to actually care much about anything. He has a look about him that screams: don't try to impress me, don't try to surprise me and keep your honesty spiel to yourself.

His honesty nearly got him killed, nearly got him dismissed, and it nearly left him maimed for life. Talk to him about his exploits and you realise he is rather vain about his honesty. And why not?

How many have actually lived a life worth a Bollywood potboiler? Jasvir has. There is enough here for not one film but an entire series.

Jasvir met his 'Gabbar' after almost 15 years of working in the UP Police, most of it having been quite eventful. When he took up his posting at Pratapgarh, he was as much a name as the local don who was a terror.

The don travelled in a convoy of cars -filmy style - with guns sticking out of the windows. No one ever dared stop them, not even at police checkpoints and barricades. This immensely bothered the young SP.

Jasvir had a dedicated team of about 50 policemen - whom he had personally trained in karate. He himself is a **brown belt**. It was time for 'the boys' to show their boss it hadn't all been in vain. A sub-inspector and a homeguard took position at a barricade, the rest of the team - some 50 people - stayed out of sight. As usual the convoy came by and pulled up abruptly, almost surprised by the barricade.

A sidekick came out to inquire, and soon the don followed. He was, of course, furious; And he took it out on the poor sub-inspector. who was looking quite miserable with fear. slapping him several times.

The officer panicked and started screaming - not exactly the prearranged secret call sign - at which the rest of the police charged in. "We beat the hell out of them," says Jasvir, reliving what was clearly a moment of triumph.

The don himself got slapped around and soon took off for Nepal to keep out of the way of the young officer. Though Jasvir in the process won himself a lifelong enemy, Pratapgarh rejoined civilised India.

The army havildar's son had come a long way from his tiny Hoshiarpur villlage in Punjab. He is clear that he completed school only because *he* was interested in studies and not because parents or relatives ever wanted him to study that far.

The next stop was the Punjab Engineering College in Chandigarh. A classmate, the well-known pollster Premchand Palety, remembers Jasvir as a simple man with simple tastes: vegetarian, teetotaller and, of course, being a Sikh, a non-smoker. He remains a bachelor because he didn't have the time to marry when he should have, and now his reputation seems to be a bit too formidable.

Palety says, "The one time he came close to getting engaged was when the girl's family had not done enough ground check - once they figured (his zeal for correctives), they ran away." Jasvir smiles, "It's their loss."

He studied hard and qualified for the Police Service in the first attempt, a matter of prestige. Uttar Pradesh became his assigned cadre. "I had never been to UP before and didn't know what it was like."

An early lesson he learnt as a raw IPS probationer was from a crusty old sub-inspector. On duty with him one day, he heard the old man ask a complainant - an old woman - for her caste!

"I was shocked," he says and remembers asking the sub-inspector why her Caste should matter. "He told me that policemen get dismissed in UP for not getting the caste right." That was a useful first lesson.

He learnt fast and was soon in the thick of things - giving politicians a hard time (not his job strictly, but intended collateral damages) and chasing and gunning down outlaws.

The Tyagi gang of Meerut vanished ; most members were eliminated. And that became his calling card. "Minister and politicians wanted me in their constituency after hearing about Meerut," says Jasvir.

They would soon know this young SP came as a package deal, warts and all: he doesn't listen to anyone when in uniform. Many politicians would unconsciously wince at any mention of Jasvir. His stint as SP in Allahabad was also eventful and he had a great future. Or so he believed.

And that's when things began to sour. The don was a big man now, with an avowed mission to finish off Jasvir. The young SP was soon reduced to making rounds of courts and the administrative headquarters of UP police. Jasvir faced 16 departmental inquiries and four near-dismissals. These are not corruption cases or of violation of criminals' rights. But they drained him physically, emotionally and financially.

He had two attacks of facial paralysis, which laid him up at home for a year. And then, during a brief hospitalisation for a minor illness, he discovered he is diabetic.

"I mortgaged some village land," he says, "to pay the lawyers." Jasvir hired the best

lawyers, who he says wryly "charged me their usual fees, thinking I have piles of corruption money - being an SP".

Appearing in court once, with reduced security, the don's goons caught up with him. He managed to escape with a torn shirt. But that's what life had become for him.

For many years now he is languishing in a department most IPS officers prefer only to retirement - food and civil supplies. But he is relishing it, raiding hoarders and defaulters.

His only satisfaction - perhaps a little twisted — after all this is this: "They don't want to give me a good posting, but no one wants to confront me. And here is the best part. No one wants to be my senior."

Jasvir has a big, loud laugh. His wiry frame unwinds as he laughs and then withdraws into a state of steely readiness that field operatives develop to protect themselves from surprises. Don't surprise him.

[Courtesy: *Hindustan Times*]



Children like these are the pride of the Sikh community

Satnam Kaur

One day in Gurbani class, the teacher tells the children a real life incident of a young boy, who was the only Sikh child in a school where two thousand five hundred children studied. He was 12 years old, studying in standard 7th (English Medium) and he was very good in the studies. He was also the first student of the Gurbani class.

Even though he was small he daily used to tie Dastar (turban) on his head and then go to school. He had a strange glow on his face, that is why everyone loved him.

Once in his school, came Austrian in country's team, who wanted to make a documentary about the school's academics and other curricular activities.

The boy's intelligence and beautiful DASTAR impressed the team very much. The boy was selected for the documentary film.

Many questions were asked to the boy about Maths, Science and General Knowledge. Some questions were also asked regarding the Sikh religion.

All the questions were taped and many photographs were also taken.

In the end a highly educated person of the team asked the boy - My dear smart boy, When are you happy the most?" The boy replied with a lot of firmness, "when my DASTAR is beautifully tied, I am happiest."

This incident took place many many years ago. Even today if you ask that young man this same question you will get the same answer.

After listening to this incident the children shouted, "wonderful. We will also enjoy tying the turban."



The Keshdhari Tradition

Shivcharan Singh Dhesi*

* Currently lives in Davis, California, is a mining engineer by profession, with a long stint in India's coalfields. Email: shivcharansdhesi@yahoo.co.in

I like to share my experience of meeting a young couple who, I learnt, belonged to **Russian Federation's Buryat** Tribe. I spotted them partaking of Langar, in the West

Sacramento Gurdwara, California, on Sunday October 28, 2007. They were evidently foreigners, yet familiar. Because of my curiosity due to long pony tail of dark hair of the man, I wanted to know some thing about them. Both were sitting at a distant table, facing each other and enjoying the Gurdwara langar. When I noticed them, just then, I had seen also a Sikh gentleman, leaving them after having talked something to them.

I went upto the tall keshadhari and asked if I could talk to him, and took my seat by his side. He could be over six feet tall, was fair complexioned, had a long pony tail of hair, nicely inserted in a black linen (or plastic) pipe, with the end projecting down beyond the pipe on his back. Beside him was a lady, apparently his wife, of great beauty. She too had long black hair, with an astrakhan cap placed on the top, the hair floating nicely over her shoulders. As I watched her, she explained, "I am his wife".

They had come to the Gurdwara to meet the Sikh Sangat, and study the Sikh tradition. She was a student of Psychology; the topic, I was told, was "PREJUDICE". She was probably a student at the Sacramento University. What they wanted to know was how the people took us because of our unique identity. They had already met people for this point before their escort to the langar hall.

In connection with the topic of their study, I explained how, at the airport, the security men want us to remove the turban. The young man exclaimed, "why don't they ask the Catholics to remove their rosaries?" I found his reaction very sympathetic. I asked them what their religion was. I was told that they followed Tengerism. I could not understand. I opened my diary and placed it before them. The lady nicely wrote the word **Tengerism**. She wrote also "**BURYAT TRIBE**" that they belonged to.

On asking as to what they believed in. They told us that they believe in only one God and in his powers. When I held the man's hair tail and expressed, "I am very happy that you keep full long hair". "You too respect that God has given hair to us in his glorious wisdom with some purpose in view". He agreed and touched his beard on his chin and told that he liked to grow full beard like us. Because he was getting patchy growth, he was sporting only a small growth on the chin.

He asked me about my family. Just that very moment my wife had come to ask me for leaving for home. As I told him "This is my wife" and was getting up, he said, **Sat Sri Akal**. Then, I asked them how they greeted each other. They told some thing which I did not quite follow. Again I placed my diary before them. The lady wrote, "**Sain bainuu**" and we left them sitting there and enjoying the langar..

After doing some home work I learn that they could be from the Republic of Buryata which is a part of the Russian Federation. The capital city is Ulan-Udey, 5519 km by road from Moscow and 3500 km from the Pacific Ocean. The national structure according to 1989 census was, 70% Russians; 24% Buryats; 2.2 % Ukrainians and 3.8% the rest. Buddhism is also a religion of the people besides Christianity, and Tengerism.

□