

# The Mystique of Kesh: No Hair-razing Science this!

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With all the talk about ecology these days, I challenged my students one day. I said to them, "Do you realize how much garbage you generate over a lifetime by keeping your hair short? And do you realize how much nutritive value goes to waste every time you shave or cut your hair?"

We may estimate that the average short-haired person removes half a kilo to a kilo of hair from his body in a year. Well, a kilo is a kilo, but in a large city like New York - or Mumbai - with millions of people, can you imagine the amount of hair - which is bio-keratin, a concentrated form of protein - that goes into the garbage cans, or down the drain? The statistics could be mind boggling.

And that is just the beginning. The body **unfailingly replaces** that hair each time it is cut or shaven. There is something in the body's DNA that simply will not allow the body to go on for long without its full complement of hair. And, every time, there is a nutritional cost for that replacement.

**There must be something important to the hair we have yet to understand, else why would the body reflexively replace the pili whenever and wherever they are removed from the epidermis?**

It reminds me of a study (Harwood, Darlow, Mogridge 2001) of the nutritional value of breast-milk. According to the report, the breast-milk has the ideal ratio of the amino acids, cystine, methionine and taurine to support the development of the baby's central and peripheral nervous systems. But what were the researchers to expect? Of course, evolved as it has over millions of years to nurture every newborn, the mother's milk has - by nature - the ideal 'nutrient ratio' to support the development of the nervous system! Not only the nervous systems, but all the other systems as well!

It would seem a study like this would tell us more about the limitations of our science than about any supposed attributes or deficiencies of the object of our understanding (*or misunderstanding* - namely, the highly evolved nutrient package which is the mother's milk):  
ਪਹਿਲੇ ਦੇ ਤੈ ਰਿਜ਼ਕੁ ਸਮਾਗ ॥ ਪਿਛੇ ਦੇ ਤੈ ਜੇਤੁ ਉਪਾਗ ॥ (SGGS: 130) Guru Nanak said five hundred years ago: That is, Providence first ensures wholesome sustenance before the birth of the (human) offsprings.

Like breast-milk, or like the human nose and fingers, the hair has evolved. It can turn up in surprising places. But who are we to question, to legitimize or to forgo it? It grows as it is dictated by the laws of God and nature that it must grow. **And when we break those laws, the cost is borne by our ecology and, God knows, by ourselves.**

Simply put, it is a waste of time and money to get one's hair cut to serve some slavish ends of fashion. And it is sheer waste of our limited ecological resources. It pollutes our environment, waterways and drainage systems and requires restitution in new foods and nutrients. What a self-inflicted and needless waste!

There is quite a rage in some scientific circles these days that Vitamin D is practically a panacea, that it maintains health and can cure a whole lot of deficiencies. Of course, the hair

produces Vitamin D. It does so now. It did so before all these new studies. And it has always done so. Moreover, I am sure it does a lot of other good things about which we can only begin to guess.

I have a kind of mystical awe about my computer. I am amazed at all it can do for me. I don't even begin to understand how it does all that it does. Indeed I won't let anyone alter its configuration unless I believe they are sufficiently knowledgeable in their field. Even then, so long as my computer is healthy and working all right, I won't let anyone near it.

The awe I extend to my computer is the same awe I have for my - God-given -body. As *Akaal Moorat*, it is sacrosanct. My body is full of miraculous lessons and it is constantly teaching me. I trust every intricate constituent of it to serve some purpose, some reason I may or may not understand with my current level of comprehension. So when a baby is born, let us greet him or her, in the language of the great scientist, Carl Sagan: 'Welcome to the planet Earth - a place of blue nitrogen skies, oceans of liquid water, cool forests and soft meadows, a world positively rippling with Life.'

As for my hair, aside from washing it regularly, and combing and tying it up in the morning, and combing and braiding it down at night, I leave it alone. No one has yet given me a good scientific reason for cutting it. Until they do, my hair stays. Thank God, I am a Sikh.

