

Put the scissors down!

By Kip Jervis

In this modern day, the classic cuts from vintage photo's rule over the male (and female) fashion world, if you walk down your local high street you will see almost uniformly similar haircuts atop heads crowding into the chain stores that young adults frequent in the hope of adorning themselves in items of clothing that will perpetuate the idea that they are "different" from their almost period dressed unfashionable friends. Now at this point i'm sure you are thinking "this doesn't sound like a particularly "spiritual" subject??" But that my friends is where you are wrong.

In Western culture we find that a large majority individuals with long hair are viewed as being rebellious, untamed, and even unclean in some cases! That by having long hair it means that they will never obtain the almost holy grail like ideology of becoming a normal functioning member of society! But is that a very short sighted view of these people? Are the patriarchal rules that condemn young adults to having acceptable length hair giving them false hope of obtaining the magical key to a successful, Prosperous and un-rebellious life? Well.....yes.

In culture's from all over the globe holy men and women are recognised by the length of their hair. The cutting of hair by enemies or oppressors has long been a representation of submission and defeat of a People, through humiliation. The Language and Sacredness of Hair is taught by many different races and religions on Earth. Hair styles can be important in portraying and announcing an individual's participation in a variety of events and the feelings expressed in such events; a state of merriment or mourning, at a given time, or a stage of life- coming of age, a marriage, one's status within the community. Hair can depict

the Spiritual path one follows in their given geographical location. Different styles signify the Tribe one belongs to and are worn to indicate times of peace, celebration and war.

In ancient Sikh culture, Kesh (sometimes seen as Kes) is the practice of allowing one's hair to grow naturally as a symbol of respect for the perfection of God's creation. The practice is seen as one of the Five Ks, the outward symbols ordered by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as a means to profess the Sikh faith. In the tradition of Kesh the hair is combed twice daily with a Kanga a small wooden comb, which interestingly enough is a symbol of cleanliness, and is another of the Five Ks. The hair is then tied into a simple knot known as a Joora. This knot of hair is usually held in place with the Kanga and covered by a turban.

In Sikh culture Kesh is viewed as a devotion to God, it reminds Sikhs that they should obey the will of God at all times. At a Amrit Sanchar (a Sikh initiation or baptism) in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh explained the reason for the continual growth of an individuals hair:

“My Sikh shall not use the razor. For him the use of razor or shaving the chin shall be as sinful as incest. For the Khalsa such a symbol is prescribed so that his Sikhs can be classified as pure”

Kesh is held in such high importance that during the persecution of Sikhs under the Mughal Empire, followers of the Sikh religion were willing to face death rather than shave or cut their hair to disguise themselves from their enemies.

In India, there are a people who are known as the Rishi, they are recognised as being wise seer's or sage's who coil their hair up on the crown of the head during the day to energise the brain cells, and then they comb it down at night. The 'rishi knot' is practiced because the rishi believe that the knot energises your magnetic field (aura) and stimulates the pineal gland that is located right in the centre of your brain.

"This activation of your pineal results in a secretion that is central to the development of higher intellectual functioning, as well as higher spiritual perception." -Yogi Bajan

During the day, the hair absorbs solar energy, but at night it absorbs lunar energy. Keeping the hair up during the day and down at night aids in this absorption of energies throughout the day and night. And by Braiding your hair before you go to sleep will help your electromagnetic field balance out from the days madness.

In native American culture the beliefs around long hair vary as you go from tribe to tribe, but, both men and women are actively encouraged to grow their hair and there is significance in the way the hair is worn. There is a way to wear the hair for various ceremonies and dances, and for many, the braiding of their hair signifies unity with the infinite. The flowing strands of hair are individually weak but when they are joined together in Oneness, they physically demonstrate the Strength of Oneness; "One Mind, One Heart and One Soul" and they show the Sacred thoughts you are to hold. There are times that you should wear your hair braided and there are times to let it flow freely, this is because there are different times to demonstrate your harmony with the flow of life and to demonstrate your thoughts of Oneness to others.

The beliefs of these peoples concerning long hair, draw parallels with the vast majority of their other beliefs in that it is tied to the earth and nature. The long hair has symbolic significance tying them to mother earth whose hair is long grasses, this is why sweetgrass is also named "Grandmothers hair" due to it replicating her long white hair, this is viewed as a symbol of experience and wisdom built over time. Many Native Americans believe their hair is a physical manifestation of the growth of the spirit, and some say it allows for extrasensory perception, and connection to all things.

You will also find in some tribes that hair is cut when there is a death in the immediate family, this is considered to be an outward symbol of the deep sadness and it acts as a physical reminder of the loss. In that case the hair that is cut is a representation of the time spent with the loved one, and the new growth is a symbol of the new life after. When hair is cut in Native American tradition it is treated with great respect, in most cases it is placed into a flowing river, buried or burnt.

Even the time of cutting your hair in this culture is important, for all things need to be in harmony with the natural rhythm and flow of the Universe. So Cutting old thoughts, harvesting full grown ideas, cutting all ties, is best done on the Full Moon. For fresh starts, like the planting time, for new seeds of thought, or for the trimming, pruning and monthly maintenance, hair is cut by the light of the New Moon, so it will grow thick and quick.

And of course last but not by any means least. Another religion with hair being of massive significance in one of its texts is Christianity, and that text is the story of Samson.

According to the biblical account, Samson was given immense strength to aid him against his enemies and allow him to perform glorious feats, such as quickly killing a lion, slaying an entire army with only the jawbone of an ass, and destroying a temple of the Philistines with his bare hands. However, if Samson's long hair was cut, he would lose his strength.

God supplies Samson's power because of his consecration to God as a Nazarite, symbolised by the fact that a razor has never touched his head. In the text Delilah calls for a servant to shave Samson's locks, then woos him to sleep in her lap. And with this, Samson has finally broken the last tenet of the Nazarite oath, Which is to Refrain from cutting the hair on one's head; but to allow the locks of the head's hair to grow; because of this God leaves him, and Samson is captured by the Philistines, who rather horrifically blind him by gouging out his eyes. After being blinded, Samson is brought to Gaza, imprisoned, and put to work grinding grain by turning a large millstone.

As i hope you understand by now, hair, its maintenance, its length and styling are of massive significance to many cultures from all over the world. In searching for solutions for the distress in our world, it may be time for us to consider that many of our most basic assumptions about reality are in error. It may be that a major part of the solution is looking at us in the face each morning when we see ourselves in the mirror. So, the next time you're getting annoyed with those luscious locks falling into your eyes and flicking out like a wild lions mane, are you going to get them cut or are you going to let your hairdresser hang up those scissors and open up another avenue of spiritual dedication?