THE TURBAN

Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the crown of turban on the head of his Khalsa. Unfortunately this very crown is in danger from within and without. The revered Guru sacrificed his whole family to give awe-inspiring recognition and respectability to the Sikhs with new unique form and physique, principles and code of conduct. With long flowing beard, profuse manly moustaches, superb saintly hair and impressive kingly turban, the shape and glamour of a Sikh became knightly and his mental psyche and selfwill turned steely. The aim to live in equality, amity, justice and with the sense of fraternity was visible from the turban of a Sikh. It became an essential as well as sacred part of his being. A devout Sikh could get his head chopped off willingly but would never allow anybody maliciously touching his turban for which he always possesses utmost reverence, veneration and esteem.

The history of eighteenth century of the Panjab testifies that the Sikhs suffered all sorts of atrocities, faced inhuman tortures, sacrificed their everything, but did not relinquish their turbans and abandon their unique form given by Guru Gobind Singh. Historians of all shades appreciated the spirit of the Khalsa in their own styles but all are one in eulogising the characteristics and tenets which the Sikhs held dearly through thick and thin. But alas, the very form of the Sikhs, their prestigious turban, their pious hair, their sublime heritage, praise-worthy code of conduct are now in doldrums and the youth of this unique Sikh nation has gone astray all of a sudden. He has started disrespecting the hair ruthlessly, he has bade well to his centuries old turban— a sign of respect. A turbaned Sikh youth is extinguishing rapidly and apostasy has become a fashion with the Sikh youngsters. The deadly and poisonous impression of alien thoughts dished through small as well as big screens have bewildered the Sikh boys and girls. Those Sikh boys who have not trimmed their hair under the manifestation of their desire have stopped tying turban and have started wearing a sport cap or scarf known as patka. With this new headgear, especially of sport cap, they have awfully denigrated their personality and community image aswell. There was a time about half a century ago when father or grandfather in a family was a clean shaven person but his sons and grandsons were proudly tying turbans. The Sikh spirit was
glowingly visible everywhere. To be a Sikh was to be a special person with everything majestic and praiseworthy at his backing, but in last one decade the situation has all-together reversed. Now one can see an older person in a Sikh family having hair and respecting turban but his younger generations are almost clean shaven totally devoid of turbans. The structure and appearance of the family has changed beyond recognition. Many Sikh lads have decorated their ears with earings, a feminine ornament. Most of such guys are addicts too, where they take very deadly intoxicants and are destroying their health and credibility. They indulge into all types of vices and have become good for nothing. They with their perverted thinking and shameful behaviour have thus antagonised their families, disreputed their faith and mutilated the values of the society they form part of.

There could be many reasons for such a pathetic state of affairs but one thing is crystal clear that the modern day parents have not fulfilled their obligations concerning their children. To gain royal materialistic galore, the parents have engrossed themselves to amass more money and wealth and in the process became distant from their wards. It proved to be a bad and sad bargain, the consequences of which are just before us now. If a person or a couple enjoys couple parties, cocktail parties or kitty parties and leaves behind their kindred tots at the mercy of the maids or the TV, surely they would get spoiled kids agitated in mind and rowdy in nature. This is exactly what has happened with Sikh children. How strange it is that the Sikh youth which is ruthlessly abandoning the turban and turning apostate and drug addict was ceremoniously blessed by the great Gurus when the symbol of honour, the turban was placed by them on his head. The great Gurus and their devout Sikhs faced innumerable sufferings, challenges, persecutions and barbarities simply for maintaining turbans on the heads of the Sikhs. If we have a bird eye view glance at the pages of Sikh history we will feel astonished to notice the big price the Sikhs had to pay to keep the sanctity of their turbans and glories attached with their pious and proud heritage.

The fanatic and bigot Mughal rulers decreed that the turban is a symbol of royalty and only the ruling class (which then happened to be Muslims) could wear it. It was also proclaimed that the turbaned
man must receive due respect from the person not wearing the turban. By doing so, they wanted to demoralize and subjugate their non-Muslim subjects. According to the rulers of those days, as Muslims are the rulers by birth, therefore, only they had the right to wear the crown of turban.

Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa Panth on the Baisakhi day (13 April) of A.D. 1699. At that time the Khalsa was also instructed to ever wear the turban for the proper upkeep of his hair. Thus, the turban became an important religious symbol of the Sikhs. They had to pass through many trials and tribulations in the past and even now to preserve the honour this religious symbol deserved, but they never allowed it to be desecrated by anybody. The Sikhs living abroad faced many hardships and waged legal battles till recent times to win back their right to wear the turban, where this right was denied to them. For this they had to agitate and suffer trials but the Guru's Sikhs never compromised on the issue. They offered themselves for any sacrifice to have the right to adorn the turbans and succeeded. We shall give here a few instances to make the position clear that if Sikhs can make supreme sacrifices for getting back the right of wearing turbans, then how deeply they might have committed themselves to keep the natural unshorn hair too.

More than 150 years ago the Sikh soldiers created commendable history by showing unbounded respect and dignity for their turbans which is briefly mentioned in the next few lines. The writer of these lines visited the British Imperial War Museum, London, about three decades ago. There he witnessed a battle scene showing fully armed Sikh soldiers fighting alongside the English soldiers against the Afghans. The English soldiers had put on steel helmets to protect themselves against bullets and bombs whereas the Sikh soldiers had only their turbans tied on their heads. When the writer asked the in charge of that museum as to whether these Sikhs had refused to wear the steel helmets or these were not provided to them by the authorities. In reply he told that the British authorities fully cautioned, rather warned the Sikh soldiers that being a hilly terrain, bullets and bombs could come from higher positions which might prove fatal if they hit anybody. Thus, the Sikh soldiers were advised to wear steel helmets for personal safety. However, the
Sikh soldiers preferred death to insulting their pious hair by covering them with helmet instead of a turban. The authorities emphasised their view by informing the Sikh soldiers that their refusal to wear the steel helmets had already resulted in heavy casualties among them and that the Government did not have enough funds to pay pensions to the families of the deceased Sikh soldiers. According to that officer, the Sikh soldiers gave in writing to the British that they agree to promise unanimously that they would not be claimants for any pension if they died of head injury but would not agree under any circumstances to use helmets instead of wearing their turbans because following the Guru's command was more important to them than their lives. May I be a sacrifice unto those Sikhs who maintained the honour and dignity of the hair and the turban with such determined and respectful feelings. I would wish to narrate here another incident for the interest and information of the readers. This also relates to the honour and majesty of the turban.

In the city of Wolverhampton in the UK, a Sikh student, named Kulwinder Singh, was expelled from the school in 1977-78 on the ground that he wore turban along with the school uniform. The school authorities felt that his turban did not go well with the uniform. The student submitted before the headmaster that he has worn the complete prescribed uniform, and in addition he has also to follow the commandment of his Guru, who is much higher than the headmaster, and kept unshorn hair and tied the turban on his head to properly cover them. He requested and argued that the headmaster should have no objections to it, but the headmaster did not accept any such arguments put forth by the student and expelled him on the charge of wearing incomplete uniform. Kulwinder Singh quietly came out of his class. He wrote details of his expulsion on a cardboard, tied it on his chest and stood at the school gate with his satchel hanging on one of his shoulders. The school time was over, but he continued standing there. The passers-by looked curiously at him and many asked him the reason of his satyagrah (non-violent peaceful protest) and finding his explanation satisfactory and convincing spoke ill of the headmaster. The matter was reported to the government. Next day a senior official of the education department visited Kulwinder Singh who had braved the cold throughout the night without giving up his
agitation. The official listened to the views of the student and agreed that Kulwinder Singh had a right to keep the hair and wear turban because these closely relate to his religion. He instructed the school authorities to re-admit the student and allow him to wear turban along with the uniform. This incident made the entire English nation conscious of the importance and significance of the hair and the turban for a Sikh. They started valuing the turban of a Sikh as a historic entity on the heads of the Sikhs and are dearly pious to them above their personal well-being or even existence.

An almost similar incident happened in Trinidad. In that island lived a Muslim family. Their daughter, Somaya Mohammed studied in the Holy Name Convent School. It so happened that she came to school with her head fully covered as was required of her by Islamic *shari'at* (religious rites). But the school authorities considered it an act not in conformity with the uniform regulations of the school. She was asked not to cover her head while attending the school, but her father argued that it was a religious obligation for her to do so. The school authorities paid no heed to the pleadings of her father and expelled the girl from school on this count. Her father took the matter to court. There he made a reference to the national anthem of that country wherein it is stated that all citizens have equal rights without any discrimination on any ground. He argued that the school has robbed his daughter of her religious freedom. To make his case more effective and weighty, he also made reference of the turban of the Sikhs which they tie on their heads as religious obligation and got exemption even driving a two wheeler without the crash helmets in England and elsewhere in the world. The court listened to the concerned parties and passed an interim order in favour of the student stating that she can attend the school with a covered head until a final decision is pronounced (Ref. The Tribune, 29 January 1995). This incident shows that Islamic religion also makes it obligatory for all Muslim women to keep their heads covered. The instructions in this behalf are even more strict while entering a mosque or going for *Haj* pilgrimage. Millions of T.V. watchers might have seen on T.V. the Queen of England, Elizabeth II wearing a big hat when she visited Pakistan and India in October 1997. In spite of wearing hat, she had to further cover her hat-covered head with a *Dupata* (scarf) while entering a mosque in Islamabad as is obligatory for everyone to do so while on a visit to the mosque. This
example clearly highlights the importance of covering the head by a Muslim woman. This obligation of covering the head is obligatory for men as well, but they always succeed in finding a way out to ignore it.

Let us here share briefly with our readers another incident relating to the covering of the head with a turban.

_The Los Angeles Times_ of 23 December 1992, published a detailed report on Guru Sant Singh Khalsa, an American who had received Sikh baptism. He has rationally argued that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of religion in a democratic and liberal country like U.S.A. Clark Allen Harris, who was renamed Guru Sant Singh Khalsa after he was duly baptised a Sikh, said that he wants to serve his country by joining the armed forces and that his new faith makes him stronger than before to fulfil this wish. **History stands witness that anyone who is familiar with the Sikh people estimates them as very brave and the entire world proudly calls them 'soldiers by birth'.** He says that his country and his religion should prove helpful rather than proving a hindrance because both are his well wishers. He denounced the report of the American defence officers that in the case of enemy using poisonous gas, turban and beard may hinder the proper wearing of mask. Therefore, they do not favour recruitment of those who keep beard and wear turban. Guru Sant Singh argues that it is not the fault of the beard or the turban if it happens to be so. There should have been masks to suit every one. The government further put forward an argument that it is difficult to run fast by wearing the mask on turban and as such it is difficult to save life in an event of crisis. Kiran Bir Singh Grewal, a Sikh Sargeant, challenged the army to counter this argument. He did sit-ups and ran a 2-mile race with his mask tied on his turban. In this race, he came first among 5000 athletes from the army and was declared the fastest runner. Neither his mask nor turban fell off during the long fast race. When the defence authorities realized that all the facts and efforts went against them, they approached Clark's father who frankly stated that he was at first in disagreement with his son over his adopting the new faith. However, when he found that the conversion of faith has brought about many good changes all of a sudden in the behaviour of his son then he also felt happy in sharing his son's happiness. He
further said that the history of the Sikhs was full of acts of bravery. As a result of this heritage, his son could gain a lot and become a better soldier. He continued further that their main concern should be that their country gets a dedicated soldier whether or not he keeps the beard and the turban. Both, the American government and the defence authorities should think on these lines because this is the only proper and rational course. On the bases of these arguments ultimately Guru Sant Singh won his case and got recruitment in the army. Following him, many more Sikhs, with their hair, beards and turbans got recruited in the police and the army in the U.S.A. and Canada. It should be categorically clear to all that very existence of a Sikh relates to his turban. So briefly his history is the history of the protection as well as glorification of TURBAN.

Just as Kulwinder Singh and other Sikhs had to struggle hard to get the right to keep hair/beard and wear turban while performing their normal duties in society in alien lands, the first President of Shrimoni Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and known freedom fighter, Baba Kharak Singh, had also to wage a long struggle to win the right to wear black-coloured-turban in India. The Indian British government had put him in a jail at Dera Ghazi Khan. The government was fully conscious to avoid the possibility of all Indians getting together under one national flag or in one uniform. During those dark days all Sikhs used to wear black turbans in protest against the tragic happenings at Nanakana Sahib where hundred of innocent Sikhs were mercilessly massacred by the vagabond Mahant of Gurdwara Janam Asthan. It seemed that the black turban had become a common uniform or a uniting factor for the Sikhs who were joining together under this black banner. The government got worried on this count. Thus, the Indian government barred Baba Kharak Singh from wearing the black turban. He refused to abide by the orders saying that the government had no right to ask him not to adorn the turban of this or that particular colour, but the Government, was adamant to stop him tying black turban. It was on this issue that Baba Kharak Singh started his agitation from the jail cell itself. The government had already yielded to Baba Kharak Singh in January 1922 in the agitation for the restoration of the keys of Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple). It was unable to resist for long the persistent Sikh demand and therefore handed over the keys to the Sikhs. It was a victory of the community and it showed
fearlessness of Baba Kharak Singh. On that proud occasion Mahatma Gandhi had sent a telegram to Baba Kharak Singh saying: 'Sikhs have won the first battle of independence, congratulations.' The government, keen on washing off the slur of that defeat, was bent upon preventing Baba Kharak Singh from wearing a black turban. Therefore in a high-handed manner, his turban was taken off. Baba Kharak Singh decried this indecent and unbecoming behaviour and renounced all clothes except his underwear. All other political prisoners followed him and gave up the use of clothes except the Kachhehra (underwear). The government started torturing Baba Kharak Singh. When that also proved futile, many tempting offers were made to him, which could not buy him. The agitation continued in the jail for five-and-a-half years. Baba Kharak Singh spent five winters and five summers wearing only the underwear and remained steadfast and committed to his earlier stand that he would wear clothes in the jail only if he is allowed to wear a black turban. At last, the Panjab Legislative Assembly in 1927 passed a resolution in favour of Baba Kharak Singh and ultimately the government had to yield once again and release him. Thus, this freedom fighter and grand Sikh walked out of the jail wearing black turban. The nation felt overjoyed in the second victory of the greatest patriot. It was a victory won after an arduous struggle that went on for five years and a half, a victory for Sikhs to wear turban of any colour or in other words, TURBAN VICTORY.

History takes pride in this unique agitation won by Baba Kharak Singh. After independence a road in New Delhi was named after his name to honour and perpetuate his memory. For a Sikh, the turban is a crown placed on his head by his great Guru and he is ready to sacrifice his everything even his life for protecting its grace and grandeur. To disassociate from the enviable respect which the turban, hair and proud Sikh philosophy hold, is a sort of ill-luck and is a serious concern which demands explicit attention of all those who have love for the sublime principles which govern the Sikh way of life.

Baba Sadhu, husband of Bibi Viro and son-in-law of Guru Hargobind, writes in support of the hair and the turban:

*I am a sacrifice unto the Guru’s turban*
Unto turban which leads to Almighty’s feet.
I am a sacrifice unto the Guru’s hair
Unto hair and the true tenets.
I am a sacrifice unto the Guru’s forehead
Forehead shines in the hue of Hari. (i.e. God)

Thy moustaches are beautiful and charming
They enthral in the sangat. (congregation)
May I be a sacrifice unto Guru's face
The face radiant with God's love.
May I be a sacrifice unto Guru's beard
The beard wherein dwells God.
Sacrifice I'm unto the Guru
Sacrifice I'm unto the Guru.

The essence of this poem is as follow:

On the head looks beautiful the turban
It is symbolic of Sikh culture
It protects his honour in turn
We can even sacrifice our lives.
Such a sacrifice is a true deed,
May I be a sacrifice unto the turban.

Dhadhi (Rebeck) Abdulah and Nath Mai mentioned about the turban of Guru Hargobind Sahib which according to them was more elegant than the turban of Mughal emperor Jahngir. The writer of book ‘Gurbilas Patshahi Sixth’ writes in chapter 8 that when Guru Hargobind tied turban on his head, he was looking to be a God himself (Ref. Gurmet Parkash April 2003).

AGITATION IN ENGLAND CONCERNING TURBAN
An Act was promulgated in England in 1972-73 which ordained that anybody riding a motor-cycle, or scooter or a two wheeler must wear a steel helmet on the head to ensure safety. This created a problem for the Sikh riders. They stopped riding two-wheelers, but refused to wear helmets instead of or over the turbans. At last an agitation started on this issue. Mr Sydney Bidwell, a member of parliament from the Southall constituency, which is a pocket of the Sikhs, pleaded their case in the British parliament. The writer of these lines also happened to be in England.
in those days. Everybody was busy collecting facts for use by Mr. Bidwell. Consequently, the British parliament witnessed night long discussions on the question of the turban on 28.1.1975, 23.1.1976, 16.7.1976, 5.10.1976 and 28.10.1976. Several white members of parliament surprised the entire nation by taking up cudgels on behalf of the Sikhs by stressing the religious, social and moral importance of the turban for the Sikhs. They went to the extent of saying that an analysis of Sikh history reveals that the hair, the beard, the moustaches and the turban are an integral part of a Sikh's personality, Mr Bidwell said emphatically that all members of parliament should note that unshorn hair and a turban over them is a distinct Sikh identity, and they want to retain this identity at all costs. He informed the House that he asked a turbaned Sikh working on the car park outside parliament as to what would he do if asked to work with a steel helmet on his head, the turbaned quietly answered that he would give up the job. It shows that the Sikhs hold their religious symbols in high esteem and can bear any loss to preserve their sanctity. The Sikhs are very hard working and they have left on the British society a great impact because of their numerous qualities. They are very loyal, obedient to law and dedicated to their jobs. We can feel proud of them. If we impart justice to such people, the coming English generations will appreciate our liberal and tolerant behaviour otherwise we shall be condemned as narrow-minded, said Bidwell.

Another member of parliament, Mr. Churchill stated in the House while talking of the Sikhs' hair, turban and morality that it was a matter of deep regret that consequent to contemporary cynicism, people have been toying with many precious social and religious values, but those who want to retain and maintain them with due respect should receive our appreciation as well as help. The Sikhs need our help for such a cause. We should therefore help them willingly. He who is familiar with Sikh history knows the Sikhs' relationship with England, and keeping in view their great achievements, must help them quite liberally. The Sikhs should be exempted from wearing steel helmet while driving a two wheeler otherwise it hurts their religious feelings. Churchill went on to state that the English people have been under obligation of the Sikhs for quite a long time. I know that during the beginning of 20th century when we were in trouble fighting First and then Second World War
and we needed their help, they readily came to our help. It is because of their timely cooperation that we won the wars and are today living with dignity, honour and freedom. In both the world wars the Sikhs fought for us and sacrificed their lives with only wearing their turbans on their heads. At that time we did not insist that they must wear steel helmets because we knew that they won’t agree to it and we would be deprived of their meaningful help, so we did not compel them to wear steel helmets at that time of our compelling need. Now we should earn their appreciation by respecting their religious feelings and symbols and therefore happily exempt them from the obligation of wearing steel helmets on their turbans.

Taking the argument further, another member of parliament, Mr Mobre, spoke beautiful words in appreciation of the Sikhs. He told that the Sikhs are a wonderful people. He could not refrain from sharing with the House an example of the Sikhs' discipline, loyalty and commitment to duty. During the World War I, the Sikh Regiment went to Galipoly (Turkey) on 4 July, 1915 to take part in an encounter. It comprised of 10 officers and 700 men. By the evening only 2 officers and 70 men were left alive. All others laid down their lives, but they remained firm on their post. Just think, for whom were they fighting? For themselves? No, they were fighting for us, or, we can say they were fighting to fulfil their commitment. Their Gurus and their religion have taught them to behave and act in this fashion. Therefore, we must pay due respect to their hair and turban which are their religious symbols establishing their unique identity. This is also our moral obligation. (Ref. Mr. Bidwell's book, The Turban).

At last, appreciating the Sikhs' religious sentiments, they were allowed to ride motor-cycle and scooters with only the turban on their head. The relevant act was amended. This had a very favourable impact on the Sikhs living in other countries too. Now Sikhs in almost every country of the world have got the legal right to maintain unshorn hair and beard and wear turban while on duty, driving a two wheeler vehicle and participating in social, religious and cultural functions and get-togethers. The statements of various M.Ps in British parliament detailed above show as to how important the hair, the beard and the turban are for the Sikhs. Where lies the shame which compels our youth to remain aloof from such a proud
heritage which raises anybody's image in the eyes of others? Beards, hair and turbans provide the Sikhs rightful opportunity to own and live with most towering heritage. The Sikhs maintained and respected these symbols even in foreign lands and have thereby added to their own dignity. They know very well that-

\[\text{He who has no religion, no faith} \]
\[\text{He ceases to be human, the fact remains.} \]
\[\text{He who does not love his principles} \]
\[\text{Can not be Loyal to any domain.} \]

(Chann Dehra Duni)

LEGIONS' FUNCTIONS IN CANADA AND THE TURBANEDS

Sardar Pritam Singh Johal was in the British 8th Army in North Africa. He had taken active part in several battles and won medals. Once he along with five other Sikh companions—all decorating their chests with medals—went to the Royal Canadian Legions Hall, Vancouver. The purpose of their visit was to participate in the memorial function being organised there in honour of their erstwhile comrades who had laid down their lives in the battlefield. As Mr Singh and his companions tried to enter the hall, they were stopped at the gate. When Sardar Pritam Singh asked the Canadian and other white soldiers who had fought in the battlefield along with them in an atmosphere of comradeship the reason for this discrimination against them (the Sikhs), they were very politely told that they could enter the hall only if they participate in the memorial function after removing their turbans. Thereupon Sardar Pritam Singh and his companions reminding them the Canadian policy of liberalism boycotted the function in protest against these restrictions imposed on them.

The issue became a subject of hot debate in the press and other media. At last reports and comments by representatives of local legion appeared in different newspapers. In these reports it was strongly demanded that if someone wants to participate in a memorial function being held in honour of the martyrs in any of the 1750 Legions' Associations in the country, he must enter in after removing his turban, hat, cap or any thing else used to cover the head and then pay his homage to the martyrs. The members of the legions pointed out that they stand up bareheaded, after removing their hats, and with deep respect pay homage to their ancestors.
This is the local custom. They further said that they feel that the Sikhs should understand their viewpoint. Whenever they visit the Sikh Gurdwara or any other place sacred to their faith, they follow their customs and enter in after taking off the shoes and covering their heads. The Sikhs should also willingly observe their customs because they are their friends, their companions. They said further that more than 1.5 lacs Sikhs (now about 2.5 lacs) are performing very important roles in the Canadian society and they in Canada have deep regard for them. But this argument did not satisfy the Sikhs. According to them, the legions function and the Sikh religious functions are totally different because the former has nothing to do with religion. The Sikhs also put forward the argument that they had been fighting and even now fight alongside the white Europeans with their turbans on. They serve in the police and in the army of Canada, America and England with their turbans on their heads. They can get employment as bodyguards of Queen Elizabeth without the latter ever raising any objection to their turban in spite of the fact that everybody calling on the Queen must take off his hat in deference to her position. They failed to understand why this strict restriction is imposed in a small social gathering in the legions hall? In a liberal country as of Canada, this biased attitude of legion authorities would simply be categorised as alarming and harming the feelings of friendly and peaceful Sikhs.

Going through this controversy on the legions, McMullen, a white Canadian citizen sent a letter to a newspaper published from Toronto, in this letter he refers to the bravery and dedication of the Sikhs in an admiring tone. McMullen strongly advocates that the Sikhs should be free to take part in the legions function with their turbans on. He called the Sikhs exceptional men. The Jalandhar Ajit, in its issue of 18 June 1994, has published a report with reference to one correspondent Amar Singh Bhullar of Canada. According to this report, McMullen says that in 1993 a professor from New Zealand wrote him a letter to inform that in the World War II, two Sikhs were also in the army prison along with him. The New Zealander fell ill there because of severe cold and insufficient food. Those two Sikhs made every possible effort to save him on humanitarian grounds. They gave much of their own food and clothing to him even though they themselves had to remain hungry and suffer the cold. The New Zealand soldier's life was saved with such altruistic gestures on the
part of those two Sikhs. Reaching back home in his country after his release, the New Zealander became a professor. Before his death, he willed his entire property in favour of the Sikh community. He travelled up to Amritsar and handed over the Will to the SGPC i.e. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. By doing so, he felt, he had been able to pay back at least a part of the debt he owed to those two grand Sikhs. McMullen tries to convince his Canadian brethren through this fine example of Sikh morality that debarring the entry into Legions hall of such noble men would be equal to debarring God from entering a temple. The National Organization of Legions, while expressing its views on the subject, had said that the ban on the Sikhs has been imposed by the local legions and that no such decision has been taken at the national level.

It is the matter of great rejoicing that the authorities governing the legions have lifted all the restrictions and allowed the Sikhs to pay their tributes in legions' functions with their turbans. This act of the Canadians has earned them great regards in the eyes of the Sikhs and also the lovers of the humanity. It is also worth mentioning that the Canadian Government has respected the glorious heritage of the Sikhs by recently allowing them to serve the police force with turban on. Not only this, in the recent elections a bearded and turbaned Sikh, S. Gurbax Singh Malhi, has been elected Member of Parliament in Canada with the help of Liberal party for the third successive term. When Mr. Malhi entered the parliament in his usual Sikh dress, all white members of parliament stood up to welcome him once again. They gave due respect to the Sikh symbols (the hair, the beard, the turban, etc) worn by Sardar Malhi and expressed their joy at the latter's popularity. 13th April 1994, the Baisakhi (birth day of the Khalsa Panth) was celebrated in Canada with much enthusiasm. The Akhand path (uninterrupted recital of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture), was done in the Canadian parliament building and in this way the Canadians honoured the Sikh M.P. and the whole Sikh nation. The Baisakhi next year was also celebrated with equal enthusiasm. Now every year S. Malhi organises Akhand Path in the parliament building and with the grace of God he has become a minister in Canadian Govt. In year 2003, the Baisakhi was celebrated in Canadian parliament on 9th April and it has now become a regular ceremonious function for each year.
This liberal attitude of Canadians created a feeling of fraternity among the people of different nationalities and religions.

It is with the guidance and cooperation of S. Malhi that three English books concerning Sikh religion were presented by this writer to the worthy prime minister of Canada in Canadian parliament on 21st April 1999. All the ministers and most of the members received the sets of these books with fullest regards and commended the efforts of Mr. Malhi and the writer in this behalf. Sardar G.S. Malhi has earned such a nice reputation in the Govt, and in the masses that he succeeded in releasing the Khanda postal stamp again in April 1999 from the Rt Hon'ble prime minister of Canada which highlighted the Sikh glory on Canadian soil. These concerted efforts did enhance the image of Sikhism in the eyes of World and thus hair-keeping turbaned personality of the Sikhs became more acceptable, familiar, appealing and recognisable, the world over. It would in due course of time, create large scale awakening of the hair-power, turban, culture and Sikh tenets. The Sikh nation as a whole and Sikh youth in specific should feel proud of such honours and recognitions which have come to their way through the dynamic efforts of the Sikh stalwarts residing in different parts of the globe. Every Sikh should fervently add prestige to the cause of Sikhism by doing anything and everything worth applauding at all levels all the time. Our turbans in that case would automatically earn more respectability in the sphere of our activities. It is no exaggeration that we are unique in many ways and our turbans easily symbolise with that uniqueness. We therefore, very cautiously glorify our turbans with good acts and in no way discard them and destroy our own image under false notions, sheepish pretexts, fallacious and faddish approach. A Sikh is a real hero, a sacred warrior and selfless server of society with turbans and hair and he should not falter and thus erode his saint-soldier image under fabulous whims, far off from ground realities.

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AND THE TURBAN

Maharaja Ranjit Singh considered the turban a crown put on a Sikh's head by Guru Gobind Singh. He gave handsome prizes to several persons who could tie their turbans in an attractive manner. Once the Maharaja gave a lucrative prize and very high appreciation to a young man who had tied turban in excellent style.
Even others also admired the beautiful way he had tied his turban. However, the appreciation went to his head and he started boasting that he had just put on his head the turban that he tied only the previous day and had he tied it ‘fresh’ it would have been much more pleasing. This boast gradually travelled up to the Maharaja who summoned the youth to his court and duly reprimanded him. He also advised the young man that a true Sikh must tie the turban again if once he has to take it off. It is not proper to put it on the head in fashion of a hat because doing so is an insult to the turban and it is an evil practice totally unacceptable. This incident made the youth realize the importance of turban. This also had the desired effect on all those who happened to be around at that moment. Maharaja had a respect for the turban which a Gursikh should have for it. But let us see what happened to the Maharaja's son, Duleep Singh.

**MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH SON’S TURBAN**

The British annexed the Panjab in 1849 AD and sent the young Maharaja Duleep Singh to England. His mother, Maharani Jindan was exiled in Nepal. As a result, the mother and the son were very sad as they were separated and could not see each other. On the one hand they had lost a vast empire and on the other hand they were suffering the pang of long separation. All this became unbearable. But both of them were helpless, like a bird put in a cage. The Maharani used to weep all day long remembering her young son. This went on for several years as a result of which she lost her eye sight. She made repeated pleas to the government to let her join her son. At last the British Government agreed to it on certain conditions, but the Nepal Government argued that subsistence pension of Maharani Jindan would cease once she went out of Nepal. The Maharani did not care for that. At last, Duleep Singh was brought from England to Calcutta in 1861 AD and the mother travelled all the way from Nepal to Calcutta to meet her son. The mother and son met after a long time. It was very touching scene. The blind mother took prince Duleep Singh in her arms and wept bitterly. She blessed him by putting her hand on his head. As she did so, she gave out a loud cry. When Duleep Singh wanted to know the reason of her mother's bitter weeping, she told him that she did not feel as hurt at the loss of kingdom as she felt now finding her son with trimmed hair. She rebuked her son and
cursed her fate for having played this cruel joke with her. Was she less miserable before that the fate had played this mean trick once again with her? She felt that the loss of kingdom was not such a severe shock as she experienced when she found that her son had lost his hair and turban. Her soul was torn with inexpressible pain. She wished she had died before this ill-fated day. Maharaja Duleep Singh could well imagine his mother's grief. He himself was equally aggrieved. He told his mother that he was forcibly converted to Christianity when he was taken to England at very tender age. At that time he was a child, therefore he could do nothing. But it has not been very easy for him too, to bear this inhuman torture. He pleaded before his mother that the Guru was ever present in him although he had sheared and done away with the Guru's gift of sacred hair. He sought her blessings so that he could once again regain his Sikh form and thus enjoy Guru's protection. He admitted before his sobbing mother that he loves his hair much more than he loved his kingdom and values turban even more than a crown. He promised that he would receive the Sikh baptism on the first available opportunity. This was his first and last wish. The mother felt somewhat relieved on listening to his son's sentiments. But she could not bear this situation for long and she breathed her last soon after reaching England along with her son. A poet Jachak, has penned this incident as follows:

*The separated Jindan when met Singh Duleep*

*The hapless mother wept bitterly.*

*Finding no hair-knot on her son’s head*

*Broken she was morally and spiritually.*

*The son fell at her feet and said*

*The ‘firangi’(whiteman) is to blame for giving this pain.*

*Once again he shall receive baptism*

*I swear my mom to adopt the Sikh way again.*

In later years of his life, Duleep Singh made several futile attempts to slip out of England. Once he reached Egypt, but was arrested. According to a book *Dukhie Ma-Putt* (The Aggrieved Mother and Son), Duleep Singh wrote a letter (9 March 1886) from England to Santa Singh (the son of his father's sister) a resident of village Emma in Amritsar district. In that letter he had indicated that he would fulfil the word he gave to his mother by receiving Sikh baptism at the hands of Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia as soon as he
reaches India. He would thus regain the blessings of the Guru. The British government also got wind of his intention. At first he was threatened in different manners but Maharaja remained unmoved. Then he was tempted with an offer that his pension would be increased to Rs.5 lacs annually provided he gave up the idea of becoming a baptised Sikh once again. No tactics worked as the Maharaja seemed to be compelled by the voice of his conscience. He left for India on the first available opportunity once again. But the government was adamant on shattering all his dreams. The Maharaja was stopped while on way to India and not allowed to visit the country. He felt heart-broken and with an unfulfilled desire to be baptised a Sikh, he died in a Paris hotel on his way back to England in year 1893 AD.

It is an irony of fate that Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to give jagirs (vast immovable properties) in reward for a beautifully tied turban, but his own son, Duleep Singh, could not tie turban on his head despite his all out efforts. This episode touches our heart, our conscience with such great force that we have to admit that the hair and the turban are as important for a Sikh as the breath for his life. He is lucky if he has an opportunity to keep them.

If we glance our present day society we would appreciate the turban on the heads of those Sikh leaders who by their thinking have leanings towards Marxism, communism, and do not give high priority to religion in their day to day life. Late Sant Singh Sekhon and Gurbax Singh Preetlari used to tie beautiful turbans. S. Harkishan Singh Surjit looks absolutely grand with his white turban. S. Gurbax Singh preetlari even wrote a thought provoking long article on the turban which forms part of his highly acclaimed book 'merian abhulyadari. In it he proudly writes that his turban provided a separate identity to him more impressive than his own personal being and during his studentship abroad he had been duly honoured, respected and liked by everyone including Indian students studying in his university only because of his turban which distinguished him from others. A Sikh politician having any political colour and affiliation has always respected his hair and turban come what may. S. Hukam Singh, S. Gurdial Singh Dhillon, S. Swaran Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Zail Singh were respected and honoured with greater zeal because of their unique form with
beards and turbans where ever they went. **Our youth should therefore emulate such leaders and should zealously respect their hair and turbans which carry dignified traditions, pious religious glories with hem stretching from the time of the inception of Khalsa brotherhood.**

*Preserve thy hair, O Sikh knights!
Maintain thy Turban, O Sikh knights!*

History testifies that the Sikhs not only respected turbans on their own heads; they even honoured the turbans of their enemies too. Maulvi Bute Shah rightly writes in his history book named *Twarikhe-Panjab* that when ever Sikhs invaded enemy caravans, they never took off turbans from the heads of men folk and *dupatas* (head cover long type scarf clothes) from the heads of the ladies belonging to the enemies. They even refrained themselves from snatching valuables from women. So many such like characteristics of the Sikhs were highlighted by Qazi Noor Mohammad, an historian of 18th century too.

**MISCHIEF BY SOME YOUTH**

When the Turban Agitation was at its peak in the UK, the newspapers often reported on the importance of hair giving references to the discussions used to be held in the parliament on the subject. Consequently, turban became the centre of every body's attention. Many of the white British looked at the turban with a feeling of respect, but some mischievous elements used to molest the turban of a Sikh when he was walking at an isolated place and run away.

The Sikhs were generally very agitated over this behaviour. They thought over the matter. At last TV authorities were approached. A drama was especially written and telecasted in which a white youth mischieviously pulls off a Sikh's turban. The Sikh cannot bear his high-handed behaviour and gives him a sound thrashing. The white youth is injured in the process. He takes the case to the law court. The court witnesses heated discussions on the importance of hair and turban for a Sikh and on the basis of which the judge gives his verdict in favour of the Sikh and acquits him. Since the white youth had knowingly hurt the feelings of the Sikh, he is warned and punished for this misdeed.
The judge takes this opportunity of making general remarks that the hair and the turban are pious for the Sikhs. Therefore, every British citizen should be careful not to molest these. The drama had a very deep impact. Next morning many Whites were seen asking the Sikhs on roadside and factories if what has been shown and said about the hair and the turban on the TV was correct. Everybody justified the message of the play and consequently even mischievous elements began to fear molesting or fiddling with a Sikh's turban.

However, there were some persons who still did not have clear heart. This became evident in the incidence which happened in June 1981. It so happened that about 250 white 'skinhead boys' held a secret conclave and resolved that they would set the Sikh houses and shops in Southall on fire on a certain day so that the non-Whites leave England in fear. As per this plan, these boys attacked Southall area one evening at 5.30. The Panjabis and Sikhs also came out to protect themselves. There took place a pitched battle for some time, but the white could not stand up to the Sikhs for long. They ran away and entered a nearby pub owned by a White. The Sikhs and other Panjabis chased them into the pub. With an idea to checking the situation from deteriorating any further, the police made a ring around that pub so as to create a wedge between the two warring factions, the white youth inside the ring and others outside. With a view to taking revenge and teach the mischievous boys a lesson, the Sikhs broke through the police cordon and gave the boys a sound beating. At last the police and some senior citizens intervened and tempers cooled down.

Next day the incident was hotly debated in the British parliament. Some white members of parliament even went to the extent of saying that the way the influence of Asians is increasing in England, it would not be wrong to say that the next prime minister of England would be a turbaned Sikh. At this time Mr Bidwell who had won the Southall seat with the Sikh support, spoke in favour of the Sikhs. He strongly condemned the action of the white skin-heads. He asked the government why those trouble shooters had gone to Southall and made a sudden attack on the peace-loving Panjabis and Sikhs, and if for their self defence they dealt with the attackers with severity, there was nothing wrong in it; whatever they did was done
in self-defence. He reiterated that the Sikhs are loyal citizens and self-respecting. He further remarked that the Sikhs do not attack first but if someone troubles and attacks them they do not yield. He advised his countrymen that they should extend a hand of friendship towards them after making a study of their personality, history and religious life. Such an attitude would go in favour of the entire nation. The newspapers also followed this line. The 'Race Relation Councils' had taken up the matter with all seriousness. They organized several seminars on Sikh culture. They did make every possible effort to make the Whites realize the qualities of the turbaned Sikhs so that the fast spreading misunderstanding is removed and an atmosphere of amity and co-existence is created.

On the other hand, the Sikhs had also organized several meetings and discussions. They had decided not to initiate any trouble, and resolved to endeavour to develop amicable relations with the white people. However, if some mischief monger still persists in creating mischief, he should be given an adequate befitting reply. The then prime minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi, immediately directed Sardar Darbara Singh, chief minister of Panjab to reach England so that the matter could be resolved through negotiations at the political level. The then president of SGPC, S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra and several other Sikh leaders also reached England. Every leader used their individual influence to bring normalcy. The efforts succeeded. As a result of that, the Sikh form and symbols were accepted by all. Tall, hefty Sikh young men were recruited in the British police by way of providing recognition and security to Sikhs. Several seminars on Sikhism were organized. Awareness about Sikhism was created among people. After a little while people all around were heard saying that these bearded and turbaned Sikhs are wonderful people. Thus the hair and turban emerged victorious.

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TURBAN

The readers might have realised the significance of the turban for a Sikh from what has been said above, but the turban has an important place in our culture, society and daily life. Its significance can be judged from its use in idioms. When the father tells his children, 'don't get his turban trampled under another's feet', 'Keep the honour of his turban', 'do not let the turban be pulled off', it shows that the turban has a place of prominence in society.
Exchanging turbans means cementing friendship or relationship. Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Maratha Scindia Rao Holkar exchanged turbans and became fast friends, nay brothers. On the other hand, placing the turban on some one's feet means total submission. This implies seeking forgiveness. On the contrary, if you put someone's turban on his head, it implies adding to his honour. In a way, turban is a part of the dress to cover human body and every man wears much more costly clothes than the turban, but the latter has immense and the most symbolic value. When one puts ones turban on other person's feet or at least tries to do so, the other person feels embarrassed and forgives whatever might be his fault. Everybody knows that by placing ones turban on others feet, one loses all respect and honour which one possesses. Thus turban enjoys great social significance. This fact can also be gauged from Nand Lai Nurpuri's song which awakens the people socially and politically. The opening words of his song are, 'O Jat, take care of your turban.' During the struggle for India's freedom, this song used to echo on every stage and in every home. The words of this song made every Panjabi aware that 'taking care of turban' implies protecting the honour of the nation which was possible only after the 'White rule' was ended. This gave rise to a movement to make every possible sacrifice for the nation and it was a call to do away with the British rule. There was another song sung by Shaheed Bhagat Singh: 'O.my mother, dye my robes in saffron', which clearly means that I am ready to sacrifice my life for the honour of my country. Both these songs inspired the Panjabis, they challenged the Britishers and made them quit India. The turban therefore united all and revived the lost honour of the country. The Indians did not rest content until they placed the turban of honour on the head of MOTHER INDIA once again by freeing her from the foreign yoke. Sikhs played a vital role in this holy struggle. Therefore, the feelings of respect connected with the turban did what even most organized movements had failed to achieve.

All the facts mentioned above point towards the honour, and the glory of the turban. At the time of birth, marriage and death, turban has a prominent place in ceremonies connected with all these occasions because turban is our honour, our grandeur, a symbol of our responsible life. In several other cultures also, it is deemed a symbol of honour. An Iranian poet, Sheikh Saadi,
considers turban symbol of morality and character and gives it due respect in his verses. **For the Sikhs, it is more important than all other beings. It is also symbolic of Sikh's unique entity. A Sikh cannot live without turban even for a moment.** That is why a child in the Sikh families is taught to show respect and dignity to the turban from his early childhood. The ceremony of *dastarbandi* (when the child starts wearing turban) is performed with much pomp and show and religious reverence. Several references in the *Rahitnamas* (code of conduct) emphasizing the importance of keeping the turban spotless and give it due honour, also confirm our contention:

*Getting up early morning, tie the turban  
Thereafter keep it on for the whole day.*

These are the words which Rattan Singh Bhangu he used in his *Rahitnama* about the importance of the turban and hair. **Summing up, it can be said that for the Sikhs the importance of turban, and of hair, is unique and will remain so forever.** He can lose his head but can’t lose his turban. His turban is the shining exhibition of his valour, his grand heritage, his unending commitment with his supreme life-style, his wilful surrender before Almighty God and also his royal stature in the social set up. With the turban, a Sikh is naturally a 'Sardar Sahib', sardar of all virtues. Guru made him so. When such grace, glamour and grandeur is attached with turban, one cannot think of alienating himself from this wondrous treasure. Every Sikh should seriously realise unbounded and vast significance of the turban and acquaint his children to feel proud being 'Dastadhari (sporting turban) Gursikh'. It is also seen that before proper *Dastarbandi* of a Gursikh child his parents start covering his head with *Patka* a sort of scarf. It is all right for small kids up to the age of 8, or 9 to use *patka* but immediately after their reaching the age of 10, they should be encouraged to tie turban regularly after their *dastarbandi* ceremony. Those who do not start wearing full fledged turban at this stage, generally become lethargic and hesitant wearing turban and continue wearing *patka*, considering it easy to tie and light to carry as compared to the turban. If a grown up Sikh young man ties *patka*, he simply displays his distorted personality and unimpressive image of Sikh grandeur. Wearing a *patka* while playing a game or doing some hard physical job is O.K.
but in no way it should take the place of a turban. We should be watchful and protest strongly if we see a Sikh being projected on T.V. or cinema screen with *patka* or even bare-headed because it gives wrong signals to everyone. *Patka* in nutshell is no substitute of turban for a Sikh. If *patka* is discouraged at an early age, sport cap is automatically discarded by the youth itself because the turban does not leave any place or chance for an ambitious youth to wear a cap.

**AUCTION OF MAHARAJA BHUPINDER SINGH'S TURBAN?**

In spite of the limitless importance of the turban of the Sikhs, some times ago it is reported in press that an English Company Krishti International by name auctioned the *surpech* and diamond studded turban of late Maharaja of Patiala State, S. Bhupinder Singh for one lac and seventy thousand U.S. dollars (Ref. The Tribune Chandigarh dated 7.11.1999). This news annoyed the Sikhs and started debate in their circles as to why the honour and prestige of the royal family and Sikh nation was tarnished by auctioning this turban. The present Maharani Sardarni Parneet Kaur, member parliament on the other hand showed ignorance about this auction (Ref. Ajit Jalandhar dated 7.11.1999). There is every possibility that the whole story is just a rumour or canard, even then the Sikhs consider it a bad, disgraceful joke. A Maharaja who specially partook *Amrit* (nectar) to participate in the *Kar-sewa* (selfless religious service) of Harimandir *Sarovar* (holy tank) in 1923 AD and who during his life time made numerous and expensive donations should not be dragged in such a shabby affair. Auctioning his turban tantamount auctioning the very honour of the Sikhs who undoubtedly can face any hardship smilingly in maintaining and enhancing the prestige of the turban which matters them the most.

Present day Deputy Speaker of Panjab Assembly S. Bir Devinder Singh took the matter seriously at that time and demanded stern action against the said company if the news is bogus and without any base. No one according to him dares molest the honour of a Sikh's turban. He demanded a full-fledged high powered enquiry from the secretariat of the Akal Takht, SGPC and Indian High Commissioner London so as the truth comes out and such
measures are adopted which assure the non-occurrence of such indecent happenings in future (Daily Ajit, Jalandhar, 10.11.99)

In the connection of a turban this can be rightly said that Maharaja Bhupinder Singh used to tie turban very majestically. With his turban he became very distinctive and unique among all the rulers of India. When he was to attend any meeting or get together with the viceroy of India, he was given special position of status because of his personality, dynamism and turban of course. Whosoever in his State had a glance of his personality used to envy the style of turban which was very gracious and became known as 'Patiala Shahi Turban'. Later on, his tall, slim, stout son Maharaja Yadavindra Singh continued enjoying Patiala Shahi turban. Now Captain Amarinder Singh, the present Maharaja and Chief Minister of Panjab is adding extra charm to this popular style when he daily ties beautiful turban of very attractive but of changing colour. Those young persons, who sport turban, emulate Maharaja’s style of turban. In a way they treat him as their role-model. This again is the contribution of Royal family in saving the turban culture and providing it a strength and recognition when the turban is otherwise under crisis.

Patiala State during the princely rule was very much conscious that its subject irrespective of its religious belief must tie turban when it was to have a darshan of royalty. It was mandatory for all the employees to tie turban as a part of their dress when they used to attend offices or official functions. The effect of this practice cum custom is visible even today when one sees many old Hindu and Non-Sikh citizens of erstwhile Patiala state tying turbans in their daily routine.

COVERING THE HAIR, A GLOBAL CUSTOM

Although the Sikhs are today accepted as the only community in the world which keeps the hair covered under double turbans, yet a cursory glance at the rituals and rites observed by people all over the world reveal in one way or the other that the importance of covering hair has been accepted in almost every society. It is accepted in some societies even today. During the Mughal rule, no non-Muslim was allowed to wear turban, but the Sikhs refused to obey this decree as a result of which they courted death. The
Mughal emperors considered turban a symbol of royalty and they wanted to share this royalism only with their co-religionists. When the Mughal rule vanished, the turban on their heads vanished too. Of course, Muslim families of higher status continued to wear turban. Maulvis, Qazis and other religious leaders can't do without turban even now. Whenever they have to participate in a religious meeting or function, they must tie turban. Most of the Muslims in Arab and African countries must cover their heads with a scarf if they do not tie a turban. The Muslims of Bahrain, Sharjah, Philistene, Dubai and such other countries are the examples to that effect. Besides, Muslims generally cover their heads during any religious and other pious ceremonies. If they cannot wear turbans on such occasions, they must put a cap of cloth, when Namaz (Muslim prayer) is performed in public on Eid (Muslim auspicious festival) or similar auspicious occasions. No Muslim generally performs Nimaz bare-headed. Muslims are known all over the world to cover their heads with different kinds of caps apart from turbans. Whenever there is a marriage in a Hindu, Muslim or a Sikh family, it is customary for the groom, his father and uncles, bride's father and brothers to wear turbans. It is considered a good omen. Even if Hindus do not wear turban in everyday life, they do observe the ritual of 'wearing turban' at the time of the death of their parents. At such a time, it is symbolic of the increased responsibility on the shoulders of the one who wears a turban.

Most of the past philosophers, professors, researchers and scientists generally kept hair, and they covered them one way or the other. Even today if one has to receive a degree in convocation, one must cover one's head. The doctor covers his head while performing operation of a patient. The judge sitting in the court looks the custodian of justice only if he has his head covered. The ranks and status of military and police officers are distinguished by the kind of caps and stars. In recent times it has become compulsory for riders of two-wheelers all over the world to wear steel helmets. Thus, the necessity to cover head is recognised even today in the world in one way or the other. But the Sikh wears turban because his Guru has enjoined upon him to do so. It is a Guru's sacred memento for him, a token of blessings of his Guru and a symbol of sanctity and royalty. Every Sikh therefore ties turban as a mark of respect for his Guru.
In some regions of India, people of social status continue to cover their heads with turbans or something similar. The Rajputs of Rajasthan consider wearing turban an honour. In Gujarat, we have the example of Mahatma Gandhi who used to wear turban even when he was dressed in an English suit. Residents of Haryana and U.P. are also fond of wearing turbans. Those in Himachal, Arunachal and Manipur use special kinds of caps to cover their heads. The Kashmiris and other hilly people also do the same.

If we look at the people abroad, Russians cover their heads to protect themselves against cold. The English consider it good etiquette to cover their heads. The rich Japanese put on a heavy headgear. The Eskimos cover their heads with the animal skin. The orthodox Jews and Zoroastians cover their heads with a peculiar kind of cloth. Not only this, the priest, bishop and other Christian religious leaders follow the example of Pope and cover their heads when they give sermons, lectures/discourses in religious functions. Above references prove that in ancient times the hair were covered to show our respect to them and to protect them. Gradually, the fashion took the toll of hair, but the custom of covering head still survives some how or the other among people in different parts of the world.

The linguists have also made researches and given evidences to bring out this fact. They opine that no language ever invents a word unless and until it requires that word. Making this point the basis of our further study we find that almost all major languages and cultures of the world have words and phrases relevant to turban. If it is \textit{turban} in English, it is \textit{taband} in French. It is called \textit{turbande} in German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. There is another word \textit{kulband'} for it in the Dutch language. In Romanian and Iranian, it is called \textit{tulipan}' and \textit{surband}' respectively. \textit{Imla, Saafa, Chamla, Cheera, Ushvik, Dumala, Dastar, Dastara} are some other oriental words used for turban. If we study the language of Malaysia, turban is called \textit{'sarban'} there, which is worn by Hajis, Qazis and other noble people. There the people consider it very pious and wearer is believed to be blessed with Divine power. Turban was an integral part of the robes of kings and emperors of Malaysia. In the history of Malaysian parliament, Sardar Mahima Singh was the first person who went in parliament in 1960 with his turban on.
Everybody appreciated him and gave him standing ovation. The linguists and social scientists have said on the basis of their researches that in ancient Egyptian culture, turban was considered a royal, decorative head-dress. They call it 'payar'. The word 'Pagri' which is used for 'dastar or turban in India might have been derived from Egyptian 'payar'. If we analyse the history of ancient Middle Asia, we learn that the turban was a divine symbol there. It implies that the wearer of turban was a godly and pious person and was given due respect. Prophet Mohammad himself used to wear turban and he also dealt in turbans. In Arab countries, turban is called the crown of the Arabs. The weather of the region also demands that the head be always covered with turban, otherwise the dust blown off by strong winds of the desert and storms might settle on the hair and the scarcity of water makes washing of hair quite often a difficult task. Of course, the Arabs today do not tie turban in the style their ancestors did, but they do keep their heads properly covered. There is also some influence of a prediction that Arab society will endure so long as the Arabs continue to keep their heads covered. It is perhaps under the influence of this prediction that when any Arabian king is buried, his relatives place his turban alongside him in the grave. (Ref. 'The Sikhs', Malaysia, March 1984).

In the encyclopaedia of Sikhism volume 3rd page 369/70 it is mentioned in the entry under the caption of ‘TURBAN’, the word; turban is derived from the ancient Persian word 'dulband' through the Turkish 'tarbush'. Turban was an essential part of the Israeli High Priest's uniform in Moses' days, 1300 BC as stated in the old Testament (Exodus 28:4). In India, it is to be seen as worn by men depicted in the Ajanta caves (200 B.C.) and on the Sanchi Gateway (150 BC). Traditionally, wearing of turban according to the said entry in the encyclopaedia was a sign of holiness and frequently, its size, material and style indicated the position and rank of the wearer. The Sanskrit word 'pak' from which the Panjabi 'Pugg' or turban is obviously derived, stands for maturity and greyness of hair.

A bridegroom, irrespective of the religious tradition he belongs to would as a practice wear a turban of pink colour on his wedding day. Even on a sad occasion of demise, the turban is ceremonially
presented to and worn by the eldest son or all the sons at the end of the obsequies in honour of a deceased parent. On joyous occasions and on the ceremonies eulogizing the services of a particular person for his services to society, turbans or short turbans called Siropas 'a robe of honour' are given to him. Turban is still considered a coveted prize during the wrestling matches. When a follower assumes someone as his guide, trainer or teacher, he presents him turban cloth as a mark of respect. In 'Dabistan-e-Mazahib' it is clearly written that on the day of Diwali, Guru Arjan Dev used to award turbans to the Masands in recognition of their religious services. (Ref. Gurmet Parkash April 2003)

For a Sikh the turban is a respectful religious symbol which has become a distinguishing feature of a Sikh male the world over. The Sikh Gurus wore turbans and their followers naturally followed them rather enthusiastically. Fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev describing a true man of God had mentioned turban being a part of an ideal appearance, Sabat Surat Dastar Sira' (Guru Granth Sahib page 1084). By the time of sixth spiritual Master of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind, turban wearing Sikhs began to think themselves equals of the be-turbaned ruling class, the Mughals. When in 1699 AD, Guru Gobind Singh blessed his Khalsa after the initiation of Amrit (nectar) to the five beloved ones; turban became an obligatory item of dress for the Sikh males, being essential to keep the hair neatly tied up. The use of a cap or tarbush i.e. 'kula' below the turban is not permitted to the Sikhs. Instead, a shorter and lighter piece of cloth is normally used as an 'under turban'. (Ref. Encyclopaedia of Sikhism published by Panjabi university, Patiala).

The above few facts make it crystal clear that the covering of hair/head was considered necessary not only for Sikhs or people in India at large but for people all over the world, especially those enjoying high position and power in society. This custom was observed in life, and even when a person was laid in the grave. All references given above prove beyond doubt that tying turban or covering head was a practice in vogue all over globe since Stone Age. There is a painting dated 1431 AD in the Art gallery of London in which a white man is designated in turban. From this painting it can be well imagined that the Western people had been covering
their hair and heads with turbans or such like headgear in days of yore. Can we ever give up such a strong tradition and turn our back on history? Rather we should be proud that a puran Gursikh young man S. Baljit Singh Chadha of Montreal has been nominated as a member of Canada's highest body named 'Privy Council' which is responsible for the security and integrity of the country. It is not a meagre achievement. Our youth should be proud of this rare recognition and must definitely contribute to enhance the supremacy of the turban. This they can do by respecting Sikh tenets and symbols, especially hair and turbans.

GURU GOBIND SINGH’S HAIR IN THE EYES OF Bhai Nand Lal Goya

There are numerous references in the history and literature of India, particularly of Panjab about the unique respect shown to the hair. The respect of hair invites the respect of turban in turn. Bhai Nand Lai Goya was a dedicated Sikh and a great poet in the court of Guru Gobind Singh. He composed several verses about the personality and vision of the great Guru. There is a couplet which when paraphrased would read: Both, this world and the next are found intertwined in one lock of the hair of the Tenth Master and each hair of his, is equal to both the worlds. A Panjabi poet, Hari Singh, has said on this subject:

About the beard, the hair and the turban
The Gurus have written in their bani (hymns).
Bhai Nand Lai in his Ghazal

Has made a suggestive statement about Guru’s hair.
He says a hair of the tenth Guru
Is equal to both the worlds.
At many places in the Rahitnamas too
The pious hair are described the glory of a Sikh.

RAHITNAMAS ON THE HAIR AND TURBANS

The hukamnamas (edicts) and rahitnamas (code of conduct) issued after the historic event of the Baisakhi day (13 April) of 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa Panth contain numerous commandments for the preservation of and against the violation of the sanctity of the hair. Throughout there is an emphasis to consider the hair as something special. There is a maxim
prevalent in Sikh world that anyone who respects hair and ties turban will receive bounties and bliss of Sat Guru all the times. Some very brief quotes from the various *Rahitnamas* on the subject are given below:

*Degenerate is he*
*Who puts dirty hand on the hair*  
*Degenerate is he*
*Who respects not his hair.*

*Degenerated is he, who puts his turban on his head, like a Cap* (Bhai Chaupa Singh)

*Shave not thy head, friend*
*Good it is to give up smoking.* (Senapati)

*Preserve thy hair well*
*Do not shave them off.* (Ratan Singh Bhangu)

*Let not the barber put his hand*
*On thy head or face*
*Sikh with unshorn hair is*
*The Guru's Khalsa with his appearance.*  
*Bhai Kesar Singh*

Bhai Nand Lai Goya also writes in one of his compositions that every Sikh must comb his hair twice daily. He is directed never to put his turban on the ground. Whenever the turban is to be taken off, it must be taken off with due respect. The following words of Nand Lai are worth-while recommendations in favour of the hair and the turban:

*He who goes out naked-headed*
*Who takes food bare-headed.*  
*Distributes prasad that is uncovered*
*He is to be condemned as tankhahia* (accused).

*He who comes with unshorn hair is the Guru's Sikh.*  
*A Sikh must never shave off his hair.*  
*Gurpartap Suraj Granth*

*He who removes away*
*The baptism of the Guru's insignia*
*Consider such a one as bemukh.* (apostate)  
- **Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh**
Macauliffe, Malcolm, Nigam, Cunningham, Gardener, Pye, Parry, Scott and many other historians, while writing history of the Sikhs, have said that the Sikhs form a distinct nation because of their high character. This is manifested in their hair and is exhibited through their turbans. According to them, hair is a symbol of life and the progressive rise of the Sikhs and no Sikh with unshorn hair can ever be pessimistic. Having a turban on his hair, a Sikh immediately looks to be a prince, a Sardar, a leader. If we scan the pages of Sikh history, we find that so long as the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh continued, everything went on well. Places of worship of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims continued to receive royal patronage. The Maharaja used to reward persons who kept their beard, and moustaches nicely and tied beautiful turbans. If someone made, a beautiful calligraphic copy of the Guru Granth, Gita, or Quran, he was duly rewarded by the state. Apart from this, it was mandatory for all recruits to the army to keep hair/beards and tie turbans. So much so that General Ventura (A French national whose tomb is in Ludhiana) was appointed a General in the Sikh Army only after he grew long, unshorn hair and beard. In this way, the British, Italians, Spanish, Austrians and Americans holding high positions in the army of Ranjit Singh could reach such positions only after keeping unshorn hair.

When the Britishers annexed the Panjab by putting an end to the Sikh rule, many people discarded their hair, turbans and beards either due to fear or in expectation of favours from the new rulers. Thus began a trend to adopt Christianity. The British rulers hatched several conspiracies to finish the Sikh community. Some Sikhs were given high positions and honours so as to tempt them to become Christians. Some innocent Sikhs were led astray through various means. Missionary work in favour of Christianity completed the job for them. In the administrative report of Panjab of 1851-52, it has been clearly stated by the new rulers of Panjab that a Sikh of Guru Nanak may survive but the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh will cease to exist because the existing situation will compel them to give up their faith. How shameful it was that they tried to create wedge between the Sikhs on one pretext or the other.

This policy of the British had an obvious effect on the Sikh form. The strength of Sikhs stood at about 12 million during the regime of
Ranjit Singh, but within the four decades of the annexation of Panjab in the census of 1881, this figure stood at 1,715,114. The number of Sikhs maintaining unshorn hair and turbans continued decreasing day by day. This alarming situation naturally generated anxiety among the Sikhs. Some far-sighted and visionary Sikhs held discussions to check this trend. During the last two decades of the 19th century, the Singh Sabha movement created among Sikhs awareness about the pristine glory of their faith. The Singh Sabha made serious endeavours to check the evil tendency of discarding Sikh faith. It can be easily said that the period from 1849 to 1882 AD can well be called the period of the 'murder of hair' and that of turbans because it was the period when the degeneration of the Sikhs was at its peak. At this time, the sensitive Sikh hearts were badly hurt as the Panjabi poet, Chann, has depicted in one of his poems:

Take care, O Singh warriors!
Save thy faith, O Singh warriors.
The need of the times makes us aware
The trend towards degeneration makes us beware.
The foundations of Sikhism are square and firm
Even the tyrant Mughals failed to shake them.
Why then the faith falling rapidly now Our soul is pained
Considering what happened and how?
Think of the hair and the beard oh Khalsa
And look at the new form, he gained Khalsa.
In deadly shape is Sikhism in Panjab today
None seems to bother about the right way.
Fulfil thy obligations, O Singh warriors!
Save the Sikhism, O Singh warriors!
This trauma and challenge let us face boldly.
Or we will be trampled and perished surely.

If we assess the present day situation, every one would be of confirm opinion that Sikh youth has gone astray and the general condition in rural as well as urban Panjab is very critical. How sad and pathetic it is that the off springs of the Gursikhs have gone out of control of their parents and feel pleased in shearing their Sikh form. Neither at individual nor at community level have such efforts come to the forefront on the bases of which it could be hoped that
this adverse trend is checked or even slowed down. The increase in the strength of clean-shaven Sikhs daily has posed a severe danger to the identity of the Sikhs. It has very badly entrapped the hair, the turban and the prestigious heritage of the Sikh *samaj*. Everything among the Sikhs which provides dynamism, courage and unique status is being eclipsed, so much so that very existence of Sikh form is in the process of being smeared. Therefore every Sikh should keenly adopt strong and solid measures to save Sikh (*Sikhism*) in his own home so as to weaken the impact of the onslaught of apostasy. That is the only way which can save turban, which is a pride of Sikh way of life and Sikh existence. No more lethargy, sluggishness or slackness is acceptable because every moment lost is lost forever, which simply aggravates the already deplorable state of affairs.

Wahe Guru ji ka Khalsa
Wahe Guru ji ki Fateh
VIOLATION OF THE SANCTITY OF THE HAIR A TREND AMONG THE YOUTH

It has been a matter of regret and sorrow that the violence depicted in films, the fashions propagated by TV programmes and cheap literature, which has nothing except hooliganism and obscenity to convey, are leading the youth astray. The entire nation seems to have fallen in a vicious trap. Old values have lost relevance. The etiquettes and manners which India once felt proud of, have now become only a record of the past. New trends in the modern world have deprived a person of noble values such as compassion, dharma, contentment, love, co-existence and fraternity. Their effect on the Sikh youth has been even more harmful because they have fallen to apostasy under the influence of these new-found trends. It is pity that Sikh boys have fallen prey to evils like trimming hair and are taking to intoxicants. The parents fail to find time from their own involvements in luxury, earning more and more money or attending kitty or cocktail parties. Consequently, the children are being neglected and are mislead. They start acting according to their whims and this undue liberty is proving suicidal to the new generation. In the recent past I myself witnessed at least 8-10 Sikh young men discarding their hair. I wanted to have their objective opinion on this matter. One of them told me that he did so just to satisfy his whim. I feel this young boy is self-centred and he has no respect for his parents, heritage or elders. He also does not bear any goodwill for society, family or religion. Today his whim has made him discard the hair; tomorrow another whim can make him commit theft, robbery or murder. It is, therefore, utmost important to bring such whimsical youth on the right track. Doing so would also be good for the society; otherwise a group of such whimsical boys can create chaos in society.

Another boy had discarded the hair because of his contention that "the hair is superfluous therefore they are not needed. They are of no use." This reply of the young man made me feel rather anxious as to what should I think of him. I thought that those who discard hair often make such irrelevant remarks. In this respect, their parents and religious organizations are more to be blamed because they could not make them aware of the importance and necessity of keeping the hair, from their childhood days. Such wavering young
children were never provided with the kind of literature which might have intimated them with their precious heritage. We often find many people in a state of confusion because of their ignorance. Thus we need to make special efforts to curb such a tendency from its very beginning. That is the only way to save our unique moral and ethical values from the attack of modernity. We can, in this way, teach from the sacred land of India the practical way of noble life to the entire mankind.

In this connection, the immediate and important effort that can be most effective is Gurmet literature which should be made available to the youth in plenty. Special attention will have to be paid to ensure that this literature does not bore the young reader who lacks interest in its reading. It should be in easily intelligible language. It must deal and analyse each and every matter rationally so that it touches the heart of each Sikh youth and inspires him to learn about his rich heritage. No effort short of this can possibly prove effective in bringing the fallen youth back to the main stream. Does the Sikh nation have any constructive plan in this regard? Or, would it prefer to sit inert and just look at its steep fall?

There is another category of the Sikh youth who wish to get their hair trimmed but find difficult to do so because of the status their parents and relatives enjoy in society and religious circles. They use some fictitious ailments of the head as an excuse to fulfil their aim of getting the hair trimmed. Some say they have boils on the head while others lament that they get headache if they tie turban. There are still some others to use as an excuse a doctor's advice which they manage to get to expose their false fear of nervous breakdown. Such excuses help them trim their hair without getting any social or religious stigma. This is a shame and sham betraying one's own self, an injustice against society and religion. On the basis of scientific investigations, it can be strongly argued that the hair does not either cause or worsen any such disease or disorder. On the other hand, they serve as a remedy to several ailments. It is a matter of anxiety that the youth have been using strange kind of excuses to get rid of hair which is the Guru's insignia. The entire Sikh nation must reflect seriously over this issue, otherwise the situation might reach a stage of no return. Had these young men been even somewhat familiar with their history, their code of
conduct, *Rahitnamas, Hukamnamas*, they might have avoided taking such a drastic step. They might have then cultivated a feeling of respect for their hair and achieved so much to spiritual strength that this very strength should have come to their help in the moment of wavering. Since Guru Gobind Singh has termed the hair his emblem, insignia, the hair are dear to him. The Guru gets annoyed with a person who discards his hair. It becomes difficult nay impossible for a *petit* (apostate) to enjoy the company and grace of the Guru. In this context, *Rahitnama* of Bhai Sahib Singh has recorded:

*When a Sikh discards the hair my company He loses to share.*

*Muktinama* says:

*Hair on head are Guru's emblem
He who discards them be deemed bemukh* *(an apostate).*

Rattan Singh Bhangu, in his *Prachin Panth Prakash*, makes an emphatic statement:

*Preserve thy hair
Never remove them,
He who goes astray
Must be punished for this sacrilege.*

The tendency to discard hair must be checked in any way possible. It becomes the foremost duty of mankind to preserve the hair as they are beneficial to the entire mankind. A Sikh's wish about the hair should be:

*Humility of mind and high intellect,
May God protect intellect.
Let the hair be kept till the Last breath,
May God fulfil this desire.* —Bawa Sumer Singh

Every Sikh wishes in his daily prayer for the fulfilment of this wish. During the period of later Mughals and Ahmed Shah Abdali (1749-1774), for the complete annihilation of the Sikhs, it was decreed - kill the Sikh wherever he was found and get the reward. Even in spite of this severe cruelty the Sikhs agreed to sacrifice their lives but they never tried to save their lives by sacrificing their hair. The
paramount need now again is to revive this feeling in the modern Sikh so that an army of *Akaal* (God) is made available always in the world to protect the nobility of humanity and also provide strength to moral values. The young men who have discarded their hair on one pretext or the other are no longer Sikhs of the Guru. If they have snapped their ties with their Guru, they can snap them with their parents, society and the country even. Thus they are in the process of losing trust and reliability. If they think that they look more smart and beautiful after doing away with their hair, they live in fools paradise. One day they will certainly realize the feeling expressed in the following couplet:

_The colour and fragrance of garden deceived me in such a way,
That in excitement of kissing a flower I put my tongue on a thorn instead._

Therefore, the trend towards apostasy must be checked at all costs. The problem should be examined fully, it be analysed psychologically and a solution be found so that the trend towards apostasy, which is bound to harm the community, be ended among the Sikhs, an apostate can never be in high spirits because he does not appear to be the Guru's Sikh. Our Gurus forbade us to live a life of pretence because this does not help us neither in this world nor in the next. Nobody trusts the degenerate and more so his own conscience is ever troubled.

**GURU NANAK ON APOSTASY**

Guru Nanak tried his best to reform the defects he noticed in the society. He openly and boldly raised his voice against such weaknesses. He saw that with the establishment of the rule of Babar, Hindus were being forcibly converted into Islam. Some Hindus became Muslims in order to save their lives. They gave up their mother-tongue in favour of the invader's language, discarded their dress, diet and other habits and tried to follow the invader—ruler in every walk of life. However, within the four walls of their houses, they were still Hindus. Thus, they were Hindus at heart but tried to look like Muslims from outward appearance and behaviour. Guru Nanak called this situation a moral apostasy. Condemning such a linguistic and cultural apostasy, they say:
Thou charge tax for the cow and the Brahmin,
The cow-dung will not save thee,
Thou wear a loin-cloth, put a frontal mark
Thou carry a rosary but eath the Muslim's hands,
Thou perform worship within,
Outside thou read Muslim books
And behave like them;
Lay aside the hypocrisy,
God's Name alone will save thee (S.G.G.S. 471)

In other words, inside the house the Hindu worships Hari, but outside (to create a different impression for others) he reads the scripture of the Muslims, so that the ruling class mistakes him for a follower of Islam. He has changed his outward appearance and behaviour to look like a Muslim, at his home he wears dhoti (A piece of cloth worn around the waist and the legs). This pretension or sham is his weakness. Guru Nanak advises him to adhere to one faith. This type of apostasy will render him useless for this world as well as for the next. Thus, he should give up a double standard. He must realize his true self and not discard his own culture. He should take pride in the use of his own mother-tongue. He will regain his self-respect by doing so. If he loses his honour or if his turban is pulled down, his life will be a life of humiliation which is worthless. He must remember the name of God. The slur of cultural, social and linguistic apostasy would be removed automatically and he would emerge a stronger man capable of defending his own values and his mother land.

Guru Nanak did not hesitate to condemn such behaviour even on the part of the Muslims. Satirizing them he says that even the Muslims also behave pretentiously. They make their appearance and behave in a manner to give the impression of being a true follower of Islam, but they perform deeds which are not even remotely concerned with the piety of Islam. The Qazis perform marriage ceremonies, but in their hearts they are not less than Satan. They pretend to mete out justice, but take bribes and deliver unjust decisions. The powerful Babar left Khurasan, along with hordes of sinners for India so as to plunder the latter. Is it a moral act? Nay, this is another type of example of religious apostasy. Morality is conspicuous by its absence.
The above views of Guru Nanak on apostasy forbid us to lead such a life. The evil trend towards this vice has made the entire Sikh society grief-stricken. Future lies in the hands of the youth. Poet Santa Singh Ajiz addresses an apostate Sikh as —

*Tell me, O apostate Sikh!*
*Why do you go astray?*
*Why do you discard Sikh appearance?*
*What is your compulsion to go away?*

*What do you gain by losing your form?*
*By disowning the Guru's norm*
*Receiving a slur on your forehead,*
*And proving traitorous to the Panth*

*Why are you in a dilemma?*
*Why waver you in loyalty?*
*Why are you inclined towards apostasy,*
*Giving up the regalia of royalty?*

*Why you violate the Sikh code?*
*Renegading from Guru is so sad*
*Why do you need company of the evil,*
*And make friendship with the Bad?*

*Remember those two innocent lives*
*Who preferred to be bricked alive.*
*They wavered not in faith*
*But gave up their lives to let the faith thrive*

Sikhs have learnt to be martyrs,
To write history with their blood.
They never begged for life
But gave away lives as a scud.

Mothers lost their sons, and
Received garlands of their heads.
Gave up life, instead their faith.
Smilingly sans tears ever shed.

They prayed in distress and grief
Fought till end to be in brief
But smiles ever played on their lips,  
Even death learnt some new tips.

No more Mannu is there with his army,  
No more is there the threat of fanatic law,  
No more is there any ruler of Ghazni to threaten,  
Then why do you feel so heart beaten?

The entire world respects your valour  
In enough wealth and property you are fed.  
Everything of luxury you own  
But luxuries seem to have gone to your head.

You get the diet you wish,  
You get all shines and bright  
You can't discard the hair,  
You don't have the slightest right.

The hair are the trust of the Tenth Master,  
Violate not the trust you got free.  
Why do you earn rebuke from the Panth?  
Why cut at the roots of your life-tree?

Those who ditch their community  
Subservient they ever are to others.  
Those who destroy their own dwellings  
They are most sinful brothers.

Get up, and take due care,  
Nothing will be left if once you are plundered.  
The fair of Gurmet is on  
Come, dear take part completely surrendered.

If you bow at the Guru's feet,  
And pray with folded hands,  
The filth of egoism will vanish  
And you will regain Sardari grand

Poet Dilbag Singh Vir considers apostasy equal to an entry into hell.  
He says-
God created this world in His own image
Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sikhs all.
Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Sastras, Quran all tell
Accepted at Divine court is one with the complete form.
The Tenth Master created Khalsa in God's own image,
Made baptised Sikh equal to Guru,
Himself becoming the Sikh.
Why humiliating the honour bestowed by the Guru?
Why add poison to nectar gifted to us by the Guru?
Why do you maul and mar the image Divine?
Why open doors of hell by becoming an apostate?

I would like to share it with my brethren, who have, for some reasons, become apostate, an example from Sir Muhammad Iqbal's Javednama. Iqbal says that once a young hawk joined the flock of crows. The hawk became forgetful of its own ancestry in the company of crows, but the latter did not accept and respect it because they knew that it has snapped ties with its ancestry and heritage and thus grown weak and isolated. We know well that he who has no roots is little respected. Even a buffalo is deemed valuable so long as it is tied to the stake. Iqbal says that the crows did not accept or give any importance to the young hawk, which made the latter feel very small because it was a royal bird connected with a higher breed. Had it not fallen from its high stature and joined the company of inferiors, the inferiors might have respected it. Thus, this little lapse on its part caused much harm to the entire community of hawks. The same is true of an apostate being. This should be kept in mind. The defaulter can learn a lesson and start respecting their hair which unites them with the unbounded strength and unmatched heritage bestowed by ten Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib.

Will the apostate Sikh brethren feel touched by the distress the entire community feels for them? May God give them wisdom, and may they come back into the Sikh fold and earn the blessings of the Guru. Only then can they become true successors and owners of the rich heritage, on which every Sikh has the right to be proud of.
TRIMMING IS SHAMEFUL

Although it has now become a fashion not only in India but throughout the world to trim the hair and shave the beard and moustaches, however, this evil is more prevalent in the West. Still an expression of the feeling of respect for hair is sometimes made by some of them. This feeling, it seems, is alive in their heart in an implicit or an explicit form. According to The Times of India, in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Miss Alvira Ozlina, the champion of 1960 Olympics, could not perform well in javelin throw. Her throw could only secure fifth place for her. She felt so ashamed of her performance that she trimmed her hair by way of punishing herself. The hair was the most valuable for her and they were the prominent object of attraction of her personality. By trimming her hair on her defeat, she expressed her sense of disappointment and took it as a sort of punishment. What a strange sentiment for showing respect and valuing the hair!

During the 1992 Barcelona games, all members of the Volleyball team of America trimmed their hair in a particular style to lodge their protest against a judgement. They called this act of theirs, 'bonding effect', and thus presented their case in the court of the masses. Is it not wonderful that even today people, for the expression of their feeling of respect, love, protest, joy, sorrow or shame, resort to hair when all other means for this purpose fail. Everybody is consciously or unconsciously aware of the fact that the hair is not an ordinary thing, although our attitude in ordinary circumstances has given them the position of even the meanest of the mean. However, it is a matter of 'joy' for all of us that our players who had gone to take part in the Barcelona games and later on in Atlanta in 1996 came back, after showing their 'Superb' performance safe without any sort of grievance or without making any protest against any decision. They had not gone to play any game, I presume, they had rather gone there to play with the sentiments of the countrymen! And, they came back victorious. Thank God. They should now be given complete rest for at least ten years to get active again in national service.

In recent past we have come across several examples of lodging protest by trimming/shaving hair. When the demands of the All-India Sweepers Association were not acceded to, the prominent office bearers of the concerned Association gathered at the smadhi of
Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat. There at the smadhi itself they got their heads shaven and thus adopted this method of presenting their case before the public.

The leaders of the Utlar Khand Morcha protested against the killing of their colleagues by getting their heads shaven (ref The Tribune, 29 April 1995). It becomes evident from these stray examples that even those who have no explicit reason to maintain unshorn hair, they sacrifice whatever little hair they have when they want to attract the people's notice to any of the serious problems facing them. By doing so they feel that they have done what ever is possible in highlighting the matter before the public and authorities. Only laying down of life is the next step. Keeping this feeling in view, it can be said that the sentiment of respect for hair still survives in the hearts of Indians. It has not completely ceased to exist (even if they maintain or do not maintain unshorn hair).

THE FASHION TO WEAR SPORTS' CAP

It is often seen that some Sikh boys, even though they still continue to maintain unshorn hair, wear sports caps on their heads. They go to schools, colleges and even to the markets with this cap on. According to them, they look more active, smart and agile by sporting this cap. If nothing else, with the cap on their heads they at least look like sportspersons. How can one make them understand that the history of the Sikhs stands witness that Sikhs refused to wear steel helmets and instead preferred to meet death in the battlefields: they respected their hair and agreed to wear only turbans over them come what may. It seems quite ludicrous that this sports cap is now taken as the only means to make the Sikh young men appear active, smart and strong. Had such a cap been endowed with so much of magic, the Indian players at Barcelona and Atlanta might not have to face such a deplorable plight when defeated. The Indian players because of their poor performance were hiding these caps, but these persons looking like players take pride in sharing with them their 'achievements' by wearing these insulting caps. It is still time to take care, to maintain the heritage, to cultivate one's qualities and strength. It is, in fact, a matter of pride that the hair adds to man's manliness. The hair, beard and moustaches are man's grandeur. It gives ecstatic joy to display
Manliness seems to flourish in their upkeep. They unite us with our martial and honourable heritage. It is therefore neither proper nor becoming honourable to hide these glorious hair and prestigious heritage under the caps. Consequently, it will be beneficial for all of us to discard this fashion as early as possible. The parents are required to play a special role in this regard: this is, in fact, their moral obligation even. Whatever a youth adopts in fashion in lieu of his chivalry is a losing proposition and he must never compromise or accept it. The hair are the expression of wearer's knightly temper, and covering them with sports caps implies hiding one's chivalry rather stigmatising it. The hair can be properly managed only by wearing double turbans and not by wearing any cap. In the *Rahitnama* of Bhai Prahlad Singh, many good and educative points have been made. Every Sikh must pay attention to these points. He writes;

*Being a Sikh, wears he a cap;*
*Leper he remains for seven lives.*

Thus, one who violates the Sikh code and wears the cap has been cursed to remain leper for the following seven births. Bhai Nand Lai Goya also forbids the use of the cap—

*Wearing on head the Mughal emblem (cap)*
*And putting foot on steel.*
*Tells Guru Gobind [Singh] to the poet*
*SUCH a one continues in the cycle of births.*

Bhai Chaupa Singh, in his *Rahitnama,* (code of conduct) says—

*He who with hair wears cap, is a tankhahia*
*He who respects the hair not, is a tankhahia*
*He who takes food bareheaded, is a tankhahia.*

The modern poet, Jachak, says on the subject—

*The beautiful minarets of Sikh form are felled down by razor and scissors.*
*Sons of many Gursikhs get apostate*  
*And thus stigmatise their turbaned figures.*

*They murder hair, calling them a burden*  
*How do they carry the burden of the body?*  
*Discarding the beautiful turbans*  
*Wear they on their heads caps so shoddy.*
We must respect the sacred hair
Considering them emblem on head & chin
Sikh women started defiling the hair
Let us stop them performing this sin.
We must wear turban on the head
Never should we go out bareheaded at all
We must, 'Jachak', remain lions
And never to live like jackals.

What the poet says is true as well as appropriate. All the instances and examples given above forbid the Sikh youths to wear caps on their heads either by way of fashion or in ignorance. We should, as a gesture of respect for the hair, never remain bareheaded, nor should we cover them with anything but turban. Turban is the crown for a Sikh, the crown which the Guru has bestowed on his loving sons. The hair is a standard of the Guru. Don't we feel proud of these sublime gifts? Is it not our duty to honour and preserve them?

Every beloved ever keeps the gift given by her lover considering it more valuable than her life. She preserves and keeps it hidden under 'seven layers'. Then why don't we hold the gift of hair given by the Beloved Guru with the respect and affection that behoves the gift?

When Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last, he permeated himself spiritually with the Scripture i.e. *Granth Sahib jee* and physically with the *Panth (Khalsa)*. Following his instruction, we respect the scripture as a living Guru and deem it a blasphemy to make any little alteration in its text. We do so because the scripture is our Guru, the soul of the Guru. Then what right do we have to alter the form of the *Guru Khalsa* by trimming hair? Shall we not be especially answerable to Guru if we transgress the commandment? Of course, by doing so, we shall be proving ourselves impudent before the Guru.

If we deem the hair and other Ks' as the gift bestowed by the Guru, we must pay them due respect. The known scholar and savant, Professor Puran Singh, has explained thus for our benefit:-
"When he (the Guru) touched my hair with his soft hands and blessed me, then how could I tolerate if they were trimmed? Only a fully dedicated can be called a Sikh. I have preserved his (Guru's) fragrance in my hair. I'm like a maiden who is to get married. People in modern times have shaved the head of the Suhagan (married woman), but the pious braids of Christ are still the best decoration of head for a man or woman. The clouds flying in the sky hide within their layers the lightning. People say it is difficult to keep hair, but a life devoid of any source of inspiration is all the more difficult to live. Human body in itself is quite capable of giving problems. We have to go daily for call of nature, rub on the face a variety of creams and powders, putting drops in the eyes—all this is not less difficult. If the body can bear all this and has accepted to live in this not-so-easy world, then the talk of getting rid of hair amounts to one's spiritual bankruptcy and loss of divine love. As I have said elsewhere, the modern woman has killed her conscience by trimming her hair and colouring her lips which are pink by Nature.

Our Guru, who is dearer to us than our parents, brothers and sisters, has given us a gift. Shame be on us if we try to question the benefits bestowed by him. The Guru provided his touch to my hair, so I maintain them. Whenever I raise my arm up, I find my steel bracelet shining. At that moment, I remember the Guru's arm which also wore a similar bracelet. Other religions have also their outward symbols. The Guru loved me. He owned me. The sword is the symbol of mind concentrated in the Guru. Steel bracelet is his memorial. Hair are like clouds overcast around a mountain-top—they always get together and burst into rain to get together again.

The waters of Ganga, Jamuna and Godavari flow through my hair. Do I have the comb given to me by the Guru? Do I possess the blessings bestowed by him? I might have lost them, but I cannot lose my hair; nay, I cannot. We are the Guru's spiritual soldiers. We are bonded for life in love. There are the chains of love, the price of our freedom. Every Sikh keeps the hair and the beard as the gift of Guru Gobind Singh. We are made in his image.

Those who have not so far developed open love for the Guru still stand outside the threshold. Don't talk to us in the tone of a preacher. The hair are not the symbol of a religion, nor symbolic of
some religious ritual. They signify that we are married 'women' i.e. Suhagans. These are the precious gifts given us by our 'groom'. Since he himself gave these to us, they are sacred. Is it mere superstition? Yes, but is there a love without superstition and is there a place where love has not its own superstition?"

The feeling of devotion towards the hair and other Ks expressed in the above quotation is quite touching. In the light of feelings expressed in it we need to change our attitude towards the hair. This is the first and paramount need of the times.

THE HANDSOMEST PERSON

Toyanbee was a famous historian of the west. One of his woman readers asked him that he has written history of the mankind and as such he might know all communities quite intimately. She wanted him to tell her on the basis of his knowledge, experience and studies as to who is the most handsome man in the world? Toyanbee told her without any hesitation that the most handsome man is that Sikh who wears long, unshorn hair on the head and long flowing beard because only such a being is in the form provided to man by God. The reader felt rather amazed listening to this interpretation of beauty. Hearing this she put another question: "What you have said must be true, but at the same time please tell me as to who is the ugliest man in the world?" He instantly replied: "The Sikh who trims his hair and beard". This view of Toyanbee has been confirmed by P.M. Wylam, a scholar and writer from England. On the basis of her long study, research and experience, she writes in her book on the importance of hair held in the minds of Sikhs. She says that a Sikh, when he becomes apostate, feels demoralized. Most of his spiritual strength is gone. Thus, for a Sikh the hair are not merely external symbols but the source of strength. (The above dialogue with Toyanbee and his reader was quoted by Prof Tanjit Singh, who retired as Principal, Gurmet college, Patiala, during the course of his lecture on 16 August 1979 at Gurbani Vichar Kendra Patiala further quoting Sardar Kapur Singh, ICS).

The contention of Wylam seems true for several reasons. If we look at the matter from spiritual perspective we admit that every Sikh is first a saint and then a soldier. By maintaining hair, he seems truly a
saint, and thus he is ever in ascending mood. According to G.K. Gaskel, the hair on the head is symbols of devotion towards truth and dharma. In other words, we can say that they represent the best state of one's mind. Duncan Greenlees is a famous author who has written on world Gospels. He confirms this view from another perspective. He calls hair symbols of discipline, courage and determination. The Sikhs gave them (hair) immense love and respect when maintaining them amounted to virtually courting death. Thus, the hair are a kind of certificate for a Sikh that he is trained to bear courageously any amount of torture for the sake of a higher and nobler end. The hair signifies the Sikh's ever readiness for making even the supreme sacrifice for the sake of dharma and moral values. During the regime of Zakaria Khan the mughal tyrant, hundreds of innocent Sikhs were daily killed in the Shahidganj area of Lahore. They ever refused to accept Islam, but willingly sacrificed their lives. Their sacrifices are written in golden letters in the pages of history.

The British rulers used the Sikh sentiment for hair to their best advantage. They realized that encouraging the Sikhs to discard hair would amount to destroying their honourable and grand heritage, and the Sikhs will not tolerate that too. On the other hand, if steps are initiated to encourage the Sikh code, they would be second to none in serving the British regime with all at their command. To put this feeling into practice, the British Govt, in India ordered that any Sikh seeking recruitment in the army must be a baptised Sikh who honours his hair and other symbols. This practice started from 19th March 1851 and continued up to the end of British rule in India. As a result of this, the British government enjoyed the services of loyal, powerful, brave and committed Sikh soldiers who sacrificed their lives on the altar of duty and in a way, made the entire world realize the importance of the hair and Sikh baptism (Amrit).

**THE PRACTICE OF TYING BEARD**

Toyanbee has made a fine statement in favour of a long flowing beard, but in modern times most of the Sikhs tie their beards. How did this practice begin? How far is it justified? Is it useful or harmful? We discuss these and similar related points in the following lines.
The experiments of science have proved that the hair on the head is most active when covered and those of beard when left loose. *Rahitnamas* also conveyed similar feeling which has been referred to at many places in the book. Some readers have shown anxiety to know as to why and when did the practice to tie beard began. In this connection, it is submitted that up to the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Sikhs took pride in keeping a flowing beard. So much so that even the European officers in his army used to move about in the army ranks with their heads covered and flowing long beards. However, after Ranjit Singh and during the regime of Maharaja Sher Singh, it became a fashion to tie a net on the beard. When the Maharaja Sher Singh himself began to dress his beard, the courtiers and army officers followed him. After some time when the British annexed Panjab, the English style suits, coats, trousers, neckties, etc. became part of the dress of an educated and a serving Sikh. Such Sikhs felt that the flowing beard did not look well when one wore a suit and wore a necktie. Therefore the trend to tie beard increased rapidly. Those who were in service and wanted to get nearer the ruling class started wearing the latter's dress and tying the beard. Thereafter tying of beard became a fashion, and by the beginning of 20th century almost all urban Sikhs adopted it. Some Sikhs gave up their faith in favour of Christianity as they were either attracted by the temptation of high government jobs or came under the influence of British missionaries. Realizing the growth of this tendency, *Singh Sabha* was established towards the closing decades of 19th century. The *Singh Sabha* made serious efforts to protect the community from this fatal trend.

Now the question arises whether it is useful or harmful, apart from all religious considerations to tie beard. Making the religious point of view clear, Bhai Randhir Singh says—as trimmed as tied. In other words, he considers trimming and tying beard as equally bad, however, the researchers opine that if beard is tied under a net without using any hair-fixer etc. the hair continue to perform their functions as usual. It is generally observed that the Sikhs go to their offices or other places of duty with a tied beard, but after retirement they leave it flowing because then they find it more comfortable and convenient. An old man with a flowing beard generally gets more respect just as the flowing beard during young age reflects the
morality and responsibility of possessor. In sum, it can be said that the hair and beard are the glory of mankind, but they are a Sikh's faith. A Sikh should prefer to die with Keshas than to live as clean shaven. A Patit Sikh in religious sense is a demoralised or a fallen Sikh. The Sikh is made to learn through the Gurus that a noble death for some principle is glorious and is remembered for all times to come, otherwise one would have gone into oblivion.

THE STORY OF GANGA RAM-JAMUNA DAS

Some Sikhs, for certain reasons, have shaven their hair. Thus, they have also discarded turban for ever. They live their life like any other non-Sikh. There are also some persons who have trimmed their hair and maintain a semi trimmed beard. They go about hairless to satisfy their whims, but when there is some function in the family, or they have to participate in a Panjabi or Sikh function or attend kirtan, etc., then immediately they put on turban and pretend to look like Sikhs. As soon as that function is over, they take off the turban, comb their plaits and revert to their previous form. Such pretentious people have sometimes to deceive their conscience by playing this drama twice or thrice in a day. These people perhaps think that they have been able to keep their image in society through this 'double-game', but they do not know that everybody deems them opportunists and mean. If they have got their hair trimmed, they might have done this after some reflection. Then why don't they remain firm to spend life in that form? What is the compulsion for them to wear turban on some occasion and discard it at others and then move about in their newly adopted changed form? They must make up their mind one way or the other. To live like 'neither king nor lion' only shows the restlessness of their mind. If they are afraid of the rebukes of society, or they fear the displeasure of religious people, then they should be bold and seek re-admission into the Sikh fold. They are welcome. If on the other hand they like and approve of the non- Sikh form, we bid them good-bye without any malice. But we appeal them to be on one side firmly so that they get peace of mind and the damage to the image of Sikh community which is caused because of their frequent somersaults is ended.

But I must share an historical incident with my brethren who shave off or trim their hair and beard. Maybe, they can in the light of this
episode take the bold step of re-embracing their faith by maintaining untrimmed hair and beard. In the fort of Anandgarh at Anandpur Sahib, forty Sikhs had left Guru Gobind Singh after signing a written document disowning the Guru. They stated that they have snapped all ties with him. They made this declaration in writing. We need not dilate in detail the circumstances which led to the Guru's exit from Anandpur as those are part of history and known to almost all of our readers. The Guru travelled a long distance 600 km from Anandpur to Khidrana (modern-day town of Muktsar) facing great difficulties. During this time, the Guru lost many of his precious possessions besides mother, sons, manuscripts of his works and a lot of other material, but they took extra care to keep with him the document i.e. Bedava signed by those forty Sikhs. It was near a pond of Khidrana that those forty Sikhs, since overtaken by remorse, joined Guru once again and fought valiantly on the Guru's side who then happened to be under attack of the pursuing Mughal forces. After the battle was over, the Guru reached the spot where was laying fatally wounded Mahan Singh, one of those forty Sikhs. Mahan Singh acknowledged his fault and requested the Guru's forgiveness for himself and his companions who had met martyrdom in the battle. The Guru on the request of dying Mahan Singh took out the disowning document (Bedava) which was being safely tugged in his waist-cloth and tore it before the eyes of Mahan Singh. Thus, the Guru forgave those 40 Sikhs and took them back unto his fold. All of them sacrificed their lives and got mukti i.e. salvation.

Those of our brethren who have shaven off or trimmed their hair/beard thus openly declared their disavowal of the Guru and loudly conveyed their bedava to their Guru. Such an action on their part adversely affects the future of our community and dims the effulgence of the Guru's Word. Unfortunately, they are still ignorant of their doing, but the time will certainly come when they shall realize that they have done injustice to the Guru by snapping their ties by shaving off or trimming their hair. This disavowal of the Guru by openly flouting the Sikh code on hair, we all downgrade ourselves in the eyes of others. For this great evil act, we shall have to pay one day an equally heavy penalty to the Guru as those forty Sikhs did pay who are, popularly known in Sikh history as Chali Mukte or Forty Liberated ones. History is certainly making us conscious of our fault and exhorting us not to disobey the code
prescribed by the Guru. This is what the Guru expects of us. We ought to realise this and seek protection beneath the umbrella of Guru's grace. The Guru is benevolent indeed and he will forgive us. We must not delay requesting the Guru to tear asunder the *bedava* or the document of disavowal: our request has to be in the form of our commitment to the sanctity of our hair.

Wahe Guru ji ka Khalsa  
Wahe Guru ji ki Fateh