



## 26<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM 2014

### Specific Guidelines

Group	Age	Presentation Time	Contents	Presentation
V	18-25 yr.	8:30 minutes	75	25
<b>Topic: <i>Importance and relevance of KESH</i></b>			<b>N. A.</b>	

Every nation, community and religion has some unique characteristic that distinguishes it from others. In the present day Sikhs it is the long unshorn hair – Kesh.

Discussion and disagreement on the Kesh both within and without the community continues to be hot and heavy. Did the Singh Sabha play a crucial role in defining this important marker of the faith? Is it that the new conquerors of Punjab, the British, recognized that to promote Sikh identity via their most obvious feature – Kesh – would cement Sikh loyalty to the Crown, and took political steps to ensure encourage it? Is it true that changing political realities have further evolved over the past 150 years and have transformed the recommendation of Kesh into a requirement of the faith? The controversy often roils the community.

There is little question that ever since the seminal events of Vaisakhi 1699 Kesh have been fundamental to Sikhi. Even though controversy is widespread, it is also true that at this time Kesh have evolved into the most pre-eminent requirement and visible marker, even a red flag, of the Sikh faith. History is replete with examples of Sikhs paying a heavy price for keeping long unshorn hair.

Unbroken tradition of keeping unshorn hairs since 1699 was finally codified in the Sikh Rehat Maryada SRM) published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in 1945. It is important to point out that the requirement of Kesh was merely codified then; it did not begin with it.

This is the only Kakaar which is also specified in the four major transgressions (tabooed practices) for Sikhs. *Chapter XIII, Article XXIV (p)*. SRM is available @ [www.sgpc.net](http://www.sgpc.net) for ready reference.

It is important to examine the following issues on this topic. In your presentation feel free to refer to reading outside of the Sikh literature.

	Question
1	How do you explain the requirement of Kesh? Is there any spiritual significance to keeping unshorn hairs by both men and women?
2	What is your understanding of the requirements of unshorn hair (kesh) for Sikhs? Traditionally it has been interpreted to apply to all hair anywhere on the body for both men and women. How do you interpret the requirement of kesh?
3	Some say that times have changed. Kesh may have been relevant once but serve no purpose now. How do you respond to this?
4	Can one call himself/herself a Sikh if not keeping unshorn hairs?
5	How would you explain importance and relevance of Kesh to others?

Dr. I. J. Singh, Author & Prolific writer

Jan 11, 2014 – Question 2 has been reworded.