

No Hair-razing Science Here!



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

We may estimate that the average short-haired person removes half a kilo to a kilo of hair from their bodies in a year. Well, a kilo is a kilo, but in a large city like New York or Delhi with millions of people, can you imagine the amount of hair - which is keratin, a very concentrated form of protein - that goes into the garbage fills or down the drain? Quite a lot.

And that is just the beginning. The body unfailingly replaces that hair each time it is shaven or cut off. There is something in the body’s DNA that simply will not allow the body to go on for long without its full complement of hair. And, every time, there is a nutritional cost for that replacement. There must be something important to the hair we have yet to understand, else why would the body reflexively replace the pili whenever and wherever they are removed from the epidermis?

It reminds me of a study (Harwood, Darlow, Mogridge 2001) of the nutritional value of breast-milk. According to the report, the breast-milk has the ideal ratio of the amino acids cystine, methionine and taurine to support the development of the central and peripheral nervous systems. But what were the researchers to expect? Of course, evolved as it has over millions of years to serve the growth of newborns, the mother’s milk naturally has the ideal nutrient ratio to support the development of the nervous systems! And not only the nervous systems, but all the other systems as well! It would seem a study like this would tell us more about the limitations of our science than about any supposed attributes or deficiencies of the object of our understanding (*or misunderstanding* - namely, the highly evolved nutrient package which is a mother’s milk).

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

Simply put, it is a waste of time and money to get one’s hair cut to serve some slavish end of fashion. And it is a waste of our limited ecological resources. It pollutes our earth and waterways, and requires restitution in new food and nutrients. What a needless waste!

There is quite a rage in some scientific circles these days that Vitamin D is practically a panacea, that it maintains health and can cure a whole lot of things. Of course, the hair produces Vitamin D. It does so now. It did so before all these new studies. And it has always done so. Moreover, I am sure it does a lot of other good things about which we can only begin to guess.

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

The awe I extend to my computer is the same awe I have for my body. As *Akaal Moorat*, it is sacrosanct. My body is full of lessons and it is constantly teaching me. I trust every intricacy of it to serve some purpose, some reason I may or may not understand with my current level of comprehension. As for my hair, aside from washing it regularly, and combing and tying it up in the morning, and combing and braiding it down at night, I leave it alone. No one has yet given me a good scientific reason for cutting it. Until they do, my hair stays.

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