

# The Sikh Khalsa

The information on this handout provides further insight into the nature of the Sikh Khalsa.

## The Five Ks

The Five Ks are physical symbols of membership in the Khalsa. Each one signifies a particular aspect of Sikh identity.

1. **Kes.** The long, uncut hair of a Khalsa member symbolizes spirituality and reminds the member that she or he should always follow the example of the ten Gurus.
2. **Kangha.** The comb symbolizes hygiene and discipline. Unlike many ascetics who characteristically neglect their matted hair, Sikhs are expected to wash and comb their hair regularly.
3. **Kara.** The steel bracelet (or wrist guard) reminds the Khalsa member to act with restraint and to remember God always.
4. **Kirpan.** The sword or knife symbolizes the Sikh commitment to the struggle against injustice. It is worn solely as a religious symbol, never as a weapon.
5. **Kachh.** The pair of shorts symbolizes chastity and self-control.

## The Khalsa Code of Conduct

Members of the Khalsa follow a specific code of conduct. Here is a summary of some of the main requirements:

- Sikhs worship only one God—no gods, goddesses, idols, or statues are to be used in worship, and no human being is to be worshipped.
- The Adi Granth is the only religious book in which a Sikh may believe. Other religious books can be studied only for knowledge and comparison.
- Sikhs do not believe in the caste system or the status of untouchability, nor do they believe in magic, omens, astrology, and many other widely known superstitions and religious practices.
- Members of the Khalsa maintain their distinctness by the Five Ks, but they are to avoid hurting the feelings of others who believe in different religions.
- Sikhs are to pray before beginning any work.
- Sikhs must learn the language Punjabi and teach it to their children.
- Sikhs are forbidden to use drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Men and women of the Khalsa are not to pierce their ears or noses. Women do not wear veils.
- Sikhs must give to the poor with the attitude that all they give goes to the Guru.
- Sikhs are to live by the earnings of their honest labor.
- Sikhs must not gamble or steal.
- Members of the Khalsa should dress simply and modestly.
- When one member of the Khalsa meets another, the two are to use this greeting: *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh*, which means, “The Khalsa belongs to God; victory belongs to God.”

