

Kirpaan

Kirpan or the sword is the emblem of courage and self-defence. It symbolises dignity and self-reliance, the capacity and readiness to always defend the weak and the oppressed. It helps sustain one's martial spirit and the determination to sacrifice oneself in order



to defend truth, oppression and Sikh moral values. It is worn purely as a religious symbol and not as a weapon. When all other means of self protection fail, the Kirpan can be used to protect yourself or others against the enemy.

The word Kirpan itself means "mercy, grace, or magnanimity". It represents spiritual power and is never to be used as a weapon. By wearing it on one's person, it is to remind the wearer to always stand up against injustice. Keeping it close to one's body also reminds the wearer that he/she is mortal and should make the most of his/her life by helping others and defending justice.

The Five K's, along with the turban, constitute the Khalsa uniform, which distinguishes a Sikh from any other person in the world, and is essential for preserving the life of the community and fostering the Khalsa brotherhood.

The Five K's are not supposed to foster exclusiveness or superiority. They are meant to keep the Sikhs united in the pursuit of the aims and ideals of the Gurus. They enable them to keep their vows made at the time of baptism. The Sikhs have been known to face torture and death rather than cut their hair or remove any of the sacred symbols.

The Khalsa cannot be anonymous. His religion is known to all. He stands out among people, and any unseemly behaviour or action on his part would be noted as unbecoming of a follower of the Gurus. People would easily blame him if he deviated from the disciplinary code of Guru Gobind Singh.



Irish Sikh Council

PO Box 9828, Dublin 2
Republic of Ireland

Phone1: + 353 (0) 87 260 5410

Phone1: + 353 (0) 85 729 4425

E-mail: info@irishsikhcouncil.com

Website: www.irishsikhcouncil.com

5 K's in Sikhism



Articles of
Faith,
Spirituality
Strength &
Discipline

Kakaars - 5 K's

The five articles of faith prescribed by the 10th master of Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh are commonly known as Panj Kakars or the 'Five Ks' because they start with letter K representing Kakka in the Punjabi language.

Kesh or unshorn hair, regarded as a symbol of saintliness & spirituality. 1st master, Guru Nanak Dev Ji started the practice of keeping the hair unshorn. The keeping of hair in its natural state is regarded as living in harmony with the will of God. Hair is an integral part of the human body created by God and Sikhism calls for its preservation. The shaving or cutting of hair is one of the four taboos or Kurehats.



Long hair has long been a common element of many spiritual prophets of various religions such as Jesus, Moses and Buddha.

The unshorn hair is to be covered at all times by the dastar (turban) as a sign of respect for God, and also as a sign of acceptance of the belief in the equality of

men and women. Sikhism preaches that the only reason one should cover one's head is out of respect for God. Since men and women are equal, both men and women must cover their heads, and since God is everywhere, they must do so at all times. The turban also serves as an outward form of recognition of Sikh men and women.

Kangha or the comb is necessary to keep the hair clean and tidy. A Sikh must comb his hair twice a day and tie his turban neatly. A symbol of hygiene and discipline as opposed to the matted unkept hair of ascetics. A Khalsa is expected to regularly wash and comb their hair as a matter of self discipline.

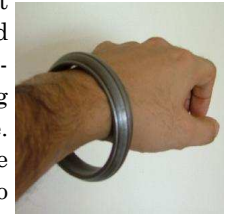


According to scientific research keeping a wooden kangha in hair reduces the level of static energy building up. The kangha is placed on the head, the highest point of the body and thus becomes supreme. In the same way the Khalsa is to become supreme by removing ego and being humble.

Just as the kangha removes broken hairs and cleans the hair physically, it is also spiritually questioning the individual as to how many good and bad deeds have been committed during the day. Just as clean hair is attached to head so are the good deeds. Similarly, as broken hairs are removed by kangha, the vices should be removed in the same way.

Kara or the steel bracelet symbolises restraint from evil deeds. It is worn on the right wrist and re-

minds the Sikh of the vows taken by him, that is, he is a servant of the Guru and should not do anything which may bring shame or disgrace. When he looks at the Kara, he is made to think twice before doing anything evil with his hands.



The circular design of the kara signifies the oneness and eternity of God and "the symbol of perfection, a reminder of the wearer to be mindful of his role of spiritual aspirant and useful citizen. By wearing it on the wrist, it binds the wearer to the will of God, and reminds the wearer to never extend one's hand for the performance of evil. The Kara must be of Sarab Loh (pure iron). According to scientific research, the Kara adds to the iron levels in the body by rubbing on the skin.

Kachhera or the soldiers shorts must

be worn at all times. It reminds the Sikh of the need for self-restraint over passions and desires. Apart from its moral significance, it ensures briskness during action and freedom of movement at all times.

