

SIKHS AND SCOUTS



Sikh Scouts taking a break on a backpacking trip in the Pine Barrens, New Jersey, October 2010



Scouts completing a 57-mile hike on the Batona Trail in New Jersey, April 2013



Sikh Scouts at the Klondike derby in Pine Hill, New Jersey, January 2011



American Sikh Scouts welcoming U.S. troops on Thanksgiving Day in southern New Jersey

Nirbhau



Nirvair



Gyan Kharg



Khalsa



Sewadar



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Sikhs and Scouts

Americans of the Sikh faith have always gone the extra mile to participate in activities that are patriotic and they consciously give back to the homeland.

Sikh Morality: The Three Golden Rules

“Greater than truth is truthful living.”

—Guru Granth Sahib, page 62

Everything is beneath truth; however, there is one thing that is higher—truthful living. Truthful living results in actions that emanate from one’s truthful inner self. In other words, merely talking about truth is not enough. Rather, one must develop the habit of doing truthful actions. These ideals are similar to those espoused by the Scout Oath.

Scout Oath

*On my honor I will do my best to do my duty
to God and my country and to obey the
Scout Law; to help other people at all times;
to keep myself physically strong, mentally
awake, and morally straight.*

According to Sikh teachings, for the development of one’s moral and truthful life, mechanical ritualistic practices of any kind are of no consequence. For example, one may think that one is already truthful within because one practices a bundle of rituals. Or one may think that visiting “holy” places, bathing in “holy” water, performing some religious rituals, or reciting “holy” words or prayers develops truthfulness. However, Sikh theology teaches that one must work to become truthful from within. It teaches that outward displays of ritualistic practices will not develop a truthful, moral lifestyle.

Rather than ritualistic practices, the Sikh way of life advocates the following golden rules:

1. **Kirat karo:** Earn your living through completely honest means.
2. **Wand chhako:** Selflessly share your earnings with others by serving humanity through completely selfless service.
3. **Naam japo:** Focus and continuously stay focused upon godly virtues (like truth, honesty, morality, integrity, etc.) in order to develop consciousness about the presence of those virtues within oneself.



An American Sikh Scout receiving his Arrow of Light Award, November 2011

Similarly, to become a reverent Scout, one needs to develop one’s inner self by staying focused upon the divine virtues of the Scout Law.

Scout Law

*A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly,
courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty,
brave, clean, and reverent.*



American Sikh Scouts receiving the first Sikh religious awards approved by the BSA, July 2014

Concept of God in the Sikh Faith

“There is ONE God.
The Supreme Truth, the Creator,
Omnipresent, without fear or enmity,
a Timeless Reality, beyond birth or death,
self-existent; (And is) Known
by the Guru’s Grace.”

—GGS, page1

The Sikh way of life started in Punjab, Southeast Asia, in 1469 with the birth of its founder and spiritual master, Guru Nanak Sahib. Guru Nanak advocated a simple and honest lifestyle that is filled with a strong sense of truthfulness, morality, trustworthiness, humility, dignity, liberty, equality, oneness of the entire human family, and justice for all.

Guru Nanak was followed by nine successors. The 10th guru was Guru Gobind Singh, who in 1708, canonized the sacred Sikh scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib (GGS)*, which would serve as the eternal guru, or enlightener, for the Sikhs.

The Sikh faith’s beliefs are modern, scientific, and devoid of any dogmatic practices. Sikhism is a purely monotheistic faith. Thus, with its belief in one God only and none else, it does not recognize anything or anybody else as an equal to God.

Sikh Uniform and the Sikh Turban

The Sikh uniform calls for keeping the human body intact, including uncut hair, which is to be kept neat and clean. In order to maintain this identity, Sikh men are mandated to wear turbans. Sikh women, however, can wear either a turban or a traditional head covering called a *chunni*.

The unique Sikh uniform is considered a gift from the guru. This helps one to create a personal relationship with the guru and thus allows one’s mind to become receptive to the guru’s teachings. It assists in disciplining the mind to free itself from inferior forms of behavior and achieve a sense of equality of all. Additionally, it makes Sikhs easily recognizable as custodians of the faith. It serves as a reminder to all others that a Sikh will uphold the values of freedom, equality, justice, unity of mankind, and truthfulness.

Like a police officer’s, soldier’s, or Scout’s uniform, the Sikh turban functions as a Sikh uniform. It serves as a constant reminder to each Sikh to always be ready to help others.

The Sikh gurus ask all Sikhs to make a public pledge and a personal commitment to follow the Sikh way of life as described above. Doing so requires that Sikhs keep their body intact including uncut hair with a turban, which is the distinguishing mark of identity for Sikhs.