

# History



# Vaisakhi

PRONOUNCED : VE-SA-KEY

Usually celebrated on the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> of April every year which is also regarded as the start of the farming year.

Vaisakhi is a happy time in the Punjab as this is where farmers harvest their crops and reap the benefits a year of hard work.



Vaisakhi 1699 was a very special day for the Sikhs because it is on this day that the Khalsa was created. The Khalsa is the army of saint-soldiers that were created to bring peace, happiness and to protect the downtrodden.



In 1699, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh called for all Sikhs to gather on Vaisakhi day at Anandpur in Punjab.

The country was under the tyrannical rule of the Mughal Empire. The Guru created a new saint-soldier army to protect the downtrodden and uproot evil



The Guru asked for 5 Sikhs to sacrifice their lives. Those five were initiated through the "Amrit" ceremony and this formed the foundation of the new saint soldier army.

The army was named the "Khalsa" or the "Pure Ones". They were given a new identity with sovereign surnames of "Singh" for men and "Kaur" for women. They were also given the five K's as uniform

The tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh tested the Sikhs to see if they would live up to the ideals of the Sikh faith by sacrificing everything. Five Sikhs passed the test and their names also had very special meanings. Daya (compassion), Himmat (effort), Dharam (righteousness), Mokham (determined and strong) and Sahib (Mastery and Leadership).

The Guru initiated the Sikhs with a new ceremony and then asked the 5 Sikhs to initiate Him into the Khalsa too. This is an unparalleled act from the leader of a faith and it further instilled the fortitude required by the Sikhs to uproot the tyranny and evil that was occurring during this period.

Sikhs do not follow traditional Indian rituals such as bathing at sacred rivers, praying to deities or in certain directions, fasting etc. They believe in One God and the Sikh Scripture called Guru Granth Sahib Jee is the 11<sup>th</sup> and eternal Guru who will be their guide for the future.

## THE AMRIT CEREMONY



- Amrit is prepared by 5 Sikhs
- An iron bowl and a double edged sword are used
- Water and sugar are added to the bowl
- 5 Prayers are read to prepare the Amrit
- Those being initiated drink 5 handfuls
- It is then sprinkled into the eyes five times
- Then it is sprinkled into the hair five times
- Sikhs are then told to live the life of a saint-soldier by praying, earning honestly, doing good deeds and standing up for the downtrodden.

## Celebrations



Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi by going to the Gurdwara and performing selfless service



The Nishan Sahib (flag) outside the Gurdwara represents freedom, justice and food and support for the needy. The community usually cleans it and replaces the cloth on Vaisakhi.



They will sing praises of God in the form of "Keertan" and will listen to discourses of historical events relating to Vaisakhi. Processions in streets also take place called "Nagar Keertans".



All food offered in the Gurdwara is free for all and there are special efforts made to cater for the thousands of Sikhs and other communities who attend

### EMOTIONAL MEMORIES

On 13<sup>th</sup> April 1919, British troop fired on an innocent crowd in Jallianwala Bagh, that had gathered for a peaceful protest. 1000 were massacred and 1500 were injured. The day is a very sad reminder for Sikhs across the world.

The **SIKH 5 K's**

**Kes** - uncut hair covered with Turban/head covering



**Kara** - iron bangle that reminds Sikhs to do good and remember God in their actions



**Kanga** - wooden comb used twice a day to comb hair



**Kirpan** - small sword worn at all times as a reminder to stand up against oppression



**Kashera** - underwear that represents modesty and self restraint to live a pure and honest life

## SIKH Head Coverings

Men and Boys

Women and Girls



Dastaar (Turban)



Dumalla (Turban)



Patka



Rumaal



Dastaar (Turban)



Keski (Small turban)



Chunni



SHARE Charity

Sikh History and Religious Education

[www.sharecharityuk.com](http://www.sharecharityuk.com)