

History



Vaisakhi

PRONOUNCED : VE-SA-KEY

Usually celebrated on the 13th or 14th 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.



PUNJAB



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



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.

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 11th 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



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.



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



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

SIKH IDENTITY

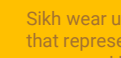


Sikhs do not cut their hair (Kesh) and they keep their hair covered with a small turban (Keski) and tie a larger one (Dastar) around it

They comb their uncut hair twice a day and always carry a comb (Kanga)



An iron bangle (Karra) reminds them to remember God and do good in their actions



Sikhs wear underwear (Kashera) that represents self control and a pure and honest life.



They carry a small sword (Kirpan) as a reminder to stand up against oppression and protect the innocent

EMOTIONAL MEMORIES

On 13th April 1919, British troops 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.



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SIKH Head Coverings

Women and Girls

Men and Boys



Dastar (Turban)



Dumalla (Turban)



Patka



Rumaal



Dastar (Turban)



Keski (Small turban)



Chunni