



Vaisakhi

Vaisakhi is the festival which celebrates the founding of the Sikh community known as the Khalsa.

On Vaisakhi day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji summoned Sikhs from all over India to the city of Anandpur Sahib. At this gathering, the Guru Ji called upon Sikhs to uphold their faith and preserve the Sikh religion. Guru Gobind Singh Ji then lifted his sword and asked that anyone prepared to give his life for his faith to come forward. There was a big silence, but the Guru Ji went on repeating his demand.

One Sikh finally came forward and followed the Guru Ji into a tent. Shortly after, the Guru Ji reappeared alone with his sword covered in blood, and asked for a second volunteer. Another Sikh stepped forward and again the Guru Ji took him into the tent, and re-appeared alone with his sword covered with blood.

This was repeated until five Sikhs had offered their heads for the Guru. Finally, the Guru Ji emerged from the tent with all five men dressed piously in blue. Guru Gobind Singh Ji called the five Sikhs the Panj Pyare, the Five Beloved Ones.

The Panj Pyare were the first members of the new Sikh community called the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave the Khalsa a unique identity with five distinctive symbols of purity and courage, known today as the Five K's or Five articles of Faith. The Guru Ji gave all Khalsa men the surname of Singh (lion) as a reminder to be courageous. Women took on the surname Kaur (princess) to emphasize dignity. With the distinct Khalsa identity, Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave all Sikhs the opportunity to live lives of courage, sacrifice, and equality. These Sikhs were to dedicate their lives to the service of others and the pursuit of justice.

