

The Guru managed to infuse a new spirit, a new strength, a new hope and a new identity into the Sikh community.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAMES OF THE 5 BELOVED ONES

The meanings of the names of the five beloved actually indicate the qualities needed for a spiritual human being:

- Daya (compassion) is the first attribute necessary for a spiritual being. Without kindness you can not have religion.
- Dharam (religion) is the son of compassion.
- Mokham (order) or discipline is necessary in our lives.
- Himat (courage) is the 4th attribute
- Sahib (master) as we practice the above four qualities we become masters.

These five qualities minus the 5 evils (lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride) provide for the complete and content human being

WHY DO SIKHS CELEBRATE VAISAKHI TODAY?

Vaisakhi is a time for rebirth and renewal. It should be a time when we try to give up some of our bad habits and try to improve ourselves, our communities and our planet.

HOW DO YOUNG SIKHS CELEBRATE VAISAKHI TODAY?

There are some Sikhs and non-Sikhs who celebrate Vaisakhi in the West but unfortunately, they use this day as an excuse to drink alcohol, smoke and gossip about the opposite sex. This is not how we

should be celebrating Vaisakhi! Our aim on Vaisakhi and every day is to keep up with improving ourselves.

THE UNIQUENESS OF SIKHISM

Sikhism embraces all people regardless of caste, culture, race, religion or other divide. It stresses the oneness of God and the oneness of humanity and provide complete equality between men and women. Sikhism does not claim to be the only path to God and its holy scripture contains divine revelation from Muslim, Hindu and Sikh Prophets. Sikhism encourages people to take an active part in their communities to work towards alleviating poverty, sickness, and a lack of education etc. It is a way of life enshrining democracy, liberty, and freedom of speech and belief.

Sikh New Year

INTRODUCTION TO SIKH NEW YEAR

Vaisakhi is the festival that Sikhs all over the World celebrate on the 13th of April. It is the beginning of the Sikh New Year.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Over 300 years ago, the people of India were being subjected to torture, hate crimes, rape, slavery and forceful conversion by the ruling community. There was a lack of unity and strength amongst the common people and their hopes and aspirations had been shattered.

The Guru's Solution

To provide a solution to the above problems, the tenth Guru of the Sikh community, Guru Gobind Singh Ji called a gathering of people from all four corners of India to Anandpur Sahib in Punjab, in 1699 AD.

What did the Guru do?

The Guru stood at the front of the congregation and removed his sword from its sheath. In a fiery voice he then said, 'I need a head! Is there anyone out there who is willing to give me their head?'

The Response of the Gathering

There was a sudden silence in the entire gathering. People did not know what to think. Some people ran away. Other people thought that the Guru had gone mad. Why was the Guru trying to kill his own people?

One Brave Soul

After repeating the call for the third time, a man named Bhai Daya Ram stood up from

the crowd. He walked up to the Guru, folded his hands and bowed and said, 'You may do with me, whatever you wish because you are my Guru'.

The Gurus Sword was Stained with Blood

The Guru took Bhai Daya Ram into a tent and a thud was heard. The Guru then came out of the tent and He then asked the congregation for another head! This time a man called Bhai Dharam Chand stood up from the congregation. He was taken into the tent and the Guru emerged again with a blood dripping sword.

5 People Came Forward

The Guru repeated his call a total of 5 times and another three people came forward included Bhai Mokham Chand, Bhai Sahib Chand and Bhai Himat Rai.

The Five People Were Reborn

After the Guru took the fifth person into the tent he came out with all five people who were now dressed in royal regalia like the Guru. The Guru called them the (Panj Pyare) five beloved ones. They were the only people who passed the ultimate test of faith in God and their Guru.

The Nectar of Immortality

The next thing the Guru did was to prepare the Baptismal water called Amrit. He did this by putting water into an iron vessel. His wife added sugar crystals to the water, symbolising the qualities of sweetness, mercy and forgiveness. The Guru then stirred the water and sugar mixture with a double edged sword symbolising

the strength, power and purity of God and during this time he recited 5 Prayers (5 Banis).

The Guru Became the Disciple

The Guru then gave each of the five beloved ones Amrit to drink and he sprinkled Amrit on their head and eyes and told them to say, 'Vahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh', which means, 'In those people in whose heart there is Love for God, those people belong to God and so do their victories'. The Guru then gave them the surname Singh meaning Lion and he gave women the surname Kaur meaning Princess. He then begged for Amrit from the five beloved ones. This was the first time in history that a Prophet had become a disciple and the disciples had become the Prophet.

The Price of Amrit

The five beloved ones listened to the Guru's request for Amrit and then asked, 'We had to give our heads before you gave us Amrit. What do you give?'

The Guru replied, 'Everything I own I will give to you including my family, my property and my soul'. The Guru was then baptised into the Sikh faith and renamed Gobind Singh from Gobind Rai. And so the Sikh community as we know it today was born.

WHAT IS THE TRUE MEANING OF VAISAKHI?

The ultimate test on Vaisakhi taught people to be courageous, fearless and have an unwavering commitment to God and Guru.