

Bringing Light and Hope: The Celebration of Bandi Chhor Divas

Every year, Sikhs celebrate Bandi Chhor Divas – but why? This article seeks to inform and explore the meaning of Bandi Chhor Divas.

Bandi Chhor Divas means the ‘Day of Liberation’. It is a day dedicated to the remembrance and celebration of the release of Guru Hargobind Sahib (the sixth Guru in the Sikh faith) from imprisonment, along with 52 Hindu Princes.

Guru Hargobind Sahib was imprisoned by the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, at Gwalior Fort due to the Emperor’s growing dislike of the Guru’s increasing popularity, which resulted from the revelation of the Sri Akal Takht Sahib (the supreme institute of Sikh sovereignty).

Jahangir decided to release only Guru Hargobind Sahib, leaving the 52 Hindu Princes in prison. The Guru disagreed and insisted that he and the 52 Hindu Princes be released together. The Emperor agreed but only if all of the Hindu Princes held onto the Guru’s robe during their long journey back home.



To the surprise of all, Guru Hargobind Sahib successfully wove a robe, with 52 tassels and led all 52 Hindu Princes to their freedom.

When Guru Hargobind Sahib returned to Amritsar, a wonderful celebration took place at Sri Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple), which was illuminated with Divas (oil lamps).

Therefore, Sikhs remember Bandi Chhor Divas as the day when light overcame darkness and when justice prevailed.

Bandi Chhor Divas teaches the importance of upholding Sikh values (selflessness, justice, and compassion) whilst stressing the importance of freedom and how despite our differences, we can all contribute to ending another’s suffering.

Practical ways we can incorporate teachings from Bandi Chhor Divas in our daily life:

1. Standing up for justice and helping others

Guru’s example: Guru Hargobind Sahib helped the 52 Princes be freed from prison.

Our example: Speak out for those who are oppressed, advocate for fairness, or help others overcome challenges.

2. Selflessness and Compassion

Guru’s example: Guru Hargobind Sahib refused to accept his own freedom without the other 52 Princes being freed. The Guru put his freedom at risk for the benefit of others.

Our example: Look for ways to serve our communities by doing Seva (selfless service).

3. Showing resilience in challenging situations

Guru's example: Guru Hargobind Sahib was resilient throughout his imprisonment, taking the challenge as an opportunity to help others, despite his own bleak situation.

Our example: Remain strong and positive in the face of challenges. When faced with adversity, instead of feeling disheartened, be encouraged to find ways to learn and grow and help others to do so.

4. Emphasising unity and inclusion

Guru's example: Guru Hargobind Sahib set aside the differences between himself and the Hindu Princes. Instead, the Guru focused on the fact that no matter one's background, everyone should be treated the same.

Our example: Be open-minded and respectful towards people of all religions, races, and backgrounds. In a multicultural world, embracing unity and inclusion helps harmonious communities.

5. Living a life of integrity

Guru's example: Guru Hargobind Sahib demonstrated integrity by negotiating the release of the 52 Princes and sticking to his principles of equality, freedom, and justice.

Our example: Live life with honesty and integrity, be truthful in your actions, fulfil your promises, and stand by your values even in the face of prejudice.

On behalf of the Sikhs in Law Association, we would like to wish everyone a Happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas!



(Above: A picture taken from last year's Sikhs in Law Association's Bandi Chhor Divas celebration)

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