

### Key concepts

- For Sikhs, Diwali is particularly important because it celebrates the release from prison of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other princes with him, in 1619.
- The festival of Diwali commemorates an important event in Sikh history when Sikh heroism and willingness to risk life to save others including those from a different faith were evident. Self-sacrifice is an important Sikh virtue. The emperor Jahangir had imprisoned Hargobind. The emperor was asked to release him which he agreed to do but Hargobind insisted that 52 Hindu princes were also released. Emperor agreed but said only those who could hold onto his coat tails. Hargobind had a cloak made with string so each prince able to hold on to his coat tails and he enabled them all to escape.
- Diwali for Sikhs is a celebration of freedom. Freedom from oppression in particular. It is sometimes called Bandhi Chhor Diwas - A Celebration of Freedom!
- The celebration reminds Sikhs of the struggle between good and evil and how good always overcomes evil, light overcoming darkness. Importance of valour and compassion for others. Expression of Sikh values of equality and readiness to be a martyr for faith and to fight persecution.

### Key quotes

'Lamps are lighted in the night of Diwali festival;  
Stars of different variety appear in the sky;  
In the gardens the flowers are there which are selectively plucked;  
The pilgrims going to pilgrimage centres are also seen.  
The imaginary habitats have been seen coming into being and vanishing.  
All these are momentary, but the gurmukhs with the help of the Word  
nourish the gift of the pleasure fruit.' (Bhai Gurdas's Var 19 Pauree 6.)  
'(When) the lamp is lit, darkness is dispelled...  
... Where there is light of knowledge, ignorance is dispelled.'  
(Guru Granth Sahib Ang.791)  
"Diwali", as the Bandi Chhor Divas has great significance for the Sikh theo-  
political (miri-piri) goals. It reminds the Sikhs of their duty to support the  
human struggle for freedom from poverty and oppression.' (Gurmukh  
Singh OBE)

### Key words

Diwali	freedom	<i>Jahangir</i>	Khalsa	light
Martyr	spiritual	virtues	good	evil
Bandi Chhor Diwas	valour	compassion	persecution	faith
Guru Hargobind				

- It reminds Sikhs of their spiritual beliefs as expressed in the symbolism of the festival. It is an expression of the duality within Sikhism of the importance of spiritual and temporal virtues. It also helps Sikhs to focus on bravery and courage in the face of persecution. It reminds Sikhs of their duty to protect their religion and beliefs.

- Importance of unity within the Sikh community is celebrated during Diwali. The unity of the Sikh community has been and is essential to its survival as expressed in the Khalsa.
- Diwali expresses that wealth and prosperity, the victory of good over evil, the dispelling of darkness through light, all come through the one and only one path ... the path of worship of One God, in hard and honest work, and through the service of humanity.

### Issues for analysis and evaluation

#### Key arguments/debates

Some believe that celebrating historical events has no meaning today. Others would argue that the past shapes the present. Some would argue that it depends on what is taken from the past.

#### Key questions

Are festivals important in Sikhism?  
Do festivals show commitment to a religion?  
Is celebrating festivals the best way to show Sikh identity?

