

Key concepts

- Vaisakhi has been the traditional Sikh New Year. The festival has been traditionally observed in the Punjab region.
- It is a celebration of the role and contributions of Guru Gobind Singh who many believe gave Sikhism its unique identity. He founded the Khalsa at the Vaisakhi assembly at Anandpur. It can be argued that this was the most important event in the history of Sikhism, the event which safeguarded the religion for the future. It is a festival that celebrates honour and courage to defend the faith.
- Vaisakhi commemorates the inauguration of the Khalsa in the late 17th century. The inaugural Khalsa was formed in order to take a stand against the religious oppression Sikhs were facing at the time. The inauguration of the Khalsa signifies freedom of belief, the concept of warriors with spiritual dispositions and the rejection of artificial distinctions based upon tribes, ethnicity and race.

- Vaisakhi is a celebration of Sikhism – a reminder of the unique teachings of the faith and the duty of Sikhs to protect them. It also focuses on the importance of self-sacrifice for the good of others. It also focuses on the role of the Panj Pyare in the events at Baisakhi – their complete commitment to their beliefs. They act as role models for Sikh - an unwavering commitment to faith.

- Vaisakhi unites the Sikh community - as its celebrated by Sikhs all over the world. It is therefore a worldwide expression of Sikh spirituality.

- The traditional colours of Vaisakhi are yellow and orange. This is because they represent the “spirit of rebirth and sacrifice of the Panj Pyare”. The colours are also symbolic of “joy and celebration”, which is why they’re worn by those observing the festival. In both its cultural and religious context, Vaisakhi is fundamentally about community, progress, and celebration.



Key quotes

‘By Surat-Shabad do thou cross the ocean of phenomena By uttering His Nam, O Nanak’ (Guru Granth Sahib p 938)
 ‘Khalsa is my form. In the Khalsa do I reside’ (Guru Gobind Singh)
 ‘By meeting Satguru shalt thou go beyond trikuti into the fourth realm And find salvation’ (p 33 GGS)
 ‘In the three guna (qualities). Sahj cannot be attained. For in delusion are the three gunas. In the fourth realm is sahaj. And the devotee of the Guru alone gets it.’ (Guru Granth Sahib p 68)
 ‘Where there are Panj Pyare, there am I. When the Five meet, they are the holiest of the holy.’ (Guru Gobind Singh)

Key words

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| Vaisakhi | Khalsa | <i>Punjab</i> | Baisakhi | community |
| Anandpur | Panj Pyare | identity | honour | courage |
| oppression | spiritual | warriors | role-model | sacrifice |
| Guru Gobind Singh | | | | |

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key arguments/debates

Some would argue that Vaisakhi is more of a community occasion than a religious event. Others would argue that the reason for celebration is completely spiritual. Some would argue that the festival has both spiritual and communal value.

Key questions

- Can Vaisakhi be regarded as the most important Sikh festival?
- Is Vaisakhi more significant than Diwali?
- Is celebrating Vaisakhi a necessary expression of Sikh identity?