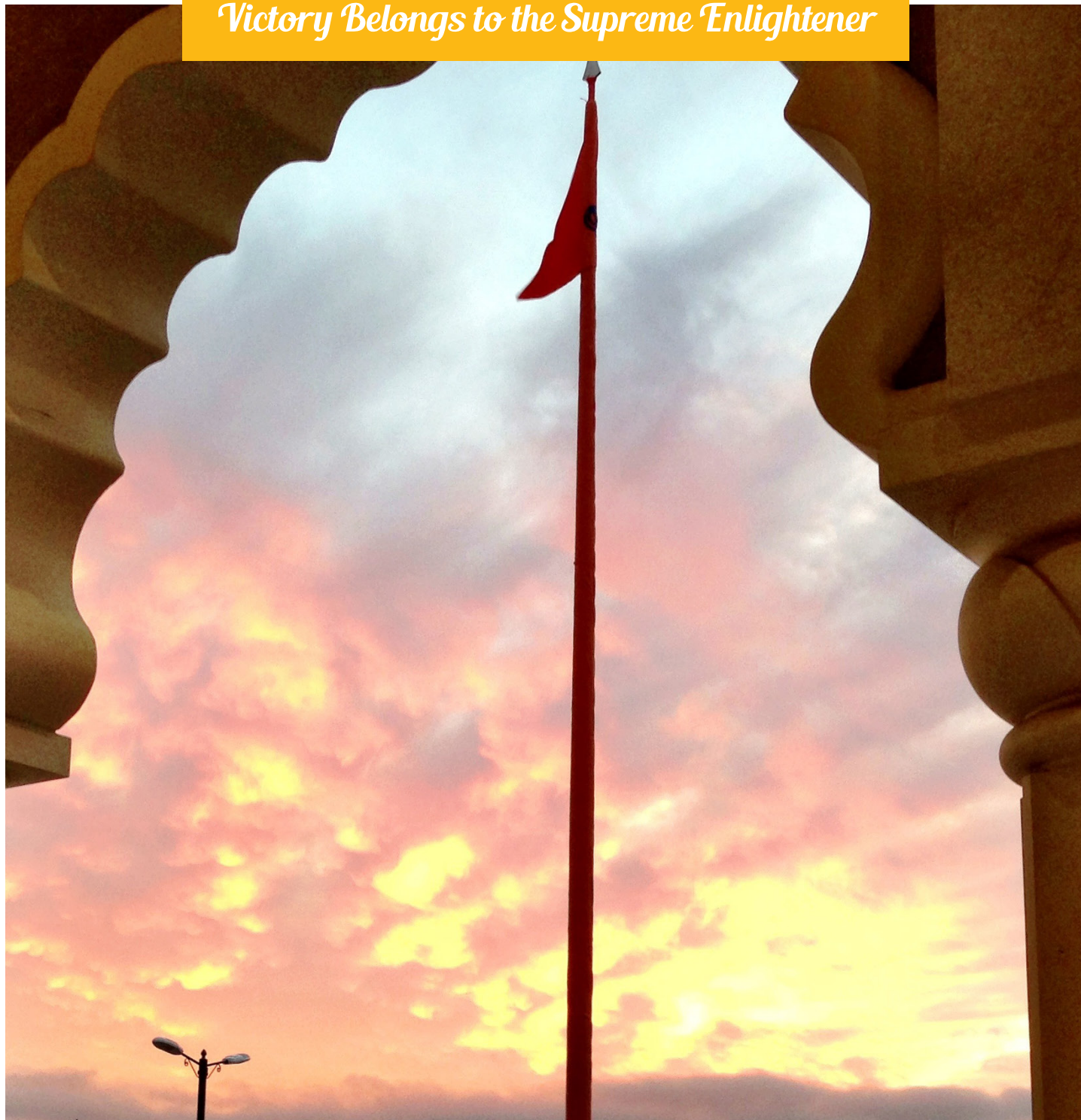
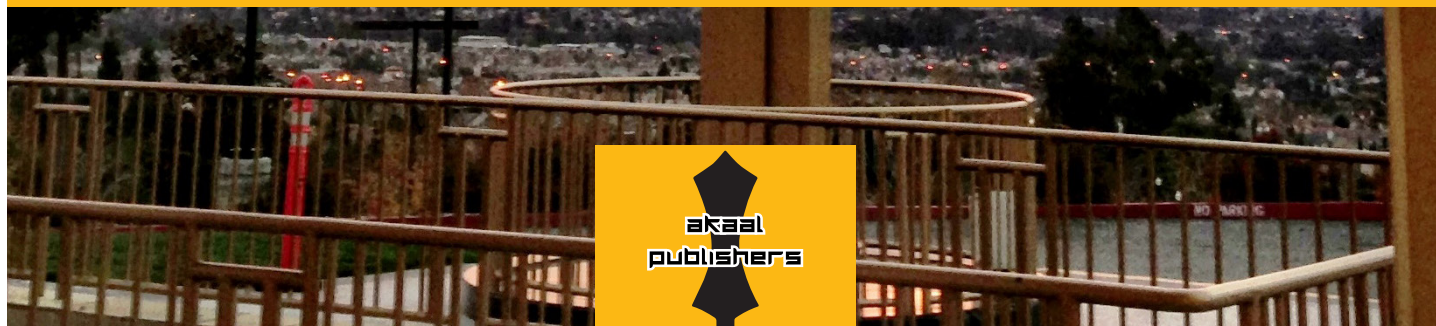


Victory Belongs to the Supreme Enlightener



Vaisakhi



What is Vaisakhi?

Vaisakhi has traditionally been a harvest festival in the state of Panjab, in modern day India. It is marked by the first day of the month of Vaisakh, usually falling on 13th or 14th April. Today, Vaisakhi is the highlight of the Sikh year, inviting Sikhs to celebrate their faith and identity.

The Sikh Gurus began their mission of teaching spiritual enlightenment at the start of the 15th century with their first Guru, Guru Nanak (1469 – 1539). The subsequent nine Gurus contributed to making Vaisakhi an annual time of gathering for the Sikhs. Each year, at Vaisakhi, the Gurus would introduce new elements to the Sikh teachings. On Vaisakhi of 1699, the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), founded the nation of the Khalsa (the Pure) at the city of Anandpur (City of Bliss).

At this time, the Sikh faith was under vicious attack for its revolutionary nature. The rise of the faith promoted many new freedoms, such as the outlawing (by the Sikh Gurus) of female infanticide, the affordance of equal rights for women and the advancement of an egalitarian society. The fifth and ninth Sikh Gurus were martyred whilst peacefully undergoing torture from the rulers of the time. In reaction to these martyrdoms, the Sikhs were militarised by the sixth and tenth Gurus, by varying degrees, to ensure the survival of the Sikh faith.

The Vaisakhi of 1699 was to be the most revolutionary and, with this in mind, appropriate foundations had to be laid. Guru Gobind Singh spent the ten years (1689 – 1699) prior to this historic day fortifying Anandpur, building five forts around the sacred city.



Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib - birthplace of the Khalsa, the fort of unshorn hair (kes)

The Five Forts of Anandpur

The five forts of Anandpur were strategically placed and built around the township. Each fort had a separate function.



Anandgarh:
The Fort of Bliss, the strongest and largest fort in Anandpur

Lohgarh:
The Fort of Iron,
an arms factory



Holgarh:
The Fort of
War Games
(Holla Mohalla)

Taragarh:
The Fort of Stars, a watch
point which housed many
saintly Sikhs



Fatehgarh:
The Fort of Victory, named
after the youngest son of
Guru Gobind Singh

The princely states of the areas adjoining Anandpur Sahib disliked the fact that all castes were initiated into the Sikh faith on common grounds and lived according to an egalitarian order. The Mughal Empire did not like the formation of a revolutionary nation that not only lived by saintly virtues, but also challenged their tyranny through both peaceful and military means. The five forts came into full use when Anandpur Sahib was attacked by the combined forces of the jealous Mughals and surrounding princely states.

Anandpur Sahib

(Sahib means master and is used as a suffix for respect)

The plush hilly region creates an atmosphere of tranquility and peace. The shimmering and shiny waters of the river Sutlej border the township. Anandpur Sahib was the first Sikh sovereign state. It was ruled by the Gurus and was self-sufficient through farming and commerce, much like the nearby independent states of the area. Living here, the Sikhs practiced their faith unperturbed. They trained in the use of arms and set up a tradition of war games called Holla Mohalla.

The culmination of the message of the Sikh Gurus, and the ten years that Guru Gobind Singh spent fortifying Anandpur Sahib, was the creation of the Khalsa. The Khalsa was destined to become a thorn in the Mughal Empire's tyrannical rule and a challenge to the hegemony of the Hill Kings of the surrounding areas. Being an egalitarian order, the Khalsa abolished differences of caste and creed. This meant that the poor could be educated, bear arms and become rulers in their own right. Such social advances were seen as threats to the existing political structures of the region.



Vaisakhi 1699

The Panj Pyare, through their pious first names, epitomised the five virtues that all Sikhs should aim to cultivate.

DAYA, DHARAM, HIMMAT, MOKHAM, SAHIB

(Compassion)

(Righteousness)

(Courage)

(Steadfast)

(Mastery)



These five names are the foundations of faith for Sikhs. They are presented in order of spiritual progress and were created as part of the Divine Order of the Khalsa. Whilst initiating these five Sikhs, five prayers were recited over water and glucose crystals, stirred by a Khanda (double-edged sword) in an iron vessel.

Five Prayers

The five prayers that were recited during the initiation ceremony each have their own significance and spiritual understanding to share.

- **Japji Sahib:** imparts divine wisdom and is a summary of all scriptures
- **Jaap Sahib:** praises and describes the innumerable aspects of God
- **TvaParsad Svaye:** teaches detachment and deters one from false practices
- **Benti Choupaiee:** prayer for protection
- **Anand Sahib:** teaches how to attain bliss



Thus, the water was transformed into the immortal holy nectar known as Amrit. The original location of this divine ceremony is today called Kesgarh Sahib, the Fort of Kes (unshorn hair). The Panj Pyare were then initiated by drinking the Amrit from the same iron bowl, to symbolise their equality.

They were instructed to wear five articles of faith at all times (The 5 Ks), which would be constant reminders of virtue and high moral living. Sikhs believe that five vices permeate our lives: lust, anger, attachment, greed and ego.

Daily Prayers

The Sikh daily prayers consist of the aforementioned five prayers, which are recited in the morning. An additional prayer, Rehras Sahib (a summary of teachings for daily living), is recited in the evening, and a final prayer, Kirtan Sohila (a song of praise, asking for protection here and hereafter) is recited at bedtime.

Sikhs were to make their breath a rosary and meditate on the glorious enlightener God at all times, as part of their saintly living. The above seven prayers are the minimum to be recited daily, and Sikhs are taught to meditate and remember God 24/7. Kirtan (devotional singing through music) is integral to faith and prayer, making up a large part of daily services in Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship).

The Five Ks

The abovementioned vices (lust, anger, greed, attachment, ego) can be repelled by wearing five physical reminders, which are to be worn at all times by practising Sikhs.

Kes (unshorn hair):

Teaching one to be humble and submit to God at all times, to efface ego, complimented with a turban

Kanga (wooden comb):

Teaching one to remain detached from the world and break the bonds of worldly attachment, the hair that falls during the combing process symbolises the breaking of attachment

Kirpan (sword of mercy – usually a small dagger):

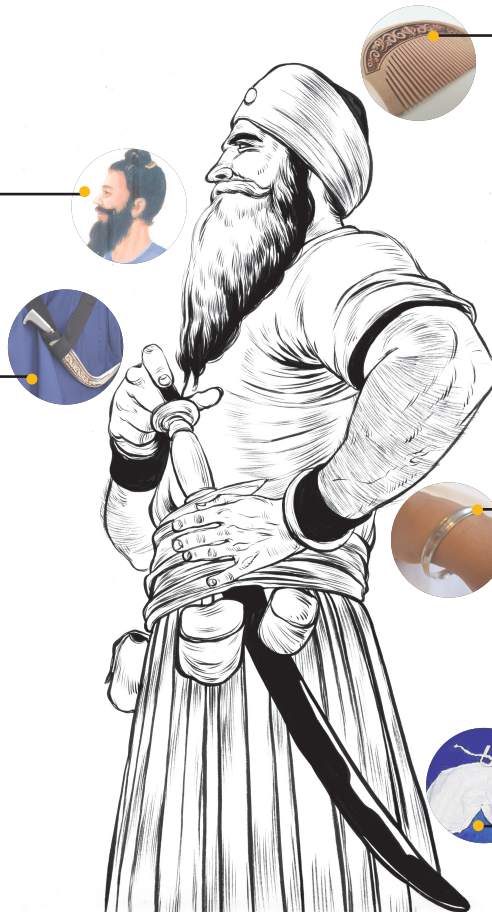
As part of the Sikh martial tradition, the Kirpan is used to bless food and, when all peaceful means have been exhausted, it can be used to uphold righteousness; it acts as a reminder to control one's anger and to only draw arms in self-defence or to protect the weak and needy

Kara (iron bangle worn on the wrist):

Reminding one of their moral obligation when using their hands and to efface greed; it is the handcuff from the Guru reminding a Sikh of their love and respect for their Guru

Kashera (long breeches – underwear):

Reminding one of their moral obligations and to control their lust



Moral Living

Anyone who is a practicing Sikh also lives by the Sikh Code of Conduct and will NOT commit any of these major sins which lead to apostasy:

- Deface their body in any way – this means no removal of any hair by any means, piercing or tattooing
- Enter sexual relations outside wedlock
- Consume intoxicants
- Eat meat, fish or eggs (or consume Halal meat in a survival situation)

Identity

- All Sikhs accept Guru Granth Sahib as the living embodiment of the ten physical Gurus. Guru Granth Sahib is the eternal Guru of the Sikhs, and wherever Panj Pyare congregate (commonly in initiation ceremonies), they are the physical embodiment of the Guru. Guru Granth Sahib is an authentic scripture, which teaches enlightenment and is anti-discriminatory in nature.
- All initiated Sikhs adopt the suffixes Singh (lion) and Kaur (princess) after their names, to show a common kinship. This eradicates caste and hereditary discrimination.
- Each initiated Sikh also takes an oath that their ancestry is that of Anandpur Sahib, which they accept as their true home.
- The father of the Khalsa is Guru Gobind Singh and the mother of the Khalsa is Mata Sahib Kaur. Therefore, all initiated Sikhs accept them as their true parents. They were declared the parents of the Khalsa to ensure that all previous links to kin and hereditary links are abolished when becoming initiated; a common kinship of the Khalsa is thus entered with common parentage.
- Initiated Sikhs wear the 5 Ks at all times and abide to the high moral code of the Khalsa – as narrated in many historical codes of conduct.

After initiating the Panj Pyare, Guru Gobind Singh himself kneeled in front of them and requested that he be initiated into the Khalsa. Thus, the prophet became the initiate and installed this practice of initiation for eternity. At this point, a nation of warrior saints, the Khalsa, was founded.

Today, Sikhs are humanitarian and saintly in their living. When peaceful means have been exhausted they fight tyranny and blaze their swords against oppressors. Even now, Anandpur Sahib gives the clear message of a sovereign Sikh nation, which is both liberal and modern.

2015 marks the **350th anniversary** since **Anandpur Sahib** was purchased and **established** by the ninth Guru, **Guru Tegh Bahadur** (1621 – 1675), in 1655.

Happy Vaisakhi!

Akaal Publishers

Akaal Publishers is a not-for-profit publishing house which aims to create timeless (Akaal) messages based upon Sikh philosophy, ethics and history. We were established in 2008 with the publication of our first book, Game of Love, which narrates the history of the Sikhs and the love imbued in the practice of their faith. Subsequently, we have published three more titles, Sikh Code of Conduct, The Great Guru Nanak Vol.1 and, in 2014, Reflections on 1984. We also write regular articles, which we share online, and are also commissioned to write specific articles for Sikh magazines and brochures.

We are active on social media, with daily updates and messages. Our website, www.akaalpublishers.com, is our portal for all information about our current projects and work streams. You can download free literature and visit our online store through the website.

In October 2014, we produced our first visual documentary about the 1984 genocide of the Sikhs, titled Genocide 1984. It can be viewed on our Youtube channel and our Facebook and Twitter pages.

For Vaisakhi 2015, in partnership with Kirpa Records and Kaurageous, we have released a music CD dedicated to the mother of the Khalsa, Dhan Mata Sahib Kaur Jee. The CD contains a 16 page booklet about the jeevan (life) of Mata Jee. The CD is titled Dhan Dhan Mata Sahib Kaur Ji – ‘Great is the mother of the Khalsa, Mata Sahib Kaur’. Visit www.kirparecords.com for more information.

We will bring you more exciting products in the coming years, with the grace of Guru Nanak. We thank you for your support and interest. God bless you.



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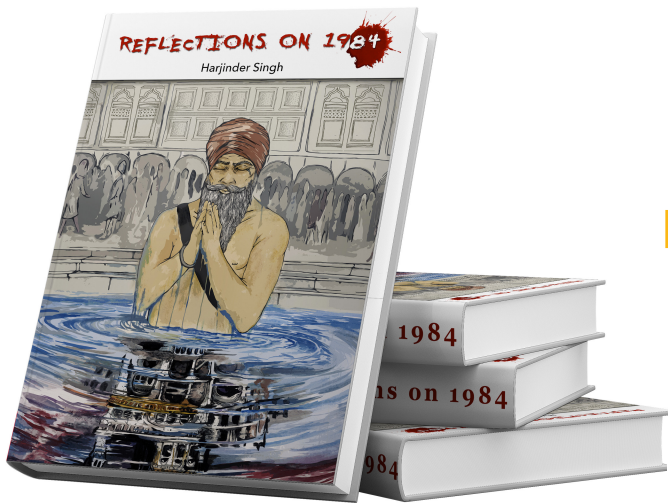
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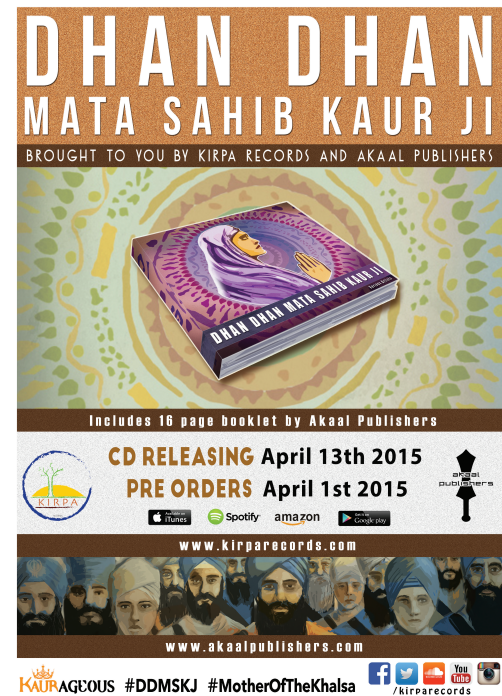
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