



Sikhism

There are numerous Sikh fairs and festivals. Some are of local importance, such as Hola Mohalla of Anandpur. The most important festivals are observed by the Sikhs wherever they are. On such occasions the whole Sikh families of a particular place gather in a Gurdwara which has been decorated and illuminated. The Guru Granth Sahib is read constantly, hymns are sung in chorus or by professional Sikh singers, prayers are said and kara prashad is distributed in the whole congregation.

Literally festivals, Gurpurbs are anniversaries associated with the lives of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikhs celebrate 10 Gurpurbs in a year. At each of these festivals, one of the ten gurus is honoured. Of these the most important are the birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and the martyrdom days of Guru Arjun and Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Baisakhi (Vaisakhi): New Year's Day in the Punjab is celebrated with joyous music and dance. It falls on April 13, though once in 36 years it occurs on April 14th. Sikhs celebrate this as a collective birthday as the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa (the Sikh brotherhood) on this day in 1699.

Sikhs visits Gurdwaras and listen to kirtans (religious songs) and discourses. After the prayer, kara prashad is shared by the congregation. Then the congregation repair to the langar, to share the community lunch served by volunteers. Processions are led by Sikhs dressed as the first baptised Sikhs, the Panj Pyaras. Mock duels and bands playing religious tunes are part of the processions.

Birth of Guru Nanak: Festival honouring the birthday of their founder, the first Guru who was born on 20th October, 1469 at Rai-Bhoi-di Talwandi in the present district of Shekhupura (Pakistan). The Birthday of Guru Nanak falls on full moon day of the month Kartik. On this day the Birthday is celebrated every year.

Death of Guru Nanak: Observance of the passing of the first Guru.

First Parkash: The Sikh scripture, the Adi Granth, is installed in the Golden Temple.

Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday: Festival honouring the birth of the founder of the Khalsa who lived from 1469-1539 C.E.

Guru Nanak's Birthday: celebration (Gurpurb) recalling the birth of the first Sikh Guru who lived from 1469-1539C.E. It is marked by sacred readings, prayers, hymns and sharing food.

Hola Mohalla: held at Anandpur Sahib, it was started by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib as a gathering of Sikhs for military exercises and mock battles on this day. The mock battles were followed by music and poetry competitions. The Nihang Singh's carry on the martial tradition with mock battles and displays of swordsmanship and horse riding.

Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev: the martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, falls in May or June, the hottest months in India. He was tortured to death under the orders of Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, at Lahore on 25 May 1606. Celebrations consist of Kirtan, Katha, lectures, Karah Parshad and Langar in the Gurdwara.