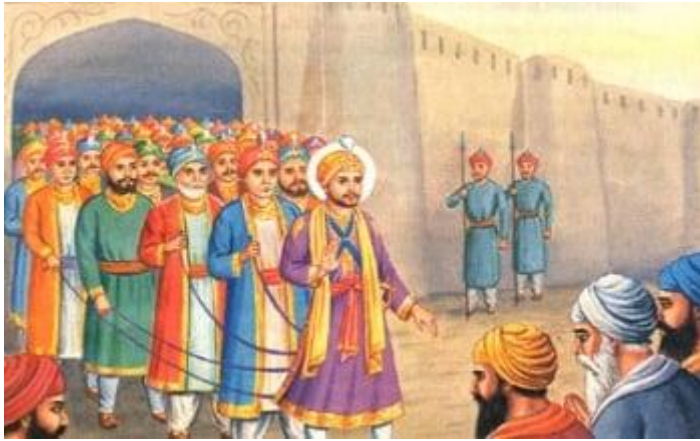


## A Sikh Festival

Bandhi Chhor Diwas means liberation of prisoners day, and it is celebrated to mark the historical release of the sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind Ji, from the Mughal prison in the early 17th century.



Legend has it that Emperor Jahangir was very ill and no doctor was able to help him recover, and his wife Empress Noor Jahan asked the Muslim holy man Mian Mir to help her husband. Mian Mir came and advised that the one who could help was in prison in the Gwalior Fort. He added that he must be released immediately and seek forgiveness. So the order was sent for Guru Hargobind Ji to be released.

Jahangir agreed and set the Guru free. However, Guru Sahib Ji refused to leave citing that there were other prisoners, 52 kings, also facing the torture of imprisonment. Jahangir said that the only prisoners that would be set free were those who could hold on to the Guru's cloak while he leaves.

Guru Sahib Ji had a special cloak made with 52 tassels. The 52 kings were able to hold on to the Guru's cloaks tassels and were all set free. Hence the name of the Gurudwara - Gurudwara Data Bandi Chhod.

The day reminds Sikhs of freedom and human rights and it is celebrated by lighting their homes with lights and candles. The tradition continues to date with Harmandir Sahib being beautifully decorated with colourful lights to mark this celebration.

Earthen lamps are lit, people go to the Gurudwara to listen to Gurbani, celebratory processions (Nagar kirtan) take place and Langar (free food) is served. It is an important Sikh celebration along with Vaisakhi, Hola Mohalla and Gurpurabs.

This year it is celebrated on 4<sup>th</sup> November as is the Hindu Festival of Diwali.