

## *Celebrating Sikhism and Diwali*

At Diwali time, Sikhs celebrate Bandi Chhor Divas. This is celebrated at the same time as Diwali and both festivals represent good overcoming bad, light over darkness and are described as the 'Festival of Light'.



This is when Sikhs remember the release from prison and return to Amritsar of the sixth Guru Hargobind in 1619. The name Bandi Chhor Divas means liberation of prisoners day.

According to tradition, Guru Hargobind was released from prison in Gwalior and reached Amritsar on Diwali. He would only agree to leave prison if 52 Hindu princes who were in prison with him could also go free. The Emperor Jahangir said that those who clung to the Guru's coat would be able to go free. This was meant to limit the number of prisoners who could be released. However, Guru Hargobind had a coat made with 52 tassels attached to it so that all of the princes could leave prison with him. The story reminds Sikhs of freedom and human rights and this is what they celebrate on Bandi Chhor Divas.

One of our students, Sukhmani and her family have been telling us all about how they celebrate during this special time. Bandi Chhor Divas is celebrated by lighting up homes with candles, prayer and visiting Gurdwaras, including a celebratory procession (Nagar Kirtan), and Langar. Sukhmani explains Langar as a community kitchen which provides food to everyone ***"no matter what their religion and background, everyone's welcome"***. This year, Sukhmani helped at the community kitchen with her mum and Grandma. Along with other family members, they enjoyed traditional food, dressed in special occasion wear and fireworks also played a big part in the celebrations. Sukhmani explained what she loves about this time of year, ***"I love how you can share with the community and dress up."***



Another celebration Sikhs have just had in November focuses around the birth of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism and 1st Guru. 2023 was the 554th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak. This is a very special day in Sikhism marked by a 3 day Gurpurab at Gurdwara.

The image below represents Guru Hargobind's coat that was made for the release of the 52 Princes.



The image below provides some further information about the birth of Guru Nanak and what his birthday means to Sikhs.



Sukhmani is really looking forward to studying Sikhism in Religion later in the year and she was very happy to speak at a recent school assembly about Diwali. We'd like to thank her for sharing so much enlightening information so eloquently.

If you have any special religious or cultural celebrations you would like to share with school, please email [admin@oswaldroad.manchester.sch.uk](mailto:admin@oswaldroad.manchester.sch.uk).