

### Bandī Chor Divas (ਬੰਦੀ ਛੋੜ ਦਿਵਸ)

Sometime between 1617 and 1619, the sixth Gurū; Gurū Hargobind, was imprisoned at Gavāliar (ਗਵਾਲਿਅਰ) Fort by the Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr (ਜਹਾਂਗੀਰ). Jahāngīr had kept him under close surveillance. Many devotees came by to see the Gurū on a daily basis but were turned away each time. This did not stop them from returning the very next day.

However, the Gurū's well-wishers such as Bhāī Jeṭha (ਜੇਠਾ), and the Muslim mystic Hazrat Miām Mir (ਹਜ਼ਰਤ ਮੀਆਂ ਮੀਰ) rallied for Gurū Hargobind to be released. Although Emperor Jahāngīr duly granted such freedom, Gurū Hargobind refused to leave the prison. This is because 52 other rulers were also being held unfairly at Gwalior Fort. In protest, the Gurū insisted on remaining a captive for as long as the other prisoners were held there. At this, the emperor conceded that however many prisoners could hold onto Gurū Hargobind's colā (ਚੋਲਾ / robe) at the emancipation would also be released. So a special colā was stitched, which had 52 strips attached to it, to be held by each prisoner.

To celebrate Gurū Hargobind's freedom, lamps were lit in Amritsar. Gurū Sāhib and this event have come to be known as Bandī Chor, which loosely translates as 'the release of the imprisoned' or 'the grand emancipator' or 'munificent liberator.' When Gurū Hargobind reached Amritsar, his Sikhs had lit lamps to welcome him. Since then this occasion is celebrated and commemorated.

There is not any significant reason for Sikhs to celebrate Divālī as this is not a Sikh holiday. However, Bandī Chor Divas falls on the same day as the Hindu festival of Divālī. This is a time of celebration for us because Gurū Jī sacrificed and rejected personal freedom in order to defend the innocent and the exploited.

**‘The brave one fights for the downtrodden’ (- Kabīr, Gurū Granth Sāhib)**