



Bandi Chhor Divas

Woman: What are you doing out here singing so early in the morning?

Sikh man: Our guru, Guru Hargobind sahib ji, is held captive in this fort. We are waiting for him to be set free.

Woman: A guru? Why would anyone hold a guru captive? What's he in there for? What did he do wrong?

Sikh man: Nothing.

Woman: Nothing? He must have done something!

Sikh man: He was sent to the fort by the emperor. He asked the guru to say prayers for him at the fort. The emperor was ill and was told that the prayers of a holy man would cure him.

Woman: But why say prayers here of all places?

Sikh man: It was a trick! When the emperor first met Guru Hargobind sahib ji, many years ago, they got on really well together. The emperor was impressed by the guru's wisdom... and one time, out hunting together, he defended the emperor from a ferocious lion.

But there were some people that didn't like it that the emperor and Guru Hargobind sahib ji had become friends.

A wealthy banker who worked for the emperor, named Chandu Shah, became jealous of their friendship.

It was Chandu Shah who suggested Guru Hargobind sahib ji should go to the fort to say prayers to make the emperor better.

The emperor agreed and asked Guru Hargobind sahib ji to go to the fort. But they locked him in, and have imprisoned him here ever since.

Woman: How long has he been imprisoned here?

Sikh man: It's been twelve long years. During that time, Sikhs have gathered here to say prayers and wait for guru ji's release.

Woman: After all he has done for the emperor, you'd think he'd be set free?

Sikh man: Oh, he's been offered freedom, but he won't leave, at least, not yet.

Woman: Won't leave? Why would you not want to leave a prison?



Sikh man: He can leave, but imprisoned with him are 52 princes. He will not leave prison unless they are freed too.

Woman: But why does he care about all the other prisoners? He can't help everyone.

Sikh man: He does care, and he can help everyone. That is what guru Hargobind sahib ji has taught us, that we can care for and help others no matter what the circumstances.

He has helped to improve conditions in the fort. And now all the prisoners and even governor pray with Guru Hargobind sahib ji every day. He will not leave until all of the prisoners there are set free, and in fact the emperor has agreed.

Woman: Really?

Sikh man: But there's a catch. The emperor has said that only those who can hold on to guru ji's cloak may be released with him.

Woman: Surely that will mean he can only leave with three or four of the princes at most?

Sikh man: Ha ha, you don't know Guru Hargobind sahib ji!

Woman: Look, they're holding on to the tassels on his coat. It's got so many!

Sikh man: Yes, 52 in fact. He has had a coat made specially with all those tassels, one for each prince, so they can all leave together.

Woman: Ha! That's so clever! What will you do now he is free?

Sikh man: Now we will celebrate Guru ji's release! Lamps will light up the night and our golden temple will shine in the darkness. And we will celebrate this day every year: *Bandhi Chhor Divas* - the Prisoner Release Day!