

Baisakhi **14th April, 2018**



Festival of Baisakhi is usually celebrated on April 13, but once in every 36 years the festival is celebrated on April 14. This year the occasion will be commemorated on April 14. It marks the advent of Baisakhi, which is **an auspicious day primarily for the Sikh community, and is also known as Vaisakhi, Khalsa Sirjana Diwas, or the birth of Khalsa.**

About Baisakhi:

- The word is derived from ‘Baisakh’, which is the second month of the Sikh calendar (Nanakshahi calendar). It signifies a new year of harvest for the community.
- The festival is primarily a thanksgiving day when farmers pay tribute to their deity for the harvest and pray for prosperity in future.
- Sikhs follow **a tradition named Aawat Pauni on Vaisakhi.** People gather to harvest wheat that grew in the winter. Drums are played and people recite Punjabi doha (couplet) to the tune while harvestin on Baisakhi day.
- Baisakhi also marks **the birth of Khalsa**, the collective body of all initiated Sikhs, also called the “Guru Panth”– the embodiment of the Guru. On March 30 in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh gathered his followers at his home in Anandpur Sahib, a city which is now home to several Gurdwaras. At this gathering, Khalsa was inaugurated.

The birth of five ‘K’s:

The five ‘K’s are the five principles of life that are to be followed by a true Khalsa. These include ‘Kesh’ or hair, which implies to leave the hair uncut to show acceptance towards the form that God intended humans to be in; ‘Kangha’ or wooden comb, as a symbol of cleanliness; the third of the marks of being a Sikh pronounced on Baisakhi day was ‘Kara’ or iron bracelet, as a mark to remind a Khalsa of self-restraint; ‘Kacchera’ or knee-length shorts, to be worn by a Khalsa for always being ready to enter battle on horseback; and ‘Kirpan’, a sword to defend oneself and the poor, the weak and the oppressed from all religions, castes and creeds.

Science behind Baisakhi:

- The festival of Baisakhi is celebrated amongst farmers as the festival of harvest. The month of April is considered as the harvesting time for the Rabi Crops, the crops which are sown during winter seasons.
- Since the photoperiod becomes larger, the short day plants start to flower and give fruits and grains, which are now ready to be harvested. Therefore, the farmers gear up in their fields and start harvesting the crops.

Facts for Prelims:

In other parts of India at this time, Bengalis celebrate Poila Boishakh (Bengali New Year), Assamese celebrate Bohag Bihu (Assamese New Year) and Puthandu (Tamil New Year) is celebrated in Tamil Nadu– as New Year festivals such as Baisakhi.

To be looked in UPSC Paper 1 Topic: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.