# The story of Bandi Chhor Divas

**"(When) the lamp is lit, darkness is dispelled…**   
**… Where there is light of knowledge, ignorance is dispelled."**   
**(Guru Granth Sahib p.791)**

***Summary for Teacher Information***

*The Sixth Guru Hargobind was freed from imprisonment in the famous fort of Gwalior by Emperor Jahangir in October 1619. The reason for the young Guru’s imprisonment was unjust. According to Sikh tradition, the Guru agreed to be freed only if the other Indian chiefs (rajahs) imprisoned with him were freed. Jahangir was under pressure from moderate but influential Muslim religious leaders like Hajrat Mian Mir, a friend of the Guru. So, he relented grudgingly and ordained, "Let those rajahs be freed who can hold on to the Guru’s coat tails and walk out of prison". He had in mind no more than four or five being freed with the Guru. However, the Guru was not to be outmanoeuvred in this way. He asked for a special coat to be made with 52 coat tails – the same number as the rajahs in prison with him! And so the rajahs were freed and the Guru became known popularly as the "Bandi Chhor" (Deliverer from prison). He arrived at Amritsar on the Divali day and the Hari Mandir (now known as the "Golden Temple") was lit with hundreds of lamps i.e., he was received in the same way as the Lord Rama and the day came to be known as the "Bandi Chhor Divas" (the day of freedom).*

***Read part 1 of the story.***

Part 1 – Imprison the Guru!

Sometimes people can be jealous of the success of other people. Sometimes we spoil things for other people just because it makes things better for us. This story is about jealousy and fear like that.

About 400 years ago there were two powerful and important men. One was called Emperor Jahangir and the other was called Guru Hargobind. They were friends. Guru Hargobind was not a ruler. He was a religious leader – a Sikh. He was a strong and wise man who led an army of Sikhs who were strong and fearless and would do anything he asked of them.

There was a third man, called Chandu. He had done wrong things. He was scared that Guru Hargobind would persuade his friend, the Emperor to punish him for the wrong things he had done. Chandu wanted to break the friendship between the Guru and the Emperor.

So, Chandu paid money to the Emperors advisers. They began to say to the Emperor that the Guru was about to attack the Emperor, take his power and become the new Emperor. Oh dear. Even though they were friends, Emperor Jahangir became worried. So worried that he had the Guru put in prison, a long, long way away for 12 years. How very unfair and unkind!

***Discuss with the children ‘injustice’. It may be a new word, but at this age they have strong views on fairness and justice!***

***Read part 2 of the story.***

Part 2 – The Guru’s life in prison.

Being in prison isn’t very nice. But in this particular prison, all those years ago, it was particularly bad. The Guru’s Sikh followers weren’t allowed to visit him. They missed him so much that they would travel to his prison and kiss the outside wall. They would bow in the direction of his prison room and go back home. But not everything was bad. The Guru was allowed a proper amount of food – by order of his one-time friend – the Emperor.

Other prisoners were not so lucky. At the same time that Guru Harobind was in prison, 52 rajas (Hindu kings or princes) were also in the prison. Their treatment was much worse. They were not given enough food, nor were they allowed to wash their clothes. They began to be sick.

Even though he himself was a prisoner, Guru Harobind did his best to improve the conditions of the other prisoners. He shared out his special food rations between them and made sure they had some clean clothes. He taught them about God. Soon the rajas became Sikhs

***Discuss with the children the Guru’s gracious response to his personal injustice and his compassion towards the other prisoners.***

***Read part 3 of the story.***

Part 3 – Let the Guru go!

The Sikhs were very unhappy that their Guru had been imprisoned unjustly. They were not the only ones. Others thought it was wrong too. A Muslim holy man spoke to the emperor about it, he said, “Guru Hargobind is a man of God. He is dear to God. It is not good to imprison such a holy man. No good can come of it. He should be released!”

The Emperor accepted this advice and sent word that the Guru was to be released.

***Discuss the power of expressing opinions. Speaking up can make a difference.***

***Read part 4 of the story.***

Now, the Guru had been a prisoner for two years and during that time the rajas had lived well. They were afraid that they would be treated badly as before. But when the guards came to set Guru Harobind free, he refused to go unless the rajas were released with him. The Emperor wanted the matter settled quickly but wasn’t willing to release 52 rajas. He came up with an idea and sent a message to the Guru, “I shall release as many of them as can come out holding either the hands or the clothing of the Guru.”

How clever he must have thought himself to be. I suppose he expected that maybe 6 or even 10 would be released.

But the Emperor was no match for the Guru. Before he would leave the prison, Guru Harobind had a special coat made. A coat with 50 long tapering tails. He put on the new coat and held out his hands. Two of the rajas took hold of his outstretched hands and the other 50, each picked up a tail or tassle from the coat. Then they all left the prison together!

***Discuss how the Guru’s solution provided fairness and justice.***

***Conclusion.***

When Guru Harobind returned home with all the rescued rajas, there was a big celebration. He became known as Bhandi Chor (Bhandi = the imprisoned ones & Chhor = released). So, Guru Harobind is the holy man who freed the prisoners. Sikhs continue to celebrate Bandi Chhorr Divas , the prisoners release day at Divali each year.

***NOTE: Divali - the Hindu celebration features in Y4 ‘Expressing Joy’ (Autumn 1)***