

April 9/87

THE COWICHAN NEWS LEADER,

COMMUNITY

Basakhi marks beginning of new year

With the coming of Spring comes one of the most important festivals on the Sikh calendar. Basakhi falls on April 13 and is the beginning of a new year according to the ancient calendar of India. In the Punjab it is celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs alike as the last folk festival before planting time. At the time of Guru Gobind Singh it became and still is an important religious holiday for the Sikhs.

Unlike the usual new year celebrations in Canada the Sikh new year arrives quietly and will be celebrated in a religious manner. In order that more people may take part, the festivities at the Paldi Sikh Temple are scheduled for the week end of April 17, 18 and 19 which will also coincide with the Christian religious services of Easter. Beginning with morning worship on Friday and the continu-



Indo Canadian

By Joan Mayo

ous reading of the Sikh holy book through Friday night and all day Saturday, it will culminate with the main service Sunday morning. All meals will be shared in the church dining hall with everyone pitching in to help

with the cooking, dish washing and cleaning up.

It was at the Basakhi celebrations at Anandpur in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh formed his Sikh army known as the Khalsa Brotherhood.

Deciding that peaceful opposition to the tyranny of the muslim rulers would only continue to result in the martyrdom of many more Sikh leaders, Guru Gobind Singh took advantage of his annual gathering for Basakhi and asked for volunteers to step forward to give up their lives for the honor of Sikhism. One by one they stepped forward until he had five in all. Each one was taken inside a tent after which Guru Gobind Singh emerged with a bloody sword asking for another volunteer until he had his five faithful devotees.

Suddenly they emerged unharmed and he blessed them

as his five chosen warriors and initiated a ceremony of baptism where each drank the sweet nectar known as amrit. He then announced his desire to form an army of baptised Sikhs who would fight against any form of tyranny or oppression. He stated that each would take the name Singh, which means lion, to give him bravery and each would dress in a distinctive manner with uncut hair and beard to distinguish them from the masses of India.

Thousands stepped forward to join his army which he called the Khalsa, meaning the pure ones.

It was at this time also that Guru Gobind Singh ordered each to keep the five K's on his

body.

- 1) Kez - uncut hair and beard
- 2) Kanga - a comb to comb the hair and keep it clean
- 3) Karra - a steel bangle on the wrist representing the omnipresence of God with no beginning and no end
- 4) Kirpan - a sword either small or large
- 5) Kachha - short underwear to be worn under the clothes for chastity.

Shortly before his death Guru Gobind Singh decreed that there be no living Guru after him but that the Garanth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, be revered as a living Guru. Any who can, now gather at the golden temple in Amritsar, while others gather at their usual place of worship.

Wedding Announcement