

Why *Hola Muhalla* is fixed on 14th March in Nanakshahi Jantri

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The so called self-styled Intellectual Council of Chandigarh, because of lack of deep understanding of calendars, says that the dates in the Nanakshahi Jantri have been arbitrarily fixed. This is not true. All dates have been fixed according to well established principles of calendar making. The original Gurburb dates have been used, except that in stead of using the lunar dates (*sudis* and *vadis*) we have used *parvishtas* (solar dates), and then converted them to the dates in the Gregorian Calendar.

To understand why *Hola Muhalla* is fixed on *Chet 1* / 14th March, one has to understand the lunar calendar first.

The lunar calendar consists of 12 months and the first month is *Chet*. Each month has 2 *pakshas*, *sudi pakash* and *vadi pakash*. *Sudi Pakash* begins after *amavas* and is the light *pakash* in which the moon goes on waxing and contains 14/15 days until *pooranmashi* (full moon). *Vadi pakash* begins after *pooranmashi*, the moon goes on waning and is the dark *paksha* and contains 14/15 days until *amavas* (new moon).

The months in the lunar calendar are of two types, *amanta* and *pooranmanta*. *Amanta* months are from *amavas* (new moon) to *amavas*, while *pooranmanta* months are from *pooranmashi* to *pooranmashi* (full moon). *Amanta* means *amavas*-ending, and *pooranmanta* means *pooranmashi*-ending.

In most of northern India, including Punjab the *Pooranmanta* system is in use, while in southern India *Amanta* system is used.

Paksh	Punjab Pooranmanta	South India Amanta
0	Chet Vadi(previous year)	
1	Chet Sudi (New Year on Chet Sudi 1)	Chet Sudi (New year on chet Sudi 1)
2	Vaisakh Vadi	Chet Vadi
3	Vaisakh Sudi	Vaisakh Sudi
4	Jeth Vadi	Vaisakh Vadi
5	Jeth Sudi	Jeth Sudi
6	Harh Vadi	Jeth Vadi
7	Harh Sudi	Harh Sudi
8	Sawan Vadi	Harh Vadi
9	Sawan Sudi	Sawan Sudi
10	Bhadon Vadi	Sawan Vadi
11	Bhadon Sudi	Bhadon Sudi
12	Asu Vadi	Bhadon Vadi
13	Asu Sudi	Asu Sudi
14	Katik Vadi	Asu Vadi
15	Katik Sudi	Katik Sudi
16	Maghar Vadi	Katik Vadi
17	Maghar Sudi	Maghar Sudi
18	Poh Vadi	Maghar Vadi
19	Poh Sudi	Poh Sudi
20	Magh Vadi	Poh Vadi
21	Magh Sudi	Magh Sudi
22	Phagun Vadi	Magh Vadi
23	Phagun Sudi	Phagun Sudi
24	Chet Vadi	Phagun Vadi

It can be seen that in Punjab the lunar month of *Chet* has been split, the *vadi* half belongs to one year and the *sudi* half belongs to the following year, while in South India there is no such split as shown in the Jantris published in South India. *Sudi pakshas* in both systems are the same, while *Vadi pakshas* differ in name by one month. For example the *paksha* which is called *Chet vadi* in Punjab is called *Phagun Vadi* in South India.

This was not always the case. In northern India, though the months were *pooranmanta*, *Chet* was not split and the year ended on *Phagun Sudi 15* i.e. *Pooranmasi*. Originally *Holi* festival was celebrated on the last day of the year - the New Year Eve - *Phagun pooranmashi*¹, because lunar *Chet* would begin the next day.

Later on myths were attached to the event. The fun and frolic that occurs on the *Holi* day is a parallel to the celebrations in all the world of new year eve on 31st December. *Hola* being celebrated on the day after *Holi* obviously was the first of *Chet* (lunar). Since we have adopted Solar Calendar with *Chet* as the first month, it is natural that *Hola* be fixed on the first day of *Chet* - the New Year Day of the new Nanakshahi Calendar. It is an interesting coincidence that in 1998 CE, the year when we suggested changes to the calendar, *Hola* occurred on 1 Chet / 14 March, the date on which we have fixed it in the new calendar. It is also another coincidence that the first *Hola Muhalla* celebrated by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib was on *Chet vadi 1*, 1757 BKⁱⁱ which was on 14 March, 1701 CE Julian.

Since we have already established that in 2100 years Bikrami calendar moves by one monthⁱⁱⁱ in relation to the seasons and it drags along with it the lunar calendar also, *Holi* in 2100 years time would occur in April, and again after a similar period in May, while according to Nanakshahi Calendar, *Hola* would always occur on 1 Chet / 14 March in the spring season. The Rishis, Sages and ancient *scholars* of the past who devised the Bikrami calendar never meant these festivals to move in seasons.

Lohri

Lohri is a festival that was and is celebrated on the eve of *Maghi* i.e. one day before *Maghi* - the *Makar Sankranti*. The sages fixed *Makar sankranti* to occur on the day when the sun commences its northward journey (*uttrayana*), when the days would start lengthening. This day was celebrated in communities all over the world. People would sit near the bonfires to celebrate the beginning of return of the sun from its southward journey. In 532 CE *lohri* was on 18 December, and *Maghi* on 19 December. The '*uttrayana*' also started on 19 December. This was the winter solstice day. Because of the Bikrami calendar's difference from the year of seasons, *Maghi* has shifted from 19 Dec in 532 to 13/14 January in Nineteen-nineties, while '*uttrayana*' still occurs around Dec 21 /22. *Lohri* is a seasonal festival one day before *Maghi* to mark the beginning of return of the sun from south, to celebrate '*barha din*' (ਬੜਾ ਦਿਨ), it has shifted by about 23 days. What would you think if *Lohri* were to occur in May in future? Would you sit near the bonfires to celebrate it or would you have gatherings under air-conditioned roofs?

In the Nanakshahi Calendar we have fixed *lohri* on 30 Poh / 12th January and *Maghi* on 13th January permanently, so that these seasonal festivals should shift no more, and stay in their present associations with seasons. Pope Gregory instituted the now current Gregorian calendar with adjustment of the shift of 10 days that had occurred in the Julian calendar and brought it in line with the originally intended seasonal calendar. We are not making an adjustment of 23 days to the calendar to bring it in line with the originally intended seasonal calendar, though I wish we could, we are by the adopted changes making sure that the present calendar shifts no more in seasons. Is not the already accumulated error of 23 days enough to tolerate and live with? In Guru Nanak Sahib's time this error was about 16 days.

The changes we have done will ensure that the calendar months keep the relationship with seasons permanently, the way these months and seasons are mentioned in *Gurbani*.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that the festival dates in the New Nanakshahi calendar have not been fixed arbitrarily, there is history of calendar behind it, there is astronomy behind it, there is wisdom of the ancient sages behind it, and above all we have taken the direction from *Gurbani* to keep the months according to seasons mentioned in *Gurbani*.

ⁱ "ਹਿੰਦੀ ਕਲੰਡਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਾਗਰਕ ਮਨੋਰਥਾਂ ਲਈ ਪੁਨਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਖਤਮ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਵਰਤੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ --- ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਹ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਗੋਣਮਾਨ ਹਨ ਇਸ ਲਈ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਦਾ 'ਵਦੀ' ਵਾਲਾ ਅੱਧਾ ਭਾਗ ਪਹਿਲੋਂ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਇਸ ਪਿੱਛੋਂ ਸੁਦੀ ਵਾਲਾ ਅੱਧਾ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਲਈ ਸਾਲ ਦਾ ਅਖੀਰੀ ਦਿਨ ਪੁਨਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਾਚੀਨ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਰਵਾਇਤ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਇਹ ਫਾਲਗੁਨੀ ਪੂਰਣਿਮਾਂ (ਜਾਂ ਹੋਲੀ) ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ।" -- ਕਲੰਡਰ ਸੁਧਾਰ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਰੀਪੋਰਟ, ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ੧੯੫੫, ਪੰ: ੧੬੧

"Thursday is the *Holi*, which in their belief is the last day of the year." --- Tuuzk-I-Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir, Translated by Alexander Rogers and Henry Beveridge, first published 1909-1914, reprint 1989 Low Price Publications, Delhi.

ⁱⁱ Guru Kian Sakhian (Punjabi), 2nd edition, p.143, Bhai Saroop Singh Kaushik, Edited - Prof. Piara Singh Padam, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1991.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nanakshahi Calendar - Pal Singh Purewal, Understanding Sikhism - The Research Journal (Montreal, Canada), Editor-in-Chief Prof. Devinder Singh Chahal, Ph.D., also published in other research Journals, magazines and papers.