



Conceptualization of Sarbat Khalsa

Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi is an autonomous organization embodying the *Panch-Pradhani* (Lead of Five Chosen Ones) concept in the light of Gurmat, without being tied to any particular country or place, representing Sikhs all over the world with complete transparency.

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Every serious Sikh is worried about the degeneration in Sikh institutions because of political interference. Whatever efforts have been made in recent times, all these basically aim to free the organizational center and 'historical' place of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar. With this narrative, the perception is made that whoever is in possession of the organizational historical place of Akal Takht, the reins of the panth are in his hands. The irony is that this narrative goes in favor of the anti-panthic forces. Because it is always easy for the regime to occupy a 'place.' Hence, this thought goes in favor of the politico-priestly unholy alliance. The need is to break free from this narrative. As was delineated by Guru Sahibs, there is a need to revive the concept that no one can subjugate Akal Takht by virtue of being in occupation of historical or religious places, as the Gurmat 'principle' of Miri-Piri is not a slave to anyone, like Guru. Despite Guru Sahibs' unparalleled history of the 17th century, why is this message not going home?

During the 18th century, the focus of the Sikh struggle on the protection of sacred religious sites emerged from the Mughal-Afghan invasions. The present times call for guidance from the history of the Gurus' period. During the 17th century, Guru Sahibs focused on freeing the Sikh society from the domination of the priesthood by institutionalizing the Gurmat principles. The priestly control of society always leads to desolation:

The Qazi tells falsehood and eats filth.

The Brahmin kills beings and then takes cleansing baths.

The Yogi is blind and does not know the way.

All three are bonded in desolation. (Mehl 1, Page 662)

The construction of Akal Bunga (Akal Takht) by Sri Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji embodied the principle of Miri-Piri. Soon, the Sixth Guru established Kiratpur as the center of Sikhi. Soon after the sixth Guru, none of the Guru Sahibs visited Akal Bunga. During the Guru's period itself, the priest took control with the help of rulers. The doors of Darbar Sahib were closed to Sri Guru Teg Bahadar Sahib

Ji when he arrived there. After waiting for the doors to open for a long time, Guru Sahib returned without visiting Darbar Sahib. Armored Sikhs accompanied him, but he forbade the Sikhs from engaging in confrontation or capturing the place by force. It could have been occupied by force temporarily, but this would have gone in favor of the adversary. Because this would have given the impression that it is very important for the Guru to occupy a particular historical place. Prithi Chand's descendants also wanted to make the same impression in the Sangat, that they are in possession of Darbar Sahib and Akal Bunga, so they are the heirs to Guru Nanak's throne. The current occupying forces also want to convey the same. But the Gurus had upheld the consistency in doctrine as supreme.

By introducing the institution of *Panj Piyaare*, Guru banished the masands who had become priest. At the same time, Guru Sahib eliminated the necessity of a place for the permanence of doctrine. Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji revealed Khalsa at Anandpur, not at Akal Bunga. Adi Granth Ji was completed at Damdama Sahib. Guruship was passed on to Sri Granth Sahib Ji, and the tradition of passing Guruship to human form ended in Nanded.

It should not be forgotten that under the leadership of Baba Banda Singh Bahadar, the Khalsa achieved unprecedented victories in a short period of time, put the tyrants to death, and established the first Khalsa State. Even during this time, Akal Bunga remained under the control of priests. Babaji never visited Akal Bunga even once.

If none from the among Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Guru and Baba Banda Singh Bahadar went to 'Akal Bunga', during this long period was the Sikh Sangat not remained devoted to *Miri-Piri*? Surely, the answer is- the Sikh Sangat has always been dedicated to *Miri-Piri*, because the 'place' may have been in the hands of anti-Sikh forces but the 'doctrine' of *Miri-Piri* had always guided the Panth. If we understand this point, we can find a way out of the present times. On the contrary, if we only limit our goal to '*seva sambhaal*' of the historical place of 'Akal Takht Sahib', then this doctrinal weakness will not only astray the Sikh energy, but it will go in favor of the politico-priest alliance.

As *Khande Baate di Pahul* was initiated from Anandpur, but it is not mandatory to be there to partake the *pahul*. However, the presence of *Panj Piyaare* is mandatory. Similarly, Guru Sahib embodied the principle of *Miri-Piri* from Akal Bunga but did not make the control of Akal Bunga (Akal Takht) mandatory for

the continuation of the principle of *Miri-Piri*. This is an important point; without it, the Sikhs cannot achieve religious autonomy.

At this crucial time, the main objective of every Sikh's activism, intellectualism, and struggle should be to liberate Sikh institutions from political domination. Today, there is a need to revive the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi under the guidance of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, embodying the *Panch-Pradhani* concept. The institute can be called Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi, which is autonomous, representing the Sikhs worldwide, and not tied to any country-place so that the politico-priestly nexus is unable to control it. This institute of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi should be able to give competent leadership to the Sikh-World on various issues, take care of the upcoming political independence, and maintain the religious shrines as per Gurmat.

The success of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi can be ensured on the basis of the following four pillars:

- 1) Ideology: The Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi should be a united forum of Sikhs under the umbrella of maximum shared ideology.
- 2) Representation: The Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi should represent the Sikh community all over the world.
- 3) Transparency: The proceedings & By-Laws of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi should be transparent to the entire Sikh community.
- 4) Continuous Improvement: To strengthen the above three points, self-introspection and continuous improvement should be part of the proceedings of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi.

Panj Piyaare should be selected from among the representatives of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi formed through these criteria. Even if these *Panj Piyaare* belong to different countries and regions of the world, they should be considered the *Panj Piyaare* of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi. The *Panj Piyaare* are equal among themselves; appointing one of them as 'Akal Takht Jathedar' renders the institution of the *Panj Piyaare* meaningless and omission equating the Guru. But anyone can be designated as the Jathedar or Chairperson by the *Panj Piyaare* for a particular task. So, there can be Jathedars who are responsible for executing various tasks and projects and communicating with the *Panj Piyaare* on behalf of their committee.

The scope of work for *Panj Piyaare* should be of Consensus Building Facilitator on Panthic issues. To arrive at a consensus, *Panj Piyaare* may form a committee of subject-experts from among the representatives of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi and convey to the Sangat about the *Panthic-matta*. No one should have the authority to pronounce *Hukamnama* (edicts) or fatwas.

(*'Gurmatta'* literally means Gurmat or Guru's wisdom as enshrined in Gurbani. *'Hukamnama'* or *'Gurmatta'* is reserved for Guru. No one should compete with Guru. The general opinion of Sikhs formed in the light of Gurmat may be referred to as *Panthic-matta*.)

The four pillars mentioned above, which will help in making the Sarbat Khalsa a vibrant working organization, are elaborated and outlined below:

1. Ideology

We must accept that there are major differences of opinion in Sikh society on many issues. Some of the prominent contentious issues are Raagmala, Dasam Granth, Rehat Maryada, Eating Meat, Nanakshahi Calendar, and accurate printing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. There are as many Sikhs on one side of these issues as many on the opposite opinion. The reason for not resolving the division in the Panth is not the issues per se but the fact that we do not tolerate each other's opinions out of ego and the desolation (illusions) caused by the priesthood. No Sikh has the right to question another Sikh's devotion to the Guru because of a difference of opinion. When the sangat associated with different factions will see various thinkers presenting their views in a pleasant atmosphere from a common stage, the mutual love within the Panth will increase on its own, and there will be opportunities to build consensus on these issues. By not rising above factions and disrupting the dialogue, we fall into an anti-panthic role.

*Some have joined the faction of ruling heads out of selfish motives.
But my alliance is with Almighty, who is pervading everywhere. (Mehl 4, Page 366)*

Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi should be a common platform for those holding varying viewpoints. We need to create a consensus on the maximum shared ideology that can represent the Sikh Panth without any doctrinal compromise. This engagement can be made on the following points:

i. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the perfect Guru of Sikhs

There may be differences within the Sikh community on Rigmala or Dasam Granth, but there is complete agreement on Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Anything less than this will lead to a doctrinal compromise, and it seems impossible to form an organizational and ideological platform with more than this.

ii. Faith in the continuity of Ten embodiments of Sri Guru Nanak Ji

There were Ten embodiments of Guru, but the jot (ideology) remained consistent with that of Sri Guru Nanak Sahib Ji. Faithfulness in the continuity of Sri Guru Nanak Ji's Ten embodiments is the backbone of the existence of the Sikh community. Accepting anything less than this makes the door open for those aberrants who pretend to have faith in Sri Guru Nanak Sahib but do not associate themselves with the rest of the nine Gurus. The next category is of those deviants who have fabricated fake stories to continue the Guruship in human form even after Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. For this reason, it becomes necessary for doctrinal clarity to record the continuity of the Ten Gurus.

iii. Full faith of Sikh in Khande Baate di Pahul

In Sikh society, there may be disagreements on the rehat maryada or Nitnem Baanis, but there can be agreement on *Khande Baate di Pahul* regardless of which rehat maryada one follows. It is difficult to form an organizational agreement with a person or institute that has compromised the Five *Kakaar* identity, and it seems impossible to form an organizational and ideological alliance with more than this.

According to the above-mentioned viewpoints, the 'maximum shared ideology' for the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi would be:

Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi is the common forum of Gursikh men and women all over the world who believe Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as their perfect Guru, who

have full faith in the continuity of the Ten embodiments of Sri Guru Nanak Sahib Ji and in the Khande Baate di Pahul.

2. Representation

The representatives of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi should be committed Sikhs who are experts in various fields from different countries, states, and regions and have partaken *Khande Baate di Pahul*. Identifying the necessary expertise, the required number of the representatives should be reserved, such as - those associated with the struggle of Sikh issues, those who contributed greatly in Gurmat propagation and sewa, Gurmat sangeet, historians, representatives of weaker sections of Sikhs (like Sikligar, Vanjara, Majhabi), writers, journalists, scientists, agricultural and environmental activists, lawyers fighting for human rights, etc. The total number of representatives should be fixed (like- 500 members).

Being an expert is not based on personal achievement but on the basis of contribution to the chardikala of the Sikh Panth and towards the human civilization through the virtues of *Nirbhau Nirvaer*.

Due to administrative requirements, Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi offices would be required but should be in different countries. The selection of countries outside India should be decided based on the number of Sikhs residing there, recognition of democratic values in the country, and international geopolitical importance. With this, the proceedings of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi will not be dependent on any one country, and a more independent working environment can be expected from countries with better democratic values. If the office in one country has to be closed due to government intervention, the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi with administrative offices in different countries will not be affected. These countries can be - Punjab (India), the USA, Canada, England, Australia, Italy, Singapore (or Malaysia).

3. Transparency

Transparency in the conduct and by-laws of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi is the lifeblood of its continuity. It is only because of transparency that the Sikh

community will have faith in it, and transparency will be the means to keep mischievous people away from it. The commitment to transparency can only be sustained if the selection process of its representatives is from bottom to top. It means that the members nominated by different organizations should be selected with the approval of the Sikh Sangat of that organization.

In the pervading process, '*Gurmatta*' is read out from the stage, and the congregation is asked to raise their hands for approval. While Sangat has no transparency about the decision-making process.

The proceedings behind the resolution or *Panthic-matta* taken by the Sarbat Khalsa or *Panj Piyaare* must be visible to the Sangat. This transparency should be brought by video recording of the meetings or sharing the minutes of the meetings with the congregation.

An annual financial audit should also be part of the by-laws.

4. Continuous Improvement

To strengthen the three points written above, self-introspection and continuous improvement should be an integral part of the proceedings of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi. Continual improvement requires room for new ideas and new skills. For this, the term of office of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi, the Working Committee, and the *Panj Piyaare* should be fixed, five years. After every five years, Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi representatives are renominated.

The *Panj Piyaare*, once selected, cannot be re-nominated as representatives of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi. Since *Panj Piyaare* themselves are the approval authority, to avoid the conflict of interest, they cannot be nominated again for the next term of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi.

Self-analysis and improvement should be part of Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi's process flow so that no '*manmat*' custom becomes a 'ritual,' thus hindering progress.

The names of the members who contributed to the formulation of the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi Concept and its By-Laws of through dialogue are listed below in Gurmukhi alphabetical order:

Dr. Onkar Singh (Phoenix), S. Kuldip Singh (Richmond BC), Prof. Gurcharan Singh (Florida), S. Gurpreet Singh GP (Bahrain), Giani Jagtar Singh Jachak (New York), S. Jagdhar Singh (Raniganj), Sdn. Jasbir Kaur (Ohio), Dr. Jaswant Singh (Phoenix), S. Tejinder Singh (Delhi), S. Nirmal Singh (Victoria BC), S. Parampal Singh (Fresno), Dr. Prem Singh (Shimla), Dr. Brij Pal Singh (Patiala), S. Mohinder Singh Talib (Delhi), Sdn. Mandeep Kaur (Dubai).

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To know about the Sarbat Khalsa Inc. By-Laws and to get connected with Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi, check:

<https://sarbatkhalsa.world>