

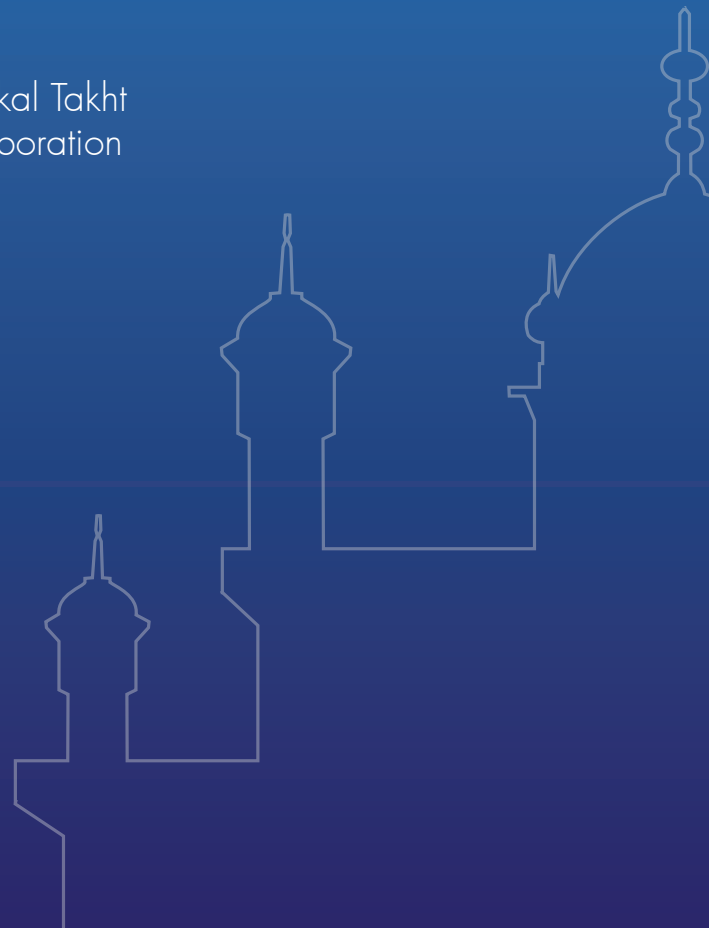


FREE AKAL TAKHT

DRAFT FRAMEWORK

JUNE 16, 2016

This package has been produced by the Free Akal Takht team as a starting point for discussion and collaboration within the global Sikh community (Sikh Qaum).





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Outline of Package

This package has been produced by the Free Akal Takht team as a starting point for discussion and collaboration within the global Sikh community (*Sikh Qaum*). The package is made up of the following documents:

1. **Free Akal Takht Introduction**
 - a. Guiding principles and mandate of the Free Akal Takht Team
2. **Short Term: Next Sarbat Khalsa**
3. **Long Term: Framework Introduction**
 - a. This current document. Introduction to the Framework
4. **Long Term: Framework Governance**
 - a. An explanation of the **proposed** Akal Takht Governance System framework
5. **Framework Definitions**
 - a. Definitions of the main terms and institutions used in the Framework
6. **Framework Background**
 - a. A more thorough explanation of the key institutions and principles used in the Framework from a Gurbani, Gurmat and Sikh historical perspective
7. **Framework Diagram**
 - a. A visual representation of the framework
8. **Frequently Asked Questions**
 - a. Answers to the questions we are asked most often about the Free Akal Takht movement and the framework



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Free Akal Takht Introduction

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Our Mandate

Free Akal Takht is focused on supporting the following two resolutions that were declared at the November 2015 *Sarbat Khalsa*:

Resolution #2

Reaffirms Akal Takht Sahib is Guru-gifted sovereign Sikh institution which must become fully independent again.

A draft committee is to be constituted comprising of Sikhs both from the Homeland and the Diaspora by 30 Nov 2015 to report on Akal Takht Sahib System which includes Sarbat Khalsa and Jathedars governance and process. Plan to be adopted by Vaisakhi 2016 when the next Sarbat Khalsa is to be held.

Resolution #5

Creates World Sikh Parliament to represent global Sikhs under aegis of Akal Takht Sahib.

A draft committee is to be constituted comprising of Sikhs both from the Homeland and the Diaspora by 30 Nov 2015 to report on its structure and governance. Plan to be adopted by Vaisakhi 2016.

A deadline of November 30, 2015 was set for the formation of two committees to address these resolutions. This deadline was then extended to December 31, 2015. Unfortunately, this deadline has passed and it is unclear if there has been any progress.

On behalf of the *Sikh Qaum*, the Free Akal Takht Team has begun the process of convening and mobilizing engaged Sikhs around the world to address these resolutions.

Guiding principles

These ten values will guide our behaviour both within our team and when engaging with others.

1. **Guru-Inspired** – Ensure processes, frameworks and documents are aligned with Gurmat (gurbani, tvaikh, rahit) principles derived from scripture, history, lifestyle
2. **Proactively Inclusive** – Reflect the diversity of 30 million Sikhs around the world including diversity of gender, age, geography and ideology
3. **Consensus-Building** – Work to foster *Panthic* unity by consensus decision making rather than majority rule
4. **Collaborative** – Allow engaged Sikhs to participate in the process at an organizational and individual level
5. **Transparent** - Rebuild trust in the community by engaging in honest and open communication
6. **Open-Minded** – Explore and integrate governance best practices from other global communities
7. **Long-term** – Develop capacity and processes to address long-term challenges and opportunities
8. **Provocative** – Challenge the status quo and established paradigms
9. **Systems Focused** – Focus on criteria and processes not personalities
10. **Reclaim & Reinterpret** - Ensure a return to authentic Sikh concepts and terminology which will be made relevant to our contemporary realities

Where Are We Headed?

The change we all desire for the *Sikh Qaum* will not happen by itself — it requires systematic preparation and planning. We must be able to articulate our policies in a coherent way propose ideas based on *Gurbani*, *Gurmat* and Sikh history and create a well thought-out and feasible plan to bring these changes to fruition.

To free the *Akal Takht Sahib* and change the dynamics of our *Qaum*, we must collectively develop our vision and framework for what 21st century sovereign governance could look like for the world's 30 million Sikhs.

Thus far, we have undertaken consultations with individuals and groups around the world to solicit their perspective on the outcomes of the November 2015 *Sarbat Khalsa* and to understand other efforts underway to address the resolutions that were passed.

An initial framework was drafted to help create governing principles and basic systems for both the *Akal Takht Sahib* and *Sarbat Khalsa*. After consultations and input, that first draft was edited and a Governance Document was created to clearly explain the structure of the Framework. [We have split our efforts into realizing/pursuing short term goals and long terms goals.](#)

Short Term and Long Term

[The draft framework is a long term vision for the Panth to consider. In the short term our work is focused on what the next Sarbat Khalsa will be like and what will be discussed. The short term goals focus on finding consensus on Sarbat Khalsa requirements and the minimum criteria for selecting Jathedars.](#)

[These two decisions are the first step toward freeing Sri Akal Takht Sahib.](#) The Global *Sangat* must continue to step forward with input, thoughts and ideas to further develop this framework into a substantial plan for the *Khalsa Panth* [as a whole to accept.](#)

We have also started mobilizing and organizing the necessary resources needed for this process. [We are committed to making this an open and transparent process.](#) We need assistance in the following functional areas:

- Information technology
- Research
- Communications/marketing
- Project management
- Translation
- Writing and drafting

Short Term: The Next Sarbat Khalsa

Our short term goal is to facilitate consensus in two categories: Sarbat Khalsa and Jathedars. These two short term goal categories come directly from the consensus that came out of the World Sikh Conference in Melbourne, Australia that was facilitated by Free Akal Takht team. The conference consisted of representatives from Punjab, USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. We are sharing each point of consensus from this conference below for the Global Sangat to consider moving forward to the next Sarbat Khalsa. It is our objective to find consensus on these points as short term goals. For more details on who was at the World Sikh Conference of Australia, what was discussed, and what was decided please visit appendix B of this package.

● Jathedar

- Jathedars must follow Sikh Rahit Maryada, must be Amritdhari, Nitnemi, Rahit-van, aspire to Miri-Piri spirit, and accept nothing but Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their Guru
- Jathedars must be experienced and educated in Sikh studies and affairs with considerable knowledge on Sikh history, philosophy, Gurbani, world politics, and world religions
- Age, gender, race, ethnicity, and caste are not relevant factors in Jathedar selection criteria
- Jathedars must demonstrate sufficient leadership qualities (excellent communication skills and ability to work collectively and collaboratively); active in public affairs and community liaison
- Jathedars must be action-oriented and politically aware of internal/external politics
- Jathedars must not hold prejudice of any kind towards any gender, race, ethnicity, caste, etc.
- Jathedars must demonstrate a life of service for the Panth

● Sarbat Khalsa

- Quorum would require representation of 51% of the Sikh community with consideration made to population, geography, schools of thought, thought leaders, and disenfranchised segments (i.e. women, Dalit, Multivasi, youth etc.). Selection would be preferred over election with the following guidelines:
 - ~90-93% correlated to population size
 - ~5-7% experts (policy, doctrine, seva)/luminaries
 - ~1-2% extraordinary Panthic contributors
- Every representative to the Sarbat Khalsa would commit to being a follower of the Sikh Rahit Maryada and profess a belief in the institution of the Free Akal Takht in that it should be self-governed by Sikhs for Sikhs without interference from the state or political parties (including Sikh parties).
- Items to be deliberated at Sarbat Khalsa would not include doctrinal issues but rather focus on matters of urgency, economic/political issues, leadership violation, and beadbi of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
- Decision-making would be consensus-based. That does not mean there is 100% agreement. Individuals that disagree would record their dissent but then agree to implement the decisions without undermining the process.
- The Sarbat Khalsa should be an open and transparent process. All 30 million Sikhs should have access to the proceedings online.



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- To ensure the execution of each decision made, an implementation team must be declared with a deadline and an action plan.

Long Term: Framework Introduction

With a Plea to Guru Hargobind Sahib for blessings:

ਦਲਭੰਜਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੂਰਮਾ ਵਡ ਜੇਧਾ ਬਹੁ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ।

***Guru Hargobind Sahib is the Vanquisher of Armies, the Heroic Guru and the Greatest Warrior
And yet He is the Most Benevolent and Loving of Caretakers***

Bhai Gurdas, V18-P20

Our sisters and brothers, fellow children of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib and Maata Sahib Kaur ji, let us learn from the Divine inspired traditions that we once lived. We were a sovereign people, with our own thoughtful and well-established systems of governance. Our Guru Sahibs created a democratic and representative model unlike anything else the world has ever seen; one with checks and balances, with divisions of power and responsibility, and a strong central authority that also allowed for local, grassroots decision making. Now, with inspiration from a glorious and awe-inspiring history, it is our time to envision what role a truly sovereign Akal Takht can play. Not only will we finally be able to deal with our own internal issues in a mature and responsible manner, but we will be able to work towards our true purpose as a *Panth*: to spread the message of Guru Nanak Sahib's remarkable vision. Guru Sahib demonstrated that through honesty, respect, mutual welfare and recognizing the divinity within your own self and in all those around you, regardless of any distinctions, the world can be made a better place.

Terminology

We seek to take back our sovereign language and culture. Our sovereignty was granted by the Tenth Master and though it has not been manifested in two hundred years, it is as true today as it was in 1699. This Framework will seek to bring back the ideals of the sovereign Akal Takht and reimagine its institutions and systems with a basis in Shabad Gurbani and Sikh history.

Ideology

The Panth has been most successful when we hold true to authentic Sikh traditions. Whenever we've followed other forms of governance, such as an absolute monarchy (Maharaja Ranjit Singh) or Westminster-style elected parliament (SGPC) we have suffered greatly. With this in mind, we seek to stay true to Panthic traditions. Let us create criteria and guidelines, but not get bogged down in minutiae. We are not here to write constitutions, but instead to dream, imagine and then work towards systems that



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will be resilient, flexible and relevant—both today and a hundred years from now. As Professor Puran Singh wrote, we are people of the spirit, not of the law.

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ਵਡਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਤੁਧੁ ਤਖਤੁ ॥

ਸਿਰਿ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਨਿਹਚਲੁ ਚਉਰੁ ਛਤੁ ॥

Long Term: Framework Governance

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1. Introduction and Overview

This document describes the proposed structure of the *Akal Takht Sahib* and the different bodies and functions that are proposed to **carry out** its operational and governance framework (the **Framework**) **for the long term**. It sets out the mandate and role of each body or function, the criteria, conditions and principles governing its composition and its relationship with the other components of the *Akal Takht Sahib*.

The concept of the *Akal Takht Sahib* has two distinct manifestations. One is the physical structure within the *Harimandar Sahib Complex* and the second is the broader institutional concepts that govern the *Sikh Qaum*. Reference in this document to “*Akal Takht Sahib*” refers to, unless otherwise indicated, the broader institutional concepts described in this Framework. The goal of the Framework is to identify and incorporate the different bodies, functions, processes and systems that would constitute the infrastructure of the institution of the *Akal Takht Sahib*. It has been designed to be comprehensive and functional and to incorporate certain safeguards and checks and balances, having regard for *Gurbani*, Sikh principles and Sikh history as well as principles of proper governance, that will be necessary to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

This is a draft framework only and it is being published for public comment and review. **We hope that this will encourage dialogue for long term solutions.** For each body or function we have set out specific questions relating to its mandate, criteria, and relationship with respect to which we are seeking specific guidance. The concepts and terms used, their roles and relationships with other bodies and the structure detailed within this Framework are intended as a starting point, or blueprint only, which is open for community collaboration. It is our collective will and intellect, inspired by our commitment to the *Sikh Qaum* and with the Guru’s blessings, that will help us to further refine and advance this blueprint. Everything is open for review, correction, deletion and clarification.

2. The Sikh Qaum

The *Sikh Qaum* refers to the global body of Sikhs living inside and outside of Punjab. The criteria to determine who is a Sikh for inclusion in the *Sikh Qaum* is taken from the *Sikh Rahit Maryada* (first published 1945).

Article I- Definition of Sikh

Any woman or man who faithfully believes in:

- *One Infinite Creator*
- *Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Sahib to Guru Gobind Singh Sahib*
- *Guru Granth Sahib*
- *The Bani and teachings of the Ten Gurus*
- *The Amrit bequeathed by the Tenth Guru,*
and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion, is a Sikh.

(note: translation into contemporary English made from the original ratified Punjabi)

3. Guru Khalsa Panth

The Khalsa Panth refers to those Sikhs who have made a formal commitment to the Guru through the *Khande ki Pahul (Amrit Sanchar)* ceremony. These are individuals who are committed to *Panthic* service and are generally the most engaged members of the *Qaum*. The *Panj Piare, Office Holders of the Akal Takht Sahib* and *Jathedars of the Sarbat Khalsa* are all members of the *Guru Khalsa Panth*.

4. Panj Piare (Sikh Qaum)

a. Mandate and Function

The *Panj Piare* would constitute the core body of the *Akal Takht*. The role of the *Panj Piare* is to serve as a type of governing council, providing leadership, governance and oversight to the *Sikh Qaum* in general and with direct oversight over the *Offices & Functions of Akal Takht* and the *Jathedars of the Sarbat Khalsa*.

The *Panj Piare* would be vested with the authority to make decisions on issues of utmost significance to the *Sikh Qaum* on a global level. The *Panj Piare* of the *Sikh Qaum* would be accountable to the *Sarbat Khalsa*. The concept of the *Panj Piare* is not exclusive at this level as each *Regional Misl* would also have its own *Regional Panj Piare* to provide leadership, governance and oversight at the regional level, and to make decisions on issues of utmost significance at a regional level. The *Panj Piare* of any particular *Misl* would be accountable to the Sikhs of that regional through the an institution/process similar to the *Sarbat Khalsa* but at a regional level.

b. Criteria for Eligibility/Composition

The *Panj Piare* should represent the diversity of the *Sikh Qaum* in all respects, including region, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, etc. Nominees to appointment would be brought forward at a standing meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* with each member to remain in service for the prescribed term.

The *Panj Piare* should be constituted of Sikhs embodying ideal Sikh principles who have the necessary knowledge, education, qualities and skills to successfully carry out the requirements of this function. At a minimum, the *Panj Piare* must be Sikhs who have taken *Khande Ki Pahul* (are initiated) and who have a demonstrated track record of *Seva* to the *Sikh Qaum*.

c. Role Relationships and Accountability

The *Panj Piare* would have the direct authority to oversee the *Offices and Functions of the Akal Takht* and the *Jathedars of the Sarbat Khalsa*.

While the *Panj Piare* would be the highest governing body of the *Sikh Qaum*, their mandate would emanate from the *Sikh Qaum* itself, as represented in the *Global Sarbat Khalsa*. The *Sarbat Khalsa* would appoint the *Panj Piare* in accordance with the prescribed criteria for selection and vest in them the authority to carry out the will of the *Sarbat Khalsa/Sikh Qaum*. The *Panj Piare*, in turn, would be accountable to the *Sarbat Khalsa*.

Questions related to the role and composition of the *Panj Piare (Akal Takht)*

- What are the relevant individual eligibility criteria for selection of the *Panj Piare* (minimum criteria for eligibility)?



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- What should be the applicable best practices and/or requirements for composition of the Panj Piare (e.g. regional representation, minimum number of women, schools of thought, etc)?
- What should the process be for the nomination and appointment of the Panj Piare
- How long should each member remain in service? Should there be a term limit?
- Should the Panj Piare have consistent or staggered terms?
- What are the appropriate rules and processes for removal, replacement and resignation of a member prior to expiry of their full term?
- What specific duties and authorities should the Panj Piare have?
- Is it appropriate for the Panj Piare to be accountable to the Sarbat Khalsa?
- Should the service of the Panj Piare be compensated? If so what are the appropriate means for compensating the Panj Piare for their service? What are the appropriate principles for determining their compensation framework?

5. Offices & Functions of the Akal Takht

a. Concept

The *Offices & Functions of the Akal Takht* refers to different offices and functions comprising of the *Akal Takht Sahib*. These would be the offices and functions necessary to carry out the mandate of the *Akal Takht* at a global level and having regard to regional needs.

These would be comprised of the *Global Offices* and *Support Functions* as outlined below.

b. Mandate and Function

The function of the *Global Offices* would be to provide guidance, research, analysis and representation on issues of importance to the *Sikh Qaum*. The representatives of the *Global Offices* could also serve as spokespersons to the *Sikh Qaum* and as needed to the broader community.

The *Global Offices* would be headed by *Office Holders* who would operate under the direct authority, and with the guidance, of the *Panj Piare*. The *Global Offices* could be located in a centralized location or throughout the various countries where members of the *Sikh Qaum* reside and have significant representation.

The basic *Global Offices* would include the following:

Gurmat Doctrine/Gurmat Affairs Office – The purpose of this office would be to provide leadership on matters of doctrine including interpretation and validation of authenticity of historical texts, guidance on theological differences, etc. This office could also be responsible for matters such as media, educational outreach (literature, internet and other forms of media) and interfaith representation.



Misl Relations - The purpose of this office would be to coordinate communication with the various regions (*Misls*) of the *Sikh Qaum*. It would disseminate the policies and guidelines drafted by the *Global Offices* as well as offer a method for regional concerns to be brought to the attention of the *Akal Takht Sahib*.

Legal or Civil Affairs Office – The purpose of this office would be to provide leadership and representation on matters involving law and civil rights as relevant to the *Sikh Qaum* in the various jurisdictions where Sikhs reside.

Gurduara Governance and Management Office – The purpose of this office would be to provide leadership and guidance on the management and operation of *Gurduaras*, including maintenance of a *Registry of Gurduaras* that are operated under the authority of the *Akal Takht Sahib*, and to determine inclusion in the registry. This office could also provide centralized services for administration of the *Misls*.

Diplomatic Affairs – The purpose of this office would be to provide representation of the *Akal Takht Sahib* at various international and multinational governmental and non-governmental forums.

Seva / Humanitarian Corps – The purpose of this division would be to serve as the *seva* or humanitarian wing of the *Akal Takht Sahib* to organize, administer and manage a corps of *Seva Groups* available to be deployed to undertake humanitarian work including response to humanitarian crises. This also includes protection and safe-keeping of *Gurduaras* and other Sikh institutions.

Administrative Office – The Support Functions would be the functions necessary or desirable to support the operations of the *Akal Takht Sahib*. At a minimum these would include the following:

- Accounting & Audit
- Legal
- Information Technologies
- Communications
- Human Resources/Capital

Questions related to the Offices & Functions of the Akal Takht

- *Are these the appropriate Offices & Functions and are their mandates/ purposes appropriately delineated?*

6. Office Holders (Akal Takht)

a. Mandate and Function

The *Office Holders* would constitute the executive function of the *Akal Takht Sahib* and could be classified into two different categories:

1. Those charged with overseeing the *Offices & Functions of the Akal Takht*, with one or more *Offices & Functions* operating under a single *Office Holder*;
2. Those appointed by the *Panj Piare* on a project basis, to provide leadership and oversight for specific mandates or projects falling outside of the regular *Offices & Functions*

b. Criterial for Eligibility

The *Office Holders* would be appointed by the *Panj Piare* and would serve at the pleasure of the *Panj Piare* based on their specific duties or functions (i.e. ongoing mandate vs. project based). *Office Holders* must be initiated Sikhs and the relevant expertise and experience based on their function. As future *Panj Piare* will likely be chosen from among *Office Holders* their composition and criteria for appointment should also be reflective of the composition and criteria of the *Panj Piare* with respect to education, experience and skills, demonstrated service-record and diversity.

c. Role Relationships and Accountability

The *Office Holders* would be accountable to the *Panj Piare* and would be responsible for oversight and management of the *Offices & Functions of the Akal Takht* as applicable and for the specific projects for which they have been appointed.

Questions related to the Office Holders of the Akal Takht Sahib

- What should be any other criteria for eligibility for appointment as *Office Holder*?
- What should be the term of appointment and process for removal or resignation?
- Should the service of the *Office Holder* be compensated? If so what are the appropriate means for compensating the *Office Holder* for their service? What are the appropriate principles for determining their compensation framework?
- Are the roles *Office Holders* appropriate? Should they be more narrow or broad?

7. Hukamname & Sandesh

Hukamname and Sandesh refer to the official communications of the *Akal Takht Shaib*. These are drafted and presented under the authority of the *Panj Piare* but with assistance from the *Global Offices of the Akal Takht* and their *Office Holders*.

a. Hukamname

Hukamname are specific directives or orders for the community. These are binding clarifications, decisions and judgements for the *Sikh Qaum*.

b. Sandesh

Sandesh are general guidelines for the *Sikh Qaum* whereby the *Akal Takht Sahib*, through the *Panj Piare*, provides aspirational but non-binding goals that the *Sikh Qaum* should be working towards.

8. Sarbat Khalsa

a. Concept

The *Sarbat Khalsa* refers to the specific meetings and deliberations of the *Sikh Qaum* at a standing or specially constituted meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* wherein representatives would meet to discuss, consider and make determinations on matters of significance to the *Sikh Qaum*.

b. Composition

These representatives would be composed of three groups.

1. A majority, up to 90% perhaps, would be composed of representatives of regional *Misls*, with an aim to strike a balance between population and geographic distribution.
2. Up to 5% or more of the representatives would be composed of representatives of international Sikh organizations as well as well-established, widely-respected *Panthic*-minded Sikh schools of thought.
 - a. International organizations refers to groups that have a global mandate, are widely known and respected, but do not have a significant and concentrated membership and would therefore not be represented by the foregoing category.
 - b. Sikh schools of thought refers to those groups that have had a significant contribution to the *Sikh Qaum* and are widely acknowledged as offering an important perspective on *Sikhi*.
3. Up to 5% of representatives would be composed of widely-respected and well learned individuals who have offered a lifetime of *Seva* to the *Sikh Qaum*, are experts in a specific field and who would not be represented by the above two categories.

The *Misl* representatives (group 1) would be chosen by Sikhs at the regional level. Representatives from the much smaller groups 2 and 3 (organization/schools of thought and well-respected Sikhs) would be chosen by the *Akal Takht* through an appropriate office designed for this task.

Questions related to the Composition of the Sarbat Khalsa

- *Is this an appropriate way to divide up the Sarbat Khalsa representatives?*
- *Should some groups that are not included be included in this body?*
- *How many representatives to the Sarbat Khalsa should there be?*
- *How long should representatives to the Sarbat Khalsa hold their position?*
- *Should there be compensation for the position of Sarbat Khalsa representative?*
- *What should the criteria be for representatives to the Sarbat Khalsa?*

c. Function

The standing meetings of the *Sarbat Khalsa* would be held once per year with the prospect of a special meeting called by the *Panj Piare (Akal Takht)* or the *Regional Misls*. The *Panj Piare* would have the authority to call a special meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* upon unanimous consent. The *Regional Misls* would have the ability to call a special meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* with the consent of the prescribed percentage of the *Regional Misls* (e.g., 50%, 66 2/3% or 75%). In this manner, while the *Panj Piare* are the supreme authority they are still accountable to the *Sikh Qaum*.

Matters to be discussed at the annual meetings could be set out in advance and constitute annual matters. These would include nomination and selection of the *Panj Piare* when and if the term of a member of the *Panj Piare* is expiring and otherwise to reaffirm the mandate of the existing *Panj Piare*.

The decision-making process of the *Sarbat Khalsa* would follow a pre-determined framework under guidelines for the scope and nature of issues that could be considered by the *Sarbat Khalsa*. The general operating principle would be to provide the *Sarbat Khalsa* with the mandate to address appropriate issues of utmost significance to the *Sikh Qaum*. Decisions would be reached through the Sikh tradition of *consensus building democracy*.

The underlying principle for the *Sarbat Khalsa* would be inclusion and diversity. This includes by region, ethnicity and nationality as well as schools of thought and individual criteria such as age, gender, ability, etc.

Questions related to the Function of the Sarbat Khalsa

- Should the *Sarbat Khalsa* meet more than once a year, or less often?
- What is the quorum for a *Sarbat Khalsa*? How many *Misls (Regions)* and/or what percentage of the *Qaum* needs to be represented for the *Sarbat Khalsa* to constitute a *Sarbat Khalsa*?
- What should the *Qaum* do during times of emergency? What if the *Sarbat Khalsa* is not able to meet?
- What standing matters should be considered by the *Sarbat Khalsa* at standing meetings, if any? (i.e. appointment of the *Panj Piare*.)
- What is the threshold of participation required for the [*Regional Misls/Regions*] to call a meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa*? 50%, 66 2/3 or 75%?
- What is the appropriate scope for matters that could be considered by the *Sarbat Khalsa*?
- What is the appropriate framework for its decision-making process?

d. Mata

Mata refers to the resolution(s) or decision(s) passed by the *Sarbat Khalsa* that are arrived at through its consensus-based decision making process.

e. Gurmata

Gurmata refers to the officially sanctioned resolution(s) or decision(s) of the *Sarbat Khalsa*. Once the *Sarbat Khalsa* has drafted a resolution(s) or decision(s) (*Mata*) it will then be presented to the *Jorh*

Mela which has the authority of the *Global Sikh Sangat*. The *Jorh Mela* will provide assent to the *Mata* through the use of *Jaikare* (Salutations of Victory) thus making the *Mata* an official *Gurmata*.

f. Jorh Mela

Jorh Mela refers to a significant and large gathering of the *Sikh Qaum*. Generally, a *Jorh Mela* will occur at the same time as a *Sarbat Khalsa* as a religious and cultural event. The *Jorh Mela* plays an essential role in the *Sarbat Khalsa* process. If an emergency *Sarbat Khalsa* is convened, a smaller gathering of the *Sikh Qaum* is appropriate (i.e., without a full *Jorh Mela*) as the governance process must be flexible to exigent circumstances.

g. Jathedars

The *Jathedars* constitute the functional powers of the *Sarbat Khalsa*. *Jathedars* would be appointed by the *Sarbat Khalsa* at the annual meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* to fulfill the mandate of a *Gurmata*. The scope and level of authority wielded by a *Jathedar* would be delineated at the time of her or his appointment. The title of *Jathedar* would be tied to the specific function that the *Sarbat Khalsa* has designated to her or him and would therefore not be a lifetime designation. The *Jathedar* would function under the authority of the *Sarbat Khalsa*, but on a day-to-day basis would work in concert with the *Akal Takht Sahib* and its *Offices* and *Office Holders*, and/or the *Offices* and *Office Holders* of the *Regional Misls* and the *Regional Panj Piaras*.

Questions related to the Jathedars of the Sarbat Khalsa

- What should be any other criteria for eligibility for appointment as *Jathedar*?
- What should be the term of appointment and process for removal or resignation?
- Should the service of the *Jathedar* be compensated? If so what are the appropriate means for compensating the *Jathedar* for their service? What are the appropriate principles for determining their compensation framework?
- Are the roles of the *Jathedars* appropriate? Should they be more narrow or broad?

9. Regional Misls

a. Mandate and Function

Regional Misl refers to the diverse geographic regions that constitute the *Sikh Qaum*. The regions will be comprised of *Regional Panj Piare* and *Office Holders*, supported by any other offices & functions determined to be necessary or desirable at a regional level as well as *Regional Sarbat Khalsa* for regional decision making. The *Regional Misls* would therefore be structured similar to the governance and operating framework of the *Sikh Qaum* at a global level.

Questions related to the Regional Misls

- What geographic locations should be represented?
- How should a geographic location be determined?



FREE AKAL TAKHT

- *What concept of representation should be used? How much weight should be given to regional representation and representation by population?*
- *Is the historically significant number of 12 Misl an appropriate number to be distributed worldwide?*
- *What issues would fall under the authority of a Regional Misl and what would need to be elevated to a global level?*

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ ॥

ਵਡਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਤੁਧੁ ਤਖਤੁ ॥

ਸਿਰਿ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਨਿਹਚਲੁ ਚਉਰੁ ਛਤੁ ॥

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Akal Takht Sahib

The *Akal Takht Sahib* is the Divine and Eternal Throne of the Guru. It is the manifestation of Guru Nanak Sahib's Divine-bestowed *temporal* sovereignty, which refers to the Guru's full authority over the realms of politics, society, law, economics and military. This Divine Takht was made into a physical building by Guru Hargobind Sahib as part of the *Harimandir Sahib Complex*, though the *Akal Takht Sahib System of Governance* existed wherever the Guru exerted their sovereign authority. Thus in this Framework, *Akal Takht Sahib* refers not just to the building in *Harimandir Sahib Complex* but the entire system of sovereign Sikh governance.

The *Akal Takht Sahib* is the capital of the *Sikh Qaum* and can be described as our political executive and supreme court, though it is a much grander than those mundane institutions. Only Guru Nanak Sahib can rule from this Eternal throne. Today the authority and power of Guru Nanak Sahib is held by *Guru Granth Sahib ji* and the *Khalsa Panth*.

Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib is the eternal and perfect *Shabad* Guru which houses the complete and unchangeable wisdom of the Divine Creator and is the receptacle of the *Jot* (Divine light) of Guru Nanak Sahib. *Guru Granth Sahib* is the ultimate authority of the *Sikh Qaum*, our *Sachai Patshah* (True and Eternal Sovereign) and is treated at all times with the utmost respect, reverence and dignity. While the *Khalsa Panth* is the physical manifestation of the Guru, the *Panth* cannot reach the level of perfection implicit in *Guru Granth Sahib*. The sovereignty granted to the *Sikh Qaum* is a product of our faithful devotion to *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Sikh Qaum

The *Sikh Qaum* is the entire global body of the Sikh community. This is an inclusive institution for anyone who self-identifies as a Sikh and fulfills the basic definition of what a Sikh is according to the *Sikh Rehit Maryada*:

Article I- Definition of Sikh

Any woman or man who faithfully believes in:

- *One Infinite Creator*
- *Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Sahib to Guru Gobind Singh Sahib*
- *Guru Granth Sahib*
- *The Bani and teachings of the Ten Gurus*
- *The Amrit bequeathed by the Tenth Guru,*

and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion, is a Sikh.

(note: translation into contemporary English made from the original ratified Punjabi)

Sikh Rehit Maryada

The *Sikh Rehit Maryada (SRM)* was developed by the *Sikh Qaum* in the mid-20th century (ratified and published in 1945). It outlines the requirements of a Sikh lifestyle, both personal and corporate (*Panthic*). The *SRM* is a basic guideline and individual Sikhs or schools of thought are free to expand upon its provisions, but they cannot lower the standards contained within. The *SRM* allows the *Sikh Qaum* to move beyond doctrinal debate and discord and unite as *Qaum*.

Guru Khalsa Panth

Initiated Sikhs, who are committed and active members of the *Sikh Qaum*, are known as the Guru Khalsa Panth. A *Khalsa* is an individual who is Guru-oriented in mind and body, and who owes allegiance only to the Vahiguru, *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Panth* itself. Through the *Khande ki Pahul* ceremony (*Amrit Sanchar*) a Sikh is transformed into the *Khalsa*. The *Khalsa* was bestowed with the title of Guru by the Tenth Master, though it serves below the Perfect and Complete Guru, *Guru Granth Sahib ji*. The standards and expectations of an *Initiated Sikh* are higher than for other members of the *Sikh Qaum*. If an *Initiated Sikh* commits one of the four cardinal transgressions (*Bujjer Kurehit*) as outlined in the *Sikh Rehit Maryada*, they are required to undergo the *Amrit Sanchar* to once again be considered a full member of the *Khalsa*. As Guru, the *Khalsa Panth* has authority over temporal issues through the use of the structures explained in this Framework.

Panthic Soch: Panthic Thinking

Panthic Soch or *Panthic thinking* is the state of mind whereby a Sikh puts the needs of the *Qaum* above their own personal, familial and financial interests. It was this sense of '*being Panthic*' which inspired generations of Sikhs to struggle against oppression and make epic sacrifices for the sake of the *Sikh Qaum*. It is not necessary to have undergone *Khande ki Pahul* (*Amrit Sanchar*) to have Panthic Soch.

Panj Piare

The institution of five deeply committed *Initiated Sikhs* who represent the authority of the Guru. This concept has deep roots in *Gurbani* and Sikh history. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib first blessed the *Panj Piare* with initiation into the *Khalsa Panth* and it was before the *Panj* that he submitted himself thus conferring *Gurgaddi* (Office and Authority of the Guru) to the *Panth*. The *Panj Piare* are the visible body of the Guru and carry Guru Gobind Singh Sahib's authority over temporal issues.

The *Panj Piare* act as a check against individual rule. Therefore, it is the *Panj Piare* who under the guidance of *Guru Granth Sahib* serve at *Akal Takht Sahib*. Simply put, the *Panj Piare of Akal Takht Sahib* can be said to hold the offices of the executive and supreme court of the *Sikh Qaum* as they are the *Mukh*



Sevadars (custodians) of the Takht. Because the *Panj Piare* formally hold the *Gurgaddi* conferred on the *Panth* by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, they are accountable to and appointed by the *Sarbat Khalsa*.

Offices & Functions of the Akal Takht Sahib*

In order to effectively provide leadership and guidance to the global *Sikh Qaum* the *Akal Takht Sahib* will have as part of its governance structure offices and functions which specialize in various fields that impact the lives of Sikhs globally. These may include offices with jurisdiction over areas like *Gurmat*, Foreign Affairs, *Misl* (Region) relations, Civil Rights and Humanitarian/*Seva*. The offices may be centrally located and/or wherever the *Sikh Qaum* resides. The support functions of Akal Takht Sahib would provide the necessary resources and tools for the effective governance of the Qaum. These functions would include areas such as IT, accounting, communications, etc.

**This is a placeholder name only. We hope that with the Qaum's assistance an authentic Sikh term for this institution can be found.*

Office Holders* of the Akal Takht Sahib

The *Office Holders of the Akal Takht Sahib* are the individuals responsible for the operation and management of specific *Offices of the Akal Takht Sahib*. As per Sikh traditions, these *Office Holders* must be *Initiated Sikhs* with the necessary skills and experience to effectively manage their responsibilities. The *Office Holders* operate under the authority of the *Panj Piare*.

**This is a placeholder name only. We hope that with the Qaum's assistance an authentic Sikh term for this position can be found.*

Hukamname

Historically, *Hukamname* were commands written by the Guru Sahibs to Sikh communities. These messages were administrative dictates used to organize a geographically spread-out *Qaum*. The *Akal Takht Sahib* will use *Hukamname* to communicate with the *Qaum*, just as the Guru Sahibs issued *Hukams* from their *Takhts*. These decisions and clarifications will be researched and drafted by the *Offices of the Akal Takht Sahib*, and issued under the authority of the *Panj Piare*. *Hukamname* are the commands of the Guru and are thus binding on all members of the *Sikh Qaum* or those individuals/groups specified therein.

Sandesh

Sandesh are formal messages from the central authority of the community to the *Qaum*. As a remnant of the biannual *Sarbat Khalsa* of the 18th century *Sandesh* are traditionally given at the *Harimandir Sahib Complex* on *Vaisakhi* and *Divali*. While *Hukamname* are formal commands, *Sandesh* are messages of a more aspirational nature, outlining the state of the *Panth* and future goals of the community. *Sandesh*



need not be delivered only at *Divali* and *Vaisakhi* and shall be issued by and under the authority of the *Panj Piare of the Akal Takht Sahib*.

Sarbat Khalsa

The *Sarbat Khalsa* is the representative gathering of the entire *Sikh Qaum* which through dispassionate *Gurmat*-inspired deliberations charts the future plans of the Sikh community. It is an egalitarian body where groups of Sikhs are represented by delegates who make decisions through consensus building. This unique democratic system is a direct expression of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib's benediction of *Gurgaddi* on the *Khalsa Panth* and was developed by Sikhs based on *Gurmat* principles.

This representative gathering is, besides Guru Granth Sahib ji, the highest authority in the *Sikh Qaum* and our main deliberative body. In a simplistic sense it can be understood to be the legislature of the Sikhs. Historically *Sarbat Khalsa* were usually held at *Akal Takht Sahib* on *Divali* and *Vaisakhi* though they can be called wherever and whenever the *Sikh Qaum* requires. While the *Panj Piare* and the *Offices of the Akal Takht Sahib* administer the day to day operations of the *Qaum*, the *Sarbat Khalsa* is where the community comes together to create plans on how to achieve concrete goals that affect the global population of the community. The decisions reached by the *Sarbat Khalsa* are known as *Mata*.

Mata

The decisions reached by the *Sarbat Khalsa* through consensus building deliberative democracy are known as *Mata*. Historically these were decisions that gave the *Qaum* a clear directive to work towards with deadlines and a detailed plan of action. *Mata* should deal with issues either affecting the entire *Qaum*, global issues that impact the entire world (e.g. climate change, human trafficking) and emergency situations (e.g. plight of Afghani Sikhs).

Jorh Mela

A *Jorh Mela* is a large and usually festive gathering of the *Qaum*. The institution was first created by Guru Amar Das Sahib to bring together the Sikh community and was held biannually at *Vaisakhi* and *Divali*. In the 18th century, this *Jorh Mela* would normally occur at the same time as the *Sarbat Khalsa*. Beyond allowing a diverse community to come together in the Guru's presence, the *Jorh Mela* plays an integral role in *Sarbat Khalsa* deliberations. While the *Sarbat Khalsa* represents the *Qaum*, the *Jorh Mela* represents the institution of the *Khalsa*, or the *Sangat as Guru* concept. Decisions of the *Sarbat Khalsa* are presented before the gathered *Qaum*, and through joyful Salutations of Victory (*Jaikare*) the *Jorh Mela* gives assent to *Mata*. This transforms the *Mata* into a *Gurmata*.

Gurmata

A *Mata* that has been acclaimed by the *Jorh Mela* gathered outside the *Sarbat Khalsa* is known as a *Gurmata*. A *Gurmata* is treated as the Guru's decision and as such is binding on all members of the *Qaum*. Historically, failure to adhere to a *Gurmata* would result in a corrective measure, or *Tankha*, being given. Ignoring the *Tankha* and refusing to correct *anti-Panthic* behaviour would lead to excommunication from the *Qaum*.

Jathedar

Historically, a *Jathedar* was a leader or representative of a group of Sikhs who was chosen based on merit. *Jathedars* represented military units, geographically defined population groups, schools, *Seva* teams or some combination thereof (e.g. a *Jathedar* could be the leader of a village taking part in a *Morcha* to free a *Gurduara* in the 1920's, or someone coordinating humanitarian efforts for victims of an earthquake or the military leader of a band of guerilla warriors fighting the tyrannical empires of the 18th century). The *Sarbat Khalsa* had the authority to appoint and relieve *Jathedars* of their roles. In essence a *Jathedar* is a leader who works to fulfill a *Panthic* goal by organizing and leading a group of Sikhs.

In this *Framework*, returning to the original conception of the position, a *Jathedar* will be a person tasked by the *Sarbat Khalsa* to help facilitate the successful completion of a *Gurmata*. Their authority, mandate and the resources allocated to them will be determined by the *Sarbat Khalsa* while their day to day work will be supported by the *Offices of the Akal Takht Sahib*. Their title and authority will be tied to the *Gurmata* that they have been assigned to fulfill, and once their mandate is complete, they will be relieved of their position.

Misl* (Regions of the Qaum)

As a 30 million large, truly global community with substantial population centres on five continents, the *Sikh Qaum* will need to be divided into regions for effective, accountable and representative governance. The division of the *Qaum* into smaller groups began with Guru Amar Das Sahib.

The regions must allow for a balance between population size, geographic distribution and national concerns (e.g. communities in certain countries would logically be grouped together because they share similar issues, while a balance between Punjab's overwhelmingly large Sikh population and the unique needs of *Diaspora* populations also needs to be considered).

Just as many governments use the same governance model at the national and subnational level so too does it make logical sense that the regions of the *Sikh Qaum* use the same *Akal Takht Sahib Governance System*. Thus, the regions will have their own *Panj Piare*, Departmental Offices, *Sarbat Khalsa***, *Mata****, *Mela*****, and *Jathedars*. The regions will have a different scope of authority than the *Akal Takht Sahib* and the *Sarbat Khalsa*. Regions would also be responsible for choosing their



FREE AKAL TAKHT

representatives to the *Sarbat Khalsa*. The *Akal Takht Sahib* would have an office specifically tasked with regional affairs. This office would be responsible for communication between the regions and the *Akal Takht Sahib* as well as assisting in the implementation of the *Hukamname* and *Gurmata* of the *Qaum* at the regional level.

**Misl has been chosen as the term for regions because it was the last extant system of sub-Panthic organization. Is it an appropriate term, or is there something better from Gurmat/Sikh history?*

***Sarbat Khalsa is by definition a term for the gathering of representatives of all Sikhs. A term is needed here for a smaller, regional Sarbat Khalsa type gathering.*

****Since a Gurmata is the product of a Sarbat Khalsa, what term should be used for the regional deliberative body's resolutions?*

*****Since a Jorh Mela is a Panthic level gathering, what should a smaller regional gathering of the Sangat be called?*

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫ਼ਤਹ ॥

ਵਡਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਤੁਧੁ ਤਖਤੁ ॥

ਸਿਰਿ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਨਿਹਚਲੁ ਚਉਰੁ ਛਤੁ ॥

Framework Background (Gurbani & History)

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The Akal Takht Sahib

As with all things in Sikhi, the *Akal Takht Sahib* begins with Guru Nanak Sahib ji. Bhai Gurdas tells us that Guru Nanak Sahib is the True Emperor who sits on the Divine Throne:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਚਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਸਚ ਤਖਤੁ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ
The True Guru, Guru Nanak, is the True Emperor
His Sangat is True and His Throne full of Peace
Bhai Gurdas, V18-P20

And Bhai Nand Lal reiterates,

ਸਿਹਨਸ਼ਾਹਿ ਦਾਰੈਨ ਕਰਦਸ਼ ਖ਼ਿਤਾਬ...
ਹੱਕਸ਼ ਆਰਾਸਤ ਖ਼ੁਦ ਤਖ਼ਤਗਾਹਸ਼ ਬੁਲੰਦ
The Divine has Blessed Guru Nanak as Sovereign of Miri & Piri...
The Divine has placed Guru Nanak on the highest Throne.
Bhai Nand Lal, Jot Bigas (Persian) P5 & 6

The *Takht* is the manifestation of Guru Nanak Sahib's authority and is thus an integral part of the institution of the Guru. This Divine and Eternal *Takht* is the expression of the Guru's complete sovereignty. The full scope of Guru Nanak Sahib's vision was revealed slowly, through the ten Guru Sahibs, and thus while the powers associated with the *Akal Takht Sahib* existed from the time of Guru Nanak Sahib, the institution was made physical by the Master of *Miri Piri*, Guru Hargobind Sahib. The *Takht Akal Bunga Sahib* (it's original name) is a unique institution. It was from here that Guru Hargobind Sahib, Sovereign of All Realms, exercised his socio-political, judicial and military power, giving *Akal Takht Sahib* its unique and integral status in Sikhi. Guru Hargobind Sahib ruled from the *Takht* as the *Sache Patshah*, the True and Complete Sovereign.

Everything the Guru Sahibs did was so rich in meaning and the building of *Akal Takht Sahib* by the Sixth Master was no different. Whereas *Harimandir Sahib* had its foundation stone laid by a non-Sikh, Sain Mian Mir, and anyone who wished to take part in its construction was invited to do so, the construction of *Akal Takht Sahib* was a much more exclusive act. It was Guru Hargobind Sahib himself who not only laid the foundation stone of the *Takht*, but in fact, made each brick with his own two hands. The building of the *Takht* was left to the two greatest and most well-respected Sikhs of the time, Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas. The message was clear. This was not a *Gurduara*, like Harimandir Sahib, open to all of humanity and a place where all beings came to be united in praise of the Divine. No, the *Akal Takht Sahib* was a place where very serious decisions about the future of a *Qaum* would take place. It was where the Guru ruled as an Emperor, and thus, it would be inappropriate for it to be an open space. Only those who had



sworn allegiance to the Guru and had fully committed themselves could enter the *Takht*, a tradition that was actually maintained until the colonial era.

The *Akal Takht Sahib* is tied directly to the office of the Guru. When Guru Hargobind Sahib moved the capital of the *Sikh Qaum* to Kiratpur Sahib, he built a new *Takht* there, *Takht Kot Sahib*, and it was from there that he, Guru Har Rai Sahib and Guru Harkrishan Sahib exercised their *temporal* powers. In fact the *Gurgaddi* ceremonies of Guru Har Rai Sahib and Guru Harkrishan Sahib took place at *Takht Kot Sahib*. When Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib built a new capital at Chak Nananki (Anandpur Sahib), he built a new *Takht*, *Akal Bunga Sahib*, there. It was from the Anandpur *Akal Bunga* that Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh Sahib formally ruled as complete sovereigns and where Guru Gobind Rai Sahib issued his first *Hukam* after the cremation ceremonies of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's remains. Later, when Guru Gobind Singh Sahib fortified Anandpur Sahib with five forts, the fort of Kesgarh Sahib was made his *Takht*.

After Guru Gobind Singh Sahib appointed Baba Banda Singh 'Bahadur' as the general of the Khalsa Army and sent the *Khalsa Panth* to free Punjab from oppressive rule, the institution of the *Akal Takht* rested with the *Panth* itself, with the *Panj Piare* (Bhai Binod Singh, Bhai Baj Singh, etc) appointed by Guru Sahib exercising power from it. The *Khalsa* were able to free Southern Punjab from Imperial rule. Mukhlispur Sahib was made the capital of the *Sikh Qaum*, and the institution of the *Akal Takht Sahib* was situated at the fort of *Lohgarh Sahib*. Therefore, even though central Punjab and thus Amritsar Sahib still lay under Mughal control, the sovereignty of the Guru, as represented by the institution of the *Akal Takht Sahib*, was still completely intact. Similarly, later in the 18th century when Amritsar Sahib was periodically under Mughal or Afghani rule, the *Sikh Qaum* would meet to exercise their sovereign self-governance traditions in other locations, such as at the Lakhi Jungle.

So while Amritsar Sahib is a very important city to the *Sikh Qaum*, and Guru Ram Das Sahib, Guru Arjan Sahib and Guru Hargobind Sahib very thoughtfully designed and constructed it as the capital of the *Sikh Qaum*, the *Akal Takht Sahib* does not just exist in that single physical location. It is a Divine and eternal institution that is tied not to geography but to the Guru.

The Sangat, after 230 years of intense and loving development by the ten historical Guru Sahibs, was transformed into the *Khalsa* on *Vaisakhi* 1699. The *Khalsa* is the Guru, though always under the guidance and blessings of the One Perfect Guru, Guru Granth Sahib. Our responsibilities as Guru are in the *temporal* realm, with primary authority always resting with Guru Granth Sahib ji. No individual, group or organization can ever 'control' or sit on the throne of Akal Purkh Vahiguru Sahib ji. It is Guru Nanak Sahib ji who rules from the Divine and Eternal *Takht*, and the *Panth* is simply the *Takht's* custodian and caretaker. Through this seva we are blessed with royal sovereignty as the Guru Khalsa Panth.:

ਇਨ ਗਰੀਬ ਸਿਖਨ ਕੇ ਦਿਉਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ॥ ਯਹ ਯਾਦ ਰਖੇਂ ਹਮਰੀ ਗੁਰਿਆਈ॥
I bestow upon these humble (Seva oriented) Sikhs my royalty.
Let them remember (and emulate the example) of my Guruship.



FREE AKAL TAKHT

Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, Panthic Oral Tradition

This episode from Sri Gur Panth Parkash by Rattan Singh Bhangu expands on this idea of the Khalsa being the rightful heirs to be caretakers of the Guru's throne:

ਦੇਹਰਾ: ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਆਖੀ ਜੇ ਬੰਦੇ ਸੁ ਉਨ ਕਰੀ ਮਨਜ਼ੂਰ।
ਪਰਗਟ ਹੋਈ ਜਗਤ ਗਲ ਕੀਯੋ ਬੰਦਾ ਭਰਪੂਰ। [10]
ਬੰਦੇ ਗੁਰ ਖੰਡਾ ਦਯੋ ਲਯੋ ਉਨੈ ਗਲ ਪਾਇ।
ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੇਖ ਸੁ ਵਿਟਰਿਓ ਤਿਨ ਖੰਡੇ ਲਯੋ ਛਿਨਾਇ। [11]
ਚੈਪਈ: ਤਬ ਫਰਯਾਦ ਉਨ ਗੁਰ ਪਹਿ ਕਰੀ। ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਹਸ ਹਸ ਚਿਤ ਬਿਚਰੀ।
ਚੀਜ ਆਪਨੀ ਇਨ੍ਹੈ ਸੰਭਾਰੀ। ਭਯੋ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਅਬ ਕਲ ਧਾਰੀ। [12]

“The Guru then handed over his double-edged dagger to the Banda Singh, Which he accepted and wore around his person as an armour. Feeling enraged at the loss of their legitimate right of being Guru's heirs, The Khalsa Singhs stripped Banda Singh of Guru's armour. (11) Chaupai : As stripped Banda Singh complained to the Guru (about the Singh's act), The Guru went into peels of laughter with immense joy. The Guru remarked that with Singh's forcible possession of their legitimate right, His mission of empowering the Khalsa Panth has been fulfilled. (12)”

Sri Gur Panth Parkash Episode 29 Volume 1, Rattan Singh Bhangu

The Sikh Qaum

Guru Nanak Sahib's path is an inclusive one. Guru Sahib revealed the truth: that we are all infused with Vahiguru's Divine light and there is no distinction between any human being, as he so boldly stated when he emerged from the river at Sultanpur Lodhi. The towns and cities the Guru Sahibs built and developed were open and welcoming to all and the *Seva* to build large scale national projects, like *Baoli Sahib* at Goindval Sahib and the *Amrit Sarovar* and *Harimandir Sahib* at Amritsar Sahib, were fully inclusive. In all things, the Gurus sought unity and oneness. As Guru Gobind Singh Sahib so boldly proclaimed,

...ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੈ ॥
...all members of the human species are recognized as one.
Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, Akal Ustat P85

While a formal pledge to the Guru is the ultimate goal of a Sikh, there has always been room for varying levels of commitment within Sikhi. While the *Khalsa* fought so bravely in the jungles and deserts in and around Punjab in the early and mid-18th century, it was other followers of the Sikh path who kept our scriptures, institutions and knowledge intact, saving our traditions from extinction.

Guru Khalsa Panth

“While Guru Granth Sahib is now universally accepted as Guru of the Sikhs, the role of the Panth as Guru is not so clearly understood even among Sikhs.”

Guru Granth-Guru Panth, Dr. Kharak Singh

From the Sikh Rehat Maryada: Article XXIII - Panth's Status of Guru-hood

This corporate entity is the Panth. Every Sikh has also to fulfill his obligations as a unit of the corporate body, the Panth.

- 1. The Guru Panth (Panth's status of Guruhood) means the whole body of committed baptized Sikhs. This body was fostered by all the ten Gurus and the tenth Guru gave it its final shape and invested it with Guruhood.**

The revelation of the Khalsa was not a one day event but instead was a two centuries long process that culminated on *Vaisakhi* 1699.

“Gobind himself, in fact, as well as his work, was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the foundation of Sikhism. The harvest which ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors.. The sword which paved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly, forged by Gobind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak. He considered the mission of all his predecessors to be one and the same, and his own as its consummation. 'The generality of men,' he says, 'take them as different from one another; very few recognize them as one in spirit. But only those realize perfection who do recognize them as one’

A Short History of the Sikhs Volume One (1469-1765) Teja Singh & Ganda Singh pg. 65

One of the first milestones in the task of developing Sikhs into *Khalsa* was Guru Nanak Sahib's act of appointing prominent Sikhs (e.g. Bhai Lalo at Eminabad and Sheik Sajjan at Tulamba) as the heads of the *Dharamsalas* (community spaces where nascent Sikh sangats could gather for both devotional, seva and administrative purposes) that he created. By giving authority to Sikhs to manage the affairs of local communities, Guru Nanak Sahib was beginning the process of developing the *Sangat's* capacity for leadership. The Third Master, Guru Amar Das Sahib introduced many important steps in the development towards the *Khalsa*. He created biannual *Jorh Melas* at *Vaisakhi* and *Divali*, thus allowing an increasingly multi-ethnic, linguistically diverse and geographically spread-out community to gather and learn from each other and from Guru Sahib (a development which led directly to the *Sarbat Khalsa* of the 18th century). Guru Amar Das Sahib also created the *Manji* system, further refining Guru Nanak Sahib's *Dharamsala* system of *Panthic* organization. Guru Sahib split the *Panth* into 22 geographical regions, called *Manjis*, and appointed 22 *Manjidars* to head them. These *Manjidars* were given a significant amount



of authority, and acted on the Guru's behalf, as his emissaries if you will (in a revolutionary act of working towards an egalitarian *Qaum*, three of the representatives were women). These steps continued up to the time of the Tenth Master, when the Sikhs of the Guru were ready for their rebirth.

The word *Khalsa* has two etymologies. It comes both from the Arabic word *Khalis*, meaning pure, as well as the Persian word *Khalisah*, meaning directly under the control of the sovereign. We see the use of the first definition in the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib himself:

ਪੂਰਨ ਜੋਤ ਜਗੈ ਘਟ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਖਾਲਸ ਤਾਹਿ ਨਖਾਲਸ ਜਾਨੈ ॥੧॥
In whose heart shines the light of the Perfect One,
That individual is to be recognized as a pure member of the Khalsa.
Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, 33 Savaiye P1

The use of *Khalsa*, with its second meaning, was first introduced at the time of Guru Hargobind Sahib, when he refers to his sangats as his *Khalsa* in two of the *Hukams* that are attributed to him. Thus a *Khalsa* is a person who is of pure mind and body and who is answerable only to the Divine and the Guru.

Panj Piare

The status of Guru that Guru Gobind Singh Sahib ji, The Tenth Master, blessed to the sangat is concentrated in the Panj Piare. The Panj are the physical manifestation (*Sargun Sarup*) of the Guru and embody the socio-political-judicial authority of Guru Nanak Sahib. The authority of five Sikhs was a well established principle long before 1699. Bhai Gurdas, living during the time of the 4th to 6th Masters, writes,

ਇਕੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਦੁਇ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗੁ ਪੰਜੀਂ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ।
One is a Sikh, two Sikhs are the true Sangat and in Five resides the Master of the World.
Bhai Gurdas V13-P19

and again,

ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਹੈ ਪੰਜ ਮਿਲਿ ਲੇਖ ਅਲੇਖ ਨ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਪਾਈ।
ਪੰਜ ਮਿਲੇ ਪਰਪੰਚ ਤਜਿ ਅਨਹਦ ਸਬਦ ਸਬਦਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਈ।
ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਗੁਰ ਭਾਈ ॥੬॥
Where five sit, the Divine is there;
this mystery of the indescribable Divine cannot be comprehended.
But only when those five reject hypocrisy and merge their minds into the Shabad,
Then is the Sangat considered the collective Guru.
Bhai Gurdas, V29-P6

Five Sikhs also played important roles in Sikh history, with Guru Arjan Sahib choosing five Sikhs to accompany him to Lahore when he gave himself up for arrest and Shahidi, Guru Hargobind Sahib choosing five generals for the first Sikh army and Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib traveling with five Sikhs on his way to Delhi to give himself up for imprisonment and execution. In fact, according to *Nihang* oral tradition, each of the Guru Sahibs had their own Panj Piare composed of their closest and most well respected Sikhs.

The transformation of a Sikh to a Khalsa, through the taking of *Amrit* (*Khande ki Pahul*), is profound. Beyond a mere initiation ceremony are deep mystical, social, and cultural ideas with Guru Gobind Singh Sahib instilling each aspect of the *Sanchar* with profound and mythic meaning. Just as Guru Hargobind Sahib's act of building *Akal Takht Sahib* was the physical manifestation of Guru Nanak Sahib's *Takht*, so too is the creation of the *Khalsa* an echo of Guru Nanak Sahib's own experience with the Divine. This experience, in the waters of the Vain Nadi at Sultanpur Lodhi, has been explained in Bhai Nand Lal's *Ganjnama*, with Bhai Sahib revealing that Guru Nanak Sahib received *amrit*, a *dastar* and the authority of *Guruship* from *Akal Purkh Sahib*. While the actual episode is an incomprehensible non-physical mystical encounter, Bhai Nand Lal is helping us understand Guru Nanak Sahib's unique position and the authority with which Guru Sahib operates. Guru Nanak Sahib's transformation of Bhai Lehna into Guru Angad Sahib is thus a re-creation of his own mystical experience with Vahiguru, and it is this experience which is then passed on to the Sikhs as a whole by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. Guru Granth Sahib's description of Guru Angad Sahib's Gurgaddi ceremony demonstrates the similarity between that event and Vaisakhi 1699:

ਨਾਨਕਿ ਰਾਜੁ ਚਲਾਇਆ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਟੁ ਸਤਾਈ ਨੀਵੈ ॥
ਲਹਣੇ ਧਰਿਓਨੁ ਛਤੁ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਿਫਤੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਪੀਵੈ ॥
ਮਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਆਤਮ ਦੇਵ ਦੀ ਖੜਗਿ ਜੋਰਿ ਪਰਾਕੁਇ ਜੀਅੈ ॥
ਗੁਰਿ ਚੇਲੇ ਰਹਰਾਸਿ ਕੀਈ ਨਾਨਕਿ ਸਲਾਮਤਿ ਥੀਵੈ ॥

Nanak established his dominion;

He built the fortress of truth on the strongest foundations.

*Singing Divine Praises, Bhai Lehna drank Amrit
and Guru Nanak placed the royal canopy over him.*

*Guru Nanak Sahib transformed Bhai Lehna
with the All-powerful Sword of Divine knowledge.*

Guru Nanak Sahib recognized and bowed before his own disciple, Bhai Lehna.

Bhai Satta & Bhai Balvand, SGGS Ang 966

So, the *Panj Piare* as holders of the office of *Guruship* is an integral Sikh concept that traces back to Guru Nanak Sahib himself. After *Vaisakhi* 1699 this concept took on the status of a more formal institution, with Guru Gobind Singh Sahib purposefully submitting to the will of the *Khalsa* three times before he left this earth in 1708. These teaching opportunities were created by the Tenth Father so that there would be



no doubt that the authority of the Guru resided not just in Guru Granth Sahib ji but in the Khalsa Panth as represented by the Panj Piare.

One reason the Panj were created was to serve as a check against the rule of an individual. In fact, according to historical sources, Guru Gobind Singh Sahib's last teaching to the Panth was that after he left his body the Panth should never put leadership in the hands of a single individual but always look to the Panj and the Sangat as Guru. When Guru Gobind Singh Sahib sent Baba Banda Singh 'Bahadur' to Punjab it was not as a king or ruler of the *Khalsa*, but as the general of the Sikh army. Guru Sahib appointed *Panj Piare* to accompany Baba Banda Singh, because it was with the *Five* that the authority of the Guru rested.

Offices & Functions of the Akal Takht & Office Holders of the Akal Takht

The Guru Sahibs were multifaceted leaders, providing guidance to the *Sikh Qaum* in a variety of fields. While Guru Nanak Sahib was very critical of organized religion in his *Bani* and actually recognized it as a source of great evil in the world, he did not reject the institution outright. Instead, Guru Sahib knew that to make real change in the world, social organization and wider nation building was essential. And so, starting with Guru Nanak Sahib, all of the Gurus created sophisticated and professional systems of organizing, managing and leading a geographically, linguistically and ethnically diverse *Qaum*. The Gurus ensured that able administrators were appointed to oversee everything from large scale seva projects, relations with other governments, militaries, the collection of *Dasvandh*, the spreading of Sikhi, educational initiatives and the patronizing of artists. Sikhs like Sheikh Sajjan (community leader and preacher), Mai Kabuli (preacher and community leader), Bibi Bhani (city planner and administrator), Baba Buddha (emissary to foreign government, national *Seva* project organizer, military trainer), Bhai Biddhi Chand (military leader, preacher), Bibi Sarup Kaur (historian and scholar), Bhai Mani Singh (scholar, educator and administrator) and Bhai Daya Singh (military leader and emissary to a foreign government) were all given different areas of responsibility within the Sikh Qaum.

None of these Sikhs had any authority on their own, but instead were bestowed as leaders in their specific field by the Divine Grace of the Guru. All power in the Sikh Qaum rested with the Guru, but to ensure that Sikhs were an effective and powerful force for positive change, and also to build capacity and skill within their Sikhs, the Gurus developed the community and created these positions.

Sarbat Khalsa

The *Sarbat Khalsa* is the decision making body that holds the authority of the *Sikh Qaum*. It is the representative gathering of the *Sikh Sangat* and makes decisions, or *Mata*, through consensus building



democracy. The *Sarbat Khalsa* was originally established in the early 18th century based on systems and principles developed by the Ten Guru Sahibs. The work of building leadership and organizational capacity within the *Sikh Qaum* was begun by Guru Nanak Sahib who developed the concept of the *Sangat* within his own Bani. This was expounded upon and built up by the other Guru Sahibs:

ਵਿਚਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਵਰਤਦਾ ਬੁਝਹੁ ਸਬਦ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥
The Ever-Living Divine exists in the Sangat;
Reflect upon the Shabad and understand this.
Guru Ramdas Sahib, Ang 1314

The Guru Sahibs had a goal of creating a community of leaders who would gather together to determine the *Qaum's* future as a collective whole. This institution would ultimately have authority even over the Guru Sahib themselves, as demonstrated by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib's relationship with the Khalsa. Speaking to this authority, Guru Amar Das Sahib introduced an oral saying still prevalent in the community today:

ਗੁਰੂ ਵੀਹ ਬਿਸਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਗਤ ਇਕੀ ਬਿਸਵੇ
"The Guru is 20 Parts, the Sangat is 21 Parts"
Guru Amar Das Sahib. Oral Tradition

Which means that while the Guru is perfect and complete (20 *Bisva* is a complete unit of land in an old Punjabi measurement system) but the Sangat is still higher in authority above even the Perfect Guru.

In the post-Baba Banda Singh 'Bahadur' period, the *Sarbat Khalsa* was developed by Sikhs as a direct expression of the lessons taught to them by the Guru Sahibs and the Gurmat principles that they had lived. The *Sikh Qaum* was in a precarious situation. The community was divided into small roving bands, living in the jungles and deserts in and around Punjab. Access to resources were severely limited and the extinction of the community seemed like a very real possibility. How could the community gather, unite and make decisions in a meaningful way that would stay true to the principles of the Guru? The ideal that needed to be represented in a governance model was the equality of all members of the *Qaum*. The system that those Sikhs developed was called the *Sarbat Khalsa*.

Every small group, or *Jatha*, would chose a representative based on merit. That representative would then come to *Akal Takht Sahib*, usually at *Divali* and *Vaisakhi* as per the old tradition of the community gathering on the dates started by Guru Amar Das Sahib. In the presence of Guru Granth Sahib and through dispassionate, selfless thinking, the representatives would propose actions for the community to take. Unlike Western Democracy, this system was not based on majority rule. Every voice mattered and every concern had to be addressed. Thus, through the slow and difficult process of consensus building, a decision would emerge. Once this decision was crafted, it would be presented to the gathered masses of the *Qaum* who would then approve it through *Jaikare*.



This model of community organization was incredibly powerful and successful. Sikhs were united, decisions were agreed to by all, and every member of the *Qaum* felt empowered. It allowed for the *Sikh Qaum* to grow dramatically, both in population and socio-political power, in a few short decades so that by the 1770's Punjab was essentially free of outside Imperial control. And this was after genocidal campaigns and suffering through the two *Ghallugharas*.

"When the chiefs and principal leaders meet upon this solemn occasion, it is concluded that all private animosities cease and that every man sacrifices his personal feelings at the shrine of general good and actuated by the principles of pure patriotism, thinks of nothing but the interests of the religion and the commonwealth to which he belongs. After the prayers (ardas) and distribution of Karah Parshad, the session commenced: Then distinction of original tribes, which are on other occasions kept up, are on this occasion laid aside in token of their general and complete union in one cause. The Akalis then exclaim, "Sardars (chiefs), this is a Gurmata on which prayers are again said aloud. The chiefs after tills sit closer and say to each other, "the sacred Granth is betwixt us, let us swear by our scripture to forget all internal disputes and to be united". This moment of religious fervour and ardent patriotism is taken to reconcile all animosities. They then proceed to consider the danger with which they are threatened, to settle the best plans for averting it and to choose the generals who are to lead their armies against the common enemy"

John Malcolm, 'Sketch Of The Sikhs', Asiatick Researches, 1810

This Guru-inspired, *Gurmat*-based system of governance is an ingrained part of the Sikh psyche, so that even two hundred years later, when the community is undergoing severe persecution and is in grave danger we, as a *Qaum*, have naturally turned to the *Sarbat Khalsa* as a means of uniting the *Qaum* and moving forward. In 1920, 1986 and last year in 2015, the *Sikh Qaum* attempted to hold *Sarbat Khalsa* to move the community forward in treacherous times. These attempts were not perfect but were inspiring attempts by the *Sikh Qaum* to recapture our sovereign governance traditions. The *Sarbat Khalsa* is the most natural and authentic method of internal Sikh governance.

Misl (Regional Groups)

The Ten Guru Sahibs created a system of governance that was both centralized in terms of authority but decentralized in terms of day to day operations. Guru Nanak Sahib founded *Dharamsalas* wherever he traveled which were left under the care of local Sikhs. Guru Amardas Sahib formalized the *Panth's* internal organization with the creation of the *Manji* system which was further developed by Guru Ramdas Sahib into the *Masand* system. At first, each *Manjidar/Masand* was appointed by Guru Sahib. They had a specific geographic area of responsibility and acted in a variety of roles. They were emissaries of the sovereign Guru, were responsible for the collection of *Dasvandh* (after its creation by Guru Arjan Sahib), spread the message of Sikhi, passed messages to the *Sangat* from the Guru and were the leaders of the



FREE AKAL TAKHT

local sangats in all affairs. This position was too powerful, and as a stark lesson to Sikhs today, *Mahants* quickly grew so corrupt that Guru Gobind Singh Sahib had to eradicate the entire system. The message was clear: never again should the *Panth* give so much authority to one individual.

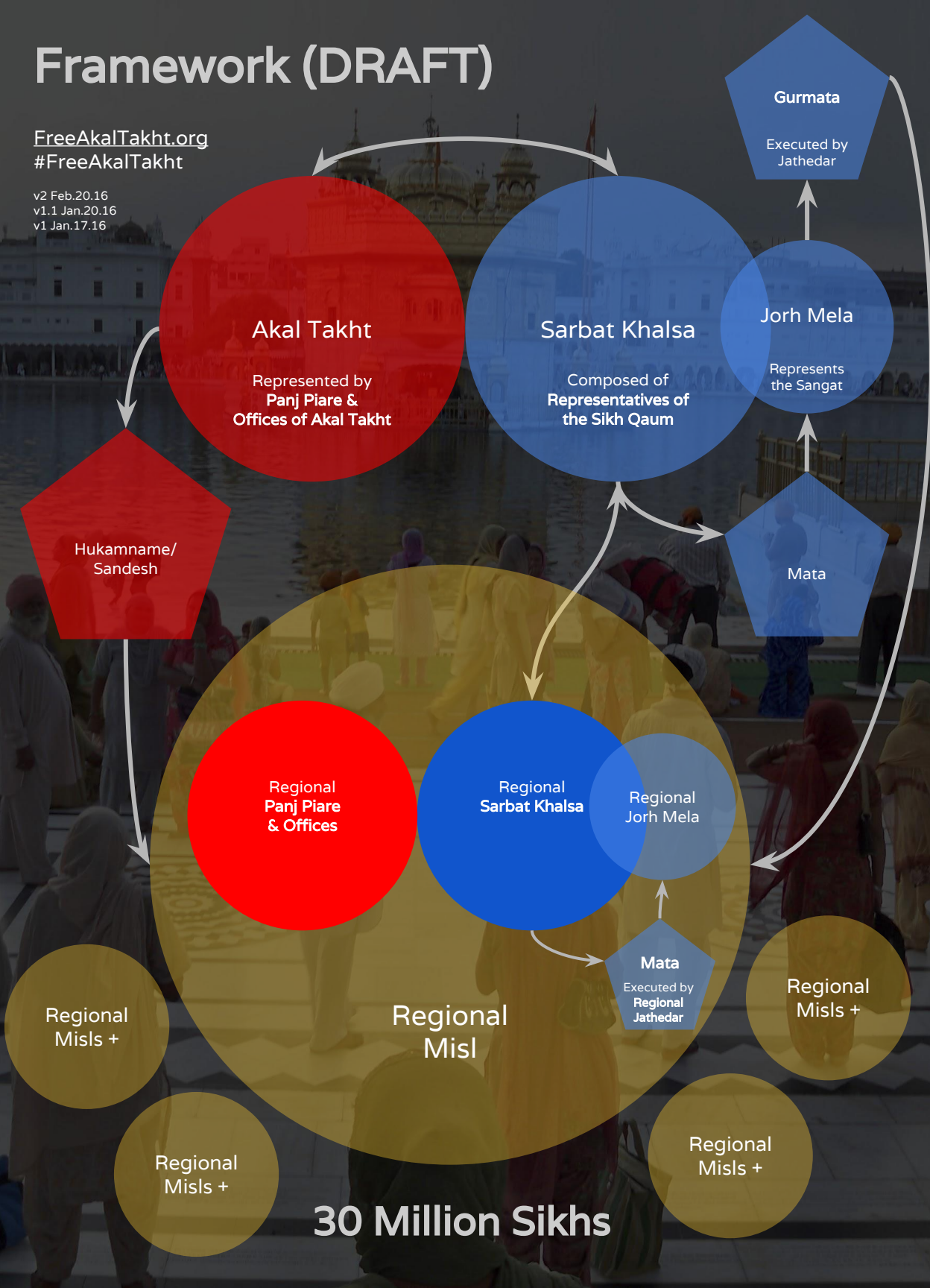
Guru Gobind Singh Sahib replaced the idea of a single leader of a *sangat* with the *Panj Piare* model. However the structure of a centralized authority with decentralized local decision making was still maintained. Each *Sangat* ran their own affairs using the *Panj Piare* as their local authority, while submitting to the central authority of the Guru.

In the *Sarbat Khalsa*-era, the community organized itself into *Jathas* then *Dals* (armies) and finally into *Misls* (confederacies). As a global community of 30 million spread over five continents the modern *Sikh Qaum* needs some system of internal organization. For now, as it was the last term of organization used, this Framework is using *Misl* as the word to describe regional zones within the larger Sikh Qaum. As with everything else in this Framework, this is open to change.

Framework (DRAFT)

FreeAkalTakht.org
#FreeAkalTakht

v2 Feb.20.16
v1.1 Jan.20.16
v1 Jan.17.16





FREE AKAL TAKHT

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫ਼ਤਹ ॥

ਵਡਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਤੁਧੁ ਤਖਤੁ ॥
ਸਿਰਿ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਨਿਹਚਲੁ ਚਉਰੁ ਛਤੁ ॥

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Why does the Akal Takht need to be free?

- a. Sikhi is the only major faith in the world without a sovereign governance structure. Over the last 90 years we have normalized the fact that the *Akal Takht Sahib* is under the legal control of the SGPC, which itself is under the direct purview of first British and now Indian laws. The *Akal Takht Sahib* was built by Guru Hargobind Sahib based on principles laid down by Guru Nanak Sahib. The Guru Sahibs blessed us with our own well developed, carefully thought out governance structure. For the sovereign, Guru-created, Divine-inspired governance model of the *Sikh Qaum* to now be under the direct control of an outside government is an unacceptable situation. Without this sovereign governance structure our *Qaum* has been unable to fulfill its true purpose or live up to its full potential.
- b. Sikhs can have a transformative impact on the world. Guru Nanak Sahib created this *Qaum* with the revolutionary ideal that full human dignity and equality can be realized through Gurbani-inspired selfless humanitarian and political *Seva* (*Degh Tegh Fateh* dictum). The *Qaum* has been able to have an impact far bigger than our tiny numbers and minimal resources would suggest. The *Sikh Qaum* defeated three tyrannical empires (Mughal Empire, Duranni's Afghani Empire and Nadir Shah's Persian Empire) in the 18th century while actively freeing and defending civilians from death, slavery and exploitation. In the early 20th century the Sikh *Qaum* was the main force in the anti-colonial struggle, freeing South Asia (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) from British control. Today, without a democratic, deliberative governance structure where our resources and institutions are under our control, we are unable to serve ourselves, let alone others. We need not go into the laundry list of current *Panthic* problems and issues, and while a Free *Akal Takht* will not solve these issues overnight, it will allow us to develop system whereby we can start to tackle the problems plaguing our *Qaum* and then finally get back to our true purpose as a people.

2. Why is the Free Akal Takht initiative not partnering with the SGPC?

- a. The SGPC is a creation of the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925, as such it falls under the authority of the Government of India. Reform of the SGPC is impossible without those changes being introduced and passed in the Parliament of India. This is unacceptable. What was once supposed to be a simple *Gurduara* management committee to ensure that historic *Gurduaras* were being run in accordance with *Gurmat Maryada* and without financial mismanagement, has become the de facto leadership of the entire Sikh nation. In 2015 the Chief Administrator in Punjab was assigned to control Sikh affairs, further rendering the *Sikh Qaum* powerless and at the mercy of the Indian State, which is able to deliberate and ultimately decide on Sikh issues unilaterally.



- b. The SGPC was created to manage historical *Gurduaras* in Punjab. However, the *Akal Takht Sahib* is not a *Gurduara* but a unique institution created by Guru Hargobind Sahib ji, based on the principles of Guru Nanak Sahib ji, and with the blessings and inspiration of the Divine Creator, Vahiguru. It is where the Guru's '*Miri*' (temporal) powers are exercised from. It is an integral part of Sikh governance structures and it is contrary to *Gurmat* history and principles for it to be under the authority of another body, such as the SGPC.
- c. The Akal Takht Sahib was created by Guru Hargobind Sahib as the seat of the Guru's authority. It was treated as such until the dissolution of the *Sarbat Khalsa* by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1805. The SGPC's role within the Sikh governance model has never been formally thought out, especially in regards to the role of *Jathedars*, *Sarbat Khalsa*, the *Takhts*, etc. This has led to confusing circumstances. For example, the *Jathedars* of *Takhts* are barely mentioned in both the *Sikh Rehit Maryada* and the Sikh Gurdwara Act, and yet they have played an increasingly prominent role in the community. There are no clear divisions of responsibility or frameworks of governance to determine who has authority over whom, creating conflict between *Jathedars* themselves, between the *Jathedars* and the SGPC and between these groups and state and party officials.
- d. While the early sevadars of the SGPC were brave *GurSikhs* who fought courageously against British colonialism to free *Gurduaras*, within a generation the institution had become corrupt. By the mid-1960's the SGPC was already a shadow of what it had once been. Using Westminster-style elections to govern a *Panthic* organization was a disastrous mistake and one that has led to increasingly outrageous anti-*Gurmat* behaviour. Elections for the SGPC have become sad and embarrassing spectacles with alcohol, drugs and money openly been used to win votes for what is ostensibly the supreme *Panthic* body of the *Sikh Qaum*.
- e. The SGPC has authority over the states that were a part of pre-1968 Punjab (i.e. present day India Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana). It has no authority over historical *Gurduaras* or institutions outside of that region. It is made up of representatives who are elected based on ridings in those three states only, with token representation from some other areas. However, Sikhi is and always has been a global faith, with a vast and widespread diaspora. Not only are Sikhs in other countries left disenfranchised but even Sikhs in other parts of India have no say in the way the SGPC is run. It is a fundamental flaw for a legislative body with such a narrow geographical mandate to have so much power over the entire *Sikh Qaum*. The concerns and opinions of millions of Sikhs are not being heard.
- f. The SGPC's electoral model has led to political parties taking an inordinate amount of control of *Panthic* Institutions. The *Akali Dal* party, once created to give voice to Sikh



concerns in the colonial era, now runs *Panthic* institutions as a political prize, with the *President of the SAD* having more power than any individual should ever have in a Sikh governance model. In fundamental ways, the leadership of the *Akali Dal* has more power over the *Akal Takht Sahib* than Maharaja Ranjit Singh had over the *Panth* in the early 19th century.

3. Why is the Free Akal Takht initiative not working in partnership with existing political parties in India?

- a. This movement is not just a Punjab issue. It is a Sikh issue, impacting the lives of 30 million Sikhs worldwide. As such, winning an election for control of Punjab will not solve the problem of how the *Sikh Qaum* is currently governed. It will not solve the issue of how the *Akal Takht Sahib* is being denigrated and the *Sarbat Khalsa* governance structure is not being allowed to function as it was designed to. Sikhs in the diaspora sometimes forget that Punjab is a multi-ethnic state with a very large Hindu population and significant Muslim and Christian communities. The state of the *Akal Takht Sahib* and the reform of Sikh institutions is not a priority for many of the residents of Punjab, and therefore no credible political party would focus their attention solely on Sikh religious issues. That is not to say that Sikhs should not involve themselves in Punjab politics and in fact, many serious issues that affect all Punjabis (female foeticide, farmer suicide, environmental pollution, groundwater depletion, drug use, alcohol abuse, unemployment, water rights, lack of infrastructure, lack of investment and systemic corruption) desperately need to be addressed. Sikhs have an essential role to play in this conversation and Sikh values need to be brought to the table to help save a dying Punjab. However, Punjab and Sikh issues need to stop being conflated as all Sikhs are not Punjabi and all Punjabis are not Sikhs.
- b. Electoral politics in India are an incredibly corrupt affair. Political parties are well established machines with huge networks of patronage that ensure they remain in power. The Shiromani Akali Dal is a sophisticated entity and its current leader himself is a political genius, having first been elected Chief Minister of Punjab over forty five years ago. Streams of Akalis within Shiromani Akali Dal, other separate Akali Dals, and *Panthic*-minded GurSikhs have struggled to win even a handful of seats in the SGPC, let alone win a majority in the Punjab legislature, for decades now. Winning elections is a complicated business and diaspora Sikhs often do not understand the motivations and concerns of Punjabis on the ground. Expending the *Sangat's* energy to win an election in Punjab would do little to actually free *Akal Takht Sahib*.

4. Why Free Akal Takht? Why not Free Punjab?

- a. Political sovereignty is an important issue to many Sikhs. The nature of that sovereignty and how it will manifest itself is less clear and there is nothing resembling consensus in the *Qaum* over this issue. The *Akal Takht Sahib* must be sovereign and free regardless of the nature of the government that surrounds it. Punjab is undoubtedly the heart of the *Sikh Qaum*, but it is not home to all Sikhs, nor are all Sikhs of Punjabi ethnic origin. The *Akal Takht Sahib* is the *Sikh Qaum's* internal governance authority and therefore must work for and represent all Sikhs. Punjab has very serious issues that need to be addressed. However, so do many other countries in the world where Sikhs live. There are significant Sikh populations in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, China (Hong Kong) and other countries with systemic corruption, human rights abuses and dictatorial governments. Before Sikhs can figure out how to bring Guru Nanak Sahib's values into whatever society they live in, we need to first have a sovereign system to govern ourselves
- b. The longest lasting sovereign Sikh state was the Lahore Darbar (Sarkar-e-Khalsa) of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. However, Ranjit Singh's kingdom did not function as many Sikhs today may imagine it to have. It was a multi-ethnic and diverse state. There were Muslims, Hindus and Christians in prominent positions of authority; the Prime Minister was a Muslim and the head of the army was a Brahmin. It was not a state run exclusively by Sikhs and nor was it governed by Sikh institutions. So, even though Sikhs had a state that stretched from Afghanistan to Nepal, Sikhs still needed their own internal governance structure as a community. The *Sikh Qaum* did not equal the Sikh state. While Ranjit Singh did limit fundamental aspects of Sikh governance (e.g. his cessation of the *Sarbat Khalsa*), the *Akal Takht Sahib* was still free and had authority even over him, the emperor of one of Asia's most powerful states, as he was still a member of the *Qaum*. Ranjit Singh did not have control over the commands issued by the *Akal Takht Sahib*, the leadership structure of the *Akal Takht Sahib* or the internal policies of the *Sikh Qaum*. The point being that even if there was a Free Punjab, a sovereign *Akal Takht Sahib* would still be necessary.
- c. Sovereignty may not be limited to one geographic area. In fact, historically, there were multiple Sikh states in existence at the same time. While Ranjit Singh's Lahore Darbar was most powerful, Kapurthala, Patiala, Nabha and Jind were also Sikh states. The *Akal Takht Sahib* had authority over the Sikhs living in all of these different states. The Eternal Throne where the Guru is seated cannot be limited in its scope, power or range. It is the *Takht* of the Infinite and Divine Creator after all. In the future there may be several sovereign Sikh states. How would the *Akal Takht Sahib* be run in that scenario? We need to create institutions based on principles that will last for centuries, not ones that will quickly become obsolete. The *Akal Takht Sahib* needs to be free of any state, even a Sikh one. Guru Granth Sahib ji teaches us that everything made will one day be destroyed. Empires that



were once vast and powerful are but a memory today, but the *Takht* of Guru Nanak Sahib is eternal and can never be destroyed.

- d. It is when we are free, and under our own sovereign governance, that the Panth has had the biggest impact. The Sikhs of the early 1900's first freed their Gurdwaras and then were able to direct their energy to freeing all of South Asia from colonial rule. So, in a sense, we don't need to free Punjab to free the Akal Takht. We need a Free Akal Takht to save Punjab.

5. Who is Free Akal Takht Team?

- a. The Free Akal Takht sevadars are a global team of Sikhs from various walks of life. We are not tied to any political party or school of thought and try to operate with the mentality that we are answerable to Guru Hargobind Sahib for our actions and behaviour. It is our sincere goal to collaborate with Sikhs globally to develop an open and transparent process for self-governance. The team is constantly growing and we are eager to expand with interested and committed individuals and groups. For more information on the team, please see: <http://www.freeakaltakht.org/team>

6. How are you going to make this happen?

- a. We envision a three phase campaign:
 - i. Phase 1: Preparation – In which we outline the processes, systems, and relationships between the *Akal Takht Sahib*, the *Sarbat Khalsa*, *Panj Piare*, *Jathedars*, and how they relate to 30 million Sikhs in dozens of countries. Our primary inspiration for this framework is Guru Granth Sahib ji, Sikh history and *Gurmat* principles. Using these as our guidelines we endeavour to collaborate with Sikhs globally in order to create a draft that the *Sikh Qaum* can rally around.
 - ii. Phase 2: In which we campaign to free the *Akal Takht Sahib*. The methodology of this process will be generated by an open and transparent dialogue by Sikhs around the world. We are not seeking to lead a movement but to help develop one and then be a part of it. Where the movement takes the *Sikh Qaum* is up to the *Qaum* itself. What we will try and ensure is that wherever the movement goes, we all try and remain true to *Gurmat* principles, as we in our very limited thinking, understand it.
 - iii. Phase 3: Implementation: In which once freed, the developed framework will be deployed at the *Akal Takht Sahib*. At this stage as before, we will continue to engage with the entire Sikh community, transparently, and work towards ensuring that the



systems and framework developed by the community at large is utilized and not undermined.

7. Is this even possible?

- a. How long this may take is unknown to all but the Guru. Whether it is possible or not, however, is not open to debate. A united *Sikh Qaum* has been capable of amazing feats. Within two generations of the massive genocide that followed Baba Banda Singh 'Bahadur''s free Sikh state, the *Sikh Qaum* had freed all of Punjab, and that was after suffering through two *Ghallughara* and a level of oppression and persecution we have never known, before or after.
- b. This is possible, but only with the Guru leading us. We need to look to Guru Granth Sahib ji as the source of our inspiration and strength. We need to go back to Sikh history and see how our Guru Sahibs developed systems of governance that were well thought out with checks and balances and which allowed for both a strong central authority but also grassroots decision making.

At the same time, faith is not enough. We need skills, knowledge and specialization. We need to work with people who understand governance and can use all of their skills to develop Phase 1, put Phase 2 into place and make Phase 3 a reality. Given the resources our community currently has, the intelligence and calibre of Sikhs around the world, the advent of technologies that allow for global collaboration and organization, and the sheer political will of the Sikh community, this is truly the best time in history to make this happen. This is the first time in the post-Guru era that we have tried as a *Qaum* to build a global governance structure that is egalitarian, democratic and sovereign. It will not be easy, but with Guru's grace, nothing is impossible. We need to have the fearless spirit and faith and love in Guru Sahib that allowed Mata Bhag Kaur to lead forty soldiers into battle against a huge Mughal army. The spirit that inspired Bhai Bachhitar Singh to fight a raging elephant head on. Let us pray to Guru Hargobind Sahib ji to bless us and give us the ability to work fearlessly, tirelessly and with full faith in Guru Sahib.

8. How are we going to engage 30 million Sikhs globally?

- a. The Free Akal Takht team is committed to bringing together and engaging with all segments of the Sikh Qaum. We will do this by:
 - i. Holding meetings, which are currently taking place and will continue to do so around the world. *Sevadars* of the *Free Akal Takht Movement* have been traveling the globe, engaging with local Sikh communities, groups and organizations. These



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meetings will continue, but in addition, online tools are being developed to allow for collaboration across the whole community.

- ii. Engaging with all Sikhs. We seek to access all spaces where Sikhs are discussing these issues, irrespective of geography, language and affiliation. Using Guru Nanak Sahib as an inspiration, we seek to unite, not divide. If you are one of 30 million Sikhs as per the *Sikh Rehit Maryada's* definition, you will have a say in this process. Your voice will be heard. We will do this together. This movement belongs to us all.
- iii. Creating regional advisors who will be established as point-persons for individuals to contact if they would like to be involved and to provide their thoughts on the process as it unfolds. This will be occurring in the very near future.

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫ਼ਤਹ ॥

ਵਡਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਤੁਧੁ ਤਖਤੁ ॥

ਸਿਰਿ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਨਿਹਚਲੁ ਚਉਰੁ ਛਤੁ ॥

Appendix A

Contents

[Feedback from www.freeakaltakht.org comment section as of February 21st 2016](#)

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[Feedback from Draft 1 Framework document posted on www.freeakaltakht.org as of February 21st 2016](#)

A. Feedback from www.freeakaltakht.org comment section as of February 21st 2016

- a. 58% of commenters gave supportive statements for the work being done and sometimes gave guidance on how to continue the movement
 - i. From: Harbans Lal "This seems to be a new youth movement lead by educated Sikh youth. May Vahaguru bless the leadership with wisdom and perseverance to carry it to success. For a movement to flourish the guiding institutions have to be renewed from time to time. It is a law of nature and law of survival. Let our youth lead with the wisdom derived from Sri Guru Granth Sahib as it is interpreted in modern idiom. It is encouraging that the leadership is using modern technology for communication and not depending on ancient clergy system to spread the word and gather the community that is mostly Diaspora. Our community is all diaspora. The Sikhs living in India are Diaspora too as they mostly migrated from areas that are now Pakistan. India is their new home as are the continents outside Indian sub-continent. Let us promote this dialogue."
- b. 15% Gave strongly worded advice that we must go back to the roots of Sikh institutions and research their origin first and foremost if we wish to return them to their former glory.
 - i. From Baljinder Singh: "ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਦੀ ਅਜ਼ਾਦੀ।" ਅੱਜ-ਕੱਲ੍ਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਫ਼ਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸ ਮੁੱਦੇ ਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਕਾਫ਼ੀ ਚਾਰਾਜ਼ੇਈ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ। ਪਿਛਲੇ ਕੁਝ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਘਟਨਾਵਾਂ ਨੇ ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹਿਲਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹਾ ਹੀ ਹਲੂਣਾ 1984 ਵਿੱਚ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਜਦੋਂ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਦੀ ਇਮਾਰਤ ਗਿਰਾਈ ਗਈ ਸੀ। ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਬਾਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਨ ਬਾਰੇ ਮੁੱਦੇ ਬਹੁਤੇ ਟੇਢੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਨ। ਮੁੱਖ ਮੁੱਦਾ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਐਕਟ ਥੱਲੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਹ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ, ਤਖਤ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਤਖਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਿਕਰ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਐਕਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੈ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ। ਇਸ ਤੱਥ ਨੂੰ ਜੇ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਚੈਲੰਜ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਜ ਖੇਤਰ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਹਰ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ। ਫਿਰ ਮੁੱਦਾ ਇਹ ਆਵੇਗਾ ਕਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਦੇ ਜਥੇਦਾਰ ਦੀ ਚੋਣ ਦਾ ਵਿਧੀ ਵਿਧਾਨ ਕੀ ਹੋਵੇ? ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਯਾਦ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਮੁਤਾਬਕ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੇ ਗ਼ੈਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੀ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਤਾਂ ਕਬੂਲ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ, ਪਤਿਤ ਅਤੇ ਤਨਖਾਈਏ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ। ਸੇ ਵਿਧੀ ਵਿਧਾਨ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਵੇਲੇ ਕੇਵਲ ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਸ਼ਮੂਲੀਅਤ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ, ਪਤਿਤ ਅਤੇ ਤਨਖਾਈਏ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ। ਜਿਹੜੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਇਸ ਵਕਤ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਦੀ ਅਜ਼ਾਦੀ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਤਨਖਾਈਏ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਾ ਹਨ। ਸੇ ਇਹ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਹਾਲਾਤਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਜਜਬਾਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਫ਼ਾਇਦਾ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹੋਏ, ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਹੀ ਖਤਮ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਜਾਣ। ਜਦੋਂ ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਨਵੀਂ ਇਮਾਰਤ ਬਣਾਈ ਗਈ ਸੀ ਤਾਂ ਕੁਝ ਪ੍ਰਮੁੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਖਿਆਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ। ਜਿਵੇਂ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੇ ਪਿੱਛੇ ਝਾਕਣ ਦੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਪਰ ਨਵੀਂ ਇਮਾਰਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਪਰਕਰਮਾਂ ਬਣਾ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ। ਪਰਕਰਮਾਂ ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਹੈ ਹੁਣ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਇਮਾਰਤ ਵੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੇ ਵਰਗੀ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੂੰ ਮੱਥਾ ਟੇਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੇ ਸ਼ਸਤਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿਰ ਨਿਵਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਝੁਕ ਕੇ ਸਰੋਪਾ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਖਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੇ ਤਖਤ ਦੀ ਉਚਾਈ ਵੱਲ ਵੇਖ ਕੇ ਸਜਾ ਲਵਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪੰਥਕ ਤਾਕਤ ਪੰਥਕ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤੀ ਵੱਲ ਸੇਧਤ ਹੋਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਗੱਲ ਦਾ ਖਿਆਲ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜਾਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਸਿਵਾਏ ਖੱਜਲ ਖੁਆਰੀ ਤੋਂ ਕੁਝ ਪੱਲੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਵੇਗਾ।"
- c. 21% Had concerns, gave caution, or shunned the whole idea



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- i. From Swal Kaur: “You write “The Akal Takht is the Sikh Panth’s Political Executive and Supreme Court.” This statement seems to imply that executive, legislative, and judicial functions are enshrined in the same institution? Will this not create problems of checks and balances that have historically afflicted Sikh institutions in which the same person/group of people are responsible for implementing all functions? WHO, specifically, will adjudicate executive, legislative, and judicial issues? Could you please elucidate what you mean by the statement above? Thank you.”

B. Feedback from Facebook as of February 21st 2016

- a. 40% of commenters gave supportive statements for the work being done and sometimes gave guidance on how to continue the movement
- b. 50% Gave advice that we must go back to the roots of Sikh institutions and research their origin first and foremost if we wish to return them to their former glory. This batch also gave opinions on various topics.
 - i. Baljit Singh Rai “I think, first of all Dedicated and Honest Sikhs should take over S.G.P.C.,then you can make a Change everywhere”
 - ii. Sewa Singh: “Jathedar must be selfless,deicated to sikhism,humanity and not a slave of anybody.”
- c. 10% Gave caution, had questions, or shunned the whole idea
 - i. Harvinder Singh: “New jethedar will be free from SGPC so what will be the role of sewadar as per 1925 act?”

C. Feedback from Draft 1 Framework document posted on www.freeakaltakh.org as of February 21st 2016

- a. Over 100 comments/edits
- b. ~50% Grammar Corrections
- c. All discussion and comments focused:
 - i. Sarbat Khalsa
 1. Six commenters debated extensively on frequency of Sarbat Khalsa
 - ii. The link between different regions of Sikh population and Sri Akal Takht Sahib
 - iii. Representation at Sarbat Khalsa
 - iv. Daily influence of Sri Akal Takht Sahib with different Regions
 - v. Many spoke out against the use of the Manji System terminology and preferred Misl System as an alternative when grouping regional diaspora Sikhs



FREE AKAL TAKHT

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫ਼ਤਹ ॥

ਵਡਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਤੁਧੁ ਤਖਤੁ ॥
ਸਿਰਿ ਸਾਹਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਨਿਹਚਲੁ ਚਉਰੁ ਛਤੁ ॥

Appendix B

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[Video Broadcast Links \(By Radio Voice of Khalsa\)](#)

A. World Sikh Conference March 10-13 2016 Melbourne, Australia Feedback Summary

- a. Diverse range of global Sikh leaders, scholars and activists, convened to discuss issues regarding Sikh Sovereignty, including challenges to the Sikh Nation, free Akal Takht, and Sarbat Khalsa. Several sangat members attended from Australia from these cities: Brisbane, Cairns, Gold Coast, Sydney, Perth, Alice Springs, Riverland, Adelaide, Griffith, Shepparton and Canberra.

B. Attendee List

a. Panjab

- i. S. Sukhdev Singh Bhaur (General Secretary, SGPC)
- ii. G. Kewal Singh (Former Jathedar Takht Sri Damdama Sahib)
- iii. G. Eshar Singh (United Sikhs)
- iv. S. Sarabjit Singh Verka (Human Rights Activist)
- v. S. Gurtej Singh, IAS (Sikh)
- vi. S. Rajwinder Singh Bains (Human Rights Lawyer)
- vii. S. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon (Historian)
- viii. S. Jarnail Singh (MLA, Delhi, AAP)

b. USA

- i. S. Yadwinder Singh (AGPC)
- ii. S. Hardayal Singh (Global Sikhs)
- iii. S. Harinder Singh (Free Akal Takht)
- iv. S. Resham Singh (SADA)
- v. S. Jasvir Singh (Radio Voice of Khalsa)
- vi. S. Sukhwinder Singh (Radio Voice of Khalsa)

c. Canada

- i. S. Jagmeet Singh (MPP, NDP)
- ii. S. Moninder Singh (Azadi)

d. New Zealand

- i. S. Rajinder Singh (Supreme Sikh Society, New Zealand)
- ii. S. Kashmir Singh (Sikh Society, Tauranga)
- iii. S. Niab Singh (Supreme Sikh Society, Takanini, Auckland)

e. Australia

- i. Several sangat members attended from Australia from these cities: Brisbane, Cairns, Gold Coast, Sydney, Perth, Alice Springs, Riverland, Adelaide, Griffith, Shepparton and Canberra

C. Minimal Criteria Agreement for next Sarbat Khalsa

a. Quorum

- i. 51% of the Sikh community
- ii. Geographic + Population representation + other considerations (schools of thought, thought leaders, disenfranchised (women, Dalit, Mulnivasi, youth etc.). Demonstrate in process, not just in principles. If it's not visible, it's not a reality.
- iii. Selection over election
 1. 1) Highest level of delegates should be proportional to population size ~90-93%



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2. 2) subject matter expert/Luminaries /governance/policy/seva experts ~5% -7%
3. 3) Proportionally large contribution to the Panth ~1-2%
- iv. Qualifications/Criteria
 1. Follows the Sikh Rahit Maryada
 2. Belief in the institution of the Free Akal Takht
 - a. No interference from state or political party (including Sikh political parties)
 - b. Self governed by Sikhs for Sikhs
- b. Issues to be discussed at Sarbat Khalsa
 - i. Matters of urgency
 - ii. **NO** doctrinal issues
 - iii. Economic/political issues
 - iv. Leadership violation
 1. Free Akal Takht
 2. Sri Guru Granth Sahib beadbhi
- c. Consensus based decisions
 - i. It's not necessarily 100% agreement
 - ii. Participating people are willing to agree to not undermine the decisions
 - iii. Even if one disagrees with content of decision, one agrees to implement decision – dissent is recorded
- d. Transparent/Open process
 - i. 30 million should have access
 - ii. Any deliberative body should have live cast of meetings/deliberative process
- e. Developing an Executive Body
 - i. Implementation team must be declared with a deadline with the resolution otherwise, it's just a statement

D. Minimal Criteria Agreement for Jathedar Selection

- a. Follows Sikh Rahit Maryada, must be amritdhari, nitnemi, rahit-van, aspire to Miri-Piri spirit and accept nothing but Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their Guru
- b. Experienced and educated in Sikh studies and affairs with considerable knowledge on Sikh history, philosophy, gurbani, world politics and world religions
- c. Age/Gender/Race/Ethnicity/Caste etc. are not factors to be deemed relevant when selecting an individual for the post of Jathedar
- d. Has demonstrated sufficient leadership qualities (excellent communication skills and ability to work collectively and collaboratively); active in public affairs and community liaison
- e. Be action-oriented and politically aware of internal/external politics
- f. Does not hold prejudice of any kind towards any gender, race, ethnicity, caste, etc.
- g. Demonstrated service for the Panth - Upstanding individual.
[Note: There wasn't an agreement on exact phrase. Concern was if the individual has stood for the Sikh nation and committed acts with non-personal political agendas that are acceptable within the Sikh framework but considered to be unlawful by the state, that individual is still deemed worthy to be considered.]

E. General feedback from Sangat at large

- a. Sovereignty topic should have been discussed more.
- b. Any Sikh can be a Jathedar
- c. Need Consultation on Sarbat Khalsa
- d. Common Sikh should be involved which will help make consensus
- e. Detailed planning of Sarbat Khalsa and parchar of it all over the world.
- f. Jathedars should have political education or understanding so that he can deal with ruling govt. and should not just be based only religious matters.
- g. World Sikh Conference should held every year so that we can work and prepare for next Sarbat Khalsa.
- h. Who is calling next Sarbat Khalsa and when? need to coordinate with other jathebandies.
- i. What about people arrested in 2015 Sarbat Khalsa?
- j. what is the framework of Sarbat Khalsa? who has authority to call Sarbat Khalsa? how can they get authority ?
- k. 70% Sikh live in Punjab, who select SGPC Representatives
- l. Sovereignty should be achieved within structure and we need to create the structure. Basic structure is Akal Takht.
- m. Mate (resolutions) to be decided for Sarbat Khalsa from now and Mate for future should be discussed in Sarbat Khalsa.
- n. Jathedars should have to go through the proper channel to prove their skills. eg- as our MP's has to serve the community for so many hours before they get even eligible.

F. Video Broadcast Links (By Radio Voice of Khalsa)

- a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Wj3yS_QvYk
- b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqMasYkmlYA>
- c. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7a2j0gmmsB8>
- d. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C47Tk26wwzl&feature=youtu.be>