



INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES (REGD)

GURDWARA SINGH SABHA, KANTHALA, IA, PHASE II, TRIBUNE CHOWK, CHANDIGARH - 160002

Phone: +91 172 2642580, 2642581

Email: iosschd@gmail.com; Web: www.sikhinstitute.org

S Gurdev Singh, IAS (retd)
Patron
+91 172 2600410

Dr Kirpal Singh, Prof Emer
Chairman
Sikh History Project
+91 9316005061

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Dr Birendra Kaur
President
+91 9888901024

Bhai Ashok Singh
Vice-President
+91 9814095308

S Sadhu Singh
Secretary
+91 9878019793

S Ishwinder Singh
Jt Secretary
+91 9815164749

S Gurpreet Singh
Treasurer
+91 9815193839

Bibi Baljit Kaur
Member
+91 9872923851

Lt Gen Kartar Singh PVSM
Member
+91 9814499969

Ref:IOSS/2015/Oct/11

Oct 26, 2015

Subject: Suggestions for 'The Office of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib'

Respected Dr Sahib,

Wahaguru ji ka Khalsa; Wahaguru ji ki Fateh

We, the undersigned, hereby, submit our response to your sincere call, seeking suggestions for rules and norms for qualification, appointments, jurisdiction and retirement, etc., of Takht Jathedars. We appreciate the concern of the SGPC in constituting a Committee of highly esteemed scholars and well-wishers of the Panth of your stature to look into this matter.

The Case: The Institution of Sri Akal Takht Sahib not only enjoys passionate reverence by the Sikhs worldwide, but also has the inherent potential to unify them. The term 'Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib', therefore, connotes great respect and a leadership status in the Sikh community. An impeccable functioning at this exalted Office, therefore, is indispensable to the unity, integrity and glory of the Panth. We shall, therefore, restrict ourselves to the issue of 'Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib', for it should be worthy of representing the entire Sikh Panth, as per the doctrine of 'Guru Granth – Guru Panth'.

The Cause: The Panth finds itself in a situation, wherein, an individual enjoying the revered position of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib, also comes under ordinary rules, regulations of appointments/ dismissals, etc., of any post. In 1952, a 'Parbandh Scheme', which was framed by SGPC for routine management of its gurdwaras under the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925, also provided that the Head Ministers of Sri Akal Takht Sahib and Sri Keshgarh Sahib would be referred to as 'Jathedars' of these respective Takhts [attached/ enclosed]. On account of such a provision, therefore, while the Jathedars enjoyed great reverence among the Sikhs, they remained subject to rules and regulations governing Head Ministers. This change in nomenclature [from Head Minister, Sri Akal Takht Sahib to Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib], thus, led to implications of colossal proportions over the period of time, as we are all witness to. [More information about the legal position attached separately.]

The Course: The foremost step should, therefore, be to retract/ withdraw the provision, whereby the Head Minister, Sri Akal Takht Sahib came to be referred to as the Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib, since the jurisdiction, nature of duties, etc., of the two are at great variance – the former having duties related to religious services, ceremonies, etc., at Sri Akal Takht Sahib, whereas the latter is to be the inspiring, guiding force on multifarious Panthic concerns. Deletion of this provision would de-link the two terms, and lead to two independent entities, i.e., the 'Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib' and the 'Head Minister, Sri Akal Takht Sahib'. Such a move would liberate the term 'Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib' from its current usage, and pave the way for creating, afresh, an

- 1 -

- 2 -

ideal Office for the same to address, resolve Panthic concerns, issues.

The Concern: In order to ensure that the Sikh leadership is in line with the concept of Panch Pardhani, an Office, which is governed by collective wisdom, needs to be put in place. It must, therefore, be in the hands worthy of handling Panthic affairs in the light of tenets of Guru Granth Sahib.

The Expectations: We envisage the Office of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib as an independent, autonomous entity, functioning with transparency, and self-sufficiency in every respect. To guarantee that it functions as per Gurmat, it must enjoy insulation from any and every external intervention, interference, pressure. A Jathedar with Pyaras is envisaged at the very top, to collectively take decisions on all important Sikh issues, which shall be announced by the Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib, selected from their midst. [The current practice of the Jathedars of the five Takhts comprising the *Panj Pyaras* finds no mention.]

The Implementation: Once all are agreed to such an Office, wider and collaborative consultations must be held on each and every aspect of the same, such as, qualifications of candidates, the selection process, tenure, powers, jurisdiction, secretariat, etc. To ensure the acceptance of the selected ones [Jathedar and the Pyaras] by the 'Guru Panth', they must be selected by a body, which is representative of all major constituencies, organisations, gurdwaras, institutions, and so on, across the globe.

The Submission: Given the bearing this issue has on the future of the Guru's Panth, we demand and expect from this august Committee that it initiate or seek initiation of a rigorous mental exercise among renowned *panthdardis* to decode the ideological concepts into material formulations, within a defined time-frame. The Office of the 'Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib' must enjoy the independence, the status and the prestige that are due to it as also prove worthy of expectations here from.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the SGPC has, over the passing years, performed a greater role than the allocated task of management of some gurdwaras, it being the oldest organisation of the Sikhs. Unfortunately, however, the issue of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib, which is of significant import to the Panth has not been handled as per aspirations of the Sikh Nation. This, therefore, needs an urgent review. We, therefore, strongly feel that we can only proceed to lay down rules and norms for qualification, appointments, jurisdiction and retirement, etc., of Takht Jathedars after the issue of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib is established as acceptable to Sikhs across the globe.

We pin great hopes on your Committee, comprised as it is of scholars of your eminence. You are indeed blessed to be instrumental in the setup of an ideal Office of Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib, as this would be a great service to the Panth as also to the cause of the Guru!

Best regards,

Kartar Singh, Lt Gen (retd) PVSM
Secretary General,
International Sikh Confederation

Birendra Kaur, Dr
President,
Institute of Sikh Studies

Copy to:

1. Dr Kirpal Singh, # 1288, Sector 15-B, Chandigarh
2. Dr Prithipal Singh Kapur, C-10, Rajguru Nagar, Ludhiana
3. Dr Balwant Singh Dhillon, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
4. Dr Balkar Singh, 34, Urban Estate, Phase I, Patiala
5. Dr Jaspal Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala

6. Secretary, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee