

### Sarbat Khālsā – ਸਰਬਤ ਖਾਲਸਾ

Sarbat Khālsā can be defined as the corporate body of Sikhs (ਸਿਖ); it is the “integrated conscience” of the entire Sikh people imbued with the spirit of the Divine. While the ten *Gurūs* were alive, their personality was the ultimate binding factor for Sikh congregations. As the Sikh faith spread, the binding force of these Saṅgats (ਸੰਗਤ) became the *Gurū’s* word (ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ - Gurbāṇī) as the *Gurū* and the Word became inseparable. The spirit of the *Gurū* was believed to mystically reside within the congregation of Sikhs. This assumption of high authority eventually culminated into the collective whole - the *Panth*. Thus, the Sarbat Khālsā, as the Gurū Panth (ਗੁਰੂ ਪੰਥ), along with the Gurū Granth Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ), is held to be the true and eternal spiritual successor in the line of personal *Gurūs* ending with Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib. As an institution, the Sarbat Khālsā is the highest organ of the Khālsā Commonwealth representing its “integrated will,” which no Sikh – member or leader – can defy. The Sarbat Khālsā, meeting in the presence of the Gurū Granth Sāhib, is the supreme sovereign body with deliberative and executive powers that is duly authorized to direct the affairs of the community.

### *Gurmatā* (ਗੁਰਮਤਾ)

A *Gurmatā* is a decree (declaration) of the *Gurū*, (a duly passed resolution that has received sanction of the *Gurū*). Therefore, it is a formal resolution. Currently, the Sikh Rahit Maryādā (ਸਿਖ ਰਹਿਤ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ) states that a *Gurmatā* can be passed on the following issues: “fundamental principles of Sikh religion and for their upholding, such as the questions affecting the maintenance of the status of the *Gurūs* or the Gurū Granth Sāhib or the inviolability of Gurū Granth Sāhib, Ammrit (ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ), Sikh discipline and way of life, the identity and structural framework of the Panth.” The Sikh Rahit Maryādā further states “A *Gurmatā* can be adopted only by a select primary Panthic group or a representative gathering of the Panth.”

### Activity: Making a Unanimous Decision

Imagine that you are stranded on a tropical island which has some resources for food and water but no other facilities. What two things would you take with you in order to survive and why?

Get into groups of five and, based on the lists of all students, decide on the two most important things that you would take with you if you were stranded on a tropical island. The group’s decision has to be unanimous!

### Reflection Questions

Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

- Did your group reach a unanimous decision?
  - What strategy/strategies did your group use to come to this decision?
- What were some difficulties that the group encountered when reaching a decision?
  - How did you overcome these difficulties?
- How did you feel during the decision-making process? (Were you listened to by other group members? Did you feel comfortable voicing your opinion? etc.)
- Keep in mind that you only had five members in your group.
  - Would such an activity work in a larger group such as a Sarbat Khālsā?
  - What are some challenges that might have to be overcome in such a situation?

*Adapted from: Sarbat Khalsa Workshop, Sikh Research Institute, 2007*