While a good deal of literature has been produced on different aspects of Sikh Polity and the Sikh Ethics, no attempt has so far been made to study the continuity of the Sikh thought from the times of Guru Nanak. Most works on Sikh Polity begin with the pontification of Guru Hargobind (1595-1644 A.D.), thereby starting with the premise that Sikh Polity was the direct outcome of the 'new policy' of the sixth Guru. Two recent works - Gurbachan Singh Nayyar's Sikh Polity and Political Institutions and Bhagat Singh's Sikh Polity discuss the development of Sikh Political Institutions during the period of the Sixth Guru onward and take the building of Akal Takhat as the turning point. While Dr. Nayyar has covered the period from Guru Hargobind to the emergence of Sikh Mislars, Dr. Bhagat Singh's work extends to the study of the Sikh Polity in the 18th and 19th centuries. Both the scholars as also a number of others believe that it was Guru Hargobind who heralded the change in the Sikh thought by assuming the temporal powers in addition to the existing tradition of spirituality. However, a careful perusal of the Guru of
Guru Nanak and successive Gurus and other Shaotas whose teachings are in conformity with those of the Sikh Gurus and form part of the Holy Book - Guru Granth Sahib - show that foundations for Sikh political philosophy and ethics had already been laid by the first Guru. Guru Nanak clearly understood the political milieu in which he was born and his reaction to the politics of oppression whether it was from the ruling elite or the priestly class. While talking of the oppression in different spheres of the contemporary society the Guru was not only showing the awareness of the problems but was clearly laying the foundations of a new kind of political philosophy based on ethics. While he did not find anything wrong with the monarchical system of rule which was then the fashion, what pained him the most was that the monarch as well as his functionaries at different levels were not performing their duties conscientiously. Instead of simply criticising the prevalent corrupt system the Guru followed a more positive approach by suggesting how a benevolent ruler should perform his duties and what should be the obligations of the ruling elite.
While Guru Nanak fearlessly condemned the Lodi rulers who failed to protect their subjects during Babur’s invasions of India he did not hesitate to criticise the Mughal Emperor as well the armies of invasion which followed no ethics and did not hesitate to dishonour the victimised innocent civilian population. Here again the Guru was indirectly suggesting that both the rulers and the subjects should follow some sort of political ethics and codes of civilised behaviour. The Sikh tradition mentions about a meeting between Guru Angad and Emperor Humayun after the latter’s defeat at the hands of Sher Shah Suri. Since the Guru was busy with his meditation he did not notice the arrival of the Emperor. This enraged Humayun who took out his sword and threatened to kill the Guru. The Guru kept his cool and boldly told the Emperor that when there was need for him to take out the sword he did not do so and use of force with a saint was going to serve no purpose. The moral was clear - the Emperor had failed to do his duty in the field of action and instead of consolidating his victory his indulgence in merry making allowed in enemy the upper hand.
Similarly the successive Gurus not only continued the missionary work of Guru Nanak but also looked after the organisational set-up. Establishment of a large number of _Sangats_ with prominent persons of the areas in their charge, was clearly a step which was bound to take care of the genuine interests of the followers along with the spiritual needs. Organisation of the _Manji System_ and introduction of the _Nanak_ system greatly strengthened the grassroots of the new polity and ethics which the Sikh Gurus had evolved. Regular remittance of _Daswandi_ to the Guru and utilisation of this amount for institutional purposes were the steps which strengthened and consolidated the Sikh movement. Since there was no open clash with the contemporary Mughal rulers due to the liberal policies of Emperor Akbar the political philosophy lay dormant. It was the change in the state policy heralded by Jahangir's accession to the throne which brought the Sikh movement in open clash with the ruling elite. Persecution and subsequent martyrdom of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev brought the Sikhs in open defiance of the unjust ways.
of the contemporary rulers. But much before Guru
Hargobind built the Akal Takhat to symbolise his
temporal authority Sikh political philosophy and
ethics had clearly emerged on the lines suggested by
Guru Nanak.

Present study is an attempt at discussing different
perspectives on Sikh political philosophy & ethics
during the times of the ten Gurus (1469-1708). On
the basis of careful study of the teachings of Guru
Nanak, successive Sikh Gurus and Bhaktas such as Namdev,
Dhanna and Kabir etc. an attempt has been made to
project the Sikh political thought which emerged
from the teachings of these saints and seers. While
Guru Granth Sahib remains the major source of this
study other contemporary sources such as Varan Bhai
Gurdas, writings of Guru Gobind Singh, Gurbilas
Pathshahi 6 and 10, Gur Pratap Suraj Granth, Puratan and
other Janam Sakhis, Hukamnamas and Rehatnamas have
also been used with great advantage. While referring
to the Indian scene references have been made from
such classics as Mahabharta, Manu Smriti, Upanisads.
To get an idea of the political thought of other
religions Avesta, Dhammapada, Koran, Bible have been
consulted. Being a student of political science, also I have made use of my study of original work of such distinguished Political Thinkers as Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes. With a view to understand the contemporary Indian and the world scene I have consulted the constitution of India, the U.N. charter and other basic sources on the subject.

While giving quotation from Guru Granth Sahib I have depended on the English translations by Dr. Gopal Singh and S. Manmohan Singh and Sikh Religion (in 6 volumes) by R.A. Macauliffe. Prof. C.S. Talib who has recently finished his translation of the Guru Granth Sahib was kind enough to help me in translating some of the quotation from Bachitra Natak, Gujilas Patshahi-6, and Gurpratap Suraj Granth. H.R. Neilson's recent work - Textual Sources For the Study of Sikhism has proved useful in giving quotation from different Mahatnamas.

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