5

STRUCTURE AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE SIKH SHRINES

There is some recent literature on the subject of Sikh architecture. Many scholars have focused individually on the Golden Temple and its structure and architecture but they do not cover the all Sikh Shrines of the Punjab region as a whole. The sources, which provide information about these aspects, are Bhai Roop Singh in his book *So Thaan Suhaavaa*, which gives coloured pictures of each gurdwara though the book covers only the historical gurdwaras. Pardeep Singh Arshi in *Sikh Architecture in the Punjab* gives the very authentic information about the architecture of the Sikh shrines in Punjab. He has classified the elements of the Sikh shrines into ten categories and deals with the case study of forty-four shrines. The author also provides the picture of each shrine for the better understanding of the reader. Besides this, Pardeep Singh Arshi in another work *The Golden Temple: History, Art and Architecture* deals with the Sikh architecture but this work give the structural and architectural detail of the Golden Temple only. Besides this, some authors like Madanjit Kaur in her work *Golden Temple: Past and Present*, Patwant Singh in his book *Golden Temple*, Bhan Singh in *Art of Golden Temple* and Kanwarjit Singh Kang in his book *Art and Architecture of the Golden Temple* also gives the structural and architectural detail of the Golden Temple only. The author Karamjit Singh in his work *Understanding Sikh Architecture through the Sikhs Shrines in East Punjab* deals with the architecture of the Sikh shrines in the Punjab. The author identifies various categories based on the elements of the gurdwaras with case study of forty-five gurdwaras. The limitation of his work is that he has not covered the Sikh shrine of whole Punjab but focusses only on Majha and Doaba areas. Besides this some other sources which deals with the Sikh architecture are Darshan Singh in his book *The Sikh Art and Architecture*, Dalip Singh in *Khalsa Heritage of Sikh Art in Gurdwaras*, Kerry Brown in *Sikh Art and Literature*, Gurmukh Singh in his work *Sikh Architecture* and Percy Brown in his well known work *Indian Architecture: Buddhists and Hindu*.

The available literature largely deals with the historical background of the gurdwaras and very little has been written about the significant features of Sikh
architecture. Although the authors Pardeep Singh Arshi and Karamjit Singh deals with the case study of forty-four and forty-five Sikh shrines respectively but they do not cover all the areas of all Punjab. It is pertinent to note that this chapter will cover the Sikh Shrines of East Punjab only i.e. the present day Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The chapter is divided into three sections, the first section will provide the detail of the architecture from the early Sikh shrines to present day Sikh shrines; the second section will describe the basic elements of the gurdwara and also deal with the study of the one hundred and thirty (130) gurdwaras and the last section will attempt to identify the changes in the structure and architectural pattern of the Sikh Shrines.

I

Architecture is the identity of people and civilizations and represents the culture of any communities through its physical structures. There is a very close relation between the emotion of the artist and his work, which express his views. Thus, all over the world, various civilizations and cultures have contributed greatly to the art of building and this is evident from the large number of historic monuments and archaeological remains. Like the other religions, the quality of Sikh architecture lies in the expression of spiritual contents through its Gurdwaras (the place of Sikh worship). The word ‘Gurdwara’ is compounded of guru (spiritual guide or master) and dwara (gateway or seat) and therefore has an architectural connotation. The gurdwaras are mainly connected with the lives and times of the ten Sikh Guru or some places are associated with the historical events. The main requirement of any gurdwara being that of room in which Guru Granth Sahib can be placed and people can sit as a congregation to listen to the reading from the holy book to sing and recite its verse. These entire things made the gurdwaras as a centre of knowledge, art, architecture and culture. A gurdwara is not only the all-important building of the faith as mosque of the Islam and temple of the Hindus. It is also like its Islamic and Hindu counterparts a keynote of the Sikh architecture. Sikhism, one of the youngest of world’s religions, derives its inspirations from spiritual and historical tradition. The Sikhs are very devoted towards their religion and they are also deeply attached to their faith. Presently, they are not bounded in the Punjab only; they have migrated to practically all parts of the world and gurdwaras have been established everywhere.
In Sikh architecture, a gurdwara in the opinion of most of the writers, perhaps owes much to the Mughal style of architecture, as the artisans of the Punjab of those days had been trained in that style at that time.\textsuperscript{1} It was during early times that the \textit{dharmasals} were simple and humble in architectural expression. The utilized the traditions set by gurus. The architectural style adopted by the Sikhs was direct reflection of their religious beliefs. The main basis of the construction of gurdwaras depended only on the resources of the Sikh community at that time. The architecture had faced certain factors such as climate, the availability of materials, political adversaries, the religious purpose and the dominant cultures of that time, these factors played decisive role in the architectural development of Sikh shrines.\textsuperscript{2}

Figure: The Sketches of early \textit{dharmasals}
Source: Pardeep Singh, Arshi

As the earlier structure were simple, small and constructed from less durable materials such as timber, brick and plaster the early examples of Sikh architecture have mostly disappeared. There is not much authentic reference material as well as documentary proof of their shape, size and style available at present. However, beyond this primitive starting point, it is found that Sikh religious architecture developed along paths of their religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{3} A gurdwara usually has a very simple entrance. One can walk right in from any of the entrances provided on all four sides. The Nanakshahi bricks used in the earlier construction are concealed behind a layer of smooth plaster, which gives it sense of lightness. The delicate pilasters and

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
blind archways that decorate its surfaces increase this effect. Most of the early historical gurdwaras are nearly always square plan, though some are rectangular and octagonal plans also. They are invariably a single storey structure and easily approachable. Besides this, most of the gurdwaras have doors on all four sides so that they can be entered from any side. The focus is, therefore, on the centre, where the sacred book, the Guru Granth Sahib is placed. In most of the shrines, there is provision of circumambulatory path around the Guru Granth Sahib.\footnote{Henry J. Walker, \textit{Golden Temple, Marble Forum}, p. 91.}

Figure: Gurdwara Holgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib, Source: Arshi,

Figure: Gurdwara Guru Ka Lahore at Anandpur Sahib, Source: Arshi,

Some of these gurdwaras, which were constructed during the mid eighteen century, reflect this simple style. These are Holgarh Sahib and Guru Ka Lahore, both of these gurdwaras are in Anandpur Sahib in Ropar district. The shape of both of these shrines was Simple Square like the present day residential room. The original structures of both of these shrines were demolished and new gurdwaras were
constructed at these sites. The Gurdwara Holgarh Sahib was a square structure. On one side, there was central doorway flanked by two blind recessed arches on each side. On the remaining three sides, there was one recessed arch with opening.\(^5\) In the old building of the Gurdwara Guru Ka Lahore, the outer circumambulation path surrounds it. It had a flat roof with projected eave at parapet level. On one side, there was central doorway flanked by two blind recessed arches on each side. On the remaining three sides, there was one recessed arch with opening.\(^6\) Another example is Gurdwara Hari Mandir Sahib at Kiratpur, this shrine has also the same design, a square room with the facade on all four sides had a central doorway flanked by two blind recessed cusped arches with niches, opening on all sides and recessed blind arches on the walls. The major difference from earlier example is that there was a kiosk at the roof level and doorway on all four sides in this shrine.

Another example of construction of the gurdwaras during its initial phase of evolution is Gurdwara Taru Singh Shahid, at Lahore. This gurdwara was built in the memory of the Sikh martyrs during the eighteenth-century. This was the place where thousands of Sikhs, including the Sikh Saint Bhai Taru Singh and about 3000 captives of the *Chhota Ghallughara* campaign were executed or tortured to till death. It is also a small square structure with similar facade treatment to Gurdwara Harmandir Sahib at Kiratpur but it has more elaborate detailing. It has a dome and curved cusp eave on top of the structure with a cupola on each of the four corners. It has projected eave in the form of cusped arch at ceiling level with small cupolas on top of it and domical roof had been provided with *kalasa* on top. The decoration work in this Gurdwara is already apparent where as in the initial examples it was very simplistic.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 44
The Gurdwara Tibbi Sahib in Faridkot was constructed on high sand dune at Jaito Mandi in Faridkot district. Guru Gobind Singh visited this place and the gurdwara was constructed to commemorate his sacred visit. The date of construction of the gurdwara is not known, but it is believed that Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha (1871-1911) constructed it in the late 19th century. A small shrine constructed on a square plan, it has only one entrance on the east side and has domical roof on the top. Besides this, on the top of the roof, there is an inverted lotus-like member holding the Kalasa. Some structural additions, like portico, have been made recently.\(^7\)

---

Another example is of Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib which is located about one mile towards south of Anandpur Sahib. It was one of the fortresses constructed by Guru Gobind Singh for the protection of Anandpur city. However, the Mughals demolished the fort after the Guru left Anandpur. Later on, the Sikh Sardars, during the ‘Misl’ period constructed an octagonal gurdwara in its place, which was replaced with a new building on an octagonal plan under the supervision of Sant Sewa Singh of Anandgarh. The original building consisted of an octagonal chamber enclosed with another octagonal structure, thus a circumambulatory path was formed between the two outer chambers had four gates, one in each side and the other sides of the building had windows in each direction. The roof was provided with the projected eave. The inner chamber had only four gates, one in each side. Its roof was slightly higher than the outer structure. The dome and kiosks were conspicuous by their absence.  

Figure: Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib  
Source: Arshi

The Gurdwara Shahid Ganj Sahib also called Angitha Sahib at Muktsar commemorates the place where the last rites of the Forty Muktas (the liberated ones) were performed. Guru Gobind Singh himself performed the last rites of the forty Sikh who laid down their lives in the battle at Muktsar and named the place as Shahid Ganj. A gurdwara was later constructed here and named Gurdwara Shahid Ganj Sahib. It has a square room with octagonal space enclosed by thick piers where Guru Granth Sahib is installed. On one side, there is a verandah with four arched opening and three blind recessed arches. On other three sides, there are arched opening in the central part and one blind recessed arch on each side. There is small straight flight

---

staircase leading to the terrace. At terrace level, raised drum is provided over which a fluted dome has provided. The dome crowing the gurdwara is a simple version of the magnificent lotus-domes.9

Figure: Gurdwara Shahid Ganj Sahib, Muktsar, Source: Arshi

The general impression of early Sikh shrines is of simple and small structures with little decoration rather than of an impressive structural element having intricate detailing. Even in these simple early gurdwaras, one can see how aesthetic value is achieved, especially in the Gurdwaras at Kiratpur, Gurdwara Taru Sahib Shahid at Lahore and Gurdwara Shahidganj Sahib at Muktsar. In most of these examples, the roof is separated from the lower of the building by wide but very thin eaves. One gets the impression that it is a light weight structure. This effect is further enhanced when a dome tops the gurdwara. The architectural style developed by the Sikhs was deeply rooted in the fundamental beliefs of their people.

In the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the gurdwaras received a new shape because he repaired and renovated a numbers of gurdwaras in the Punjab. Although he had given grants to various Sikh shrines but his contribution to beautify the Golden Temple is remarkable. Maharaja Ranjit Singh profusely embellished the first floor hall of the Golden Temple with floral design. The walls of the hall were decorated with floral designs and its arches were ornamented with verses from the Guru Granth Sahib and reproduced in letters of gold. The walls of the hall stand inlaid with figures and floral designs adorned and studded at places with precious stones. This Jaratkari (craftsmanship) reminds us of the pietra dura tradition.10 Maharaja Ranjit Singh first

---
engaged the Naqqashes for decorative purposes in 1805, when he visited the Harmandir and made lavish grants to beautify it. Most of the gold came from Maharaj Ranjit Singh’s treasure. For the dome, Maharaja Ranjit Singh also donated gold worth Rs. 3½ lacs during his times. Ranjit Singh further donated gold worth Rs. 53,735 through Bhai Gurmukh Singh who was entrusted with the gold plating work after the death of his father Bhai Sant Singh. Ranjit Singh got the walls of the central shrine inlaid with gold. According to Gian Singh Giani the total cost of beautifying the temple with gold and naqqashi was Rs. 6,411,000 out of which the Maharaja donated Rs. 1,639,000.11 Besides this, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was so much pleased to see the marble parkarma around the main shrine, that he ordered marble worth Rs. 21,000 and used it to beautify the Temple. Again, in 1836, under orders of Ranjit Singh, white marble slabs were fixed on the walls of the Temple. These were later on adorned with beautiful filigree work and blandished with enamel coating. In 1837, the Maharaja got the marble slabs fixed on the parkarma in front of the Sarkar Bunga. Ranjit Singh also established a marble factory near the shrine for the utilization of marble in Golden Temple. Bhai Sant Singh Giani was put in charge of the factory at that time. After the death of Ranjit Singh, his successors Maharaja Kharak Singh, continued the work in the Golden Temple, as per scheduled. He obtained marble worth Rs. 50,000 and put 500 masons and a thousand labourers on work. Afterwards, there was a lull in the construction activity under the administration of the Britishers. The work was resumed with vigour when the Singh Sabha Movement gained momentum towards the close of the nineteenth century. Ever since slabs and replacement of the old go on side by side.12

The early Sikh shrines were of simple and small structures with little decoration rather than present types of structure. The earliest example of this is the Gurdwara Ramsar Sahib at Amritsar. The date of the construction of the old building of the gurdwara could not be ascertained. It seems to have been constructed quite late perhaps not before the 18th century. Although, this building has been completely demolished and replaced with a new building in 1992. The old gurdwara had a sacred tank in the north, within an enclosure formed by rows of rooms on three sides and an archway in the east. Thus, the enclosure formed an open circumambulatory path. The

gurdwara was two storeys high. Although it was a relatively simple building, it had some of the features of the shrines built or renovated by Ranjit Singh. In the new building, the enclosure around the gurdwara had rooms on three if its inner sides facing the courtyard. On the fourth side, the entrance to the shrine was gained through an archway (Deodhi) on the eastern side. The gateway, a single unit, consists of rectangular structure with an arched opening, the upper part of which was cusped. Outside the enclosure to the south was the sarovar, which was linked by a doorway through the rooms on that side. The sarovar was surrounded by a decorated gateway. The overall appearance of the shrine was quite pleasing. The enclosure surrounded the gurdwara alone, cutting the sarovar off from the rest of the complex. The new building of this gurdwara was constructed later and these elements were integrated in a better way.

Another example is the Gurdwara Damdama Sahib at Sri Hargobindour in Gurdaspur district. The gateway was integrated in new constructed building.

![Old Entrance](A: Old Entrance) ![New Entrance](B: New Entrance)

Figure: Gurdwara Damdama Sahib, Sri Hargobindpur, Source: Arshi

Besides this, the culmination of the architectural experiments towards forming a perfect union of the elements in a Sikh shrine can be seen in the Darbar Sahib at Tarn Taran. It is hard to imagine that this was once no more than a hut beside a sarovar, until the present gurdwara was built in 1775 and later renovated by Ranjit Singh. Here the gurdwara and the sarovar form an integrated unit and the sanctuary wall encloses the entire complex (rather than just the gurdwara itself). In its design, the gurdwara is remarkably similar to the Harmandir Sahib. The Harmandir Sahib simply brings its features to perfection.
The most authentic example of the development of the Sikh architecture can be seen in the Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple at Amritsar. There were many techniques used for the beautification of the Golden Temple with the passage of time. The Harmandir Sahib is the most sacred shrine of the Sikhs. The Harmandir Sahib is the premier shrine of the Sikh community and a wonderful example of the blending of architectural styles that created a new style the form and style of gurdwaras. In the 19th century, the complex was still open to the outside world, so it must have appeared to blend into it and spread all the way to the horizon. A colonnade has been added in mid twentieth century on all sides, but this does not distract from the impression of a vast open space.\textsuperscript{13} The Golden Temple is approached through archway on the northwest side. The causeway, which leads to main shrine, is 60m long. There is a vast 75 light-reflecting pool. The Sanctum Sanctorum rises from the centre of this pool. The sacred tank which holds the temple in its midst like a lotus flower is 492 feet square and 17 feet deep. Running around the outer edge of the tank is marble pavement (parikarma) 60 feet wide with marble slabs of various shapes, designs and colours. The hall is 42 feet square.\textsuperscript{14} The colonnade, the \textit{sarovar} and the path all revolve around the gurdwara.

\textsuperscript{14} Madanjit Kaur, \textit{The Golden Temple –Past And Present}, p. 162.
The centrality of the gurdwara is emphasized by the four doors, which open out in all directions. The focal point is of course, the holy book the Guru Granth Sahib in the central hall. The square building of the central shrine is a three storeyed structure over which rises a low fluted majestic masonry dome covered with gold plated copper sheets. The dome is the crowning feature of the temple. It is designed after the shape of the lotus-symbol. The petals of the dome present a very harmonious setting. A number of varieties of smaller domes, drawn in a line, decorate the parapet. Four chhatris (kiosks) with fluted metal cupolas stand at each corner. The floor of the upper storey is paved with Nanak Shahi bricks. These red bricks are broad on the top and narrow at the bottom and stand exquisitely laid in very fine brick-mortar and lime. The holy Guru Granth Sahib, the scriptures of the Sikhs rests under a gorgeous canopy in the centre of this hall. There is a small square pavilion on second floor surmounted by a low-fluted golden dome. The interior of the pavilion is set with pieces of mirror of different sizes and colours. That is why it is called the Shish Mahal. It is said that originally the first floor was pavilion where the Sikh gurus used to sit in meditation. The hall was profusely embellished with floral designs during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Everything about the Harmandir Sahib reveals the presence of a reality that lies beyond mere appearances. The great flat dome that crowns the entire building matches the four domed kiosks at the corners of the roof. This dome is adorned with a gigantic lotus-leaf motif and the little spheres that run around it are actually lotuses as well. The walls of the hall are decorated with floral designs and its arches are ornamented with verses from Guru Granth Sahib reproduced in letters of gold. The techniques used for embellishment of exterior surfaces as well as for interior decoration is called jaratkari. It is both an expensive and time-consuming technique. The architecture of the Harmandir Sahib testifies to the fact that Sikhs vociferously patronized the architectural embellishments and ornamental accretions to their mansions. They spent lavishly in beautifying their holy Sikh shrines. The Harmandir Sahib was designed to produce the experience of contemplation without focusing on any single element. The surfaces of the gurdwara deliberately distract the senses so as to direct the mind.

16 Ibid., p. 93.
Besides this, in due course, the certain prominent characteristics such as the repeated use of *chhatris*, ornamenting of parapets, corners, angles and other permanent projections were developed in Sikh architecture. Apart from the building of a religious Order, the Sikh architecture has other types of buildings as well such as forts like Gobindgarh Fort, palaces, (Rambagh Palace, Amritsar), *bungas* (Ramgarhia Bunga) and institutional building like Khalsa College at Amritsar, etc. Among the other types of building of the Sikh architecture, Khalsa College at Amritsar is one of most outstanding example. The *baolis* and stepped wells are also common in the Sikh architecture. Besides this, brick, lime mortars, lime or gypsum plaster and lime concrete have been the most favoured building materials and white marble has also been used extensively in the Sikh shrines. The white marble has been used for flooring and cladding or decorative material than for meeting structural needs. The *Nanakshahi* brick (brick of the time of Guru Nanak Dev) was most commonly used for its intrinsic advantages. The brick-tile made mouldings, cornices and pilasters etc, are easy to work into a variety of shapes. The evolution of gurdwara architecture is
marked by a strict adherence to the religious consideration and that has continued over last few centuries. In the Punjab, most of the historical gurdwaras were built towards the end of the 18th century and in the early 19th century, when the Sikhs gained political power. These gurdwaras received the grants from many rulers at that time. Much number of gurdwaras buildings has been rebuilt by rulers with an extensive use of modern materials and marble for the purpose of embellishment and durability. In the 20th century, the visitors made big contributions in cash and kind to see the work accomplished at an accelerated pace. The *parkarma* was fully covered with marble by 1966.  

![](image1.png)

A: Entrance Gateway (Deodhi)  B: New Main Shrine

It is obvious that the old Sikh shrines were simple and they rarely had any kind of decorative work on its walls. However, as time went on, the Sikhs wanted to place their gurdwaras in an elaborate setting, to make their gurdwaras part of a large impressive sanctuary. The new techniques were used in the style of architecture with the passage of time. In the 20th century, in most of the large gurdwaras complex, one can find that the builders had to integrate four elements, which had become the fundaments of gurdwara architecture: the enclosure, its gateway (Deodhi), the gurdwara itself and the *sarovar*.

II

The gurdwara structures had begun to acquire a definite shape by the latter half of the 18th century. The development in the structure of these gurdwaras was set on standard pattern in the 19th century. Furthermore based on this development, there were some basic elements visible in most gurdwaras in the 20th century. The gurdwara buildings

---

have historically evolved to cater to the needs of the Sikh *sangat*. These include the main hall or *parkash asthan* of Guru Granth Sahib and the attending *sangat* (congregation place), resting room for Guru Granth Sahib, *Langar* building or kitchen, office complex, *Sarai* (lodging facilities for pilgrims), entry from all side for visitors, to accommodation of *granthis* (priests) and *sewadars* (volunteers). In the major gurdwaras, the provision of the library and the museum was also prevalent. These elements can be divided into two parts namely inner elements and outer elements of the shrine. The inner element includes the main hall, *Sanctum Santorum*, *Sukhashan* Room (Rest Room for the Guru Granth Sahib), Inner *Parikarma* (Circumambulatory path) and *Karh Prashad* (The Sanctified offering). The main hall is the most important part of the gurdwara. There should be proper covered hall and as much as possible it should be big. The main hall includes many small elements inside it like some weapons were placed in front of the Guru Granth Sahib. The Sanctum Santorum is the small place built inside the hall on a raised platform on which the Guru Granth Sahib placed and on the top of this platform, a canopy is hung. It can be called Manji Sahib or Darbar Sahib in another term. Devotees leave their offerings in a box called *golak* in front of the Guru Granth Sahib. Here people assemble as devotees and can sit as a congregation to listen to the readings from the Guru Granth Sahib, meditate and to sing and recite its verses. This hall in most modern gurdwaras is very large and can accommodate many hundreds of devotees. After completion of the daily rituals in a gurdwara, Guru Granth Sahib is placed for resting in a separate room for overnight, this room is called as *Sach Khand* or *Sukhashan Room*. The provision of this room is provided in all gurdwaras whether the gurdwara is small or large.

There is also the provision of inner *Parikarma* (Circumambulatory path) inside the hall. The inner *parikarma* means it is open passage around the Sanctum Santorum. While walking around the *parikarma* one is supposed to be binding and uniting with the almighty. The devotee has to remain on the left side of the holy book while performing *parikarma*. This inner *parikarma* is provided in each gurdwara. The *karh prashad* is sanctified offering of a delicate sweet pudding served to every person who enters the gurdwara and at the closing time of every worship service or ceremony, which takes place in the gurdwara. The recipe for *prashad* is outlined in the Sikh code of conduct and conventions. Besides all these inner elements, there are

---

no images of any guru or other saint is allowed inside the hall. In the gurdwara it is considered superstitious to ring bells, burn incense and light ghee lamps and wave them before the holy book in the form of arti. The pressing of the walls of the gurdwara is not permitted. The devotees should not consecrate water by placing it before the holy book. No images should be introduced during worship.

The outer elements includes the darshani deodhi, hand wash area, feet wash area, Jora Ghar, Gathri Ghar (cloak room), karah prashad area, the Nishan Sahib (Sikh flag), outer parikarma around main shrine (Circumambulatory path), Sarovar (Holy Pond) and Langar (Dining Hall). When a visitor enters the gurdwara, firstly he washed his hand in the hand wash area. There is the provision of hand wash area, means that it is the place where people wash their hands when they enters the main shrine. This place is located before the darshani deodhi. The provision of multiple hand wash area is available in the big historical gurdwaras. After the hand wash area there should be the feet wash area. In many gurdwaras, the feet wash area is built near the darshani deodhi. It is mandatory to every person to wash their feet here when they enters the gurdwara. No one is allowed to enter the gurdwara without washing his or her feet. After the feet wash area, the visitor faces the darshani deodhi. Many gurdwaras have a darshani deodhi, it means an entrance through which one has to pass before reaching the main shrine. A deodhi is often an impressive structure with an impressive gateway. The visitors get the first glimpse of the Sanctum Sanctorum from the deodhi.

After darshani deodhi the place of Jora Ghar existed, it is a place to keep footwear before entering the gurdwara premises. Here pilgrims take off their shoes and hand them over to the persons performing service in the Jora Ghar. The shoes are collected by the volunteers to keep in the racks and a token is issued for retrieval. In many gurdwaras the shoes of the pilgrims are also polished by the volunteers who performing service (sewa) at the Jora Ghar.\footnote{The provision of polishing the shoes of the devotees is practiced at The Golden Temple (Amritsar) and The Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran Sahib at Patiala among others.} The provision of multiple Jora Ghar is also available in major gurdwaras. The visitors are required to deposit items, which are either not allowed or they themselves do not wish to carry inside the shrine and these luggage are deposited in the stores, which are called Gathri Ghar (cloak room). The provision of multiple Gathri Ghar is also available in big historical gurdwaras.
The *Karah Prashad* means a religious offering, it is sweet flour based recipe that is offered to all visitors to the Sikh shrines. This is regarded as food blessed by the Guru. There is a provision of *Karah Prashad* area means that place where the devotees got the receipt of *karah prashad* as much as they wish to offer to God. Besides this, on each gurdwara is unfurled a flag, yellow or dark blue in colour, surmounted with a double-edged sword. This flag is an indication even from a distance of the location of a gurdwara. The Nishan Sahib is an integral part of a gurdwara unless, Nishan Sahib—the Sikh Flag, flutters on or at the place, it is not considered a gurdwara, it is fixed within the gurdwara complex. The tradition of fixing a Nishan Sahib is said to have started by the sixth Guru Hargobind Singh, he installed two Nishan Sahib in front of Akal Takht at Amritsar depicting temporal and spiritual power. It is steel pole draped in yellow or blue covering called *chola*.\(^{20}\) The outer *parikarma* means the ambulatory passageway for circumambulation around the main shrine. The difference between the inner and outer *parikarma* is that the inner *parikarma* performed inside the hall and the outer *parikarma* performed outside the main shrine. The provision of the outer *parikarma* is available only in the major historical gurdwaras. The *sarover* or the holy tank is also the important outer element of the Sikh shrines.

The Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar is situated amidst the holy *sarover*. The devotees take a holy dip in the water of this *sarover*. Not only Sikhism but also almost all the religious have attached the high importance to water. In one way or the other, the holy water is used in the respective religions to perform various ceremonies. The *langar* is also the most important element of the Sikh shrines. The *langar* is a Persian word meaning: an almshouse (A house built originally by a charitable person for poor people to live in). In Sikhism, this word has acquired the meaning of kitchen and Guru-ka-Langar conveys the message that the kitchen is being ‘run on the name of the Guru’. According to Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Langar* is defined as –place where food is cooked.\(^{21}\) The institution of *Guru Ka Langar* is associated with a gurdwara and is as old as Sikhism itself. It was started by Guru Nanak Dev and carried forward by his successors. It served the dual purpose of feeding the poor and eliminating the caste and status prejudices and distinctions. Guru Nanak took practical

---


steps to break the vicious hold of caste by starting free community kitchens or Guru ka Langar on all centers and persuading his followers, irrespective of their castes to sit and dine together.\(^{22}\) Langar in short helps in teaching service, spreading equality, removing untouchability and other such evils and prejudices that spring from social and racial distinctions. Maharaja Ranjit Singh made grants of jagirs to gurdwaras for the maintenance of langars. Other Sikh rulers created similar endowments as well. Today, practically every gurdwara has a langar supported by the Sikh community in general. Establishment of langars became a continuing tradition of the Sikh society.

Based on the primary and secondary sources, a total one hundred and thirty (130) gurdwaras are documented and analyzed for studying the structure and architectural pattern of the gurdwaras.\(^{23}\) For the better understanding of the Sikh architecture, eleven common elements of the gurdwaras are included in this study. It will include the both inner and outer element of the gurdwaras. Based on the collected data the total eleven categories of elements are studied. These categories are provision of darshani deodhi, direction of the main shrine, entry from different side, approach to the main shrine, shape of the shrine, number of floors of the shrine, location of the sarovar, location of the Nishan Sahib, shape of the dome, outer structure of the shrine and the provision of the stepped baoli and well. The further detail of all these categories is as follows:

1. **Provision of Darshani Deodhi:**

   The first glimpse of a Sikh shrine is seen through a *darshani deodhi* and one has to pass through this before entering the main shrine. This category includes the two different things one is called the *darshani deodhi* and the second is called the darshani gate. The difference between two is that the darshani gate is simply built with the name of the gurdwara and it is the first entry point to the gurdwara than is the provision of darshani deodhi and after this the location of the main shrine exist. There were total twenty eight (i.e 21%) gurdwara who have the *darshani deodhi* like The

---

\(^{23}\) The calculated information is collected from the *So Thaan Suhaavaa* by Roop Singh, *Sikh Architecture in the Punjab* by Pardeep Singh Arshi, *Understanding Sikh Architecture through the Sikhs Shrines in East Punjab* by Karamjit Singh and the website of historicalgurdwaras.com. This website provides the very authentic pictorial information about the gurdwaras of the Punjab.
Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, Gurdwara Guru ka Bagh, Ghukhewali and total eight (i.e. 6%) sacred places who have the *darshnai* gate like Gurdwara Holgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Ropar in the region. Some major gurdwaras have also the provision of multiple *darshani deodhi* depending upon the number of entrances to the shrine. In the case of smaller gurdwaras the provision of the only *darshani* gate was provided for example Gurdwara Holgarh Sahib and Gurdwara Sisganj Sahib at Ropar, etc.

**Figure 1: Provision of Darshani Deodhi and Darshani Gate**

2. **Direction of the main shrine**

The direction of the main shrine is not fixed. It depends upon the direction/location of the entry points to the site. During the course of the study the main direction of thirty four (i.e 26%) shrine were on east side like Gurdwara Shaheedan Sahib, Amritsar, twenty six (i.e 20%) on north side like Gurdwara...
Padshahi Naumi, Baba Bakala, twenty-seven (i.e. 10%) on south side like Ber Sahib at Sultanpur Lodhi, twenty-eight (i.e. 8%) were on south east side like Gurdwara Chola Sahib at Gurdaspur district, nineteen (i.e. 7%) on west side like Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, twenty-nine (i.e. 6%) on north west side like Gurdwara Qila Anandgarh Sahib at Ropar, the four shrines (i.e. 3%) on north east side like Takht Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur and three (i.e. 2%) on south west side like Gurdwara Hatt Sahib at Sultanpur Lodhi entry into the shrine. It is evident that the main direction of the shrines is provided in almost every direction without consideration for any specific direction unlike other contemporary religious architectures like Hindu and Islamic architecture. But the direction in east side i.e. 26% is highest while the south west has the least with only 2% entry into the main shrine.

3. **Entry from different side**

In most of the gurdwaras, the entry has provided in all the directions and it seems that most of the presently built shrines have followed the pattern of Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar. It is obligatory that the gurdwara should be open for every person from any direction. Any person without distinction of religion, caste or creed can visit the gurdwara. There is no restriction on anyone for entry in the gurdwara. During the

---

course of the study the total forty eight (i.e 37%) gurdwaras had the entry from all four sides like The Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar and The Darbar Sahib at Tarn Taran, the four shrines (i.e 3%) have entry from three side like Takht Kesgarh Sahib and The Akal Takht Sahib at Amritsar, the three shrines (i.e 2%) have entry from one side like Gurdwara Mata Jito Ji at Anandpur Sahib and the only one shrine namely Gurdwara Thara Sahib at Khadur Sahib (i.e 0.76%) had entry from two sides only. It is noteworthy that because of this site constraint, it does not permit entry on all four sides. Majority of the shrine have entry on all the four sides.

![Entry from different sides](image)

**Figure 3: Entry from different sides**

4. **Approach to the main shrine**

The approach to the main shrine may be in different way like through flight of stairs, covered shed etc. In the course of study there were twenty seven (i.e 20.76%) shrine were approached through flight of stairs like Gurdwara Mau Sahib at Jalandhar and Gurdwara Kapal Mochan Sahib at Yamuna Nagar, the ten (i.e 7%)...
through covered shed like Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran Sahib at Patiala, Gurdwara Padshahi Dasmi at Thanesar in Kurukshetra, the six shrines (i.e. 4%) had the verandah at front of the shrines like Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib and Gurdwara Tham Sahib at Kartarpur in Jalandhar district and four shrines (i.e. 3%) had the small covered hall at the front of the shrines like The Darbar Sahib at Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district. It is evident that there was no standardized pattern for the entrance of the shrines. It depends upon the location and available space of the shrines.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4: Approach to the main shrine**

5. **Shape of the shrine**

There were four basic type of formation of gurdwaras building identified in the region. These four types were –the square, the rectangular, the octagonal and the cruciform but mainly shrines are in square and rectangular. In most of the shrines, there were the quadrangle chambers at the four corners. There was also the octagonal chamber sometimes at the two or sometimes at the four corner of the roof. It depends upon the age or the construction of the buildings. It is noticeable that mostly in the

---

38 Ibid, 124.
newly constructed gurdwaras they have the octagonal and quadrangle chamber at the four corner of the roof. During the course of the study the total sixty five (i.e 50%) shrines were in square shape like Darbar Sahib (Tarn Taran), Burj Sahib (Dhariwal, Gurdaspur)\textsuperscript{42} and Pipli Sahib (Amritsar).\textsuperscript{43} The fifty three (i.e 40.76%) shrines were in rectangular shape like Darbar Sahib, Khadur Sahib (Tarn Taran), Gurdwara Padshahi Naumi, Baba Bakala (Amritsar) and Gurdwara Manji Sahib, Alamgir (Ludhiana).\textsuperscript{44} The five shrines (i.e 3.84%) were in octagonal shape like Gurdwara Holgarh Sahib at Anandpur (Ropar)\textsuperscript{45} and Gurdwara Garna Sahib at Bodal (Hoshiarpur). The five shrines (i.e 3.84%) were in cruciform shape like Gurdwara Bir Baba Budhha Ji at Thattha (Amritsar)\textsuperscript{46} and Gurdwara Ber Sahib at Sultanpur Lodhi (Kapurthala). It is evident that almost half the numbers of the shrine were in square and the remaining massive numbers of shrines were in rectangular. The numbers of the octagonal and cruciform shape was rather small.

![Shape of the Shrines](image)

Figure 5: Shape of the Shrines

\textsuperscript{42} Roop Singh, \textit{So Thann Suhavva}, p. 51. For the detail of all the gurdwaras see the Table No. 5 in Appendix-VI.


\textsuperscript{44} \url{http://www.historicalgurudwaras.com/GurudwaraDetail.aspx?gid=4199}, Retrieved on 26-3-2017 at 10 a.m


\textsuperscript{46} Karamjit Singh, \textit{Understanding Sikh Architecture through the Sikhs Shrines in East Punjab}, p. 130
5.1. **Square Plan**

Most of the shrines had the square in shape like Gurdwara Darbar Sahib (Tarn Taran), Gurdwara Burj Shaib Dhariwal at Gurdaspur and Gurdwara Pipli Sahib at Amritsar. The pictures of this pattern as following:

![Square Plans](image1)

Source: Karamjit Singh

5.2. **Rectangular Plan**

The rectangular shrines had also very much in number after the square plan. This plan is mainly used because area of such shrine is large and there is a large space in front of sanctum sanctorum, which can accommodate more number of devotees. Some of the examples of rectangular shaped shrines are Gurdwara Nau Lakha Padshahi Naumi at Fatehgarh Sahib, Gurdwara Shaheedan Sahib and Gurdwara Chheharta Sahib at Amritsar.

![Rectangular Plans](image2)

Source: Karamjit Singh

---


5.3 **Square with Octagonal Chamber at Corners**

There was also the provision of the Octagonal chambers at the top of the main shrine. These chambers are topped with domical structure on top, normally similar to the dome of the main shrine. Some of the examples of these shrines are Gurdwara Garhi Sahib at Chamkaur Sahib, Gurdwara Tap Astahn Baba Budhha at Ramdass and Gurdwara Katalgarh Sahib at Chamkaur Sahib.

![Figure 5.3. Garhi Sahib at Ropar, Tap Asthan Baba Budha at Ramdass and Katalgarh Sahib at Chamkaur Sahib](image)

5.4 **Rectangular with Octagonal Chamber at Corners**

The only difference to the above-mentioned shrine is that in this category the shape of the main place is rectangular instead of square. Some example of these shrines is State Gurdwara Sahib at Kapurthala and Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib.

![Figure 5.4. Hatt Shaib (Sultanpur Lodhi) and Fatehgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib)](image)

Source: Karamjit Singh

---

5.5 Rectangular/Square with Octagonal Chamber at two Corners

In few shrines, the octagonal chambers are used only at two corners for example Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib\textsuperscript{52} and Gurdwara Manji Shaib at Alamgir in Ludhiana district.

![Diagram of Keshgarh Sahib and Manji Sahib](image)

Figure 5.5. Keshgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib) and Manji Sahib (Alamgir)
Source: Karamjit Singh

5.6 Square/Rectangular plans with entrance hall/verandah in front

A very few shrines had the entrance hall/verandah in front of the shrine. Some time the flight of stairs was placed under these verandahs for entrance into the shrines. Some examples of these shrines are Gurdwara Anandgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib\textsuperscript{53} and Darbar Sahib at Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district.

![Diagram of Anandgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib and Darbar Sahib](image)

Figure 5.6. Anandgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib and Darbar Sahib, Dera Baba Nanak
Source: Karamjit Singh

\textsuperscript{52} Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, \textit{Anandpur Sahib and Keeratpur Sahib Gurdwarres} (Punjabi), Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1975, p. 54.

5.7. Octagonal Plans

There were some shrines have the octagonal shape like Gurdwara Baba Atal Sahib at Amritsar,\textsuperscript{54} Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib and Gurdwara Holgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib in Ropar district.

![Octagonal Plans](image)

Figure 5.7. Gurdwara Baba Atal Sahib, Amritsar, Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib and Holgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib
Source: Karamjit Singh

5.8. Cruciform

There were some shrines had the cruciform entrance porticos on both the longer sides of the rectangular shrine. These shrines have an overall form similar to cruciform for example Gurdwara San Sahib at Baserke,\textsuperscript{55} Gurdwara Janam Asthan Padshahi Chhevin at Vadali and Gurdwara Bir Baba Buddha in Amritsar district.\textsuperscript{56}

![Cruciform](image)

Figure 5.8. Gurdwara San Sahib, Baserke, Janam Asthan Padshahi Chhevin, Vadali and Bir Baba Buddha in Amritsar
Source: Karamjit Singh


\textsuperscript{55} Karamjit Singh, *Understanding Sikh Architecture through the Sikhs Shrines in East Punjab*, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{56} http://www.historicalgurudwaras.com/GurudwaraDetail.aspx?gid=4134, Retrieved on 26-3-2017 at 2.30 p.m.
6. **Numbers of floors**

The number of floors for the selected study ranged from one to nine. Most of the gurdwaras had the single storeyed structure. The total thirty six shrines (i.e. 27%) were the single storeyed structure like Gurdwara Charan Kanwal at Machhiwara (Ludhiana),\(^{57}\) Gurdwara Kot Shamir (Bhatinda), Gurdwara Padshahi Chhemi at Akoi (Sangrur) etc. Some shrines were also having the basement like Gurdwara Thara Shaib (Amritsar) and Gurdwara Bhora Sahib at Anandpur (Ropar).\(^{58}\) There were thirty four shrines (i.e 26%) had the two storeyed structure and some of these were also the basement like Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Dera Baba Nanak (Gurdaspur), Gurdwara Guru ka Bagh at Ghukhewali (Amritsar). There were also thirty four (i.e 26%) shrines have the three storeyed structure like Gurdwara Takht Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib (Ropar),\(^{59}\) The Darbar Sahib (Amritsar) and The Darbar Sahib (Tarn Taran). There were nine (i.e 6.92%) shrines who had the four storeyed structure like State Gurdwara Sahib (Kapurthala),\(^ {60}\) Gurdwara Parrivar Vichora Patshahi Dasmi (Ropar) and Gurdwara Bhatta Sahib at Kotla Nihang (Ropar). Some four storeyed shrines also had the basement plan like Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib and Gurdwara Ber Sahib at Sultanpur Lodhi (Kapurthala). There were ten (i.e 7.69%) shrines have the five storeyed structure like Gurdwara Mau Sahib (Jalandhar), Gurdwara Tham Sahib, Kartarpur (Jalandhar). Some five storeyed shrines also have the basement plan like Gurdwara Janam Asthan Padshahi Chhemi at Vadali (Amritsar)\(^ {61}\) and Gurdwara Akal Takht Sahib. There was only one (i.e 0.76%) shrine who had the seven storeyed structure and this was Gurdwara Ramsar Sahib at Amritsar. There was also only one (i.e 0.76%) shrine who have the nine storeyed structure and this was the Gurdwara Baba Atal at Amritsar. It is evident that there was no standardized pattern for numbers of floors for shrines, basically it depends upon the resources of the local devotees and on the space of the shrines. The earlier shrines were of less height and as the technology advanced and the financial power of the Sikhs increased, they started creating bigger and taller structures.

---

\(^{57}\) Roop Singh, *So Thann Suhavva*, p. 88. For the detail of all the gurdwaras see the Table No. 6 in Appendix-VI.


\(^{59}\) Roop Singh, *So Thann Suhavva*, p. 95.

\(^{60}\) Karamjit Singh, *Understanding Sikh Architecture through the Sikhs Shrines in East Punjab*, p. 16.

### Number of Floors

![Number of Floors](image)

**Figure 6: Number of Floors**

7. **Location of the Sarovar**

It is the very common element of gurdwara architecture and most of the gurdwaras have the provision of the *sarovar*. However, there is no fixed place for the *sarovar*. During the course of the study, there was only one (i.e. 0.76%) shrine have the *sarovar* around the main shrine and this place was The Golden Temple at Amritsar. There were seventeen (i.e 13%) shrines have the *sarovar* at the south side of the shrine like Gurdwara Baba Bir Singh at Naurangabad (Amritsar), Gurdwara Santoksar Sahib (Amritsar) and Gurdwara Manji Sahib at Ambala. There were ten (i.e 7.69%) shrines have the *sarovar* at the west side of the shrine like The Darbar Sahib (Tarn Taran), Gurdwara San Sahib, Basarke (Amritsar) and Gurdwara Chhehartha Sahib at Amritsar. There were also ten (i.e 7.69%) shrines have the *sarovar* at the east side of the main shrine like Gurdwara Datansar Sahib (Muktsar), Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran Sahib (Patiala) and Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib at Dina in Moga district. There were nine (i.e 6.92%) shrines have the *sarovar* at the north side

---

62 Sundar Singh, *History of the Golden Temple, Amritsar and the Shrines around the city*, p. 58. For the detail of all the gurdwaras see the Table No. 7 in Appendix-VI.


64 Roop Singh, *So Thann Suhaavaa*, p. 115.
of the main shrine like Gurdwara Burj Sahib at Dhariwal (Gurdaspur), Gurdwara Parrivar Vichora Padshahi Dasmi (Ropar) and Gurdwara Tap Asthan Baba Budha Ji at Ramdas at Amritsar. The shape of the sarovar is also not standardized, some sarovar have the square and the other sarovar were rectangular. Mostly it depends upon the available space of the shrine.

![Figure 7: Location of Sarovar](image)

8. Location of the Nishan Sahib

The provision of the Nishan Sahib is provided in all the shrines. There is no gurdwara even big or small without Nishan Sahib. However, the location of the Nishan Sahib is varying from place to place. In the undertaken study, there were sixty seven (i.e 51%) shrines have the Nishan Sahib at front side like The Darbar Sahib (Tarn Taran), Gurdwara Takht Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib (Ropar), Gurdwara Patalpuri Sahib at Kiratpur Sahib (Ropar) etc. The sixteen (i.e 12%) shrines have the Nishan Sahib at east side like Gurdwara Padshahi Panjmi at Bilga (Jalandhar), Gurdwara Padshahi Dasmi at Haji Rattan (Bhatinda), Gurdwara Sukhchan Sahib at Phagwara (Kapurthala). The thirteen (i.e 10%) shrines have Nishan Sahib at west side like Gurdwara Baoli Sahib at Goindwal (Tarn Taran), Gurdwara Gurusar at

---

66 Pardeep Singh, Arshi, *Sikh Architecture in the Punjab*, p. 92. For the detail of all the gurdwaras see the Table no. 8 in Appendix-VI.
Nathana (Bhatinda), Gurdwara Gangsar Sahib at Jaito (Faridkot). The five (i.e. 3.84%) shrines have the Nishan Sahib at the south side of the shrine like Gurdwara Kandh Sahib at Batala (Gurdaspur), Gurdwara Gurusar at Hadiaya (Sangrur). The four (i.e. 3%) shrines have the Nishan Sahib at the north side of the shrine like Gurdwara Achal Sahib at Batala (Gurdaspur), Gurdwara Rakabsar Sahib (Muktsar). The three (i.e. 2%) shrines have the Nishan Sahib on the floors of the shrine like The Darbar Sahib (Amritsar) at second floor and Sri Akal Takht Sahib at the third floor. The two (i.e. 1.53%) shrines have the Nishan Sahib at the both side of the shrine like Gurdwara Tahliana Sahib at Raikot (Ludhiana) and Gurdwara Gurusar at Mehraj in Bhatinda district. It indicates that more than half of the location of the Nishan Sahib is at the front of the shrines. A few numbers is identified in the east, west, north and south side. Some shrines have the provision of two Nishan Sahib at the entrance of the main shrine. Some shrines have also the provision of the Nishan Sahib at the second or third floor.

![Location of Nishan Sahib](image)

Figure 8: Location of Nishan Sahib

---

9. **Structure of the Dome**

There were three types of the structure of the dome can be identified through the documented of the sources of Sikh architecture. Almost all the shrines have the common pattern of the dome. The highest one hundred and fifteen (i.e 88%) shrines have the onion shape dome like Gurdwara Pipli Sahib (Amritsar), Gurdwara Manji Sahib at Mulowal (Sangrur), Gurdwara Gurusar at Lopon in Moga district. The eight (i.e 6%) shrines have the domical type roof on the top. The domical top means the shape of the dome is flat type and not like the onion type. Some examples of these shrines were Gurdwara Padshahi Dasmi at Hehran (Ludhiana), Gurdwara Padshahi Dasmi (Nadaun).\(^\text{71}\) The seven (i.e 5%) shrines have the gilded dome like The Darbar Sahib (Amritsar)\(^\text{72}\) and The Darbar Sahib in Tarn Taran. It is evident that more than half the shrines have the onion shaped dome and it is the standardized pattern. Even the gurdwara is big or small the pattern of the dome should be the same. There were few shrines identified who had the gilded dome. The provision of the gilded dome is depends upon on the resources of the local devotees. It is fact that if the local devotees would be rich than obviously the building of gurdwara of that area would be well maintained and decorative.

![Structure of the Dome](image)

**Figure 9: Structure of the Dome**

---

\(^{71}\) Roop Singh, *So Thaan Suhaavaa*, p. 133. For the detail of all the gurdwaras see the Table No. 9 in Appendix-VI.

10. **Outer structure of the Shrines**

The outer structures of the shrines vary from one shrine to other. There were three main types of outer structure of the shrines can be identified in the region. The twenty (i.e 15%) shrines have the cusped arched gallery around the main shrine like Gurdwara Baba Ganda Singh at Barnala (Sangrur), Gurdwara Padshahi Dasmi at Bargari (Faridkot), Gurdwara Sulisar at Kot Dharmu (Mansa). The meaning of the cusped arched gallery is that some shrines have the colonnade type corridor around the main shrine at ground floor. The massive ninety seven (i.e 74%) shrines have the simple railing at the roof like Gurdwara Tibbi Sahib at Jaito Mandi (Faridkot), Gurdwara Vivah Aasthan at Kartarpur (Jalandhar), Gurdwara Manji Sahib at Damdama Sahib (Bhatinda). The thirteen (i.e 10%) shrines have the railing of small dome at the roof like Gurdwara Baoli Sahib at Goindwal (Tarn Taran), Gurdwara Padshahi Panjmi at Bilga (Jalandhar), Gurdwara Nabha Sahib in Patiala. The meaning of small dome railing is that some shrines have the very small onion shape dome railing around the main shrine at the roof. However, all these shrines have also the octagonal or quadrangle chamber at the four or two corner. It is evident that the common pattern of the outer structure is simple but some new features of architecture are also applied in the newly constructed shrines.

![Outer Structure of the Shrines](http://www.historicalgurudwaras.com/GurudwaraDetail.aspx?gid=4066, Retrieved on 28-3-2017 at 3.30 p.m. For the detail of all the gurdwaras see the Table No. 10 in Appendix-VI.

11. Stepped Baoli and Well

It is also very important element of gurdwaras because some shrines were built on the name of the *baoli* and some of these *baolis* were constructed by the guru himself like Gurdwara *Baoli Sahib* at Goindwal (Tarn Taran). The two (i.e. 1.53%) shrines have the stepped *baoli* like Gurdwara *Baoli Sahib* at Goindwal (Tarn Taran)\(^{75}\) and Gurdwara *Baoli Sahib Padshahi Chhemi* at Nadala (Kapurthala). There was only one (i.e 0.76%) shrine have the sacred *well* in the region like Gurdwara *Charan Kanwal* at Machhiwara (Ludhiana).\(^{76}\) It is clear that the provision of the sacred well was very less. It is mentioned that the provision of the sacred *baoli* may be in more shrines but it is impossible to find out the location of the *baoli* through the documentation of picture. However, as much as possible the authentic data has been collected from the sources.

![Provision of Stepped Baoli and Well](image)

**Figure 11: Provision of stepped Baoli and Well**

It is evident that the provisions of some common element like hand wash area, feet wash area and *Jora Ghar* was made in all the shrines. The provision of multiple hand wash area, feet wash area and *Jora Ghar* was also available in the major shrines for example The Golden Temple at Amritsar and The Darbar Sahib at Tarn Taran and it also depends upon the number of entrances to the shrine. The provision of the

\(^{75}\) [http://www.historicalgurudwaras.com/GurudwaraDetail.aspx?gid=4294](http://www.historicalgurudwaras.com/GurudwaraDetail.aspx?gid=4294), Retrieved on 28-2-2017 at 3.40 p.m. For the detail of all the gurdwaras see the Table No. 11 in Appendix-VI.

\(^{76}\) Roop Singh, *So Thaan Suhaavaa*, p. 48.
Darshani Deodhi has made in most of the shrines. The provision of the multiple Darshani Deodhi is also provided in big shrines and it also depends upon the numbers of entrances to the shrines. The location of the Darshani Deodhi is depends upon on the direction/location of entry points to the shrine. The provision of the Karah Parshad area has made in majority of the shrines. The direction of the main entrance is not fixed as it depends upon the direction/location of the entry points to the site. However, the majority of the direction is looked on the east and north direction. Most of the shrines have entrance on all the four sides. In very few cases, due to site constraint there are entrances on three, two or only one side.

Sikh shrines do not follow any standard layout. Various forms have been used in these shrines. However, all the shrines fulfill the basic requirement like the provision of main hall, sukhashan room or rest room, room for akhand path, inner parikarma, no images inside the hall, Karah Prasad. The location of the sukhashan room or rest room is not fixed it depends upon the suitable space inside the hall. Sometime it is built on the left or right side of the sanctum sanctorum and in many shrines, it is built on the first floor. The shape of the sanctum sanctorum as well is also not standardized. It is either square, octagon or rectangular. The direction of the sanctum sanctorum depends upon the direction of the main entrance to the shrine. In majority of the shrines, parikarma (circumambulatory path) have provided for movement around the sanctum sanctorum. The approach to the main shrine also varies from one shrine to another. However, most of the shrines have approached through flight of stairs. In few cases, there is covered shed and verandah at the entrance. The shape of the most of the shrine was square or rectangular. However a very few cases of octagonal and cruciform shape of the shrines can be identified. The shape of the shrine was depends upon the available space for the shrines. The number of floors also ranged from one to nine, there was also no standardized pattern for the number of floors for any shrines. The provision of sarovar is provided in majority of the shrines. In some cases, the provision of the sarovar was not there due to the size of the site does not permit it. The location of the sarovar was also not fixed, it depends upon the location of the shrines. The provision of the Nishan Sahib has provided in all the shrines irrespective of their size. However, the location of the Nishan Sahib varies from one shrine to another but most of the shrines having Nishan Sahib at the front side. The shape of the dome was also not standardized but most of
shrines have the onion shape dome. The outer structure of the shrine also varies but most of the shrines have the simple railing and no arched gallery around the main shrine. The provision of the stepped baoli and well can be identified in very few shrines. The provision of the langar building has also made in majority of the shrines. The non-availability of a langar building in a shrine may be due to its proximity to some prominent shrine or it being part of complex with provision of the langar building.

III

From the above discussion of the data of one hundred and thirty shrines, it is clear that there were many architectural elements commonly used in a gurdwara like dome, kiosks, chhatris, chambers, cupolas, arches, covered shed and balconyed windows. The salient features of the gurdwaras are the multiplicity of chhatris, kiosks, and cupola, decorating the parapets and corners at terrace level. The crowning feature of a shrine is the fluted or ribbed dome. Most of the shrines have the onion shape dome but few example of gilded dome can be identified. Normally all the domes are painted with white marble pieces or white porcelain tile pieces. The gold plated copper sheets are also used in many historical shrines. In many shrines, balconyed and bay window with shallow elliptical eaves and supported on carved brackets are used. The surfaces of the shrines are also made with floral and other design. In major shrines like Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar and The Darbar Sahib at Tarn Taran work in brass and copper gilt sheeting is introduced with lavishness to create the grandeur.

Domes

The domes are the very important part of religious architecture throughout the world and are the crowning feature of a Sikh shrines as well. There were very few shrines who have the domical top means flat roof at the top. The Sikh shrines have an impressive visual effect, because of the use of various types and forms of the dome, which makes the gurdwara more beautiful. In present study, most of the onion shape domes can be identified in the region. These onion shape domes have heightened more than simple domes. Such domes are larger in diameter than the drum on which it rests. These bulbous domes taper smoothly to appoint and strongly resemble the onion after which they are named. In majority of the shrines, these domes are usually white or gold plated. Generally, these domes are either white or lined with marble pieces or
white ceramic tile pieces. Some of the major historical shrines are covered with gold plated copper sheets like The Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar, The Darbar Sahib at Tarn Taran, Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak at Gurdaspur and Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib at Fatehgarh Sahib. The various type of the technology was used for making to these domes. In some shrines, the finial over the dome has given of gold plating like Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib and Gurdwara Kandh Sahib at Batala.

From the technically point of view, using copper to clad the masonry work is considered to be the most reliable method of waterproofing to protect it from decay. Gold plating the copper is the ideal finish for the protection of these copper sheets for durability. Apart from the large central dome there are often four cupolas one at each corner of the dome base and several cupolas embellishing the parapet. In most of the shrines, the dome springs from a floral base with the lotus petal motif provided around it in a single or in some cases a double row of petals have been used. The dome of Darbar Sahib at Dera Baba Nanak is unique. It has miniature cupolas all around the octagonal base and double layer of lotus petals with small kalasa like motif on the top of upper row of lotus petals. The detail at the top of the dome is also quite different from the domes generally used in the Sikh shrines. The domes of almost all historical shrines are made in brick masonry, thus in the method of the construction and placement of the dome over the structures of Sikh shrines have mostly followed the age-old traditions of architectural experimentation. Almost in all the cases, dome rests on a square pavilion with three opening on all the sides.

Figure: Domes of Gurdwara Bhatta Sahib, Katalgarh Sahib and Fatehgarh Sahib at Fatehgarh Sahib

Source: Karamjijit Singh

77 Karamjijit Singh, Understanding Sikh Architecture through the Sikhs Shrines in East Punjab, p. 188.
Cupola

A cupola is a dome-shaped ornamented architectural element provided on parapet at terrace level, on the corners of the dome base. The word cupola is an Italian word from the Renaissance, a time in architectural history when ornamentation, domes and columns defined a rebirth of Greek building designs. The word is derived from Latin cupula, meaning a kind of cup or tub. The cupolas have used in the Sikh shrines to decorate the parapets and corners of the dome base in many of the Sikh shrines. There have been many varieties of cupolas used with interesting variation with respect to size, type and form in the Sikh shrines.

![Figure: A B C D E, Cupola used at A. Bhatha Sahib, B. Katalgarh Sahib, C. Baba Bir Singh, D. Akal Takht Sahib, E. Keshgarh Sahib](image)

Source: Karamjit Singh

The Kiosks

The kiosks are also very important architectural element of Sikh shrines. In Sikh shrines many varieties of kiosks has used with interesting variations with respect to size, type and form to decorate the parapets and corners. The size of the kiosk may vary from a small kiosk at the corner to a room sized structure. The most common type of a kiosk is a square pavilion crowned by a domical roof. Besides this, the octagonal type kiosks have also been used commonly for beautify the facade of the Sikh shrines. Sometimes the kiosks are provided on the raised piers, like the Akal Takht and the Harmandir Sahib. The square kiosks have either single arched opening
on each side or in case of large kiosks may have three arched openings on each side and similarly the octagonal kiosks have arched opening on its each face. These kiosks are finished with white paint in most of the cases but in some cases like Akal Takht and the Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar these are in gold plated.

**The Pillars and Pilasters**

The pillars and pilaster is also very important feature of Sikh shrines. The pillar is a structural member, basically meant for supporting the superstructure or an arch above. The pilaster plays its important role for beautify and shining of the Sikh shrines. A pilaster is used from aesthetics point of view and as a decorative element. The pilaster is used in the Sikh shrines on both the exterior and interior walls surfaces. The carefully designed bases and the crowing elements enhance the beauty of the pilasters. The pilaster of the Sikh shrines seems to be derived from the pillars of Mughal and Rajput architecture.
It is evident that there were many changes came in the architecture of the Sikh shrines with the passage of times. These changes can be divided into various phases. In the first phase, as the earlier dharmsal were simple, small and constructed from less durable materials such as timber mud bricks and thatch. However, the early examples of Sikh architecture and art have mostly disappeared. There is not much authentic reference material as well as documentary proof of their shape, size and style available at present. The second phase of architecture begins with the coming of Ranjit Singh as a ruler of the Punjab. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a patron of the art. During the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the gurdwara get a new shape. Firstly, he gives the grants of thousand of rupees to these Sikh shrines and this made possible the building of these shrines in *pucca* masonry. He introduced the new techniques in the architecture like the floral designs on the walls inside as well as outside of the gurdwara. The arches of the gurdwara buildings were ornamented with verses from the Guru Granth Sahib and reproduced in letters of gold. He donated a very much quantity of gold to these Sikh shrines. He introduced the gold work on the dome and the walls of the Sikh shrines. He also introduced the jaratkari system and he engaged the Naqqashes for the decorative purposes. Besides this, the white marble slabs were fixed in the Sikh shrines and he also made the white marble *parikarma* in the major Sikh shrines. Therefore, the dharmsal from the timber mud bricks and thatch became a *pucca* masonry, decorative design with architectural features during the period of Ranjit Singh.

The third phase of architecture covers the period of the 20th century. In the 20th century, the pattern of architecture of gurdwaras was fixed as marble carving. The white marble became the mandatory element of architecture and the use of it became stereotype ritual for all the Sikh shrines. Most of the buildings of Sikh shrines were converted into white marble in the 20th century. Besides this, the fresco paintings, gilded dome, decorative *jali* work and *gach* work were visible in gurdwaras in the 20th century period.

The fourth phase includes the gurdwaras of the modern times. The new forms of gurdwaras buildings were evolved in the modern times. The significant feature of the modern gurdwaras is that the large complexes are constructed around the main
shrines. It is observed that there are the variations in structure of gurdwaras buildings with compared to the plain areas, hilly areas and the gurdwaras situated in abroad. For example, the roof of the gurdwaras of the plain areas will be the same like flat roof. However, it is different with the gurdwaras located in hilly areas. For example, the roof of the Gurdwara Hemkunt Sahib is different from other gurdwaras. The form of the roof of the Gurdwara Hemkunt Sahib is a juxtaposition of the conceptual as well as the functional part of the design. The design of the roof, with its valley and the ridges is suited to the particular climate that is prevalent in this area. Such a design can bear snow load extremely efficiently. As the roof is made of aluminum sheets with Astro lite backing, it glowing like a radiant gem, the roof is an effective and aesthetic rendition of the architect.\textsuperscript{78} Like this, the Gurdwara Baru Sahib is another example of the architecture. Besides this, the gurdwaras situated in abroad has also different types of architecture. For example, the Gurdwara Sahib at Leamington in United Kingdom has different type of architecture. Like this, the Gurdwara Sahib Fremont, California in U.S.A also has new form of architecture. Another example is the Gurdwara Nanaksar at Dubai also a different style of architecture.\textsuperscript{79} Therefore, there are many variations in the structure and architecture of the gurdwaras. The structure and architecture of these shrines is also depends upon the location of the place.

However, beyond these types of architecture, it is observed that Sikh religious architecture develops along paths of their religious beliefs. Rather than serving a local community, a number of people from far off places visit gurdwaras. This has increased the resources of the gurdwaras and the more beautiful buildings were also constructed at these place with modern technology. More sarai, congregational hall, multiple Jora Ghar, hand wash area and multiple entrances are also required to make in these Sikh shrines with the increasing number of the devotees. As the new technology is coming day by day, the new technique of construction is also applying in these Sikh shrines.


\textsuperscript{79} For all these Gurdwaras see Figure No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 in current chapter.
Figure 1: Gurdwara Hemkunt Sahib at Hemkunt
Source: Google Images

Figure 2: Gurdwara Hemkunt Sahib
Source: Google Images

Figure 3: Gurdwara Baru Sahib in Himachal Pardesh
Source: Google Images

Figure 4: Gurdwara Sahib at Leamington in United Kingdom
Source: Google Image
Figure 5: Gurdwara Fremont Sahib at California in U. S. A  
Source: Google Image

Figure 6: Gurdwara Nanaksar at Dubai  
Source: Google Images