CHAPTER – VI

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

To gain a deeper insight into the idiosyncratic distinctions of places of worship of different religions, it is necessary to analyse the why's and wherefore's of their conception, construction, and expression, which set them apart as sacred building-types, representing architecturally the tenets of each faith in easily identifiable forms. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and the Sikh Faith have their places of worship, respectively, called: The Temple (Mandir), The Stupa, The Church, and The Gurdwara (portals of the spiritual preceptor). The illustrations discussed here are archetypes which have become established, through visual imagery and associative cerebration, as typical emblems of each of the stated five faiths.

HINDU TEMPLE [Ref.: Sketch I]

A Hindu Temple’s sanctum sanctorum is the garbha-griha (the womb-room), a small unlit shrine where the sacred idol is lodged. The devotees enter it, not merely to pay obeisance but to gain mystical absorption in the Being of the presiding deity – so as to come out of it into a new rebornness. It is a one-to-one conjugal, transformative communion.

A mandir is built on the trabeate structure system in stone, and the emphasis is on the artistic expression of the metaphysical concept rather than on the physical aspect of the science of construction. The temple, being the body of god or goddess, has the shikhara express the towering persona of the sculpted idol. Its pyramidal roof-form is thus an apt expression of the underlying religious intention. The devotees' reverence for
SCHEMATIC PLAN OF WATERSUPPLY AND RAINWATER DISPOSAL

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PLATE NO XIII
PLATE NO XIV: Master Plan of Walled City showing Watersupply Network
APPLICATION OF REGULATING LINES:

NOTRE DAME, PARIS

The determinant surface of the Cathedral is based on the square and the circle.

THE PORTE SAINT-DENIS (BLONDEL)

DIAGRAM - I : Le Corbusier's Method of Evaluating Historical Monuments

Shown in the above illustrations is Le Corbusier's Method of Regulating Lines that he developed and applied to famous historical monuments to underscore their Geometric Ordering and System of Proportioning.

SOURCE: Towards A New Architecture., op.cit., pp.63&73
AESTHETICS, The Expression of Visible Beauty, is manifest in Built Form and, therefore, amenable to exact Geometric Ordering that supports Proportioning System.
DIAGRAM -III  SRI HARMANDAR SAHIB

Revealed Structure of the Holy Shrine's Unique Aesthetics: The photographic image has been removed from behind to lay bare the stark composition of squares, a rectangle, and a triangle, which has created a beautiful facade.
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PLATE NO II
SRI HARMANDAR SAHIB, AMRITSAR:
SECTION AT A-A
COVERED PASSAGE BETWEEN MAIN SHRINE & HAR-KI-PAURI

SECTIONAL PLAN OF BASE

SECTIONAL ELEVATION AT B-B

SECTION AT A-A

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PLATE NO III
NORTH ELEVATION (WITH VAULTED CAUSEWAY)

JAALI PARAPET DETAIL

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PLATE NO IV
DARSHANI DEORHI: ELEVATION FACING AKAL TAKHT

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PLATE NO XII
the presiding deity is an offering in the form of elaborately-carved human and animal figures.

**BUDDHIST STUPA** [Ref.: Sketch II]

The Buddhist Stupa is not a shrine to be entered, but a building to be walked round about (circumambulation). Its very sight has a purgatory effect on the devotees. Its strong geometric shape, a hemisphere, seems to draw attention to the powers of the mind lodged within the cranium cavity—and alludes to its chief idiosyncrasy: the human reason. It invokes no gods and/or goddesses except the Holy Personage of Lord Buddha (the Enlightened One). It contains His relics which are shown for the benefit of the devotees only on ceremonial occasions.

Though *arcuate* in form, this gigantic dome is not a Structure. It is a construction of stone that covers an earth mound. A *stupa* is a sacred Buddhist monument, and not an ordinary building which the devotees enter for worshipping an idol. It houses relics which are revered as a foremost act of religious duty.

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH** [Ref.: Sketch III]

The Latin cross is the most ubiquitous plan-shape on which the Christian Church is built. It is an upright cross with the lowest limb longest. The cross is used to symbolise Jesus Christ's crucifixion. Its main parts are the apse, located at the eastern end in the upper limb, the transepts formed by the horizontal limb, the nave (from the Greek word *navis*, meaning ship), and the aisles on either side which run parallel to the nave. The main access to the church is from the western end, via an atrium or forecourt (provided only in the case of elaborate plans). The nave in which the faithful perform the
offertory service symbolise the ship that transports them to the haven of grace. Both volumetrically and height-wise it is the largest space in the church. As may be evident, a church is built on a strong axial plan, in which apse is the circular or multangular termination of the sanctuary.

The Structure is a combination of the trabeate and the arcuate systems. Indeed church architecture has developed an intricate exquisite method of vaulting, flying buttresses, and dome-shapes, notably, the ribbed construction ingenious (almost modern) system of roofing large-span spaces.

According to Banister Fletcher, "Early records speak of gilt roofs or ceilings, silver altars, and silver and gold candlesticks as well as coloured marble columns and wall facings—all contrasting strongly with what must have been a very plain exterior".

**ISLAMIC MOSQUE** [Ref.: Sketch IV]

The Islamic mosque is always planned on an axis directed towards Mecca. This axis is terminated on the inner face of the mosque by the **mihrab** (Arabic word for arch/vault). This is the niche or arched recess in the western wall of an Indian mosque, towards which the worshippers turn for prayer. The **mihrab** is where the leader of the congregation makes his prayer. This act, which involves prostration (in Arabic, **sajda**, from which the word "**masjid**"—literally, place where **sajda** is performed—has been derived), must be observed from other parts of the prayer chamber (usually a vast courtyard), and lateral vision is, therefore, important. The congregation assembles in lines transversing the main axis and takes its cue from the leader or those in the centre of the line in a position to observe him. Thus

1 FLETCHER, *op. cit.*
a multi-columned hall with transverse aisles is acceptable. The prayer space is furnished only with a *mimber* (whose counterpart is the pulpit in a Christian Church), *from* which formal pronouncements can be made. A part of the prayer space may be screened off or fitted with a balcony for special uses of a dignitary or ruler, or of muezzins or women.

Structure system used in a mosque is predominantly *arcuate* comprising arches, vaults, squinches/pendentives, and domes. A massive dome—varying in shape from a hemisphere to the typically bulbous, more often than not, fluted—roofs the central space containing the *mihrab*, whose presence is functional rather than sacred: it shows the *qibla* (direction) towards that part of the world where Mecca is located. The side prayer spaces have slightly smaller domes, though of the same shape as the main dome. The muezzin delivers the *azaan* (prayer-call to the faithful) from the minarets which have come to stay as among the most conspicuous features of Islamic mosque. There is no circumambulatory in a *masjid* like in a Buddhist *stupa*.

**THE GOLDEN TEMPLE** [Ref.: Sketch V]

In contrast to the foregoing places of worship of other Faiths, Sri Harmandar Sahib is a unitary shelter primarily for the installing of Guru Granth Sahib, which all the Sikhs are enjoined upon to revere as a *living* spiritual preceptor (*Guru*). It also provides space for the *raagis* (baptised hymn-singers) and the congregation without any discrimination of caste, colour, creed, or sex. Its circumambulatory (*parkarma*) is meant for walking round about the *sanctum sanctorum* in contemplative reverence for the Holy *Guru*. Unlike in other places of worship analysed before, Sri Harmandar Sahib has four doors signifying that the Sikh Faith is open to anyone who seeks to be *Guru-
guided on the path of socially-beneficent spirituality. Whereas all other historical places of worship are elevated on high podiums, the Golden Temple is much lower than its surroundings so that the devotees have to climb down more than a floor-height to have access to the shrine. That the construction and development of the Amrit-Sarovar antedates that of the sanctuary, the proclamation of the Sikh Faith on the foundation of dharma, the Cosmic Moral Law, gains an added significance. The implication is that this world is not Maya (i.e., illusory), and that human life is spiritually committed to socially-beneficent action which is the immanent aspect of Divinity. No wonder why Guru Nanak has made Humility the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. He proclaimed that Humility along with (politeness) is the quintessence of all virtues and qualities, and demonstrated it by identifying himself with the lowliest of the lowly.