CONCLUSION

Before drawing my own conclusion(s) from this study of Sri Harmandar Sahib, I would like to quote what Percy Brown has written about the Holy Shrine:-

As an example not so much of architectural style but of religious emotion materialized in marble, glass, colour and metal the Golden Temple at Amritsar is equalled only by the Shwe Dragon Pagoda at Rangoon; the former symbolizes the faith of the Sikhs, the latter is the highest expression in a very similar range of material of another great Indian religion, that of the Buddhists5.

This quote needs elaboration. The phrase “architectural style” is loose, and, at best, means a repository of FORM-al features which characterise the art and science of building as practised by a particular community during a particular period of history. And the implication is that these features are distinguishable from those developed previously or contemporaneously by another community for expressing its aesthetic preferences. Similarly, the content of the word “religion”, in the expression “religious emotion”, seems to connote “belief in, recognition of, or an awakened sense of, a higher unseen controlling power or powers, with the emotion and morality connected therewith”. The dictionary meaning of the word “emotion” is “a moving of the feelings: agitation of the mind: one of the three groups of the phenomena of the mind—feeling, distinguished from cognition and will” (as in philosophy). It should be evident that the word “religion” alone accounts for everything else because the devotion that it


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inspires underscores the act of “giving up of the mind to the worship of God”. Devotion is psycho-somatic stirring of the human soul that desperately longs for reunion with its Creator, the Lord God. Seen in this curious light, the very Act of Creation of Sri Harmandar Sahib was never an exercise aimed at developing a new style of architecture. It was quite simply an impassioned expression of experience of “in touchness” with the dynamics of God’s Grace which, on its own initiative of Divine Creativity, produced an apt building-type as a soulful work of Revelation. And a legitimate “style” of Sikh Architecture eventually ensued.

Be that as it may, Percy Brown⁶, the learned architectural historian, has conceded that the Golden Temple expresses “religious emotion materialized in marble, glass, colour and metal”, and its example is “equalled only by the Shwe Dragon Pagoda at Rangoon”.

My conclusion is that Sri Harmandar Sahib, as an artistic creation of Divine inspiration, is a Marvel of Religious Architecture among other Places of Worship in the world. It expresses the unicity of Ek Omkar and His divine Immanence; inspires the devotees to follow the Path of Truth; and reunites their soul-consciousness (surat) with The Source, The Logos (shabad): The Primal Person (Akal Purakh), whose Essence is Transcendent and Might (qudrat) Immanent, as the life-breath of the entire cosmos.

⁶ ibid
This is a near-panoramic view of the Golden Temple (Southern facade), with eye-level corresponding to the top of the parapet of the shrine.

*Sri Harmandar Sahib*, The Temple of God, or *Sri Darbar Sahib*, the Court of the Lord, seems to rise like a lotus from the waters of the Pool of Nectar, *Amrit-Sarovar*, from which Amritsar, the City Sacred of the Indian Punjab, derives its name. The shrine is approached by a causeway, symbolising that an extraordinary spiritual endeavour leads the seeker to a life akin to that of a lotus—untouched by water even when it exists right in its midst. The vast enclosure, which has, among other things, a covered circum ambulatory (*parkarma*), is painted white to underscore the exclusive resplendence of the Golden Temple. Its deliberately-lowered plinth-level suggests that even the humblest has to step down to reach it. This element symbolises Humility which was proclaimed by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539 AD) as the cardinal principle of the New Faith (now called Sikhism) which he founded on the basis of his Revelation.
This is the Western facade of the Golden Temple, showing a small part of the causeway which leads to the main entrance and the circumambulatory (parkarma) around the sacred shrine. The frontal aspect is a near-square, all gilded except the ground-floor wall which is in white marble. Demountable railings are erected on the causeway to regulate the movement of the devotees who throng the Temple on special occasions in milling crowds. The point to note is that the shape of the main dome, which is elliptical, was deliberately chosen to express the cardinal principle of Humility. A low-sitting dome such as this is not visible from close-on but the problem has been solved most ingeniously: the parapet has been lowered in the middle so as not to obstruct the view of the dome. The chhattris, or kiosks, on the corners, are also squat and kept lower than the highest point of the main dome. The white surroundings automatically shift the focus onto the Golden Temple.
This picture shows the North-Eastern aspect of the Golden Temple. The cuboid form of the *sanctum sanctorum* has been extended by adding to it part of a hexagonal prism. The main dome is easily seen, thanks to the lowering of the parapet. Note, however, that the *chhattris* placed at the sides of the part-hexagon are hexagonal too— and look more austere than the square-based front duo. The oriel window at the back marks the place where another copy of *Guru Granth Sahib* (The Sikh Bible) is ceremoniously installed. Underneath is the *Har-ki-Paurhi*, God’s Stair, where devotees come and take palmfuls of *amrit* (nectar) from the holy tank. The junction of the cuboid and the hexagonal prism roofs over the *parkarma* on the Eastern side. Seen on the left is a majestic gateway which provides access to the holy precincts from the Southern side. This, along with the covered circumambulatory, was built in late-1940s.
This picture is south-eastern aspect which captures less of the surroundings in order to provide a larger image of the Golden Temple. The point to note is the provision of a *chhattri* at each important corner of the circumambulatory and the extended sides of *Har-ki-Paurhi*. The cuboid shape of the *sanctum sanctorum* has been ingeniously emphasised by setting back the Southern facade where the cuboid and the hexagon meet. The fact that, with the exception of the four entrances, there are no openings in the marble walls at the ground-floor level, lends a mystical charm to the *sanctum sanctorum* where Guru Granth Sahib alone is the Presiding Spiritual Preceptor or Guide. The white structure on the right is a mirror-image gateway which provides access from the Northern side.
This picture gives a view of the holy shrine from the East-South-Eastern side. It is different from the previous four photographs in three aspects: (a) It shows the main entrance called the Darshani Deorhi, (b) It shows the full causeway, and (c) It shows the Akal Takht, the Throne of the Immortal Lord, which completes the two-prong Creative Mysticism of Guru Nanak Dev. The Sri Harmandar Sahib guides the Sikhs (seekers of Truth) in their Spiritual journey, and the Akal Takht regulates their Temporal affairs. This melding of the Religious with the Secular is unique to the Sikh Faith, which proclaims that this life is real because it is the creation of The True One, Peerless Lord God and all members of the Homo sapiens species must live it fully by engaging in socially-beneficent action, through honest livelihood and constant contemplation of the Holy Name. Sharing with the under-privileged what one earns by the sweat of one's brow alone can elevate one's spiritual endeavour to a soul-consciousness (surat) that subsumes all forms of discrimination to become one long stillness of prayer thanking God for His infinite bounties and His boundless benediction.
View of the domed square-shaped room which is the crowning feature of the Purkash Ashiana. Each side has three doors with cusped arches, demarcated by tapering, fluted pilasters. The tympanum (the space between the lintel and the embowed arch above) and the elliptical dome above are copper-gilded.

The dome is inverted lotus, symbolizing reflection, and has nine turrets on each of the four sides of its base, with a mace-like domelit in each corner.