CHAPTER - III

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is the completest of all professions, and actually uses the inputs from different fields of human endeavour, notably: Humanities, Art, Science, and Technology. As an inescapable psycho-social art, Architecture touches all human beings at all levels of life, and is the single largest contributor to the making of Built (or Human) Environment. So universal is its way, and so timeless its vogue, that Architecture is, indeed, the matrix of civilisation. Its socio-cultural significance never dies. When in use, it provides shelter for multifarious human activities. When in ruins, it assumes the discipline of Archeology – the tell-tale narrative of civilisations long past and dead. It is the indestructible unique worth of Architecture that motivates the use of the word "Architect" or "Architecture" with special connotations: the Architect of the nation; the Architect of one's destiny— and now in its state-of-the-art usage: Computer Architecture.

In pragmatic terms, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica:

Architecture is the art and the technique of building, employed to fulfill the practical and expressive requirements of civilized people. Almost every settled society that possesses the techniques for building produces architecture. It is necessary in all but the simplest cultures; without it, man is confined to a primitive struggle with the elements; with it, he has not only a defense against the natural environment but also the benefits of a human environment, a prerequisite for and a symbol of the development of civilized institutions.
The characteristics that distinguish a work of architecture from other man-made structures are (1) its suitability to use by human beings in general and its adaptability to particular human activities; (2) the stability and permanence of its construction; and (3) its communication of experience and ideas through form.

All these conditions must be met in architecture. The second is a constant, while the first and third vary in relative importance according to the social function of buildings. If the function is chiefly utilitarian, as in a factory, communication is of less importance. If the function is chiefly expressive, as in a monumental tomb, utility is a minor concern. In some buildings, such as churches and city halls, utility and communication may be of equal importance.

MANY DEFINITIONS OF ARCHITECTURE

Architecture has been defined by a galaxy of luminaries of the profession through the ages. Geo Ponti, the Italian architect, wrote an exclusive book in praise of Architecture. Among the most interesting statements on this subject are given by Le Corbusier and Louis I Kahn, representing as they do two extreme aspects of the case: the physical and the metaphysical. Corbusier writes: "Architecture is the conscious, correct and magnificent interplay of volumes assembled under light." Kahn avers: "Architecture does not exist...Only the spirit of Architecture exists...What has presence is a work of Architecture, which should be made in a way that is worthy of an offering to..."

Architecture. The former has stressed the FORMal Element of Architecture while the latter has highlighted its SPIRITual nature.

And yet the ideal definition eludes the grandest of human disciplines – which is not a profession, but a habit of the mind, as Corbusier once put it. I have attempted to provoke Architecture itself to say what it is. Here goes, the original verse in Urdu, and its English rendering:

*Khalvat kee fizaaon mein karoon jalvatein paida*
*Jo khaak mein pinhaan hain woh hon sooratein paidea*
*Khoon ban kei rag-i-sang mein utroon jab kabhi*
*Hon Taj-o-Ajanta see haseen moortein paidea*

In the vast expanses of wasteland I create habitations
Forms, which're buried 'neath dust, become manifestations
When, like blood, I course thro' the veins of stones
Taj 'n' Ajanta spring as beautiful configurations

**ARCHITECTURE AND THE HINDU TRINITY**

The music, might, and majesty of Architecture can be best grasped by contemplating one of the most ancient triune concepts of Godhead, the Hindu Trinity. According to it, Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu the Provider, and Shiva the Destroyer. Each god has absolute power in his assigned role. Yet the three gods could not do without an Architect. They had to engage the Celestial Vishwakarma to create the Universe.

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3 WURMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
And he did so with incomparable virtuousity, with just two elements: Space and Time—whose primal progeny is Nature—the perfect Architecture that already existed before Man arrived on the Planet Earth! Architecture is Frozen Music (Goethe) which can be thawed into fluid grace only by the heat of Passionate Love (Ishq-i-Mijaazi) an Architect must have for Mother Nature—the Primary Resource of men, materials, methods, and machines.

What are the Elements, the Principles, the Determinants, and the Objectives of Architecture?

**The ELEMENTS are**: Space, Structure, Form, and Time.

**The PRINCIPLES are**: Scale, Proportion, Rhythm, Balance, Harmony, Contrast, Order, Beauty, etc.

**The DETERMINANTS are**: Geography, Climate, Social Custom, Economy, Building Materials, Technology, Decision-Maker’s/Client’s Whims,—above all, the Architect’s Creative Imagination and Ability to Interpret Complex Problems and to Express them as One Organic Whole.

**The OBJECTIVES are**: Comfort, Function, Expression, Strength, Durability, Contextual Relevance, etc.
The objectives: Comfort, Function, pertain to the creation of Space (Architecture) and become this element's primary generator. Strength and Durability are attributes of Structure as a product of Engineering. Expression is an Objective expected to be fulfilled by Form, as a manifestation of Aesthetics. The three interrelated terms given in Vitruvius' Latin text are: *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas*, which, respectively, mean: STRUCTURAL stability, appropriate SPATIAL accommodation, and AESTHETICAL appearance. The principles enumerated above are primarily applied to Building Design with Form in mind. The depiction of Time as an Element is sought in the Contextual Relevance which the created artifact must fulfill as a primary objective. How all these aspects, criteria, and parameters figure in the present study are discussed in appropriate sections.

**UNDERSTANDING ARCHITECTURE**

Understanding Architecture requires an insightful knowledge of History of Architecture, Art, and Culture. This knowledge should be applied to seeing what happened/happens to the Elements of Architecture: Space, Structure, Form, and Time. Structure is to Building, which is the only perceivable manifestation of Architecture, as Skeleton is to Human Body. But Structure, in essence, is a complex of various forces resolved and brought into an equilibrium-intellectually. It is an unseeable abstraction, and the moment it is made into a Building it becomes construction—which is, to put it simply, an assembly of materials. All the different kinds of Building are built primarily as a Structure against one or two or a combination of these forces: Gravitation (exact vertical and/or eccentric), Wind Load (horizontal force), and Earthquake (a complex of forces which act in different directions,

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simultaneously—and are, therefore, not precisely predictable). When Structure as essence (i.e., the inner distinctive nature of Building) is realised as substance (i.e., the existence or body to which essence belongs) Materials come automatically into play as physical attributes of Building. Thus Understanding Architecture is preceded by an understanding of various materials, the many methods by which they are assembled, the Manual and the Mechanical Means available, and the kind of men who will work on the site or in the factory to build Architecture and its several components. Historically, the development of materials may shown as: Cave (God-made or Natural Shelter) → Wood → Stone → Brick → Iron → Steel → Concrete/RCC → Aluminum, Plastics, PVCs, etc.

EXPERIENCING ARCHITECTURE

Experiencing Architecture may be accomplished in three stages: Immersion, Recovery, and Formulation. Immersion takes place when you let go of everything that you have Learned and Understood and be totally lost in Architecture. There are three parts of experience: The experiencer (i.e., you), the experienced (i.e., the building, in this case), and experiencing (i.e., the process without the producer or the product). Experiencing Architecture will come about when You and the Building are dissolved in what may be called unconscious Self-Consciousness i.e., when you are self-conscious without being conscious of the fact. Such a state of consciousness synergises the Soul, Mind, and Body into an Organic Whole which is greater than the sum of its parts as a Live Force in which all faculties (Reason, Emotion, Imagination, Intuition, Will, Discrimination, Judgement, etc.) function integrally and simultaneously. Experiencing leads to either delight or disappointment, but can NEVER remain apathetic. This is a solid gain on which the next stage rests.
Immersion is like having drowned in what may be a puddle, a pond, a stream, a river, or sea, or ocean. Recovery, the second stage, of Experiencing, is like surfacing again to ask: Where have I been? What happened during that delightful or disappointing drown? If such questions do not emerge automatically, you can be sure that Immersion was not proper.

Recovery leads to Formulation which is essentially an intellectual exercise aimed at putting into words the nature, scope, and form of Experience. Formulation cannot merely say: Oh! It was great. It must also explain Why, How, and to What extent it was great. Using the faculty of Reason, Formulation gives Emotion the Language of Thought which alone is transmissible. Emotion requires physical presence of the Experienced for Experiencing. If Emotion springs up for someone or something not physically present the Experience is vicarious, not real. Stage, TV, Screen, Novels, et al, provide only vicarious Experience. The mass media fire your imagination and can make you laugh or weep or act heroically by the artifice of histrionics or evocative writing which express mock-up Emotion largely through mimicry conveyed through thought-enacted spoken or written.

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SRI HARMANDAR SAHIB: ARCHITECTURE
(Ref.: Plate No. V, VI, VII and VIII)

GENERAL FEATURES

The Golden Temple has been built on what PS Arshi (a pioneer scholar on the subject) has termed a "hexa-square" plan—a compounding of a square in the front and a half-hexagon in the rear. The square part has a three-level structure while the half-hexagon rises to two-level height. The main building on the square plan is crowned by a structure roofed over by an elliptical dome, which makes it a 1½-storeyed building. The Sachch Khand structure is actually single-storeyed, with double-height for the Parkash Asthan. This disposition of volumetric space permits darshan of the Adi Granth from the middle-level visually exalting the Parkash Asthan. (The two front corners are surmounted by two kiosks raised on boldly-articulated structures, each containing a staircase. Similarly, the inclined sides of the half-hexagon plan are marked by two kiosks but of a different design placed atop the roof of each staircase. The building, whose main part forms the sanctum sanctorum raised on a square plan, has been placed on a wider platform of the same shape. To this is added the half-side of the half-hexagon to constitute a circumambulatory (parkarma) whose front and sides are open to sky but the rear is a covered passage. Thus the first-floor roof slab forms a bridge between the main shrine in the front and the supporting facilities at the rear. The whole building is placed in the centre of a near-square water tank, amrit-sar, or pool of nectar. The shrine is approached from the western side through a gate-house, called the darshni deorhi, or viewing vestibule, via a causeway. The paved embankments of the sacred pool form the outer, open-to-sky parkarma along which run colonnaded passageways providing a covered circumambulatory. A monumental building,
each in the centre of the four sides of the outer parkama, is an integral part of the Golden Temple precincts. The western side has Akal Takht, Throne of the Timeless One, which constitutes a counterpoint with the Holy Shrine in that the latter is the Abode of God's Spiritual Attribute, and the former the seat of His Temporal Authority. The north and south have identical "buildings serving as gate-houses and fulfilling other secular functions. The eastern building is a free-standing gateway, and has a quite different design.

DESIGN OF DARBAR SAHIB

This holiest of the holy shrines of the Sikh Faith was originally called Har-Mandar (God's Temple) or Darbar Sahib (Court of the Lord). The suffix "Sahib" is traditionally added to underscore the Spiritual Attribute of God by whose grace, Guru Nanak Dev reiteratively proclaimed, the world comes into existence, and is sustained by His edict-fiat. "Sahib" is an Arabic word for "Master" or "Lord". The Sikhs use it as an epithet to lavish reverence on all things religious. Their Holy Book is called Guru Granth Sahib, which, literally, means Mr Book, the Holy Preceptor; Anandpur Sahib: the City of Joy, where the Lord dwells, etc.

A square edifice measuring 40'-7" x 40'-7" forms the main sanctuary of Harmandar Sahib which stands on a square podium of 66'-4" side. Technically speaking, the building is two-storeyed, with the third storey constituted of a square pavilion roofed over by an elliptical dome. However, this terrace-pavilion is a full-fledged room, square in plan with 19'-5"x19'-5" outer dimensions. The cuboid structure of the main sanctuary has double height in the middle, with the first-floor gallery running round the central space. The area thus formed at the ground floor is called the parkash asthan: or the place where the light
of *Guru, Granth Sahib* (The Sikh Bible) dawns. The function of the domed terrace-pavilion is, indeed, to prevent anyone from crossing over the sacred *parkash asthan*, which is considered to be an unpardonable sacrilege. This cardinal rule is so strictly followed that even in the villages where the mud hamlets cannot have the *sentinel* dome, thorny bushes placed on the roof-top over the *parkash asthan* perform this crucial function.
SCRIPTURAL SOURCE OF DESIGN CONCEPT

The concept and design of the Golden Temple is not a routine architectural creation. Much less is it a building-type derived from the stylistic features of places of worship of other religions as has erroneously been accepted by scholars of all disciplines and denominations. The source of its concept and design lies in the sacred scripture, the Bani of Guru Nank Dev (1469-1539 AD), who founded the Sikh Faith as a Religion of Revelation. Though this crucial subject has been alluded to in the previous sections, an attempt here is made to deal with it comprehensively in one go. Since a particular place of worship as building-type is the sheet-anchor of an architectural style associated with a particular religion, it stands to reason that it would have necessarily developed from the intrinsic vision that distinguishes one faith from another. In other words, the concept and design of a place of worship are the architectural correlates of the tenets of a given faith as enshrined in its sacred scripture and/or as expressed in its founder's cosmic view of life vis-à-vis the ultimate reality.

Guru Nanak heralds the Sikh Faith by the sacred Formula, 
EK Oankar or Omkar (ॐ), which proclaims the indivisible Unicity and Absolute Sovereignty of the One Lord God; and stands at the head of mul-mantra, the sacred text, which enumerates His Attributes—and introduces the Bani called Japuji. The use of the numeral “1” before God’s Name (Oankar) is unique in the history of world religions. “One” stands for the non-attributive essence (nirgun) of God as the Transcendent Being. “Oankar” depicts Him as attributive Primal Person (Karta Purakh) who, unaided by any deity whatsoever, Himself performs the three-pronged function of Creation, Preservation,
and Dissolution. This is God’s sargun (attributive) Form experienceable as palpable Immanence. The name by which we know Him is also of God’s own Creation—the Holiest of Holy—among Time, Space, and Matter, whose primary manifestation is Nature (qudrat : God’s own Divine Might).

**The mul-mantra proclaims thus**:

The One Lord God has Truth as His essential trait ie He is unaffected by the law of Change, which is of His own creation. His attributes in Immanence may be named thus: He is the creator (karta), Primal Person (purakh), sans fear (nirbhau), sans enmity (nirvair), beyond death (akañ), Immanently experienceable (murat), but not born (ajooni), Self-existent (saibham). By God’s Grace (parsad), who is the Guru (Enlightener or Holy Preceptor), have I proclaimed this New Faith.

It should be evident that Guru Nanak’s mul-mantra, the sacred formula, which is used by the Sikhs ad infinitum, speaks of God both as a Transcendent Being (nirgun) and Immanent Becoming(sargun) as His two roops (forms). And, then, moves on to Jap(u) or Prayer-Chant (from where Guru Nanak’s Bani “Japuji” takes its name), followed by sloka (prologue), which reiterates God’s essential trait as Unchanging Essence (sachch).

True was He (ie God) before Time was born; True was He when Time began to run its course; True is He even now; True shall He be evermore.

The four sides delineated in this sloka represent the concrete form of God’s Transcendence. Kaaba (Arabic word for
cube) is the holiest of the holy for the Muslims. The cube symbolises both this-worldly (material) and other-worldly (spiritual) dimensions in the selfsame geometrical solid. The cube opens out to a Latin Cross when its six squares are developed geometrically on a two-dimensional surface, thereby representing Jesus Christ, Compassion Personified. No wonder the Muslims recognise him as one of their own prophets. The cross symbolises sacrifice as well as self-abnegation ie when one "crosses" oneself (as the Christians habitually do) one symbolically negates oneself. The beauty about cube is that it is a perfect solid in terms of aesthetic appeal. All its six constituent surfaces are complete squares which admit of no disputation as to their proportions (a basic criterion in the evaluation of an object’s aesthetic).

Since Plan is the "generator", as Le Corbusier⁵ has aptly put it, let us see how the foregoing exposition of Guru Nanak’s Revelation figures in the plan of the Golden Temple. Plan is a figure or representation of anything projected on a plane or flat surface especially that of a building, floor, etc. as disposed on the ground. The plan of sanctum sanctorum of the Golden Temple is a perfect square, representing thereby the concrete form or manifestation on ground of God’s essential Transcendence designated as Truth—the Unchanging, the Infinite (Space), the Eternal (Time)—by Guru Nanak, as revealed to him by God Himself in the capacity of his Guru’s (i.e. Holy Preceptor’s) Benefaction (prasad). This is the first part of the sacred mantra: Ek Omkar (ॐ), and represents God’s Unchanging Essence as Transcendent Being suggested by the numeral “1”. The second part depicts His Multi-Form, Multi-Dimensional, Ever-Progressional, Entity as Immanent Becoming. Thus a half-hexagon has been attached to the square

⁵ CORBUSIER, op. cit., p. 44.
of the sanctum sanctorum, by an independent unit of space which connects and serves both the front (the square) and the rear (the half-hexagon). A complete hexagon would have produced a competitive form, whereas the half-hexagon is complementary to the main square form. In other words, now it is “together (with the square) making up a whole”, embodying as it does both the Transcendent and the Immanent aspects of the selfsame Ultimate Reality, the One Lord God (Ek Omkar). It is interesting to note that the three sides of the half-hexagon also suggest the three gunas (ie attributes) which, according to the Sikh Scripture, create Diversity in Unity by their countless combinations. The three gunas are: tamas, rajas, sattva, and, respectively, represent: inertia and ignorance; energy and ambition; and poise and enlightenment. The square and the half-hexagon constitute a form not unlike that of the human brain. The brain has two hemispheres separated by a deep furrow, the fissure of Rolando, and connected by the corpus callosum. The corpus callosum of the Golden Temple is the covered passage (part of the parkarma or circumambulatory) which connects the square of the sanctum sanctorum with the half-hexagon which forms the Har-ki-Pauri ie God’s Stairs, at the rear.

Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to spell out the five realms (khands) which, according to Guru Nanak, constitute the stages of mystic experience or spiritual evolution of human life whose final goal is the realisation of Truth, not merely as the attainment of the “beatific vision” but as absorption in Divine Essence. This goal is attainable through an earnestly sustained process of psycho-emotional discipline and spiritual experience. The Five Realms are: Dharma Khand; Gyan Khand; Saram Khand; Karam Khand; and Sachch Khand. Dharma (or the Cosmic Moral Law) constitutes the foundation of
spiritual life. Placed in this realm man has to discharge his obligations while performing the human functions imposed on him by the Creator. God has endowed him with superior consciousness, and man is thus expected to carry on functions, both secular and religious, during workaday existence.

Gyan Khand is the next stage, Realm of Knowledge, in which man's intellect steadily gets keener and his mental horizons widen. He starts perceiving cosmic mysteries through deliberate intellectual effort. As GS Randhawa has put it, "man is seized of his own reality, his kinship with the Sole Being and his predicament of the 'paradise lost'."

Armed with this awareness, man moves on to the next stage, Saram Khand, the Realm of Spiritual Endeavour. It is here that man's intuition, understanding, and insight are all superbly forged. His incessant labours in the psycho-ethical field ultimately qualify him to enter Karam Khand, the Realm of (divine) Grace. The key to earn God's Grace lies in total surrender to His Will and unremitting involvement with His Name Divine, which is itself its own invaluable reward as a dispensation of Lord's grace, Karam. The long and arduous journey of the human spirit (the soul-Bride) is by row well-nigh over, and it enters the Realm of Truth, Sachch Khand, where the Divine-Husband, the Formless Lord (Nirankar) dwells. It is from here that the Almighty Father showers His Grace and issues forth His Edict-Fiat (hukam). Sachch Khand, indeed, is humans' primal home and their final destination through the countless vicissitudes of a long and arduous journey, that begins in dharma, moves via gyan, saram, and karam khands, to get there ultimately.

In the light of the foregoing exposition, it should be easy to appreciate why the site, on which the Golden Temple has been
built, is called “Sachch Khand” (the Realm of Truth) and the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Holy shrine exalted as “Parkash Asthan” (the place where Enlightenment dawns). Because it is here that the Adi Granth, the Divine Word revealed to Guru Nanak in his Enlightenment, is worshipped as God’s Living Embodiment, and installed with a befitting ceremony everyday at pre-dawn hour.

The Epilogue (concluding sloka) of the Japuji exalts this planet as the Great Mother Earth, identifies the Guru (The Holy Preceptor) with Air (the Breath of Life), and underscores the indispensability of Water as Father that sires all forms of Creation (as one of God’s three Primary Functions). The inclusion of a huge waterbody in the concept and design of the Golden Temple is thus a symbol of the procreative propinquity of Water (Father) and Earth (Mother), as a primary fact of life. Its psycho-spiritual import is extended into the very lifestyle of the Sikh who is enjoined upon to seek Truth (sachch) by an incessant endeavour to be a sachiar (one of truthful conduct) by fullest involvement in life during workaday existence. The essence of this spiritual exhortation is that one must lead an inner life untainted by the viscous attachments of the outer world whose besetting sin is its countless temptations to which the mortals fall an easy prey.

One of the most important of Guru Nanak’s religious injunctions is that man should indulge in constant spiritual endeavour to become a sachiar (truthful) by living in the midst of everyday life, yet remaining untainted by its worldly attachments. Says he: “Jaise jal mein kamal(u) niraalam(u) murgai nai saane” (SGGS,p.938). This pragmatic symbol forms the concept of siting the Golden Temple (sachch khand) in the middle of a huge waterbody (developed from an existing pond whose water was believed to have healing powers) called the
Amrit-Sarovar (The Pool of Nectar). Since water is the “Father of Life” on planet Earth (The Great Mother) its primacy is tantamount to that of the elixir of life. The metaphor in Guru Nanak’s exhortation to a life of the spirit underscores this fact beautifully. Just as the lotus, which is borne of water, remains unaffected by it, or the duck does not get wet though it is a water-fowl, a seeker of Truth must live within the heart of the world, and yet remain unattached to its countless enticements.

The subtler meaning of this concept becomes clear when one reads the succinct description Guru Nanak has given of the architecture of God’s Placc: “Dukh(u) darwaaja roh(u) rakhwala aasa andesa duay patt jarhay/Maya jal(u) khayi paani ghar(u) baadhai sat kei aasan Purakh(u) rahei”. (SGGS,p.877)

Gurbachan Singh Bachan has rendered it as under:-

Guru Nanak in Raga Ram Kali has elaborated the architectural plan of God’s palace where he has described anger as the gatekeeper, hope/desire and anxiety as two sides/shutters of the door. A ditch filled with water of maya is encircling the palace and God is sitting on the throne of truth. Anyone who can overcome all these barriers and is having truthful living may enter the palace of God⁶.

However, in the above explanation, the crucial opening which suffering creates for the door (dukh(u) darwaaja), has been overlooked. This is crucial because elsewhere Guru Nanak has said that it is sorrow that becomes the cure and happiness that attacks the mind as disease (dukh daru sukh rog bhaiya). In other words, the basic concept of the Golden Temple suggests

that the Holy Shrine is *Sachch Khand* (the Realm of Truth) where the Formless One (*Nirankaar*) dwells.

The *Amrit Sarovar*, as a huge waterbody surrounding it, is the moat—the *jal(u) khayi* of Maya or the worldly wealth and its countless entrapments. The *Darshani Deorhi* is the Door where suffering has brought the seeker whose earnestness for Truth gets an existentialist pep when he has the “beatific vision” of *Sachch Khand*, the Palace of God. The lure of the Spiritual Treasure embodied in Truth thus outrivals the power of the Material Wealth of the Temporal World, and steps up the pace of his psycho-ethical journey manifold. The Spirit beckons him, if tantalisingly, but his soul has yet “miles to go before I sleep”, as suggested by the long causeway, from the Darshani Deorhi to the Golden Temple.

The upshot of this somewhat esoteric exposition is that, though the Revelation is refreshing as the spring, Guru Nanak takes no credit whatsoever for his proclamations. Much to the contrary, as GS Randhawa has pointed out, the Guru asserts: 

"*Apinai ap(u) sajio apinai rachio nao; duyi kudrat(i) sajiai kar(i) asan(u) ditho chao/data karta ap(i) tun tus(i) devai(n)h karai(n)h pasao...*"

He translates it as under:-

The Formless Lord—manifested He Himself first.

And unfolded He His Noumenon (essence) too.

Created He then the phenomenal world.

And permeating it, He began thence enjoying its functioning in serene bliss.
O Lord, Thou art our Creator and Bounteous Master too

It is Thee, who bestoweth all on us.

Aye, verily it is Thee, who through Thy sweet compassion

reedeemeth us—the sinners that we be!

This elucidation should underscore the ethico-spiritual significance of Humility which Guru Nanak has made the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. For, the crowning feature of the Golden Temple is the elliptical dome which expresses this all-important postulate of Guru Nanak’s “Creative Mysticism”. The siting of the Golden Temple at the level of the existing water-pond, much lower than that of the surrounding land, reinforces the cardinal principle of Humility manifold. For this signal feature alone, the concept and design of the Holy Shine is unique in the annals of World Religious Architecture.

Humility being the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith, it is necessary to dilate upon this all-important theme. Guru Nanak has commended Humility not only as a superconductor for transmitting God’s Grace to the mortal’s heart but also as a psycho-social detergent to cleanse the Indian society of the stigma of rigid caste system. The Guru raised his voice against the arrogance of the Brahmin (of the highest of the four castes) particularly because he had arrogated holiness to himself. The so-called lowest caste (the Shudra) was vigilantly deprived of an honoured place in society. The Shudras were not given the right to possess landed and residential property, and denied the ministrations of religion. This meant that the path of liberation, the highest goal achievable by a created being, was sought to be

7 RANDHAWA, GS (1997), Guru Nanak’s Asa di Var, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, pp. 72-73.
denied to them. Guru Nanak placed himself in the midst of these poor disinherited folks, and exalted Humility as the sole means of God-realisation for all seekers of Truth, regardless of their caste, creed, colour, race, rank, and gender.

In Sri Raga 3, page 15 (SGGS), he thus raises his mighty voice :–

The lowest among the low castes, lower than the lowest —

Nanak is with them : He envies not those with worldly greatness.

Lord ! Thy glance of Grace falls on the land where the humble are cherished.

In another place, with heart overflowing with Divine compassion, he thus exalts the low-caste (Shudra):–

Should anyone out of the higher castes serve the Lord,

Beyond expression is his merit.

But he who from amongst the lower castes serves God,

Saith Nanak, may wear shoes made from my skin.

—Malar 6, p.1256, SGGS.

But such Humility is not feigned modesty or lowliness of mind. It is rock-bottom, unconscious, self-effacement: the dross of egotism reduced to ashes by the fire of Divinity. Such a state comes about when the seeker becomes God-oriented (Guru-
Mukh) and jettisons all the machinations which Mind-oriented (Man-Mukh) Lifestyle endlessly produces all in vain to catch the evanescent allurements of the phenomenal world. Humility, indeed, is the foundation of Dharma, the Cosmic Moral Law. The curious thing about Humility is that if you know you are humble, you are not humble. You are vain. It should be evident that Humility cannot be cultivated. It comes to the seeker as God's first pointer to the Path of Liberation. It is the signature of a heart full of Compassion ie Passion for Community of All Creatures. It is an unguarded vulnerability to the ineffable pain of human predicament. Humility is psycho-emotional void that prepares the soul to receive God's Grace. Humility is Compassion that bleeds in empathy for the tears shed by the helpless, the hapless, and the hopeless. It is God's unseen power working through the hands of the Blessed to raise the down-trodden to the stature of human dignity.

H-U-M-I-L-I-T-Y is Holistic Understanding through the Medium of Intense Love how the inverted-"I" experiences Truth in its evergreen Youthfulness. The point being stressed is that the First Principles themselves find their own appropriate expression through creativity encompassing Literature, Art, Lifestyle, Architecture, and so forth.

The use of water, which, in its very form and scale, is new and integral to the design concept of the Golden Temple, needs elaboration. Apart from its spiritual dimension, water has other crucial functions, both climatological and visual. In the former sense, it helps in creating a hospitable micro-climate, because it heats up and cools down more slowly and steadily than solid building materials. Throughout the year, which sees six different seasons, the Golden Temple has a pleasant, welcome atmosphere. This is enhanced manifold by the aesthetic function which water additionally performs. Water has the
characteristic power to etherealise the building bulk, visually. The visual appeal assumes a soulful charm when the Holy Shrine is reflected in the Amrit-Sarovar. The shimmering reflection of the Golden Temple mutely beckons the devotees to a life of the Spirit (ie etherealised materiality) within the intransigent regimen of the Phenomenal World. A lifeless Object takes on the pulsating sparkle of the Subject(ive), and there is an instant transformation of the devotees' psycho-emotional make-up. The Golden Temple springs up as a Lotus in full bloom. Its roots (the foundation) are deep in water, but the stem and flower (the superstructure) emerge in joyous fullness, symbolising the human beings' spiritual quest accessing the Realm of Truth in an impassioned embrace of Divine devotion—a heady concoction of a devotee's unremitting love and longing.

I should like to make a brief mention of the apt role which the building materials of the Holy Shrine play in expressing the fact that its design concept has its source in the sacred scripture of the Sikh Faith. White marble and copper-gilt are the two principal materials. The whiteness is a symbol of purity, attained by the devotee by inversion of his way and view of life from Man-Mukh to Guru-Mukh. This purity must be sustained by constant Naam-contemplation, honest livelihood, and sharing of one's income with the less-privileged, as an approved act of Dharma (The Cosmic Moral Law) which reminds one of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Mankind. And, thereby, goads one to indulge in socially-beneficent action as an obedience to the Divine Will, without appropriating any credit whatsoever to oneself.

The copper-gilded upper parts of the Holy Shrine, which is the Sachch Khand, portray Beauty as the Splendour of Truth. This splendour of the Spirit is such that all the splendour of Worldly Wealth pales into insignificance before it. The yellow of the gold and the white of the marble are contrasting colours but
yet in lyrical harmony. For, as John Leighton succinctly puts it: “Harmony is an agreeable contrast—that is, pleasing to the eye, as a ‘chord’ is to the ear in music.” Further, as Anna Jameson says: “In the art of design, Colour is to Form what verse is to prose, a more harmonious and luminous vehicle of thought.” (emphasis added.) The “white” symbolises purity while the “yellow” is the colour of the exalted spirit. The two together are an excellent architectural expression of the design concept of the Holy Shrine which is essentially derived from the Gurbani (the Revealed Word). Both marble and copper-gilt remain unaffected by water just as Lotus and Duck do, thereby graphically substantiating the design concept of the Golden Temple based on their similes.

It is now necessary to say something about the symbolism of the Lotus, and the Spiritual Postulates in the design concept of the Golden Temple. To recapitulate, the Golden Temple was intentionally built by Guru Arjan Dev at a low level (signifying Humility) and it floats like a Lotus in a Pool of Nectar (suggesting Purity).

According to Dr JS Neki:-

The spirit behind the architecture of the Golden Temple is that of spiritual enlightenment and the lotus is the symbol employed to express this spirit. This flower remains closed with its stem bent down till the sunlight falls on it, when it becomes upright and opens up to blossom. This symbol has been appropriately incorporated in the architectural design of the temple. The main dome of the temple has the form of inverted lotus flower. The same flower is depicted in the arches and designs of the pillars.

8 SINGH, op. cit., p. 82.
Dr Neki's is an apt observation but it needs elaboration. The inverted lotus symbolises reflection (Vichaar), which has been stressed time and again in Sri Guru Granth Sahib – as an indispensable tool to penetrate the mystery of phenomena (Maya) for a deeper understanding of Shabad. The physicality of this symbol is transcended when one sees the reflection of the Holy Shrine in Amrit-Sarovar, and realises that the Essence lies beyond the substance of what one encounters during workaday existence. The uniqueness of the Architecture of Sri Harmandar Sahib lies in the subtle marriage of the Spirit and the Body through an inspired Building Design.