'Gur parsadae vekh tu,  
Harmandir terae naa!

With the Grace of the Guru the Harmandir shall always stand by you  
[whenever you look at the Gurdwara]"  
(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Panna 1346)

GOLDEN TEMPLE : A ROLE MODEL  
FOR SUBSEQUENT DECORATION OF  
SIKH SHRINES (GURDWARAS)
Dome and Balconied window from the Golden Temple

Courtesy: Walking with The Guru: Historical Guidebook of Punjab
CHAPTER 9

Gurdwara as a symbol of the Sikh Identity

When the tenth Guru gave unto the Sikh his title of Khalsa [the Pure] and five distinctive characteristics of Kesh [hair], Kangha [comb], Kirpan [sword], Kacha [underwear] and Kara [iron / steel bangle] he created a unique identity for the Sikh that embodied the significant features of the faith. The Sikh in today's world stands for a robust way of life, a hardy, steadfast, hardworking nature and an adventurous spirit. Their sense of service to God and country as well as the strong work ethics besides the piety and benevolence earmarked by the ‘daswandh’ [contribution of a tenth of one’s earnings to the Gurdwara] makes the Sikhs a powerful entity that has taken root in the most hostile of climes turning them into havens by sheer dint of their hard work. So emboldened are they by their faith that wherever stands the Sikh there stands the gurdwara – a house of devotion and counsel, of soothing the mind and healing the heart. The Gurdwara also is a meeting place for the congregation or sangat that assembles to celebrate the unity in devotion. People gather here to seek clarity to the many confusions and contradictions that life inflicts. These solutions were found in the essence of the teachings of the Gurus as represented in the Guru Granth Sahib which is central to every Gurdwara. Thus, the Gurdwara is as much the Sikh as is the Sikh the Gurdwara.

“The gurdwara emerged as a new edifice on India’s religious landscape in the seventeenth century. Ever since then this indestructible symbol of the Sikh faith has stirred intense and indefinable feelings in millions of Sikhs everywhere. These feelings range from a yearning for the comforting peace of its sacred precincts and the ever abiding fragrance of marigolds and rose petals, to a longing to hear recitations from the Guru Granth Sahib, and the shabads rendered in the robust and resonant voices of the ragis. There is also the urge to savour the karah parsad once again – the sacramental food blessed by the Lord
and given to all who visit a gurdwara. Each of these experiences are so elevating as to bring tears to many eyes”

What the Golden Temple is to the Sikh

It is called sachkhand or the ‘realm of truth’. Everything in the complex of the Harmandir Sahib gives rise to feelings of superior aesthetic grace and spiritual bliss. The glimmering sight of the Harmandir Sahib banishes from within one the baser instincts of kaam, krodh, lobh, moh and ahankar [lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego]. The sanctified waters of the sarovar have been blessed by the Gurus and divine saints alike. This holy tank known as ‘Amrit Sarovar’ is the pool of nectar in every sense of the phrase for the devout pilgrims who take a holy dip in it.

Ever since 1721, the Golden Temple complex has been the epicenter of the Sikh world, its history, politics and theophany. There have been, however, chapters in its history that have been smeared with the bloodshed of devotees attempting to safeguard their identity.

Since it is the fountain head of Sikh philosophy, the Golden Temple has influenced other sites of Sikhism in terms religious significance, architectural style and also to an extent the surface decorations. Some of the chief places of pilgrimage that have emerged as the sites of the Sikh theology are presented in this chapter. But before going into the influence of the Golden Temple on other gurdwaras it is necessary to cast a look at the similarities of sites and their significance as attached to various theosophical heads.

All important Sikh shrines have an imposing visual impact on the senses. This is because of the fact that the domes or the entrances of these shrines and

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Chattris or Kiosks from The Golden Temple
Courtesy: Waking with The Gurus Historical Guidebook of Punjab.
even their infrastructural layout are of different types and forms but in effect maintain the simplicity of form that is essential to the outline of almost every gurdwara built after the Golden Temple in as much that the Golden Temple is in effect the role model along the lines of which the other gurdwaras flow.

Some of the essential features of the gurdwara as exemplified by the Golden Temple are as follows:

1. The installation or 'sthapana' of the Guru Granth Sahib in the sanctum sanctorum of the place of worship breathed in it the holy atmosphere that made the Gurdwara the 'house of the Guru'.

2. The Nishan Sahib or the flagmast that is a beacon for the Sikh to the house of the Guru. It is often a tall post mounted by the ‘Nishan’ or sign which is the characteristic ‘khanda’. The flagmast is usually clothed in saffron.

3. The characteristic dome which has undergone many an evolution in shape, style and construction depending upon the materials available, geographical location and unshaken faith of the devotees.

4. The Parkarma or the circumabulatory path around the gurdwara is a salient aspect that has been featured into gurdwara.

5. The Sarovar or water body is another essential feature that has been a more or less constant with many a gurdwara constructed after the Golden Temple Complex.

6. The ‘jot’ or eternal light and
7. The aesthetic surface decorations that mark the devout fervor of the devotees to make the house of worship a place of pristine beauty.

8. The dispensing of ‘karha parshad’ or ‘degh’ at the gurdwara is another essential feature where the devotees pay obeisance and partake of the sweet preparation.

9. ‘Langar’ or the practice of cooking in a community kitchen and sitting down to eat collectively bereft of all segregation and communal discriminations of caste, creed and religion. This was one of the main tenets of the gurdwara.

10. Upto four entry points leading into the main sanctum. These are generally in the four cardinal directions.

In some instances the gurdwaras that were constructed subsequent to the Golden Temple have been demarcated as such because of the presence of most or all of the above characteristics. Their distinctive architecture, placement of significant features and emphasis on beautification or surface ornamentation is evident in many of the finest examples of Gurdwaras the world over.

Sikh settlers anywhere first of all set up their house of worship and after devotedly embellishing it set up shop nearby for their own prosperity and that of the community. The gurdwaras discussed below have religious as well as aesthetic appeal as they were constructed making use of the best features available to the population in terms of locale, material used, artists and artisan skills, time devoted and the climatic and geographical conditions. These houses of worship were beacons that invited the weary traveler to a haven of succour, piety and devotion. They were the symbols of hope, aspiration and the countless blessings showered upon a people who were and still are steeped in their traditions, roots and continue to practice the tenets laid down by the Gurus.
Takht Sri Patna Sahib, Patna, Bihar

Courtesy: Patwant Singh, 1992, Gurdwaras in India and around the world, Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib, Anandpur [Punjab, India]: It is located on a gradient higher than its surroundings. The pristine white architecture of the Gurdwara popularly known as Anandpur Sahib has a commanding view of the rustic landscape around as it stands proximal to the Sutlej. The Gurdwara marks the place of the raising of the Khalsa or the ‘Pure’ by the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh about 300 years ago. The ‘shastra’ or weapons used by the Guru are on display at the Gurdwara.

The cuppolas and kiosks atop the roofing of the gurdwara are much in similarity to those of the Golden temple Complex. The inner sanctum is as much supplemented by arched corridors both in and around the premises. The significant feature of the Gurdwara being crowned by a central dome is another characteristic. The four chattris on the four corners and the central dome bear resemblance to the Golden Temple.

Gurdwara Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib, Nanded [Maharashtra, India]: This gurdwara was constructed to mark the site where Guru Gobind Singh was stabbed to death in 1708. It stands on the banks of the Godavari river in Nanded, Maharashtra. This gurdwara represents the fourth Takht or ‘throne’ of the Sikh faith. It is also the place that marks the baptism of Madho Das, a mystic, by Guru Gobind Singh who styled him Banda Singh Bahadur or the ‘Brave Man’.

Built in Maharashtra the Gurdwara is another rare example of the surface decorations that are a significant characteristic of the Harmandir. The marble walls, like in the Golden Temple, are embellished with peitra dura work, carving and embossed gold work. The geometric and floral patterns on the marble flooring are another feature that are remarkably similar to the marble work observed in the Golden Temple. The ceiling and some parts of the wall of the inner sanctum are also intricately worked upon with kach and gach work in the
hues of the Harmandir. Ornate archways and cornices are another characteristic of this form of art work that has been done as a part of the surface embellishments of the Gurdwara. It is almost as if the workers carried within themselves the images of the Golden Temple and worked upon them to attain the brilliance and exquisite workmanship observed in the Harmandir itself.

**Takht Sri Patna Sahib, [Bihar, India]:** This Gurdwara stands at the site where the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh was born on December 22nd 1666. As Guru Tegh Bahadur, who traveled extensively, spent the monsoon season of 1666 at Patna where he left his wife and went on to go to Dacca. It was at Dacca that he received the news of the birth of his only son, Guru Gobind Singh.

The Gurdwara’s bleached white exterior is surmounted by domes and *chattris* that rise above arched balconies at the various levels of the multi-storeyed edifice. The windows and the awnings or ‘chajjaz’ are in the typical Rajasthani and Mughal amalgamated style of architecture as seen in the Golden Temple complex. The basic lattice work parapet is an innovative Muslim addition to the structure which is another feature taken from the Harmandir Sahib.

**Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Saboo, [Punjab, India]:** It is situated between the railway line and the national highway in Bhatinda and lies three kilometres East of the city centre. It is dedicated to Guru Tegh Bahadur, who halted here briefly on his way from Amritsar to Walla in 1664. The double storey structure bears resemblance to the Golden Temple in the construction of its domes and *chattris* ornate with lotus motif. The arched ‘*baradari*’ or corridors are another distinctive feature as are the trellis work ramparts.

**Gurdwara Nadha Sahib, [Haryana, India]:** Standing on the banks of the Ghaggar river, amidst the mud hillocks, the tall and stately gurdwara commemorates the visit of Guru Gobind Singh who had stopped on the banks of the Ghaggar. Here the Guru’s army was well looked after by one Naddu Shah.
Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo, Punjab, India
Courtesy: Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi

Gurdwara Sri Chamkaur Sahib, Roopnagar, Punjab
Courtesy: Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, Sirhind, Punjab

Courtesy: Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi

Gurdwara Paonta Sahib, Himachal Pradesh

Courtesy: Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Takhat Sri Keshgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Punjab

Goindwal Sahib, Kapurthala, Punjab

Courtesy: Bhaiwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
who was blessed by the Guru who said that the place would be sanctified and the memory of Naddu Shah live on forever.

The domes surmounting the gurdwara are akin to those of the Golden Temple while the extensive marble work and other surface embellishments that are coming up presently hold the promise of similar refinement.

**Chamkaur Sahib, [Punjab, India]**: Standing aloft a raised part of the small settlement, the Gurdwara rises above the grove of tall trees. The raised plinth was probably because of the strife the Sikhs had to experience at the hands of the ruling classes and the local hill chieftains. On December 7th 1705 a bitter battle was fought between the hill rajas and the army of the Guru at Chamkaur Sahib.

Like the Golden Temple this Gurdwara, Chamkaur Sahib, has four entry points with one of them rising up with a dual level marble staircase. The other two entrances are sloping routes that were probably used for horses in the olden days. The towers, domes and chattris as well as the parapets are similar in style to the Golden Temple.

**Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, [Punjab, India]**: This gurdwara is dedicated to the younger two of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh who sacrificed their lives for their faith. They were savagely put to death when they were bricked in and finally beheaded. The wall where the young boys had been bricked in stands to this day and it is over this that the Gurdwara has been constructed. The wall is in the 'bhora' or basement.

The marbled flooring and walls are similar to the work in the Golden temple while the gilded domes rising above the edifice are also reminiscent of the work done in the Golden Temple.
Goindwal Sahib, [Punjab, India]: Situated in the small township of Kapurthala the Gurdwara Goindwal Sahib has an impressive black and white checkered forecourt bearing similarity to the geometrical patterns in marble rendered on the Parkarma in the Golden Temple. The domes of the edifice are raised on the pattern of the Harmandir Sahib. The dome raised over the baoli sahib is guilded with gold. The baoli goes deep down to reach the amrit kund.

The golden canopy over the Guru Granth Sahib is a magnificent example of its kind. The embellishments are observed in the intricate and beautiful embossing on the golden surface of this canopy.

Paonta Sahib, [Himachal Pradesh, India]: The name ‘paonta’ is derived from the word ‘pav’ meaning ‘a foot’. It alludes to the hoofprints of the horse of Guru Gobind Singh who had enjoyed the environs at the bank of the river Yamuna during a hunt. The Guru had selected the site for training his men in reading, writing and hunting. The gurdwara stands on the banks of the river Yamuna and lies virtually half way between Dehradun in Uttranchal and Nahan in Himachal Pradesh.

The sprawling complex is surmounted by the towering dome that stands alone. Its very height and majesty serve as a proud yet sagacious reminder of the glory of the Guru and his Sikh. The presence of the Yamuna acts as a holy tank for the peaceful and tranquil presence of the Gurdwara Paonta Sahib. Arched galleries surround the inner sanctum much similar to those of the Golden Temple.
Gurdwara Sach Khand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib, Nanded, Maharashtra

Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, Delhi

Courtesy: Partwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Dukhniwaran Sahib, Patiala, Punjab, India: The gurdwara is in one of the busiest sections of the town. The sarovar is placed to one side of the gurdwara and has a deep religious significance. In recent times the gurdwara has undergone total renovation and has come up as a dominant edifice in the area.

The surface ornamentation observed in the Golden temple has been endeavored to be replicated here. It includes mirror work, marble work, enamel work and gold work in myriad variations on the many surfaces. It is evident that the Golden Temple has been a role model for this gurdwara.

Gurdwara Sahib Bindrakh, Punjab, India: A simple village gurdwara which has been constructed keeping in mind the spirit of the fountainhead itself, i.e. the Harmandir Sahib. The pattern of construction of the main edifice is similar while the pristine white domes and chattris surmounting the gurdwara are similar to that of the Golden Temple though not gilded.

The interiors of the gurdwara are very rich and ornate and at once the pilgrim is transported to reflect upon the interiors of the Golden Temple with its surface ornamentation in many hues and forms. Although the materials and method used are dissimilar the idea of ornamentation and the spirit infused in the task of embellishment is similar in its devout simplicity and aspiration.

Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, N. Delhi, India: The territory around the Gurdwara was renowned as Jaisinghpura because the bangla or bungalow of Raja Jai Singh was located there. It was the camping ground of the Jaipur armies as Raja Jai Singh and his son Ram Singh were based there. True to the Rajput traditions of keeping one’s word and living for honour alone. When the young Guru Har Krishan was summoned by Aurangzeb the Raja offered to protect the Guru and gave his word to the Sikhs when he insisted that the Guru reside with him. It is to commemorate this memory that Gurdwara Bangla Sahib came into existence.
Despite being greatly influenced by the urban impact of the National Capital Territory as it is located virtually in the heart of the city, the gurdwara has the chief characteristics of architecture that bind it undeniably to the primary structural premises of the Golden Temple. The golden dome complemented by chattris and kiosks enclosed within a lattice work balcony surmount the modern building which in turn seeks its reflection in the sarovar much like the Harmandir Sahib. The arched corridors also maintain points of similarity with the role model to a large extent. Of late the renovation and restorations carried out highlight the deep devotion of the devotees in carrying out seva to embellish the highest seat of their faith.

**Gurdwara Pania Sahib, [Pakistan]**: It is located in Hasan Abdal in Attock district of Pakistan. The story goes that during the visit of Guru Nanak to Hasan Abdal he sat down to preach at the foot of a hill on top of which lived a Muslim saint, Baba Wali Qandhari. By changing the course of the waters flowing from a spring Guru Nanak incurred the wrath of this saint who rolled down a huge boulder down the same hill to annihilate the Guru. Legend has it that the first Guru stopped the speeding boulder with his hand. The imprint of the Guru’s hand or ‘panja’ is left indelibly in the rock ever since. The devout take great stock by the legend and the Gurdwara constructed there along with the pool, which were built after their annexation by Ranjit Singh’s General, Hari Singh Nalwa, of this trans-Indus territory. A two storey building was built here having surface embellishments in the form of frescoes. Around 1928 the building was enlarged and another level added while the tank was also worked upon. Further buildings were added to the complex for the pilgrims who thronged to the site.

As the work may have been commissioned under the minions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, it can be surmised that intrinsic similarities between the Harmandir and the Punja Sahib would appear. This is all the more evident in the architectural similarities of the dome, the kiosks, the chattris and the windows. What is most similar is that the sanctum stands in the tank and is surrounded by
Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Pakistan

water on three sides. A bridge connects the main entrance with the outside. A distinctive feature is the ornate gateway at the beginning of the bridge. The arched gallery and the geometrically patterned Parkarma are also the specific features that are akin to the Golden Temple.

_Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Nankana Sahib, [Pakistan]:_ Maharaja Ranjit Singh commissioned the construction of a gurdwara on an impressive scale at the site to commemorate the birthplace of the first Guru, Guru Nanak Dev in Sheikhupura district of Pakistan. Guru Nanak was born at Nankana Sahib, also known as Talwandi Rai Bhoe on April 15th, 1469. Nankana Sahib is located South West of Lahore. In the beginning of the nineteenth century it became a part of Ranjit Singh’s empire. Since those times the Gurdwara was worked upon in several phases till October 1959 when the Pakistan Government carried out repairs and renovation to further strengthen the edifice. The Gurdwara bears a distinctively Muslim character in its architecture. There is no central dome but the embellishments on the domes surmounting the two towers are similarly embellished with the lotus effect like those of the Harmandir. The latticework on the ramparts is similar though the scalloping is at variance.

The entire effect of the edifice is to give the impression of a fortress. Even the colour of the Gurdwara walls is different from other gurdwaras. Another typical feature is the ornately carved marble _palki_ in which is placed the holy scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib.
**Gurdwara Baba Nanak, [Baghdad, Iraq]:** The gurdwara was founded by Mohammad Pasha Arnaoot. He was the follower of Pir Bahlol and founded the gurdwara to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak to the Pir in 927 A.H. [1520-21 A.D]. Till 1989 regular 'Diwan' or congregation and 'langar' or community kitchen used to be held at the gurdwara but the practice was changed then to have only Diwans on every Friday.

The dome of the gurdwara is its only distinctive feature which bears any resemblance to the role model in the sense that it rises above the roof under which the Guru Granth Sahib is placed. Taking into consideration the geographical location and the construction of the common buildings in the region it is indeed remarkable that the effort should have been made to raise the dome in itself. The rest of the gurdwara complex conforms to the common architecture of the area with flat geometrical shapes and thick walls to ward off the vagaries of the weather. The construction is also very basic with simple baked bricks and mud/clay based plaster. The small windows are another characteristic of the area.

**Gur Sikh Sabha, Scarborough, Ontario [Toronto, Canada]:** The gurdwara was completed around 1991. It represents a wonderful combination of the modern juxtaposed with the traditional. The plain brick walls and flat roof are surmounted with a central dome built on the lines of the Golden Temple. The four kiosks placed at the cardinal points hold lamps. The arches above the windows are reminiscent of the desire of the devotee to embellish even in materials that may not be conducive to being moulded or used traditionally.

**Gur Sikh Temple, Mission, [British Columbia, Canada]:** It is a modern structure that is surmounted with onion shaped domes where one dome is the main one and the others are the ancillary domes. The arched corridor effect has been attempted which lends an ethereal beauty to the structure. The arches tend
Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Nankana Sahib, Pakistan
Courtesy: Partwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi

Gurdwara Baba Nanak, Baghdad, Iraq
Courtesy: Partwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
to bend the light in such a manner that the play of the shades of lighting gives a beautiful effect. The impact of the darkened windows of the upper storey seen against the backdrop of the lighted lower levels provides an impact enough to inspire the devotees to greater heights of piety and devotion.

Ontario, Khalsa Darbar, [Toronto, Canada]: Built as a modern structure, the gurdwara bears resemblance to the role model of Harmandir in having the domes, if somewhat flattened and pinnacled with thin needle like spires, which bear a guilded look. The turret like kiosks on which are mounted the smaller domes also bear marks of ornamentation that are a characteristic feature of the desire of the devotee to embellish as in the Golden Temple.

Sikh Temple, Ross Street, [Vancouver, Canada]: The edifice is an example of embellishment done on the gurdwara according to the Harmandir. The roof in itself is a classic portrayal with its angularly placed hexagonal roofing levels set in a pyramidal shape. The highlight of the structure is the exquisite dome fashioned from pipes that stands tall over the centre as a feat of excellence in itself. Despite its simplistic design and silhouette the gurdwara is unmistakably a representation after the role model.

Akali Singh Gurdwara, Vancouver, [Canada]: Located in Vancouver, the Gurdwara is an example of the Sikh devotees ability to replicate his ideal – the Harmandir Sahib – through some characteristic features like the golden dome, the embellishment above and below the periphery of the dome itself and the highly ornate entrance. The geometric pattern of construction lends a severity akin to the landscape that merges into the entire structure which is surmounted with five domes. The domes in themselves are almost golden orbs fitted onto fluted turrets of concrete and capped by the spire which is topped by the *khanda sahib*. The expanse of the stairway leading up to the arched hemispherical coloured glass window above the main doorway is complemented by two smaller subsidiary windows on either side. These make for a glorious break in the grey-
walled expanse of the building. The interiors are in keeping with the Harmandir with a beautiful canopy above the Guru Granth Sahib. However, it veers from the main design in the form of the golden *palki* which houses the holy scripture.

**Nanak Sar Gursikh Temple, Richmond, [Vancouver, Canada]:** From afar the Gurdwara lives up to its role model in the sense that there is ample embellishment done on the surfaces to the extent that one look at the exteriors of the edifice transports one to the lush and verdant terrain of Punjab. The presence of the whitewashed building against the blue sky brings to mind the various gurdwaras dotting the Punjab landscape.

The interiors of the gurdwara are reminiscent of the highly ornate surfaces of the Golden Temple. In form and fashion they resemble the surface decorations of the Harmandir even to the delicate vegetable motifs. The entire effect is of ornamentation on the walls, the canopy, the areas around the holy scripture and in its immediate vicinity.

**Hacienda Guru Ram Das Gurdwara, [Espanola, New Mexico]:** The earlier building of the gurdwara had been founded in the early 70s, however, it was only in 1990 that the new edifice came into existence. The remarkable feature of the gurdwara is its massive golden dome that surmounts the bleached concrete walls of the building. The vaulted roof is overhung with a simple yet beautiful canopy. The wooden rafters add a touch of the rustic local influence to the gurdwara. The elaborate *khanda*, symbol of the Sikhs forms the backdrop to the *beed* which has been covered in a simple yet beautifully worked *phulkari*. The white walls of the building have no windows. Reminiscent of the frescoes of the Golden Temple Complex, the opposite wall of this Mexican gurdwara has a large painting depicting the lives of the gurus.

**Guru Ram Das Gurdwara, [Los Angeles, USA]:** The need for embellishment by the devotee is visible in the workmanship of this edifice. The large decorative
Gur Sikh Sabha, Scarborough, Ontario Toronto, Canada
Courtesy : Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi

Ontario Khalsa Darbar, Toronto, Canada
Courtesy : Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Nanak Sar Gursikh Temple, Richmond, Vancouver, Canada

Courtesy: Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwara* in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
door in the shape of the symbolic khanda is inviting for the devout who from afar can be beckoned into the house of worship to seek succour from their worldly cares. The building is surmounted with a coloured awning that is in the shape of a pinnacled arch. It stands at the entrance door. The golden domes of this gurdwara are fluted along their tapering shape and rise up into the khanda. Some paintings depicting the gurus and their lives adorn the interior and exterior walls of the edifice.

_Sikh Dharama, Massachusetts, [Millis, USA]:_ The softly painted exterior of the gurdwara has a sloped roof. The entrance is marked with the ornate khanda while a glimpse inside would show the similarities of this far away gurdwara with the Harmandir in having elaborately decorative geometric flooring patterns in marble and other stone work. This is also the case of the bases of the rounded pillars inside the gurdwara which are geometrically placed in gray or white marble. The wrought metal palki is another feature of the embellishments visible in the gurdwara while the simple coverings of the Guru Granth Sahib are rich in content and yet humble in their offering.

_Sikh Temple of Yuba City, [Yuba, USA]:_ The scalloped arches and the dome over the porch or the main entrance as well as the blue and white walls of the beautiful gurdwara are a further proof of the Harmandir being a role model for the workmanship of the subsequent gurdwaras. So far away from the Golden Temple yet this edifice bears all similarity in its form and content. Despite the landscape the gurdwara rises out as an ethereally beautiful building and is ample evidence of the devout passion of the Sikh to embellish and add to the beauty of his house of worship. The balance of the blue and white paint all over the temple both inside and outside, especially even the dome, gives a very pleasant effect overall. The paintings of the Gurus adorn the walls, the resplendent canopy that is raised above the Holy Scripture which is placed in a palki having a pristine white and gold dome as well.
Conclusion

The desire to embellish a place of worship stems for the devotees’ innermost feelings of love and piety for his faith. The Harmandir Sahib has been emulated through the centuries in various regions of the world. To understand the motivation for the replication of this model requires and in depth purview of the basic tenets of Sikhism and the innermost sentiments of the devotee. This can be glimpsed as under:

Men behind the tasks of embellishment: The rich ornamentation on the various surfaces of the Golden Temple complex is a source of great pride and joy for the entire Sikh community who have over the years given their best to beautify and embellish the edifice. Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave impetus to the tradition with his donation of five lac rupees as a grant towards the gilding of the temple in 1803. Workmen from all walks of life and from various disciplines of the art of embellishment flocked to the Karkhaneh established in the vicinity of the Golden Temple and since then the work of the beautification of the Golden Temple has been going on from generation to generation. Even today members of the Sikh community and other devotees give freely of their earnings to maintain the pristine glory and sanctity of the Harmandir. Be it on Indian soil or elsewhere, wherever there is a devotee there stands the unmistakable symbol of the faith, the ‘Nishan Sahib’ and in its shadow a gurdwara. The embellishments of the gurdwaras have been varied and multiple depending upon the sangat at a particular location and the support they enjoy among their brethren in India.

Comparisons of the domes in various geographical locations – guilded and non- guilded: The main dome of the Golden Temple is a synthesis of details and ornamentation which can safely be said to be the role model for other Sikh shrines as most of them have derived their inspiration and character from it. From the flatish to the conical, from the bulbous and even the wire frame...
Hacienda Guru Ram Das Gurdwara, Española, New Mexico

Courtesy: Bhai Sant Singh. 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Gursikh Temple Mission, British Columbia, Canada

Sikh Temple of Yuba City, Yuba, USA

Courtesy: Pitam Singh, 1992 Gurdwaras in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
structures experimented with in various gurdwaras in India and abroad, it is imperative to assert that the golden ramparts of the Harmandir are what fired the imagination of devotees all over the world to fashion and frame the domes and structures surmounting the gurdwaras of the Sikhs all over the world.

A distinctive architectural feature of most gurdwaras in India and abroad is the balconied window a culmination of the traditional Mughal and Rajasthani styles of architectural ornamentation. There are several kinds of projected windows and balconies some of which are noted in the Golden Temple and later replicated in gurdwaras elsewhere. The three-dimensional out-jutting window balconies are characterized by providing ample surface for decoration that is visible in the Golden Temple as well as in other gurdwaras. In the Golden temple these window balconies are worked over in embossed gold and the play of light and shade on their surface is enhanced by the excellence of the relief work or moharakashi.

Apart from the main domes are the kiosks or chattris. There are several types of kiosks with the most common one being the square chamber crowned with a domical structure. These chambers usually have walls with a number of entrances often with an arched upper portion. These structures have been copied and replicated in many a gurdwara in Punjab, in India and some of the major countries of the world. These structures are reminiscent of the Mughal and Rajput traditional influences especially in the arches and the sloping stone awnings.

Availability of methods and materials – making best use of the skills and natural elements: Even though the best efforts were made to follow the lines laid down in the architecture and surface decorations of the gurdwaras it is interesting to observe the variations of the other edifices that have been coming up in Indian and other lands subsequent to the construction of the Golden Temple. Depending upon the materials available the gurdwaras have been
made of wood, stone, mud and bricks. The chief lines of construction have also been taken from the surrounding locale. The distinctive features of the ornamentation in these gurdwaras are also local in their content inasmuch that the effect considered especially beautiful is utilised to the optimum. Be it the typical colours of the landscape or the form and outline of the edifice itself the gurdwaras built in different lands are very much a part of the indigenous landscape. For example the pagoda creeps into the structure in eastern sites and the cathedral effect is heightened in some of the gurdwaras having stained glass windows, huge flower vases and candles juxtaposed with muted colours of the draperies, tapestries and floor coverings; the windowless building in sand blown Bagdad and the wild jungle surroundings of the one in Kenya as also the hacienda of Mexico — all live upto the basic tenets of the Golden Temple’s spiritual perfection in spirit. Yet they are adept at retaining within their souls the essence and form of the Golden Temple as has been carried there by the faithful Sikh.

Placement of the water body proximal to the gurdwara in various locations:
Most places of pilgrimage have been since ages situated on the banks of rivers or close to some water body. Many a times miraculous properties have been attributed to the waters some are characterized as having a healing effect on skin ailments while others have been blessed by the presence of some holy personage. Sarovar [lake], kund [pond], baoli [underground well], khu [well] and chasma [springs] are all features of the water body that is close to or proximal to a holy place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. Almost all the gurdwaras have a prominent water body in the form of one of the above. A distinctive aspect of the water is its acceptance as ‘amrit’ or nectar. What began with the first Amrit sarovar of the Golden Temple complex and gave the city its name was to become a practise for subsequent gurdwaras which were either located on the banks of rivers like the Yamuna, Ravi, Beas, Satluj, Ghaggar and the Ganga or had significant ponds, wells or springs for the weary and sick pilgrim to seek divine solace, succour, cures and treatment at these various sites. Thus, the
Sikh Dharma Massachusetts, Millis, USA

Courtesy : Partow Singh, 1992, Greetings in India and around the world, Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Guru Ram Das Gurdwara,
LA, USA
Courtesy: Ritwant Singh. 1992 Gurdwara* in India and around the world. Himalaya Books, New Delhi
Sri Guru Singh Sabha, UK

The gurdwaras that were constructed consequent to the Golden Temple complex share many a point of commonality with the premiere institution. This is almost as if the blueprint of the gurdwara was carried within the minds-eye of the devout Sikh and wherever he settled down he initiated the creation of his house of worship on the lines of the Harmandir. While the chief lines of construction may be different and may, many a times, be akin to the local scenario at a particular place but the essence of the building, its exteriors and interiors, its surface decorations and embellishments, can be derived to be mostly an essential fall back upon the basic lines of the Golden Temple itself.