Abstract

Across time and space, communities bound by geography, ideology, language and spiritual path have time and again created physical structures to represent their collective consciousness. Almost every architectural structure addresses, in a direct sense, cultural identity and philosophy within a physical context. Sikhism, one of the youngest of world’s religions, derives its inspiration from a living spiritual and historical tradition. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, experienced both Hindu and Muslim religions and it was only after deep contemplation that he evolved his own school of thought or a new dispensation.

There is very limited literature available on the subject of Sikh Architecture. Moreover, the literature available is primarily concerned with the historical description and very little has been written about the Architecture of the Sikh shrines. Thus, it is difficult to believe that such a style of architecture exists at all. Most of the authors have just taken up the architecture of the Harmandar Sahib (Golden Temple) as a case study for understanding and explaining the Sikh architecture as a whole. Only PS Arshi has discussed the cases of some other Gurudwaras, but the analysis of various architectural elements of the Sikh architecture has not been studied by him. So, there is an urgent need to expand and update the study done by PS Arshi by covering other historically important Gurudwaras as well as to take up an indepth analysis of architectural elements of the Sikh Gurudwaras. Forty five Sikh Shrines in East Punjab (Indian Punjab) has been studied during the course of study. Since little work has been published on the Sikh architecture, the present work may prove to be a pioneering effort by an architect and of a great value to the scholars of other fields as well.

Most of the Gurudwaras represent significant events in Sikh history as they are built at sites associated with the Gurus or at places which are important milestones in Sikh history. The primary objective of this study would be to ascertain and assess, on the basis of documentary research, the actual contexts within which a given shrine or the architectural phenomenon would have originated in its time and space as well as have exhibited any subsequent changes over time. The scope of this dissertation is mainly to look into the aspects of the origin of Gurudwaras, their development and architectural analysis.

Architecturally, Gurudwaras have evolved over a period of time. In early times, a Gurudwara was known as a Dharmsal. Gurudwaras were simple and humble in architectural expression. Sikhs started with very simple abode, may be huts or other such types of dwelling units, which have no particular architectural merit. As time went on, Sikhs wanted to place their Gurudwaras in an elaborate setting to make their Gurudwaras part of large and impressive complexes. During this period of Sikh supremacy in Punjab, the art and cultural atmosphere drew master craftsmen from different areas and from various religions. With the arrival of these artists, the art activity flourished in Lahore, Amritsar and other princely states like Kapurthala and Patiala etc. Various art forms which add to the ornamentation of Golden Temple in particular and other

This dissertation discusses the forty five case studies of the Sikh shrines and based upon the primary research and documentation, tries to bring out the concepts that have been adopted for the construction these. All these shrines are arranged in the chronological order according to the date of their reconstruction. Harmandar Sahib at Amritsar is the oldest shrine and Gurudwara Chheharta Sahib at Amritsar is most recently constructed shrine amongst the documented and analysed shrines. The most consistent of Sikh architectural vocabulary is represented by the Gurudwaras across Punjab. It is devotedly exemplified in lavish splendour in the Golden Temple at Amritsar and many other historical Gurudwaras.

There are numerous varieties and types of the architectural elements, the literal description of which is insufficient to express properly the architectural ideas, forms and imageries they represent. The most consistent of Sikh architectural vocabulary is represented by the Gurudwaras across Punjab. This dissertation has attempted to describe, document and analyse the important Sikh shrines, various architectural elements and features and symbolic meaning of the structure. It discusses and analyses the results of the dimensional study of the Gurudwaras. Further it discusses the various plan forms, architectural elements like domes, *chhatris*, arches, kiosks, cupolas and pilaster etc.

New architectural styles get inspired from the prevailing architectural styles. This phenomenon is observed throughout the architectural history in all parts of the world, particularly, in the case of India where many invading cultures brought in their unique influences and became assimilated into an indigenous character. Sikh architecture also seems to be inspired from the prominent prevailing architectural styles (Mughal and Rajput) of that time. It is possible that Sikh architecture owed some of its features to the Rajasthan and Mughal prototypes. But these architectural features were adopted, adapted, and ultimately assimilated and a new architectural style was generated by the Sikhs.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the study is the undoubted fact that the Harmandar Sahib holds a unique and inspiring position as a Gurudwara and Sikh Architecture seem to be best represented through this shrine. The final conclusion that can be drawn is that the Sikh Architecture is unique and Sikhism seems to be represented through the Sikh shrines.

There is a lot of scope of work in the field of Sikh architecture as there are hundreds of historical Sikh shrines spread all over India and abroad. This dissertation has partly covered the Indian Punjab. A comparative study of shrines in Punjab and other states or abroad can be taken up. A study of the Gurudwaras in foreign countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan will be more interesting as these Gurudwara buildings are untouched and authentic, whereas, Gurudwara buildings in Eastern Punjab (Indian Punjab) are renovated to a large extent by the *Kar Sewaks*. 