

**Gurudwara Complex Building: A Sacred Haven of Spiritual and Community Development
Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir.**

Noor US Saba¹, Ataf Razzaq², Adnan Anwar³, Sohail Nawaz⁴

¹ PhD scholar, Archeology Department, Xian Academy of Fine Arts. Email:

noorussabaabid9@gmail.com

² PhD Scholar, Archeology Department, Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts

³ Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Hazara University, Manshera

⁴ PhD Scholar, Department of Archaeology, Hazara University, Manshera

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i3.870>

Abstract:

In the Sikh faith, the Gurudwara complex is a significant symbol that represents spirituality, social harmony, and community development. Serving as holy spaces for Sikhs to worship, meditate, and relate to their teachings from the Guru Granth Sahib, gurudwaras—which means "the Guru's door"—Defined by their domed shapes and gorgeous artwork, they represent the relevance of art in Sikh tradition. Beyond prayer, gurudwaras provide a sense of belonging and motivate social contact, education, and charity work as well as acting as community hubs. Encouragement of equality and unpaid service comes from the community kitchen, also known as "Langar," which provides free meals to everyone. Showing the inclusive character of Sikh beliefs, their buildings enable learning and cultural events. In today's varied world, the Gurudwara complex represents peace, harmony, and spiritual development.

Location and Approach

With a total area of 5,134 square miles, Azad Jammu and Kashmir is situated between longitude 73-75 and latitude 33-36 (Hussain, 2003). Muzaffarabad is capital to Azad Jammu and Kashmir. On the Eastern side of Muzaffarabad, the Gurdwara is a collection of structures. Some kilometers from the Neelum River is the place known as the Police Line in Gujra. The location is accessible through a connector road joining Lohargali and Muzaffarabad. The police department still uses the building (Khawaja, 2020, p. 52). Muzaffarabad was visited by a Sikh Jatha, or collection of visitors, in 2008. In Pakistan's Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir, they said, this was Guru Hargobind Gurdwara, the sixth Sikh Guru. (Pl. 1) Part of it has been disassembled into police lines.



PL.1 .Sikh Guru , Guru Hargobind, Muzaffarabad (After Earthquake 2005)

(The Indian Express) Sat November 8, 2008 stated, The Guru stopped by the hamlet on his 1620 journey to Kashmir. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had leased the land for yearly Rs 3,000. Baisakhi was a significant event in the Gurudwara. (Yasmin, 2022).

Gurdwara

"Gurdwara" is defined in the Oxford Dictionary (2009: 703) as a place of Sikh worship The name 'Gurdwara' derives from the terms 'Gur', which refers to the Sikh Gurumukhi, as well as the channel via which the Guru can be approached; consequently, all Sikh places of worship are known as Gurudwaras and summons. (1469, 1539) established the custom (Singh, 2006) (Singh 2000 :86; Vaid 2007: 3; Scott 2012: 307). A Gurdwara complex is a place of worship and community for followers of Sikhism. It typically consists of several buildings and facilities that serve different purposes to meet the spiritual, social, and practical needs of the Sikh community. Here are some common components you may find in a Gurdwara complex.

Darbar Sahib (Main Prayer Hall)

This is the central and most important building in the Gurdwara complex. It contains the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred text of Sikhism, and is that main prayer hall where congregational prayers and religious ceremonies take place.

Langar Khana / Hall: Illustrated by the Langar Hall, Sikhism emphasizes community and equality. At the Langar, everyone is warmly welcomed to share complimentary meals served with love and respect—regardless of caste, religion, or social level.

Community Space / Hall: Large space for religious celebrations, social gatherings and conferences. Additionally, it can be utilized as a venue for lectures, workshops, and educational courses. **Library:** Additionally library containing Sikh religious texts, literature, and historical papers connected to Sikhism is housed in Gurdwara complexes.

Class / Lecture rooms: These help adults and children learn Sikh history, philosophy, and customs.

Kirtan Rooms : Spaces specifically set aside for the singing of hymns and devotional music. Larger Gurdwara complexes can have rooms or a residential area for the priests (Granthi) and other staff members who work at the Gurdwara.

Administrative Offices: Areas for execution of administrative chores related to the operation and management of the Gurdwara.

Garden/Courtyard: Beautiful gardens or courtyards at gurdwara complexes invite meditation and relaxation.

Shoe Room: To demonstrate their respect and cleanliness, visitors are allowed to leave shoes at a designated area before entering the main prayer hall.

Sarovar (Pool): Some Gurdwara sites have a holy pool where one can meditate and reflect. The Amrit Sarovar at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India, is the best-known example.

Community Services Facilities: Additional amenities depending on the Gurdwara's size and resources include medical clinics, educational hubs, and humanitarian activities for the neighborhood. It should be emphasized that the particular arrangement and amenities of a Gurdwara Guru Hargobind Ge complex might change according on its size, location, and the resources available to the community. To offer a place of worship, encourage community service, and foster a sense of unity among Sikhs as well as others who come by, the main goal of a Gurdwara.

Guru

In three instances, Guru Nanak made use of the word "Guru. First of all, the master is Akal Purakh and the Guru personifies the word, hence the reality of Akal Purakh. Interacting with the ageless Guru for Guru Nanak meant sharing God's wisdom. The guru is seen as the voice of God, thus miraculously articulated within the man's heart, mind, and soul—man. Second, the persona of the individual Guru is the human conduit via which God's voice becomes discernible (Scott 2012: 318).

Gurus

By presenting the ten Guru, the Sikh religion was revealed. Though Sikhs respect them totally, they also acknowledge other messengers from God like the Buddha, Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Mayled 2002: 4)¹. In the fifteenth century, Guru Nanak Dev established Sikhism. His father was Mehta Kalu; mother Nanak; sing 2006: 5. 2. Guru Angad Dev (1504–52): Father was Pheru Mal; mother was Mata Dayal Kour (Sing 2006: 23) 3. Guru mar Dav (1479–47): Father was Baba Taj Bha Khatri; mother was Bakat Devi; Sing 2006: 36. 4. Father of Guru Ram Das (1534–81), mother was Anup Devi (Sing 2006: 36). 5. Guru Arjun Dev (1563–1606). In a book called the Adhi Geanth, Arjan Dev ji gathered his own hymns in addition to those of the first four Gurus. His parents were Bibi Bahni and Guru Ram Das, (Sing 2006: 62). 6. At four years old, Guru Hargobind (1595–44) assumed the role of Guru after his father, Guru Arjan Dev , mother was Nata Ganga (Sing 2006: 7). 7. Guru Har Rai ji (1644–61) was four years old when he took up the responsibility of Guru; his father was Guru Har Gobind ji, mother was Mata Nanki (Sing 2006: 113). (Sing 2006: 128).

Story Guru Hargobind Singh

Born in Amritsar in 1595 to Guru Arjun Dev and Mata Ganga Deur, Guru Hargobind Singh was taught by Baba Budha, as noted by (Sharma 2012: 5). At the young age of eleven, he assumed the

responsibilities of a Guru during the Mughal era, where he also acquired equestrian skills. In 1606, he visited Lahore, where he was temporarily held in Gulyaram fort by Jahangir. However, upon the request of Hazrat Mian Ji, he was eventually released, and Guru Hargobind returned to Delhi. Taking steps to fulfill Guru Arjan's aspirations, Guru Hargobind made significant symbolic gestures. He respectfully set aside the sacred helmet of renunciation, known as seli, handed down from Guru Nanak. Instead, he sought two swords from Bhai Budha, positioning them on each side to symbolize Shakti (power) and Bhakti (meditation) (Sharma 2012: 49). The Guru was deeply committed to strengthening the Sikh community. Journeying to Kashmir via Uri, he stayed in Muzaffarabad for a period (Lawrence 1895: 301).

Description

The Gurdwara of the sixth Sikh Guru, Shiri Hargobind Ji, located in the village of 'Naluchi' in Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, holds historical significance. In a report from The Indian Express on November 8, 2008, Kartar Singh, descendant of the Gurdwara's mahant Subha Singh from 1831, revealed that the then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Kanwar Sher Singh, paid a visit to the Gurdwara. During this visit, he allocated 100 bighas of land and made various contributions for the benefit of the Gurdwara (The Indian Express Sat November 8, 2008).

Regrettably, the historic Gurudwara of the sixth Sikh Guru, Shiri Hargobind Ji, situated in the village of 'Naluchi' in Muzaffarabad, has undergone a transformation and now serves as the police lines in Pakistan-administered Kashmir (The Indian Express Sat November 8, 2008).

Architecture

The Gurdwara is located in the center of the courtyard in a complex of buildings having small windows on all four sides.

Small Windows: The buildings in the complex have small windows on all four sides. The design of smaller windows could be for both practical and symbolic reasons. Practically, smaller windows may help regulate temperature and light inside the buildings. Symbolically, this could represent a sense of humility and modesty, as it encourages individuals to focus more on the spiritual experience inside the Gurdwara rather than external distractions. It's important to remember that Gurdwaras can differ in their architectural features and layout, and the specific design elements may vary depending on cultural influences, local traditions, and available resources. The main focus of any Gurdwara is to provide a sacred space for Sikhs to come together, pray, and engage in community service

The Gurdwara features an entrance situated on its western side (PL.2). It is a single-story structure, and a staircase leads to the roof on the northeastern side of the courtyard (Pl. 3). On the eastern side, an imposing and well-preserved building faces east, with some parts of the windows covered with woods (Pl. 4). Notably, the Police department, currently utilizing this structure for official purposes, has made alterations to separate it from the complex.

Encircling the Gurdwara on all four sides are inscriptions indicating that extensive renovations occurred during the spring of 1947. Additionally, a row of blind windows adds a distinctive architectural feature to the building (Pl.5). On the eastern facade, you'll find two distinct niches positioned on either side, with one situated to the left and the other to the right of the blind windows. An earthquake of 2005 caused partial damage to the central Gurdwara, which is a significant place of worship for the Sikh public. Such as a consequence of the earthquake's impact, some parts of the Gurdwara may have been structurally compromised, leading to the need for renovation and repairs. (Pl.5).



PL.2 Single Building story , Guru Hargobind Gurdwara , Muzaffarabad



PL.3 Steps to the roof , Guru Hargobind Gurdwara , Muzaffarabad



PL.4 East Intact building Guru Hargobind Gurdwara , Muzaffarabad



PL.5 Row of blind Arches Guru Hargobind Gurdwara , Muzaffarabad

Substantial

The construction of the Gurdwara incorporates a diverse range of materials, including baked bricks, mud plaster, limestone, marble, wood, and Shial stones. These elements collectively contribute to the architectural composition, showcasing a blend of structural strength, aesthetic appeal, and cultural significance.(Pl. 6).

Baked Bricks: Mostly Gurdwaras in past were constructed using bricks, a basic building material. Frequently used for walls, floors, and some decorative elements, they offer structural stability.

Mud Plaster: To give the walls and ceilings of Gurdwaras a smooth and aesthetically pleasing finish, mud plaster, also known as clay plaster, is utilized. Many areas employ this traditional construction method.

Limestone and Marble: The construction of Gurdwaras typically involves the use of natural stones for various reasons. They can be used for elaborate art, ornamental carvings, and flooring.

Wood: Particularly for doors, windows, and internal constructions, wood has a major part in the design of Gurdwaras. The incorporation of wood in interior results in a cohesive and individualistic design. Domed design, open central hall (Darbar Sahib), and a noticeable entrance known as the Darshan Deori are hallmarks of Gurdwaras. Their design materials are selected to fit Sikh beliefs and provide a welcoming and spiritually elevating environment for every guest.



PL.6 Renovation on the main Gurdwara

Writing

The scripts showcases ancient writings of the Gurmukhi script (PL.7).

Gurmukhi Script: Mostly employed for writing Punjabi on the Indian subcontinent, Gurmukhi is an abugida script. The writing system utilized by Sikhs is also used to write other Punjabi dialects. Referring to the Sikh Gurus who were very instrumental in its creation, the term "Gurmukhi" means "from the mouth of the Guru."

History: In the sixteenth century, the second Sikh Guru, Guru Angad Dev Ji, created the Gurmukhi script. To make the script more appropriate for writing the Punjabi language, he changed and standardized it. Rooted in the Brahmi script, the Devanagari language is intimately connected.

Features of Gurmukhi Script:

Consonants and Vowels: An abugida, Gurmukhi is one; consonants have an innate vowel sound and extra diacritic marks are used to alter the vowel sound. Ten vowels and thirty-five consonants comprise it.

Direction: The script is written from left to right.

Used for Punjabi: Gurmukhi is mainly employed for Punjabi writing, but it has been used to write other languages in the Indian subcontinent as well.

Sikh Scriptures: The Gurmukhi script is perhaps best known in relation to the Sikh holy book, Guru Granth Sahib.

Inscriptions and Historical Documentation: Gurmukhi script inscriptions and historical records are present on different Sikh religious texts, historical manuscripts, and monuments.

Such inscriptions are typically of religious and historical importance, upholding the culture of the Sikh community.

Decoration

The Gurudwara has carefully arranged rows of lotus petals tracing out the edges of marble window frames. Also, there are blind windows and niches that ornament the walls, forming a complex visual and beautiful architectural work.

The characterization you offered would seem to describe the architectural features typically present within a Gurudwara complex. A Gurudwara is a Sikh place of worship and congregation, and it generally features unique architectural components.

Lotus Petals: The lotus flower is a deeply symbolic flower in most cultures, including Sikhism. It represents purity and enlightenment. Arrangements of lotus petals are frequently built into the central dome or ceiling design of the main prayer hall (Darbar Sahib) of a Gurudwara. The elaborate decoration enhances the majesty and holiness of the room.

Marble Window Frames: Gurudwaras usually have exquisitely crafted marble windows encasing the main hall and other rooms. The frames of marble are well designed and can be embellished with artistic motifs, floral patterns, and religious symbols.

Niches: Niche is a recessed space within the walls that can be used to store religious relics or statues. In a Gurudwara complex, niches can be found in the walls surrounding the central prayer hall, and they can contain sacred scriptures, Sikh historical figures, or other sacred items.

Blind Windows: Blind windows, or false or ornamental windows, are structural details that are designed to provide symmetry and beauty on the outside walls. They are shut and lack openings outward, but they provide visual value to the building's facade. Gurudwaras are constructed with great care and attention to detail, and their architectural style often reflects a blend of traditional Sikh design principles and the local cultural influences of the region where they are built. These features help create a serene and spiritually uplifting environment for worshipers and visitors.

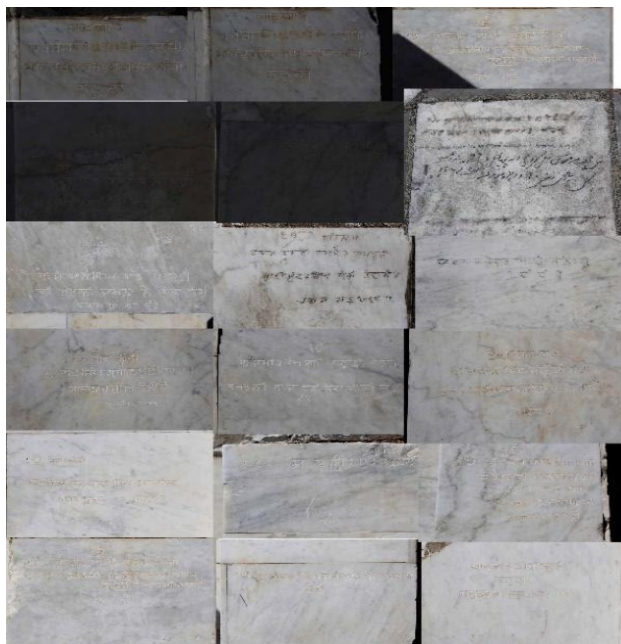
The Gurudwaras are built with utmost care and attention to detail, and their design is typically a fusion of the traditional Sikh principles of design and the local culture of the area in which they are erected. These aspects work towards the creation of a peaceful and spiritually elevated atmosphere for worshipers and guests alike.

Religious Coding

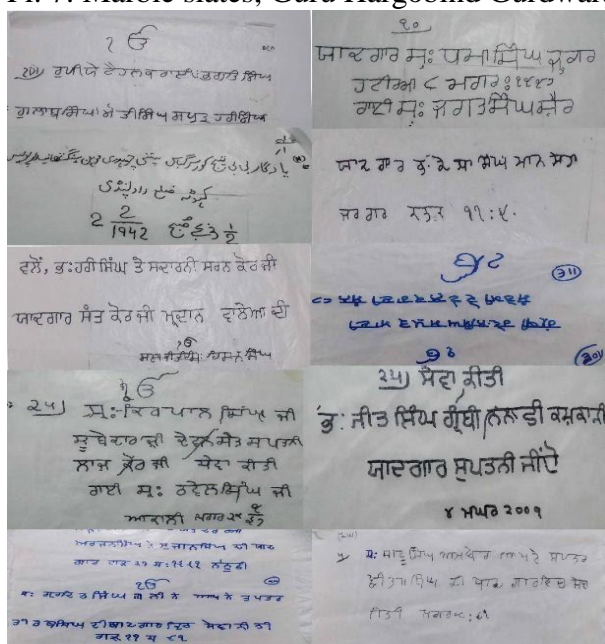
There existed a possibility of religious codes or texts in different locations, which were subsequently deleted by the department.

State of Preservation

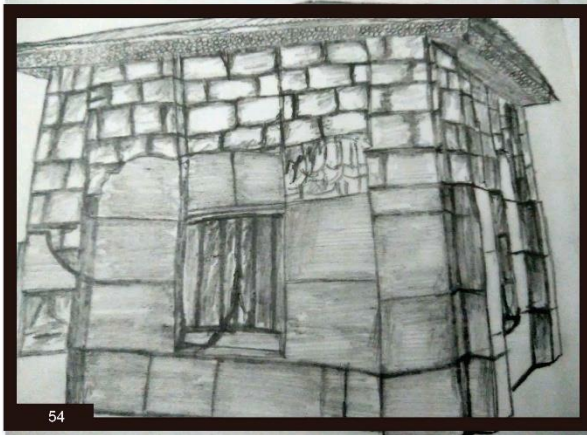
The Gurudwara complex, once peaceful and hallowed ground, now wears the looks of partial destruction, being transformed into police line offices and housing. The peace that used to reverberate with hymns and prayers has been replaced with the hubbub of police work. This transformation is evidence of a change in the function of the space, from religious refuge to center for administrative and residential operations. The contrast between the former sanctity and the present pragmatic function invites inquiry into the changing dynamics and priorities of the community and greater societal environment.



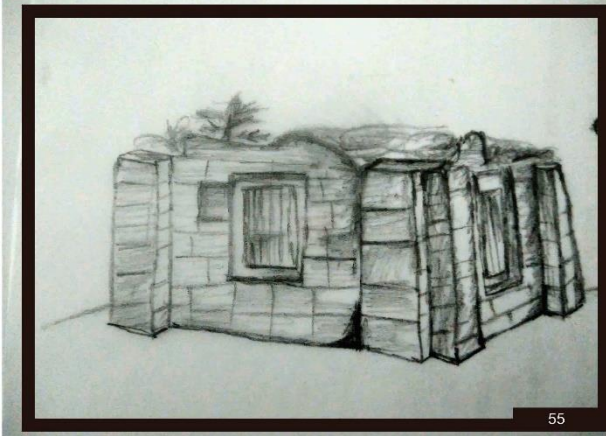
Pl. 7: Marble slates, Guru Hargobind Gurdwara , Muzaffarabad



Pl. 7: Marble slates, Guru Hargobind Gurdwara , Muzaffarabad



Pl. I : (Page no 54) Pencil Sketch Gurdwara Chatti Padshahi (Police Line).



Pl. II :(Page no 55) Pencil Sketch Gurdwara Chatti Padshahi (Police Line).



Pl. III : (Page no 56) Pencil Sketch, Gurdwara Complex, Gurdwara Chatti Padshahi (Police Line).

Conclusion

The Gurudwara Complex Building, a spiritual sanctum of religious and community growth, has been massively destroyed. This tragic incident has provoked profound grief and unease among the Sikh people and the general public. The Gurudwara Complex building, a building of worship, learning, and communal congregation, was of profound importance and a refuge for numerous individuals looking for comfort, direction, and assistance.

The level of destruction to the Gurudwara Complex has quite possibly rendered its facilities and infrastructure in disarray, reducing its ability to allow for the practice of their religion and participation in community and cultural activities. Further, the destruction of such an indispensable central place for spiritual development and communal bonding may have profound psychological effects on the members and individuals connected to the Gurudwara.

During times of hardship, the Sikh community has always shown strength and solidarity, uniting to renovate and rebuild their religious halls. Organizations both within and outside the community will most likely provide assistance and support in the reconstruction efforts to restore the Gurudwara Complex to its former glory.

Although the material loss can be mended with reconstruction and rehabilitation, the emotional and psychological recovery process of the affected may be long-term. However, the spirit of compassion, faith, and community that the Gurudwara Complex represented will still be there to guide and support the members through this hard time.

As the Gurudwara Complex emerges from the ashes, its precepts of peace, love, and unity will stand unaltered, affirming its stature as a house of worship and community interface for the generations ahead. The incident is a wake-up call to the status of protecting then valuing such holy spots and the necessity of the joint endeavors in safeguarding them from damage in the years to come.

References

- Chopra, S. (2008, November 8). Historic Gurdwara in PoK converted into police lines - Indian Express. The Indian Express. Retrieved from <http://archive.indianexpress.com>
- Hugel, B. C. V. (1845). *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab*. London: John Petheram, 71, Chancery Lane. PP. 15, 185-187.
- Hussain, R. (2003). Pakistan's Relations with Azad Kashmir. *REGIONAL STUDIES-ISLAMABAD-*, 21(4), 82-97.
- Khawaja, A.** (2020). Sikh archaeological sites in Muzaffarabad Division. *Khoj*, 84, 51–64.
- Sharma, Amrita. (2012). *Guru Hargobind*. New Delhi, India: Singh Brothers ,Publishers Private Limited. PP. 5, 49.
- Singh, P. P. (2006). *The history of Sikh gurus*: Lotus Press.
- Threat to the cultural heritage of Pakistan. (2016) (first ed.). Islamabad, Pakistan: Textila institute of Asian Civilization, Quaid-i-Azam University. PP. 91, 93, 88-89, 171-172
- Vaid, H. K. (2007). *The Sikh Religion* (1st ed.). New Delhi, India: Everest press . Okhla Phase II. P. 115.
- Yasmin, R. (2022). *Muslims under Sikh Rule in the Nineteenth Century*.