

Harmandir Sahib

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Harmandir Sahib or the Golden Temple is the **chief gurdwara** or house of worship of Sikhism and the **Sikhs' most important pilgrimage site**. It is located in the city of Amritsar in Punjab.

History of Harmandir Sahib

- **Guru Arjan Sahib, the fifth Nanak**, conceived the idea of creating a central place of worship for the Sikhs and he himself **designed the architecture of Sri Harmandir Sahib. It was first built in 1604.**
- Earlier, the **planning to excavate the holy tank** (Amritsar or Amrit Sarovar) was chalked out by **Guru Amardas Sahib, the third Nanak**, but it was **executed by Guru Ramdas Sahib** under the supervision of Baba Budha ji.
- The temple was destroyed several times by Afghan invaders and was finally **rebuilt in marble and copper overlaid with gold foil during the reign (1801–39) of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.**

Architectural Features

- Unlike erecting the structure on the higher level (a tradition in Hindu Temple architecture), Guru Arjan Sahib got it **built on the lower level** and instead of having only one gate for the entrance and exit, Guru Sahib got it **open from four sides**. Thus he created a symbol of the new faith and made it **accessible to every person without any distinction** of caste, creed, sex and religion.
- Sri Harmandir Sahib, is built on a 67ft. square platform in the centre of the sarovar (tank).
- The main structure of Sri Harmandir Sahib, functionally as well as technically is a **three-storied** one. The front

which faces the bridge is decorated with repeated cusped arches.

- At the top of the first floor, a 4 feet high parapet rises on all the sides which also has four **'Mamtees' on the four corners.**
- Exactly on the top of the central hall of the main sanctuary rises the third storey. It is a small square room and has three gates.
- On the top of this room stands the low fluted **'Gumbaz' (dome) having lotus petal motif** in relief at the base and **inverted lotus at the top which supports the 'Kalash'** having a beautiful 'Chhatri' at the end.

Significance of Harmandir Sahib

- The Harmandir Sahib is significant because it housed the Sikhs' holy book, the **Adi Granth**, when it was completed in 1604.
- Later on, **Guru Gobind Singh** added to the Adi Granth the compositions by his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur.
- A copy of this volume, the **Guru Granth Sahib, now rests on a throne** beneath a velvet canopy decorated with silver and gold thread.
- The holy book is read out continuously, with each complete reading of the entire Adi Granth taking 48 hours. Sikhs visit Harmandir Sahib to hear the reading of this important living Guru.