

ARCHITECTURAL DOCUMENTATION OF GURDAWARA SINGH SABHA COMPLEX, FAISALABAD

Ar. Muhammad Abdullah

ABSTRACT

Present day province of Punjab in Pakistan was an important area for the Sikhs of Subcontinent India before the partition. A large number of Sikh families inhabited the cities of Lahore, Rawalpindi, Attock, Sialkot, Faisalabad and small neighboring towns like Nankana Sahib (Birthplace of founder of Sikh religion; Guru Nanak), Hassan Abdal and Kartarpur. Numerous religious places of Sikhs were present in these areas however, after the partition of Indian Subcontinent in 1947 most of the Sikhs migrated to present day India leaving behind their houses, farms and religious places abandoned. Out of all the migrants who went to India, the Sikhs have the largest number of people who keep visiting Pakistan mainly due to their religious sites in Nankana Sahib and Hassan Abdal. All the buildings including Gurdawaras, schools, colleges etc built by Sikhs before partition hold a very high emotional and religious value for the people visiting Pakistan now.

Keywords: Gurdwara, Faisalabad. Architecture, Building, Complex

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The city of Faisalabad was planned and developed in between 1985 and 1905 mainly as a market based town as a part of canal colony in West Punjab. (ISDP, 2011) Initially named as Lyallpur the city's plan was somewhat similar to the union jack and there was a clock tower in the center. Eight markets commonly known as *Bazaars* were developed around the clock tower. This was a mixed use land use area with residences, schools, religious buildings all merged with the shops of markets. The city of Faisalabad was divided into two main areas; the market place i.e. the area around the landmark clock tower and secondly the villages locally known as *Chaks*. As the area was all a new development, the land was allotted to people of diverse backgrounds. People from Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Sialkot, Gurdaspur, Ludhiana, Gujrat, Jullundar and Lahore came to the area. The settlers belonged to different castes and backgrounds however they were from three religions i.e. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. (Ahmad, 2017) This new settlement

was of diverse nature where all three religions coexisted. This is the reason that religious buildings of all these religions can also be found in the area. One of the buildings which were built by distinguished Sikh businessmen near clock tower is under study in this research.



Fig.01: Clock tower (Ghanta Ghar) of Faisalabad. (Nizami, 2017)

The site under study is basically a building complex consisting of a Gurdwara, a school and a guest house locally known as *Musafir-khana* which served the religious travelers (Fig.02). The three buildings encompass a triangular courtyard in between them which unifies the building blocks. The complex is situated in between two main markets near the famous clock tower (Fig.01) i.e. present day known as the “*Katchey Bazaar*” and the “*Rail Bazaar*” (Fig.02). The guest house building has been used as commercial shops and they were detached to the rest of complex due to its opening towards Market Street only. However, now the building of guest house has been reverted and given under the authority of school. The building has also been renovated to be used as school’s class rooms. The rest of two buildings i.e. The Gurdwara and school is being used by a school now named as “Pakistan Model School” after the partition time (1947).



Fig 02: Map of the Site under study and its adjacent markets (Bazaars)

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Pakistan is rich and culturally diverse in its heritage sites which include temples, mosques, forts etc. These heritage sites can be economically beneficial if properly conserved and rehabilitated. More number of tourists can be expected especially if the religious buildings like the temples, Gurdawaras and mosques are properly protected and projected to the people around the globe. Sikhism was very strong in the region of Punjab and till date the people of this religion wish to visit the places built by their ancestors. Keeping in view the recent state of affairs with Indian Sikhs with the opening of Kartarpur corridor by Pakistan government, the number of Sikh tourists is going to be increased at a higher rate. The Gurdwara Singh Sabha complex is probably the first Gurdwara built in the city of Faisalabad and inspite of that it is unknown to the most of people of its city and Sikhs coming from abroad. It is an immense need of the time to protect and promote this site and initial step to conserve any building is its documentation. This research paper aims to study the history and style of architecture of this complex building as well as document its present condition.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The architectural documentation of the site is categorized in to three types. i.e.:

- Pictorial documentation
- Graphical documentation (Plans and elevations)
- Written documentation

On site surveys have been done to do first two types of documentation whereas the written documentation has been done by consulting the books and specialists of historical buildings in the region.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The exact date of construction of this building complex is unknown however there are few inscriptions on walls of the buildings in Sikh language (*Gurmukhi* script) which show the donations made by different people for its construction. These inscriptions carved on stone show various dates which gives an idea about the construction. The buildings were built in early 20th century in dates ranging between 1911 and 1930s (Amir, 2017). The pictures of these inscriptions are given below along with the English translation done by an online blogger and history enthusiast Mr. Tariq Amir.



Fig. 03: Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur

For more details see (Amir, 2017)

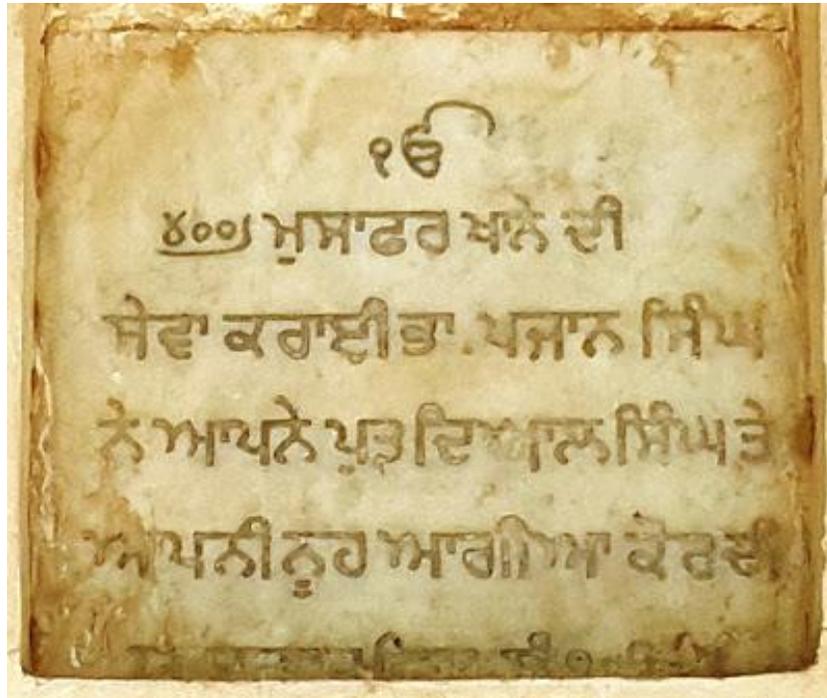


Fig. 04: : Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur

For more details see _____ (Amir, 2017)

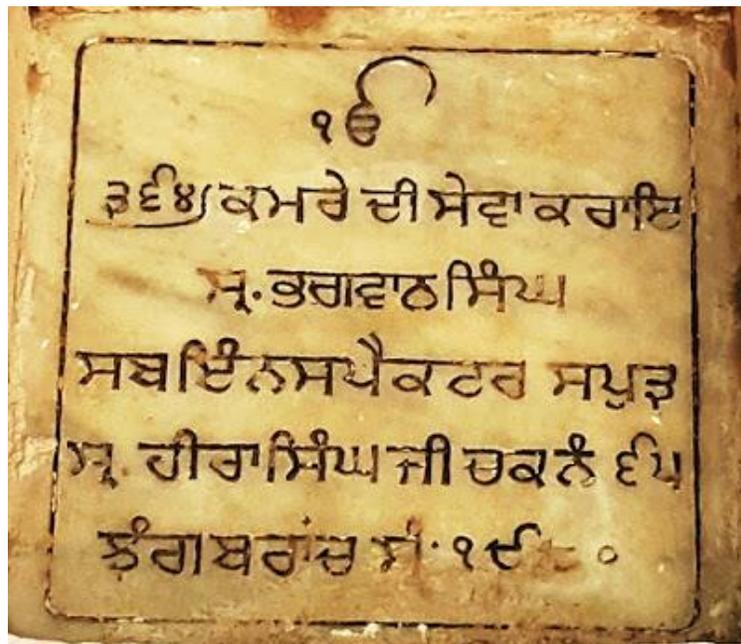


Fig. 05: Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur

For more details see (Amir, 2017)

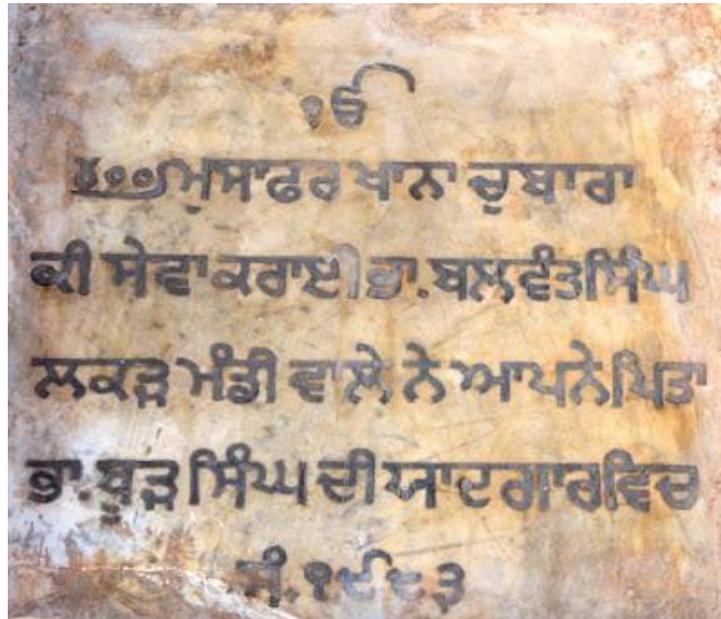


Fig. 06: : Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur

For more details see (Amir, 2017)

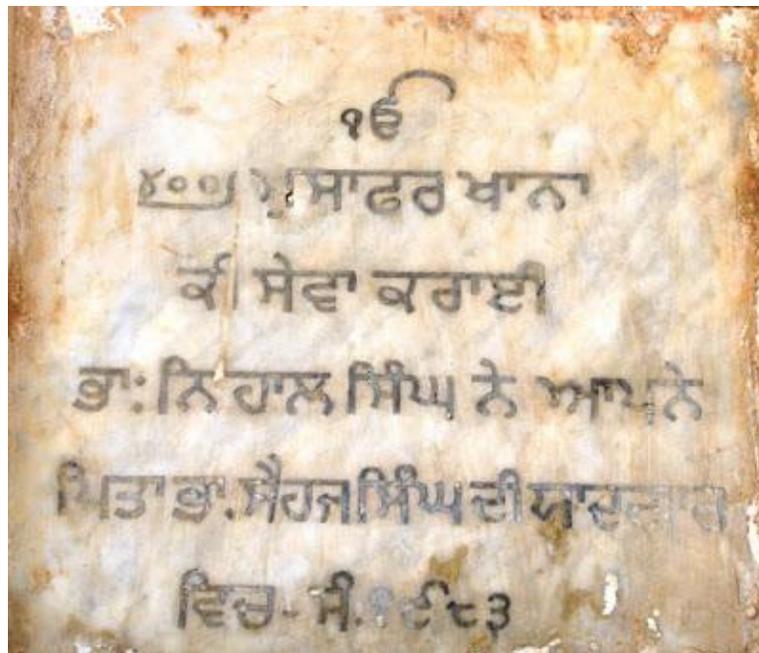


Fig. 07: : Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur

For more details see (Amir, 2017)

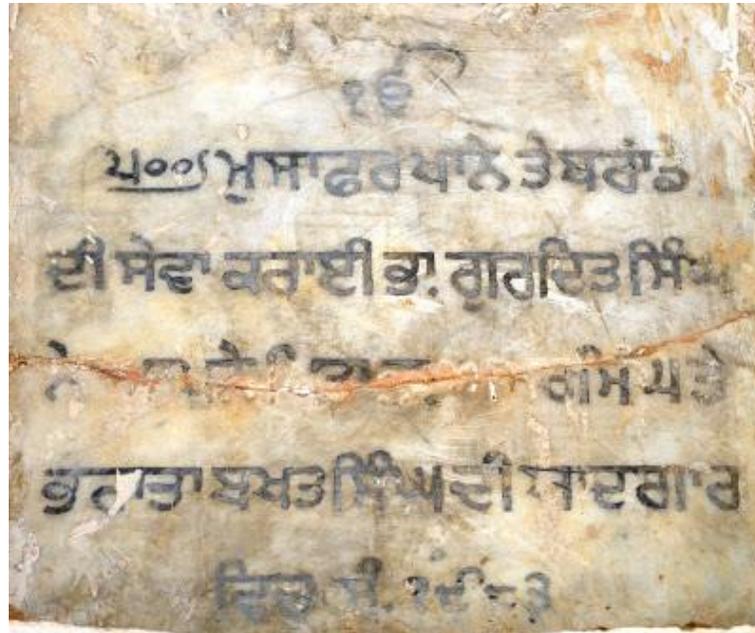


Fig. 08: Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur
For more details see (Amir, 2017)

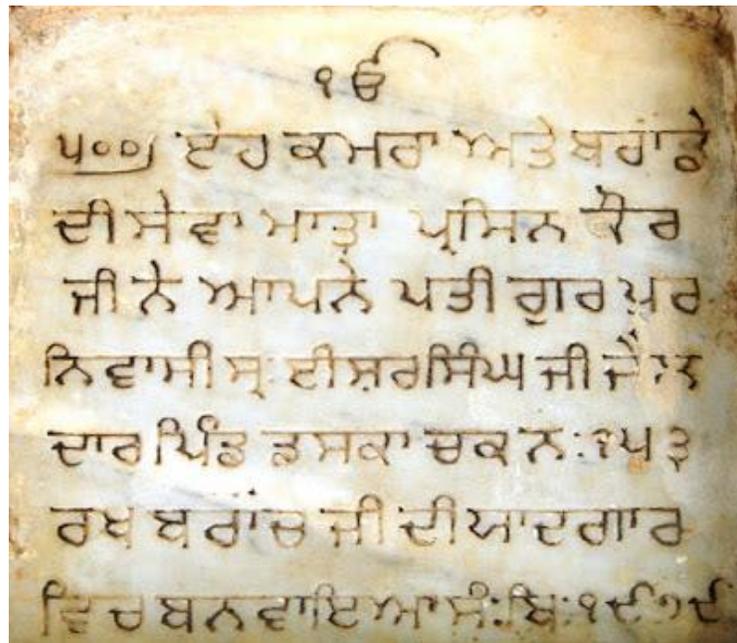


Fig. 09: Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur
For more details see (Amir, 2017)

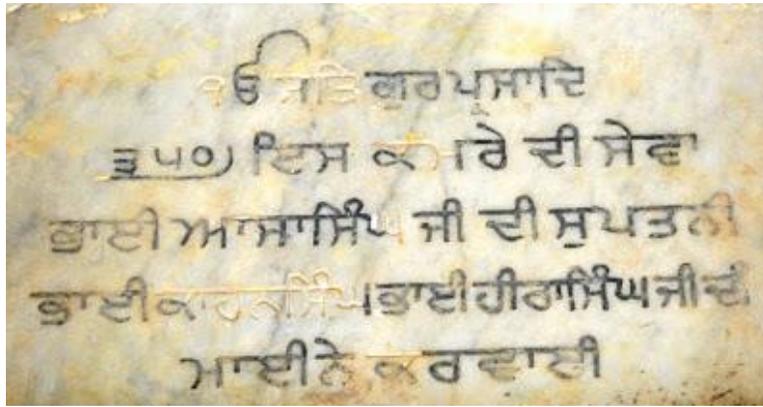


Fig. 10: Inscriptions in the Gurdawara, Lyallpur
For more details see (Amir, 2017)

This is a very interesting way of keeping the history intact as well as giving the credit to the donors who actually helped in construction of such a building of historic and religious value. The inscriptions show that the wealthy people of that time actively participated in the welfare buildings like Gurdawaras and schools. They were well aware of the importance of studies for the development and better growth of their region.

5. ARCHITECTURE OF THE BUILDING:

PLAN

The complex of Gurdawara Singh Sabha consists of three main buildings; the school, the Gurdwara and the guest house which is now being used as commercial shops and detached to the rest of two buildings. Currently the school and Gurdawara buildings both are being used by a school (Pakistan Model School) and the main entrance in the site is through a small door in the school building. (Fig. 17)

ROOMS

The sizes and number of rooms are certainly vary in each building and is recorded in following table:

SCHOOL BUILDING			
Sr. No.	Room	Size	Number
1	Class room	20'-3" x 16'-0"	6
2	Class room	19'-6" x 16'-0"	3
3	Class room	31'-6" x 25'-10"	3
4	Class room	22'-6" x 16'-0"	3
5	Class room	12'-0" x 16'-0"	3

6	Class room	28'-0" x 25'-10"	3
7	Class room	22'-0" x 25'-10"	3
8	Class room	26'-0" x 25'-10"	3
9	Admin and others	Varying between 65-550 Sq. ft	6
Guest House Building (<i>Musafir Khana</i>)			
1.	Room	14'-0" x 9'-0"	2
2.	Room	13'-9" x 9'-0"	2
3.	Room	15'-3" x 9'-0"	2
4.	Room	13'-3" x 9'-0"	2
5.	Room	14'-6" x 9'-0"	2
6.	Room	16'-0" x 9'-0"	2
7.	Room	9'-6" x 14'-0"	2
Gurdawara Building			
1.	Hall	40'-0" x 83'-0"	1
2.	Room	20'-4" x 24'-6"	4

Table 01: Numbers and sizes of the rooms in building complex.



Fig. 11: A view of class room in the school building on first floor.

HALL

The Gurdawara hall now is now being used as an examination hall for the kids of school. It no longer serves the purpose it was built for and this current use has been there since the partition time i.e. 1947. The size of hall is a 3320 Sq. Ft (40'-0" x 83'-0") and it is double height with nine entrances. Each entrance has double doors of 5'-0" width each. The Gurdawara hall is most beautiful in this complex due to its color scheme and embellishments which include the arches, beautifully carved wooden doors, floor pattern, wooden ceiling and above all the light staining from its glass window panes. The gallery on first floor level adds the beauty to the double heighted hall. The hall certainly was a marvel of architecture in the area in its time however; it is not in a very good condition currently, mainly because of less maintenance.

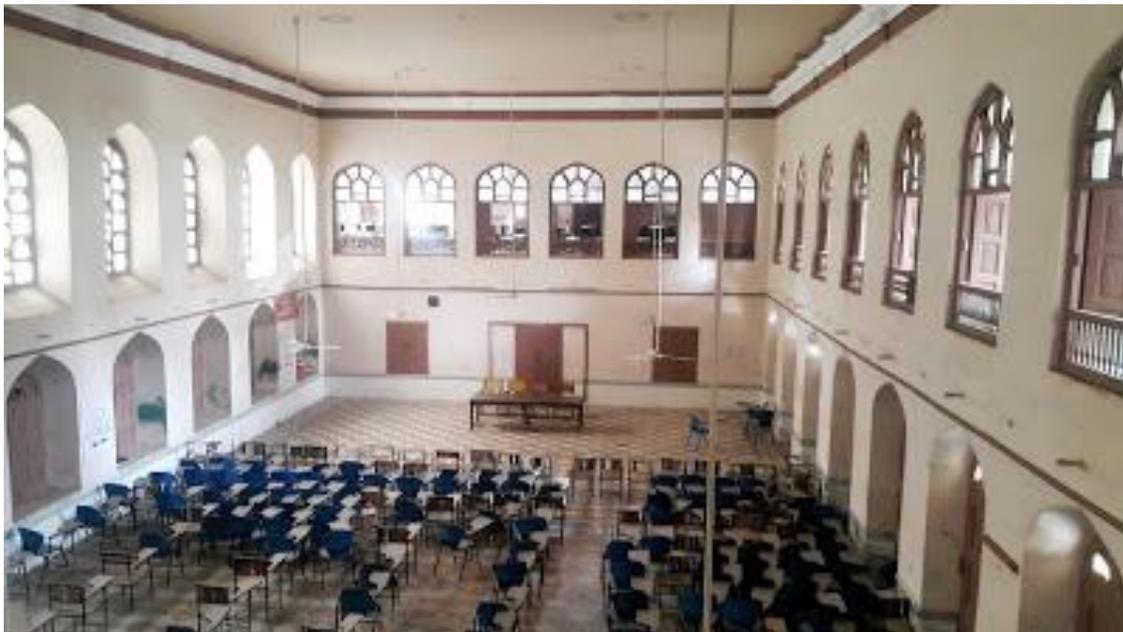


Fig. 12: A view of Gurdawara hall now being used as examination hall for the students of school.

COURTYARDS

There are three courtyards in the complex; one is the main/central courtyard of somewhat triangular shape. It is encompassed by the three main building blocks of the complex i.e. the school, the Gurdawara, and the guest house (*Musafir Khana*). Standing within the center of this courtyard one can experience the stunning beauty of symmetric architecture of each building block. The school building painted in pure white color, the Gurdawara building in yellow along with its doors and windows painted in green color and the arched entrances to the corridor of the guest house (*Musafir khana*) each building holds its very own value. The base of “*Nishan Sahib*” (Fig. 13) with a huge pole for the flag of Sikhs still exists in this courtyard. The base is decorated with carved stone in a symmetric manner. The stone on base of pole also has an inscription on its stone which

tells the story of a donation made for the construction of this *Nishan Sahib* in year 1939 (Fig.03).

The second courtyard is on the eastern side of the main courtyard. It is a smaller courtyard which has one entrance from the street and nine rooms around it. These rooms are now under the use of school management. Door to a staircase which leads towards the gallery of Gurdawara on first floor is also present in this courtyard but it remains locked most of the time now.



Fig. 13: Octagonal Platform with a Pole

The third courtyard of the building complex is located on the southern side of main courtyard and it is smaller than the other two. This courtyard has one door from the street on north-west side and one door on the south-east side. This part of the complex is completely isolated now from the rest of building with brick walls and now being used as a private residence. It has five rooms of varying size around it.

CORRIDORS (VERANDAHS):

There are total four corridors (Locally known as *Verandahs*) in this building complex. Each corridor varies in its size and decorative elements. The sizes are given in following table (Table 02):

Sr. No.	Building block	Size
1.	School	8'-0"
2.	Gurdawara	10'-0"
3.	Guest House	13'-6"

Table 02: Sizes of Corridors present in the complex.



Fig. 14: A view of corridor on the first floor of school building.



Fig. 15: A view of corridor of the Guest house building on first floor.

STAIRS

Number of staircases in the complex is five. The main staircase is situated in the school building and leads to the dome which is the highest point of the site. This staircase is a spiral one however all the others are straight L-shape or U-shape staircases (Fig. 16)



Fig. 16: View of one of the staircases in the courtyard.

WAHROOMS

Four washrooms are located within the main courtyard of the building complex. These are detached to all three main buildings and constructed as per usual design of its era.

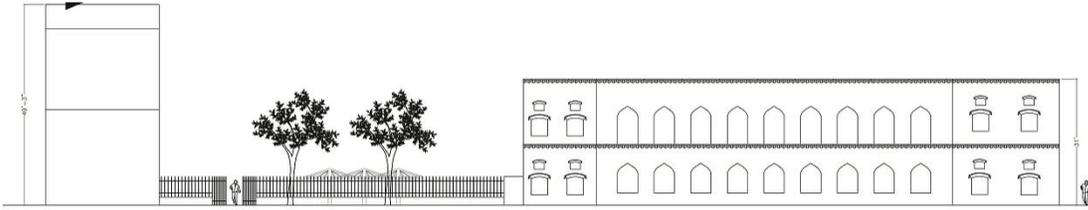
ELEVATIONS

Fig. 18: North-East elevation of the building complex. (Munir, 2013)

The outer elevation of side of North-East side of the building projects the outer wall of the Gurdawara and it has similar niches as inside the hall. There are nine niches with pointed arches on ground floor level and windows with similar design but varying size is followed on the first floor level. Moreover, the rooms on each side of hall can also be seen on the outer elevation with differently designed windows. On the left side of the elevation there a door leading to the smaller courtyard of the school. (Fig. 18)



Fig. 19: The main entrance outer side elevation of the school building. (Faiq, 2013)



Fig. 20 : A view of main entrance of the school from the street.



Fig. 21: South-East Elevation of the building Complex. (Munir, 2013)

The South-East elevation on the outer side of the building exhibits the building of school with a dome on its top. A beautifully designed main entrance in almost the center

of elevation can be seen (Fig. 19.). Windows and ventilators have been used as decorative elements of the elevation. These windows and ventilators are also the source of natural light and air with in the class rooms. (Fig. 21)

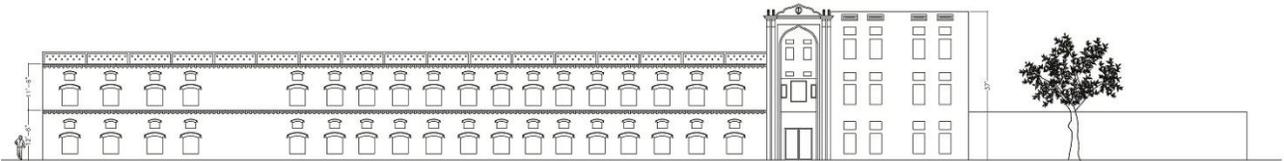


Fig. 22: North-West Elevation of the building Complex. (Munir, 2013)

The North-West elevation of the building complex has one entrance gate which is now under the use of private residence. The rest of the wall has windows and ventilators of similar design as used on the elevation of main entrance (South-East elevation) (Fig.22). This is a wall on the outer side of the guest house (*Musafir khana*) building. The windows and ventilators used on this wall are decorative as well as functional as they provide natural ventilation and light to the rooms. (Fig. 23)



Fig. 23: View of a room of the Guest house building (Musafir khana). (Amir, 2017)



Fig. 24: South-East Elevation of the building Complex from inside the main/central courtyard. (Munir, 2013)

The most note-able feature of the South-East elevation from inside the courtyard is its white dome. It is an octagonal *Burj* surmounted by melon shaped dome with lotus leaves at the base and inverted lotus flower shaped petals on the top finally ending with a finial above (Fig. 25). The second most prominent feature of this elevation is corridor behind nine columns. The third noticeable feature of the elevation is the central rectangular arched entrance to the courtyard with decorative brackets on both sides. The stone grill at the edge of corridor on the first floor level has a sign of Sikh religion which shows that this school building was also built by the Sikhs (Fig. 27). Moreover the use of white color and screens (*Jaali*) enhances the glory of this side of the building from within the courtyard.



Fig. 25: The dome above the school building.



Fig. 26: A side view of the frontal side of the school building.



Fig. 27: The sign of Sikhs on the entrance of school. A view from the central courtyard.

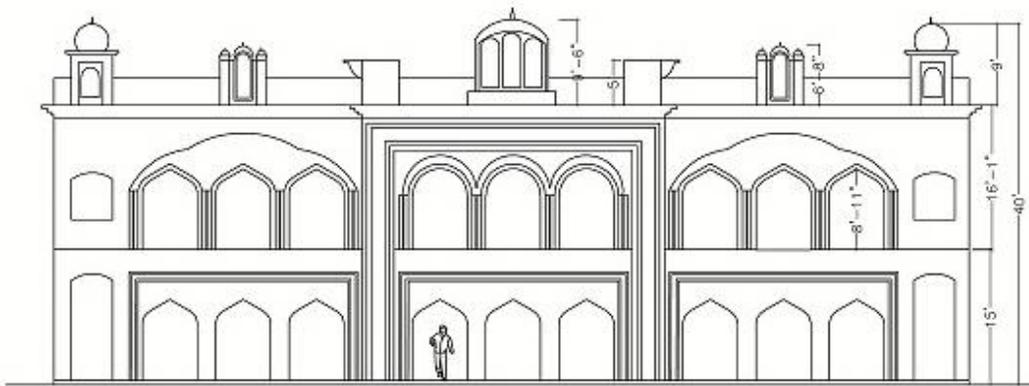


Fig. 28: North-East Elevation of the building Complex from inside the main/central courtyard. (Munir, 2013)

The North-East elevation from inside the main/central courtyard shows the most highly decorated elevation of this complex. It is the front view of the Gurdawara building and has nine arches on the ground floor level which lead to the corridor of the main Gurdawara hall. (Fig. 28).



Fig. 29: A picture of the North-West elevation from the central courtyard. (Faiq, 2013)

Various decorative elements have been used in this elevation. Firstly, the multi-foiled arches of the corridor which are painted half green and half white. Secondly, the nine arched shape windows of green color on the first floor level with glass fixed in them. Thirdly the decorative kiosks which increase the beautification of this side of elevation and give it the look of Gurdawaras. There are two corner kiosks with rectangular base and domes on the head. Moving towards center there are two sleekly shaped kiosks, then two plain square shaped kiosks with bowl “*pyala*” (Fig. 30) shaped decorative element on

it and finally one kiosk in the center. The central kiosk has three arches on the front side and has a sleek dome above it.



Fig. 30: The bowl shaped decorative element, locally known as “Pyala”.



Fig.31: The kiosks above Gurdawara building.

CONCLUSIONS:

The complex of Gurdwara Singh Sabha is a marvel of its time and piece of religious, architectural and cultural heritage. It has remained in use of the school and never abandoned which is why its building condition is not very bad. However, if it is taken care of by building heritage department and promoted, it can prove to be one of the sites which Sikh tourists would wish to visit. It has a potential of becoming a great source of revenue as well if the Gurdawara building is revived to its actual use.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, M. A. (2017). History and development of Lyallpur 1890-1947. *Journal of research society of Pakistan* , 103.
- Amir, T. (2017, November 13). *Pakistan Geotagging*. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from <http://pakgeotagging.blogspot.com/2017/11/as-i-mentioned-in-my-previous-post.html>
- Faiq, M. (2013, January 2). Photography of the old buildings of Faisalabad. Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.
- ISDP. (2011). *Integrated Slums Development Program*. Faisalabad.
- Munir, Y. (2013). *Urban Regeneration of the Clock Tower, Faisalabad*. Lahore.
- Nizami, A. j. (2017, April 04). *The nation (E-Paper)*. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from <https://nation.com.pk/04-Nov-2017/faisalabad-architectural-heritage-in-a-shambles>