

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



J. C. Armytage

View of the Golden Temple at Amritsar

Preparatory sketch by J. C. Armytage for an etching after William Carpenter

Probably London, ca. 1859

Pencil and ink on paper

Stock no.: A5482

A preparatory sketch by the renowned engraver John Carr Armytage (1802–1897) after a watercolour by William Carpenter, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (accession no. [IS.50-1882](#)). The engraving was made for the publisher James S. Virtue and published in *The Illustrated History of the British Empire in India and the East, from the Earliest Times to the Suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1859*, by E. H. Nolan [see final image]. The caption reads ‘The Sacred Temple and Tank. Umritsar, India’.

‘The Tank’ refers to the sarovar, or pool of holy water on which the temple was built. It is the holiest site in the Sikh religion, and gives its name to Amritsar, which means ‘pool of nectar’. The sketch depicts the view looking northwards, picturing the Golden Temple side-on, with its marble entrance causeway extending towards the lefthand side. To the right, the minaret-style watchtowers of the Ramgarhia Bunga are illustrated. Local people populate the banks of the sarovar, including veiled women, naked bathers, children, and an elderly man under a parasol.

The sketch is based on a watercolour, likely done from life, by the artist William Carpenter. Many of the details are translated directly from the watercolour to this sketch unchanged. The groups of women and children on the lefthand side are positioned in the same way. However, whilst the bathers remain and have the same poses, they have been moved within the composition. Similarly, the three seated figures on the righthand side of the sketch, whilst copied from the original watercolour, were originally sitting amongst a larger group. A cow in the foreground of the watercolour has been removed entirely.

William Carpenter travelled India from 1850 to 1856. He produced several watercolours of people and scenery he encountered, possibly having been commissioned to do so by *The Illustrated London News*, which published engravings of his works between September 1857 and October 1859.¹

[1] Parlett, Graham, and Pauline Rohatgi. *Indian Life and Landscape by Western Artists: Paintings and Drawings from the Victoria and Albert Museum 17th to Early 20th Century*. V&A/CVSM, 2008, retrieved online via https://archive.ph/20100325153614/http://www.illwa.org/chapter_7.htm#2 on 27 November 2025.