

Architecture and Social Reform in Sir Gangā Rām's Institutions for Women in Colonial Lahore, c. 1915–1947

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Abstract

Between 1915 and the early 1930s the Punjab engineer and philanthropist Sir Gangā Rām founded and endowed a group of institutions in Lahore for Hindu and Sikh widows and for the education of girls: a Widow Remarriage Association, a Hindu Widows' Home with an attached normal and industrial school, and a first-class secondary school for girls, to which a separate private high school was later added under his Trust. Existing scholarship has described these buildings singly and admired their façades. This article reads them together, as one graduated plan whose spaces were arranged to move a widow from customary seclusion toward salaried work as a teacher. Reform, on this account, was not confined to statute and sermon; it was given material form, and the buildings carried out part of the labor that reform required. Drawing on recent readings of the colonial city as a joint undertaking of the state and an Indian elite, and on Foucault's writing on enclosed and set-apart space, the article also asks what became of this reform architecture once the community it served departed at Partition. It offers one of the first accounts of the widow question in Punjab conducted through architecture rather than through law and text.

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Introduction

Sometime in the early 1920s a Hindu widow in Lahore might leave the walled courtyard in which she lodged, cross a short passage, and take her place in a classroom. There she learned to read, to keep an account, to work a trade, or to teach; and once she had passed her examinations, she left the compound again, now to earn a salary in a girls' school. The distance she covered was a matter of a few yards, yet it ran against the whole direction that custom prescribed for her. For a high-caste Hindu widow in these years, life was meant to move inward toward a bare room, a plain white *sārī*, and a discipline of restriction that marked her as a woman whose useful days were behind her (Bedi, 1940, pp. 199–200, 204; Chakravarti, 1995, pp. 2248–2256; Atwal, 2016). The buildings that made the outward passage possible were founded, financed, and in large part built by one man, the engineer Sir Gangā Rām (Bedi, 1940, pp. 32, 281; Glover, 2008, p. 231).

Gangā Rām is well remembered in Lahore, where his name attaches to a hospital, a school, several streets, and a long roll of public buildings, and where he is honored as a maker of the modern city and an open-handed benefactor (Bedi, 1940, p. 32). His institutions for widows and girls' figure in nearly every account of his life, but only in passing, as one more proof of his generosity. What has not been attempted is a reading of them as architecture: buildings arranged, deliberately, to alter the lives of the women who moved through them. That omission is the occasion for this study.

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The women's buildings were not raised at a single stroke, and they have not before been considered together. The Widow Remarriage Association (*Widwā Wiwāh Sāhaik Sabhā*) opened its work in 1915; the Hindu Widows' Home followed in 1921, on land Gangā Rām gave on the Lower Mall, with a normal and industrial school beside it and a girls' secondary school forming part of the same scheme (Bedi, 1940, p. 287). Considered one at a time, each is an unremarkable act of charity. Considered as a plan, they compose something more purposeful: a sequence of spaces contrived to carry a widow, by stages, from seclusion into an independent life.

The argument. This article advances a single claim. In Gangā Rām's Lahore the reform of the widow was not merely advocated in print and pursued in law; it was constructed. The Home, the training school, and the girls' school worked as one connected apparatus: a graded arrangement of rooms and thresholds that drew a woman out of the seclusion custom imposed and returned her, qualified and paid, to public life. The buildings did not simply shelter reform; they performed a share of it. Sir Edward Maclagan, Governor of Punjab, grasped as much when he opened the Home in 1921 and called it a "Triple Project" three institutions, that is, addressed to a single end (Bedi, 1940, pp. 217–218, 220). The reading that follows takes his phrase seriously.

Two consequences follow. The first concerns method. The established way of reading colonial architecture in India, owed above all to Thomas Metcalf, treats building and the Indo-Saracenic manner in particular as an instrument of imperial self-representation, a claim by the British to the inheritance of the Mughals (Metcalf, 1989, pp. 55–57). I return to that argument, and to its limits for a building of this kind, in a later section. What such a reading cannot easily hold is a structure that receives people at one threshold and returns them, changed, at another. That calls for an approach in which architecture acts upon its occupants rather than merely speaking on their behalf. The second consequence concerns the sequel. After the Partition of 1947 the Hindu and Sikh widows for whom the Home was built departed for India, and the buildings passed, with other non-Muslim property in Lahore, into the keeping of the new state (Talbot, 2007, pp. 151–155; Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, pp. 221–222). This is commonly recounted, when it is recounted at all, as a conclusion; it is better read as a change of use for which the architecture was, in a sense, prepared a point about the durability of such institutions to which the final section returns.

Research questions. Three questions govern the enquiry. First, how did the physical arrangement of these buildings their siting, their walls and thresholds, the order in which their rooms succeeded one another work to change a widow's standing in society? Second, what becomes visible when the buildings are read as one connected sequence rather than as three separate benefactions, and what does a building-by-building description fail to see? Third, what became of this reform architecture once the community it was built for had gone, and what does that afterlife disclose about the kind of thing Gangā Rām had made?

The study and its scholarship. Two bodies of work meet in this article, and neither has quite reached its subject. The first is the history of colonial architecture in India. Against Metcalf's account of building as imperial display, a later body of scholarship has shown that the colonial city was not the work of the state alone. Preeti Chopra, writing of Bombay, calls it a "joint enterprise" of the colonial government and an Indian elite who financed and shaped much of what was built, hospitals and charitable institutions among them (Chopra, 2011). William Glover, writing of Lahore itself, traces a conviction shared by British and Indian reformers alike: that the material fabric of a city could improve those who dwelt within it (Glover, 2008, pp. xxi–xxvi, 154). Swati Chattopadhyay has redirected the study of the colonial city toward its ordinary and everyday spaces

(Chattopadhyay, 2005). It is to this body of work that the present study belongs, and it carries that work in two directions, from the presidency city to the provincial capital, and from the monument and the public work to the welfare building, which this scholarship has largely left aside.

The second body of work is the history of widow reform, a literature ample in extent but concentrated almost wholly on law and language: the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, the pronouncements of reformers, and the protracted controversy over widow immolation, conducted in public by men while the women concerned were seldom heard (Sarkar & Sarkar, 2008; Stein, 1998, pp. 257–258; Tharoor, 2016, pp. 889–890). Recent scholarship has broadened the field Jyoti Atwal has drawn the subject away from its long fixation on Bengal, and Prem Chowdhary has shown how, in Punjab, the custom of *karewā* held a widow, and her late husband's land, within his family (Chowdhary, 1994). Yet this work still reads what reformers wrote and what the state enacted; it does not ask what reformers built. The two literatures pass one another by, and it is in the gap between them that this article is placed.

Theoretical framework. Four ideas direct the reading, and each is fastened to a feature of the buildings. The first, from Glover, is the reformers' conviction that surroundings form character, so that the right building might remake the person within it; Gangā Rām's institutions are an unusually literal instance of that conviction (Glover, 2008, pp. xxi–xxvi, 154).

The second, from Foucault, is the account of how enclosed institutions, the school, the workshop, the reformatory, govern through the ordering of space, partitioning their inmates, timetabling their hours, and holding them within view (Foucault, 1977, pp. 135–169). It is this that allows three separate buildings to be read as one working mechanism; but the reading also marks the point at which the complex departs from the prison, for its purpose was not to confine the widow but to train her and release her.

The third, again from Foucault, is the *heterotopia of crisis*, the set-apart place reserved for those passing through a difficult change of condition; the widow stands close to his own example, and the notion explains why the Home was placed apart from the ordinary quarter (Foucault, 1986, pp. 22–27).

The fourth, from Gilles Deleuze's reading of Foucault, treats institutional architecture as *formed matter* a durable spatial apparatus capable of receiving one marginal population after another without being rebuilt; it is this idea, rather than any single later use of the buildings, that makes their afterlife legible (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 33–34; Scriver & Prakash, 2007, pp. 64–65).

Alongside all four runs a caution taken from Gayatri Spivak and from the wider study of colonial "improvement": that the reform of women was frequently a manner of speaking for them, and that a man who builds homes for widows is not the same as widows speaking for themselves (Spivak, 1988, pp. 271–313). Gangā Rām took up the language of rescue and improvement that the colonial state employed and turned it to his own ends an Indian reformer improving Indian women, by the state's own methods, while occupying the place the state expected to occupy. That double position runs through everything that follows.

A word on the evidence is in order. The most dependable witness here is the architecture, which still stands and may be walked and measured. The figures and narratives the Association printed are less disinterested; published to make a case, they are used here as the reformers' account of their own work rather than as plain fact (Department of Census Operations Punjab, 1923, p. 246). A like caution attends the claims about the antiquity of widow immolation that circulated in this literature;

they belong to the movement's rhetoric and are treated accordingly. A single commemorative biography, B. P. L. Bedi's *Harvest from the Desert*, issued by Gangā Rām's own Trust in 1940, supplies much of the documentary detail; it is read against the government's census and education reports wherever those allow. This reliance on a single commemorative source for much of the institutional detail is a limitation the reader should weigh: independent corroboration from the Punjab Archives and from any surviving Sir Gangā Rām Trust records remains a task for further research, and claims drawn solely from Bedi are flagged as such throughout.

Widowhood as a Spatial Condition

To understand why Gangā Rām turned to building, one must first see that the widow's condition was already, in its own way, a matter of space. Custom did not merely prescribe what a high-caste Hindu widow might wear and eat; it prescribed where she might be. She withdrew from the festive rooms of the household, was kept apart at meals and at ceremonies, surrendered her ornament, and, in the severest reading of duty, was pressed toward the pyre on which a faithful wife was said to follow her husband. Widowhood, that is, was enforced through enclosure and removal long before any reformer raised a wall. What Gangā Rām built was a counter-enclosure, a set of walls designed to undo the work of the older ones.

Punjab lent the problem a particular form. Over much of the province the custom of *karewā* permitted, and frequently compelled, a widow to marry a younger brother of her dead husband. This bore the appearance of remarriage, and reformers sometimes counted it as such, but its effect was to retain the woman, and the land to which she had a claim, within the husband's family (Chowdhary, 1994). A widow in Punjab was therefore rarely free in the manner the reform pamphlets imagined. She was held between a custom that secluded her and a custom that transferred her, with the fields, to the next brother; and reform that meant to grant her a life of her own had to furnish a third place in which to stand. A building could be that place.

The Remarriage Association and the Turn to Building

The Association that Gangā Rām chaired set out first to arrange remarriages. Its organizing began in December 1914, and the *Widwā Wiwāh Sāhaik Sabhā* was formally constituted at Lahore in 1915, with Gangā Rām as chairman, Bābū Abināsh Chandar Majumdar as secretary, and Lāla Lājpat Rāi Sāhnī as assistant secretary. It did not, as is sometimes said, work from a rented house; Gangā Rām gave it a building in the Gūwālmandī quarter, and the property returned some ninety-two rupees a month toward the running of the office (Bedi, 1940, pp. 206–208). Its watchword was plain enough: to register a marriage a day.

Its own reports narrate a steady expansion. Twelve remarriages were solemnized in 1914 and thirteen in 1916; the figure reached two hundred and twenty in 1920 and four hundred and fifty-three in 1922, the year of Gangā Rām's knighthood, so that the Association could claim to have met its daily target. Between 1915 and 1925 the Lahore body recorded 6,334 remarriages at a cost of some 95,639 rupees, and by 1932 its eighteen-year total across India stood at 39,460. What had begun with a single clerk and a peon had grown into an all-India body of more than four hundred and twenty-five local stations, its monthly income from donated property risen to about a thousand rupees (Bedi, 1940, pp. 208–209). To press its case the Association also circulated alarming figures, drawn from the census of 1921, on the incidence of child and infant widowhood, and it carried its

argument in three newspapers and in books in Urdu, Gurmukhī, and English (All India Women Conference, 1926, pp. 201–202; Kaūr, 1926, pp. 55–56).

These numbers did their work in their day, and they record what the movement wished to say of itself. For the present argument their exact truth matters less than the turn the Association took once the limits of remarriage became plain. Many widows were too old, too poor, or too closely bound by caste to marry again, and for them the arrangement of a wedding was no remedy. What they wanted was a means of living, and it was at this point that the Association moved from the register to the building.

The Making of the Complex

Gangā Rām's response was to present the government with a building. He offered the Punjab Government a structure on the Lower Mall worth close to 2,50,000 rupees, on condition that it serve as a home in which widows might be housed, taught, and trained to support themselves. The Government accepted the gift on trust, and the Hindu Widows' Home was opened in 1921 by the Governor, Sir Edward Maclagan, in person (Bedi, 1940, pp. 215–217, 287). In its Trust Deed the institution bore the plain designation "A Home with a Normal and Industrial School for Hindu and Sikh Widows." The term *Widwā Āshram*, sometimes attached to it, does not appear in the Lahore records; the only widow *āshram* named in the reform literature of the period is that at Poona (Bedi, 1940, p. 287).

The Home did not stand alone, and Maclagan named the whole at its opening. He called the institution "a Triple Project," meaning three linked parts built by one hand and intended to act together: a normal and industrial school to train the widows, a residential hostel for some eighty boarders, and a first-class girls' secondary school open to children of every community (Bedi, 1940, pp. 217–218, 220). His phrase is the plainest contemporary acknowledgment that these were not three benefactions but one design. A widow entered the Home; within and beside it she was trained; and on qualifying she passed outward into the girls' school as a teacher, or into the wider provincial system. The buildings charted that passage and gave it walls, doors, and a settled order of rooms.

A question of authorship must be met here, if only to set it aside. Gangā Rām is credited with a great many of Lahore's buildings, and the attributions are not agreed: his biographer, following the *Journal of Indian Engineering*, names him the executive engineer behind the Museum, the Mayo School of Arts, and the General Post Office, while later architectural historians assign several of these to Bhai Ram Singh, working under John Lockwood Kipling (Bedi, 1940, pp. 38–39; Glover, 2008, p. 231; Jahangir, 2014, p. 194). The present argument does not depend upon resolving those cases. It rests on Gangā Rām's role as the founder and financier of the women's institutions, and as the patron who fixed their purpose, a role on which the sources agree. Whoever prepared the working drawings, the form of the complex followed the reformer's intention, and it is that intention, set into space, with which this article is concerned.

Enclosure: Reading the Widows' Home

The first stage of the plan was the Home, and its first decision was one of placement. The Home was not set within the widow's own quarter, among the relatives whose house she was leaving; it stood on donated ground on the Lower Mall, at the newer, modernizing margin of the colonial civil station (fig. 1).



Fig: 1 The Hindu Widows' Home, popularly known as Widwā Āshram, now Fountain House, Lahore.

That distance was no incidental matter. A widow's difficulty began at home, in the family that secluded her or passed her on, and the Home's work could not begin until she was beyond its reach. To set the building apart was the first service it rendered her, and it answers exactly to the heterotopia of crisis outlined above: a space defined, before all else, by its separation from ordinary ground (Foucault, 1986, pp. 24–25; Bedi, 1940, pp. 215–217; Glover, 2008, p. 154).

Within, the Home was arranged to hold its residents and to order them. The widows were lodged together under a resident lady superintendent, a matron, and an advisory committee of women who directed the daily round, and their hours were divided among lessons, industrial work, and rest (Bedi, 1940, pp. 217–219; Foucault, 1977, pp. 135–169; Glover, 2008, p. xxi). This regulation of bodies and hours is the clearest sign of the kind of institution Foucault describes: the school and the workshop share it with the reformatory, and it is what enabled a charitable home to do more than shelter. It could form. A woman within the Home was not merely fed and housed; she was set into a routine meant to remake her, from a dependent widow into a working woman.

The plan of the complex made the intended passage legible in stone. The residential hostel, arranged about its courtyard for some eighty boarders, gave onto the normal and industrial school; the school in turn stood beside the girls' secondary school, whose eight classrooms opened along a wide veranda (fig. 2) (Bedi, 1940, pp. 218–220; Report on the Progress of Education in the Punjab, 1923, p. 130).



Fig: 2 Govt. Lady MacLagan Girls Higher Secondary School; Main Building of School.

The sequence courtyard, workshop and schoolroom, and beyond them the public classroom described a single line of movement from enclosure toward the world. It is here that the complex parts from the prison, whose walls face inward and whose doors are meant to stay shut. The Home's decisive feature was a door that opened the other way, the passage from the hostel to the school; the enclosure was made in order to be left. The widow was held only so long as her training required, and the fabric was disposed about her departure rather than her confinement. The techniques were those of discipline, to enclose, to divide, to timetable, but the end was release rather than correction.

The outward appearance of the place carried its own argument. A home for widows bore a double stigma, its residents being at once poor and, by the reckoning of custom, inauspicious; yet the Home wore the dignified public dress of the city's courts and colleges, its front worked in the familiar red-brick hybrid manner of colonial Lahore (fig. 3) (Metcalf, 1989, pp. 55–57, 177, 211–215; Scriver, 2007, pp. 31–33, 45–47).



Fig: 3 The Hindu Widows' Home (popularly known as Widwā Āshram), facade of Fountain House.

The choice conferred standing upon the institution, and upon the women within it. A building that resembled a college announced to the city that those it held were being made into persons the city ought to respect. The façade, in other words, was itself part of the work of rehabilitation, and not a screen drawn across it.

The Pipeline: Training and the Return to Public Life

If the Home was the stage of enclosure, the schools beside it were the stage of return, and here the design disclosed its full ambition. The training was practical and directed toward employment. The widows were taught the ordinary school subjects and prepared for the Junior and Senior Vernacular examinations, the qualifications a woman required to teach, and those in training were maintained by graduated monthly stipends: thirty of fifteen rupees for the training classes, twenty-five of ten for the preparatory classes, and twenty-five of five besides. Those unsuited to teaching were trained in sewing, hosiery, typing, and embroidery, that they might keep themselves by their hands. The object of the training was not a certificate but a wage: qualified women commonly found posts paying between thirty-five and eighty rupees a month, and Gangā Rām is said to have followed their later careers with satisfaction (Bedi, 1940, pp. 217–218, 222, 230).

The girls' secondary school completed the circuit. The Lady MacLagan Girls' School, a government institution open to girls of every community, was formed in 1921 by taking in the older Victoria Girls' High School, which became its middle branch; it stood in want of teachers, and the widow trained in the Home might pass into it, or into the wider provincial network of girls' schools, as a salaried mistress. Here the plan closed upon itself. A woman who entered as a widow without a place in the world left as a teacher with an income and a room of her own, and the building that trained her supplied the school that employed her. Where custom had offered the widow a dead end, the complex offered a passage, and the passage ran through a connected order of rooms. Margaret Cousins, a founder of the All-India Women's Conference, came away from the Home and its industrial school impressed by what she had seen, and wished aloud that Madras possessed a benefactor of Gangā Rām's stamp (Bedi, 1940, pp. 222–223). What impressed her was a working provision, not a sentiment.

The reach of the design had its limits, and candor requires that they be named. The employment it prepared women for was the employment custom already judged fit for women teaching and handicraft so that the schools enlarged a woman's life without disturbing the assumption that women's work was of a particular kind. The provision for "girls of all communities" opened the doors more widely than most institutions of the day; yet the enterprise still ran along the communal lines by which colonial institutions were accustomed to sort their subjects. The Trust Deed reserved the Home and the industrial school for "Hindu and Sikh widows and women," and the Association published its remarriage returns caste by caste. In this it followed the wider colonial habit, after 1857, of treating Indian society as a fixed order of communities the same habit set in stone at Aitchison College, with its separate blocks for Muslim and for Hindu and Sikh boys (Bedi, 1940, pp. 218, 283, 297; Glover, 2008; Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, pp. 117, 135; Kumar, 2005, pp. 98–99).

A deeper limit remains. The enterprise was, throughout, a man's design for women's lives. Across the long reform debates of the period over immolation, the age of consent, remarriage the women concerned were seldom heard in public; men settled the terms, and colonial officials and Indian reformers alike inclined to the view that a girl's schooling should fit her to be a companionable wife and a capable mother rather than a public equal. In the Association's own papers Gangā Rām speaks at length on the widow's behalf, in pamphlets bearing such titles as "Purify your homes before you desire Home Rule," while the widows themselves appear as recipients of charity and as figures in a caste-wise return, rarely as voices (Stein, 1998, pp. 257–258; Kumar, 2005, pp. 107–112; Tharoor, 2016, pp. 889–890; Bedi, 1940, pp. 201, 206–208; Spivak, 1988). The liberty the buildings afforded was real, and for many women it marked the difference between a life and none; it was also a liberty shaped and bounded by the man who built it. Both things hold at once, and the architecture holds them together.

The Face of the Buildings

Something should be said of how the complex looked, since in the older manner of reading colonial architecture, the look is the whole of the matter. Gangā Rām's women's buildings wore the red-brick hybrid dress common to public Lahore in these years: bulbous domes, projecting *chajjās*, domed *chatrīs*, and the many-lobed arches of the Mughal manner, set against the axial, classicizing plans of Western institutional building (Glover, 2008, pp. 70–75, 231; Arshad, 2017, p. 52; Hameed & Tahir, 2018, pp. 278–280). Gangā Rām knew the idiom intimately, having spent years as an executive engineer in Lahore and having had a hand, how large a hand remains disputed, in several

of the city's best-known public works, from the Museum to the Mayo School of Arts and the General Post Office (Bedi, 1940, pp. 38–39; Glover, 2008, p. 231; Jahangir, 2014, p. 194). On Metcalf's influential reading, this manner was the empire's means of claiming descent from the Mughals: by working Mughal forms the pointed arch, the domed *chattrī*, the deep bracketed eave into modern public buildings, imperial architects sought to present the Raj not as a foreign imposition but as the legitimate heir of India's past, and to demonstrate to audiences at home that their rule was a settled and benevolent thing. In his account the style is a controlled medium of imperial statement, each dome and arch charged with a political purpose (Metcalf, 1989, pp. 55–57, 177, 211–215; Scriver, 2007, pp. 31–33, 45–47). Read for its surface alone, the front of the Home says what the museum and the college say.

But the patron who chose that dress for the Home was not the colonial state. He was an Indian engineer and reformer, spending his own money to clothe a home for Indian widows in the public style of the day; and in his hands the same forms carry a different sense. They do not proclaim a foreign ruler's title to the Mughal past. They lend a scorned institution the standing of a college, and they allow an Indian patron to appropriate, for a charity of his own, the visual authority that the colonial public building had made familiar. The idiom is borrowed, but the borrower has turned it to a purpose the empire did not intend. In the women's complex the face of the buildings is a claim to respect; made on behalf of women the city would rather not have had to see.

After 1947: Partition and the Afterlife of the Complex

The complex had been built for a community that did not remain in Lahore. Before 1947 Hindus and Sikhs made up over a third of the city; in the violence and migration of that year almost the whole non-Muslim population left West Punjab for India, and the widows for whom the Home existed departed among them (Talbot, 2007, pp. 151–155). The Home stood, with the *samādh* of Gangā Rām and the *Apāhaj Āshram*, in a cluster on the banks of the Rāvī, and it was left empty.

What ensued was not a single dramatic conversion but the ordinary machinery of Partition. Under the emergency law of the new province, buildings abandoned by non-Muslims were declared evacuee property and turned to the most urgent need of the hour, the housing of the Muslim refugees arriving from the other side. Institutions nearby were put to the same service: the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College became a camp for families from Delhi, and Gangā Rām's own hospital at Wachhowālī served as a point for the distribution of relief (Talbot, 2007, pp. 150–151, 162–163; Bedi, 1940, p. 272). The charitable purpose of the Home did not so much end as migrate. Such of the Trust Society's movable funds as could be carried out were taken to India and applied to the re-founding of comparable charities at New Delhi, while the Lahore fabric passed into other hands (Bedi, 1940, p. 272; Talbot, 2007, pp. 161–162). The reform survived by moving; the building survived by changing occupants.

This afterlife bears on the argument, for it discloses what kind of thing Gangā Rām had built. In Deleuze's gloss on Foucault, institutional architecture is *formed matter* a spatial apparatus, like the school or the ward or the reformatory, contrived to enclose and to sort, and for that reason able to receive one displaced population after another without alteration (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 33–34; Scriver & Prakash, 2007, pp. 64–65; Bedi, 1940, pp. 39–41; Glover, 2008, p. 231). Gangā Rām built precisely in this durable and adaptable way: in plain, solid brick, with generous verandas and rooms that might serve many uses. The result was a set of buildings whose usefulness outlasted both the

community they were made for and the colonial order that had sanctioned them. A home raised to answer one social crisis proved fit to answer others; the design proved sturdier than the moment that produced it.

It is sometimes said in Lahore that the Home later served as a psychiatric institution. The sources consulted here do not record that use, and the claim would need to be established from other archives before it could carry weight; it is set aside rather than built upon. The argument does not require it. The point is not which particular later use the walls were put to, but that walls of this kind contrived to enclose, to tend, and to set apart those for whom the ordinary city keeps no comfortable room tend to find fresh populations to hold. That is the quieter lesson of the building's survival.

Conclusion

Return, at the last, to the widow with whom this article began, crossing from the courtyard of the Home to the classroom beside it. The movement is a small one, a few yards of covered ground, and yet it contains the whole of the argument. It was possible only because a man had built the ground it crossed: an enclosure to receive the widow, a school to qualify her, and a way out to a paid place in the world. Reform, in this quarter of colonial Punjab, was not accomplished by legislation and exhortation alone. It was worked out in brick in the siting of a compound, in the order of its rooms, in the direction its doors were made to open.

Three things follow from seeing it so. A history of widow reform conducted through statute and tract alone overlooks the instrument that did much of the actual work, which was the building. Gangā Rām, an Indian reformer employing the colonial state's own style and methods, occupied a position that neither the older narrative of imperial architecture nor a straightforwardly nationalist one can quite contain and the buildings are where that uneasy position may best be read. And the provincial capital, rather than the great ports of Calcutta and Bombay, proves the place in which this way of building gender may be seen most plainly.

A last observation is quieter still. When the community the Home served departed in 1947, its charitable work did not cease but removed to Delhi, while its fabric was taken up in Lahore for other uses. Gangā Rām had built something more lasting than an answer to one community's need an institution whose walls could hold, in their turn, whomever the city set apart. The buildings still stand, most of them worn and some near ruin, and they merit study as what they were: not monuments to a generous man alone, but instruments that once, for a season, gave a body of women a way out of a life that custom had closed.

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