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# Rai Bahadur Sir Ganga Ram: Architectural Contribution of “Father of Modern Lahore”

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*This article deals with the architectural contribution of Sir Ganga Ram, who laid the groundwork for modern Lahore, was a brilliant engineer and generous man. He was entrusted with the task of modernizing this historic, imperial city due of his exceptional service and skill as an architect. Regarding the architecture of Lahore, Sir Ganga Ram is a significant figure. In Lahore's architectural history, the "Ganga Ram period" started here. He, later, rose to prominence as a renowned civil engineer, shaping the city's design in the process. As one of the top engineers of his era, Sir Ganga Ram made millions of rupees, the most of which he donated to charity. In addition to being a rigorous enforcer of discipline, Ganga Ram was a kind individual. Additionally, he built Gulberg Town and Model Town, two of the most affluent neighborhoods Lahore had to offer at one time and which are still among the city's finest neighbourhoods. His contributions touched on a variety of topics, including women's rights, agriculture, engineering, and architecture. This is irony that his contribution has never been adequately discussed and written by historian. Present study fills the gap and highlights his important contributions in the city of Lahore. Paper start with his early life followed by his architectural contribution in Lahore. Data has been derived by using original sources available in Punjab Archives.*

**Key Words:** Ganga Ram, Educational Building, Ganga Ram Hospital, Architecture, Modern Lahore, Philanthropist, Modal Town.

## **Introduction:**

Whenever History of Lahore is written contributions of Sir Ganga Ram cannot be ignored due to his extensive work in Lahore. He is remembered as father of Modern Lahore. There is hardly any British construction style which he had not followed. Sir Ganga Ram is a significant figure in the architecture of Lahore. Objective of the study is to highlight the important contribution of great architect Sir Ganga Ram in Lahore. Research Question is that why he is called father of Modern Lahore, what type of construction style he adopted for different building for different purpose like hospital, schools, Colleges, post office and roads etc. Qualitative (historical and descriptive) method is used to explore Sir Ganga Ram's services. This study is based on primary sources as well as secondary sources. In Mangtanwala, which is roughly 64 kilometers from Lahore, he was born on April 13, 1851. He graduated from the Government High School with a matriculation certificate, and in 1869 he enrolled in the Government College in Lahore. He was given a scholarship in 1871 to attend the Thomason Civil Engineering College in Roorkee.<sup>1</sup>

In 1873, he received a gold medal for passing the last lower subordinate examination. One of the best engineers of his era, Sir Ganga Ram made millions of Rupees, the most of which he would donate to charity. He was knighted in the 1922 Birthday Honors list and personally invested with his honour at Buckingham Palace by King-Emperor George V on July 8. Although Ganga Ram was known for his rigorous rules, he also had a good heart. He was named Assistant Engineer at the prominent Center Public Works Department in Lahore as a result of his exceptional academic performance and his appointment as a graduate.<sup>2</sup> He was requested to Delhi to erect the Amphitheatre for the Delhi Durbar, which would take place there in 1877, four years later. Queen Victoria of England was proclaimed Empress of India in the Dubar, sometimes referred to as the Proclamation Durbar. Ganga Ram then collaborated with the railroads on the vital Amritsar-Pathankot railway route. The then-Viceroy and Governor-General of India, George Robinson, was drawn to the work being done on these two illustrious projects and sent him to Radford Technical College (now and Drainage)<sup>3</sup>.

Ganga Ram returned to Lahore from England in 1885, where he would oversee and carry out the most significant undertaking of his life—the reconstruction of Lahore. Lahore also served as the seat of the Sikh Empire of Ranjit Singh after centuries as a provincial capital under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals. He was a government worker sent here to take care of the monument honoring the donor, whose remains are interred there and who planned and built a number of Lahore landmarks.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, the time when he worked as Lahore's executive engineer, between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, is now referred to as the "Ganga Ram architectural period."<sup>5</sup> "It was not only Lahore where we can see his work but his ideas are visibly notable in Sheikhpura, Sargodha and Lyallpur. He received the Title Rai Bahadur in appreciation of his great work. Principal Government Collage A.S Hemmy who

was great and versatile critics of Architecture writes that he ensured maximum results with minimum expenditure with great efficiency. Government College Chemical Laboratory is example of it. As an ex officio Municipal Commissioner his services are remarkable for Lahore.<sup>6</sup> It is due to him that citizens own paved lanes, metaled streets properly laid drains which no doubt lessend threat of malaria and helped in raising standard of health of citizens. Dusring his services in Lahore he used to live in Anarkali which was center of wealth and fashion where he celebrated his eldest daughter marriage.<sup>7</sup>

### **A. Building Projects in Lahore**

Mughal and Sikh monuments, gardens, and tombs were let to deteriorate after the Empire fell to the British in 1849, depriving the city of its imperial magnificence. Amritsar, which is nearby, had been the Sikh Empire's and North India's economic hub during Sikh rule. While Lahore trailed behind towns like Delhi, which had partially regained the economic wealth they had lost following the Revolt of 1857, Amritsar continued to develop under British rule. Therefore, the British opted to reconstruct Lahore from the ruins of its Mughal heritage over the final two decades of the 19th century. Up until 1920, the Mall Road's alignment stayed the same, after the eastern sections of the GPO underwent significant development crossing by Executive Engineer Sir Ganga Ram.<sup>8</sup> Due to the requirement that the new city be modern, indo-Saracenic, a fusion of conventional and Indic architectural. Ganga Ram, who had been employed by the city's Public Works Department, was chosen to serve as Lahore's Executive Engineer.<sup>9</sup>

The founding of Aitchison College can be credited to Captain Tighe, the then-D.C. of Ambala, who designed the Ward's School in the Ambala Cantonment in 1864. It was created in 1868 with the purpose of educating the area's young princes<sup>10</sup>. However, in order to educate all of the other princely state heirs who lived in other areas of Punjab, Sir Henry Davies, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, insisted that it broaden its mission in 1874. The current constitution of Aitchison College is still built around the guidelines created for the Wards' School. On November 3, 1886, Ava and Viceroy Earl of Dufferin officially laid the cornerstone for the main building. Bhai Ram Singh, a prominent architect, and Sir Ganga Ram, a prominent builder of the day, both designed and constructed the building. Sir Charles Umpherston Aitchison, the Punjab's then-Lt. Governor, is honoured by having his name associated with the college. Since the "Wards School," "Chiefs' College," and "Aitchison College" have all had a seamless history.<sup>11</sup>

Ganga Ram conceptualized and built the Mayo School of Industrial ARTS, one of only two art schools in British India at the time. The National College of Arts is the name that it currently goes by. The new Mayo School of Art building was built as a memorial to the late Lord Mayo, who presided as viceroy and governor general from 1869 to 1872. The trustees of the funds raised in 1873 to honor Lord Mayo provided the majority of the 43000 rupees. The building's structure at the time was made up of three wings grouped around an open courtyard, with the north wing facing the mall being primarily double-story<sup>12</sup>. Turrets, chattris, kiosks, and jali work, among other indigenous architectural and artistic elements, are incorporated into the building's main structure, fusing several traditions. The Lawrence and Montgomery Halls, two other notable neoclassical structures on the mall, stood in stark contrast to it as a result. Aitchison College project came next. He received a commission to create Model Town and Gulberg in 1887 for the golden jubilee of England's Queen Victoria; both structures are now recognized as icons of the modern city of Lahore. Along with many other structures, he also gave a new waterworks. According to a proposal, the Mayo School of Art's building would be built utilising plastered bricks in the Saracenic architectural style.<sup>13</sup>

The General Post Office is located in Lahore, the capital of Pakistan (GPO). The largest GPO in Pakistan is located in GPO Chowk, which is adjacent to Anarkali on Mall Road (Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam). On average, 20,000 pieces of mail are processed each day. It replaced the telegraph office in Anarkali Bazar and was built in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The building was built by Sir Ganga Ram, a well-known architect at the time, and it was placed near to the shrine of the saint Shah Chiragh, who lived in the 17th century. The building includes two minarets and two main chambers. The General Post Office (GPO) building that stood at the junction of the Mall and the Nabha Road was constructed in 1904.<sup>14</sup>

The British Raj Lahore museum features a plethora of domes, tiny balconies, stunning red sandstone lattice work, and a magnificent façade. The masterpiece of Colonial architecture is just one of the museum's many notable attractions. It is located on the Mall road not far from the National College of Arts. Its first location was in Wazir Khan's Baradari in 1856. But on February 3, 1890, the architect Albert Victor laid the foundation for the museum's current design. It was finished in 1993 under the direction of Lahore's Executive Engineer, Rai Bahadur Ganga Ram. The public was welcomed inside during Queen Victoria's silver jubilee celebration in 1894.

Among his above-mentioned contributions is Sir Ganga Ram Hospital which has stood the test of time and undergone several expansions over the years. Established in 1921 as a dispensary, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Lahore was developed into a mega hospital on 13th April 1943.<sup>15</sup> That time Ganga Ram Hospital consists of 125

beds<sup>16</sup> Only few of the documents were retrieved by Chaudary about hospital's archives in June 1988. But then Governors house gave him a pamphlet about Balak ram Medical collage which is replaced now as Fatima Jinnah Medical University. This property was actually purchased by one of ganga Ram,s three sons Balak ram. His tradition and name were continued until 1958 when Miss Fatima Jinnah addressed here a convocation name was changed as Fatima Jinnah Medical college. Fortunately, it was attached with ganga Ram Hospital. The then British Governor of Punjab Sir Bertrand James Glancy performed the opening ceremony. Punjab government officials confirmed that no attempt had ever been made in the past to change the name of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. They said that Lady Aitchison Hospital, Mayo Hospital and Gulab Devi Hospital also retain their old nomenclature.<sup>17</sup>Not documented though, but some reports suggest that an attempt was made to change the name of the hospital under Zia's Islamization drive, but it was opposed from within the government. This alleged move dates to the time when the historic Lawrence Garden in Lahore was re-named as Bagh-e-Jinnah.<sup>18</sup> He designed and built famous architectural marvels building. All of them were among the top constructions of their era and each had a distinctive design. His inventiveness was evident in his designs, which included a structure that utilized novel methods. Being a highly skilled and educated engineer, Sir Ganga Ram was immensely helpful to Lahore. Sir Ganga Ram also contributed to the development of the Albert Victor wing of the Mayo Hospital, the Government College University's chemistry department, Lady Mclagan Girls High School, Sir Ganga Ram High School (now Lahore College for Women), and the Hailey College of Commerce (now Hailey College of Banking & Finance). Because Sir Ganga Ram had a soft place for education and wanted people to be able to access it easily, he concentrated more on building institutions that would offer high-quality education.<sup>19</sup>

The Ganga Ram Trust Building on "The Mall," Lady Maynard Industrial School, and Ravi Road House for the Disabled are a few other marvels he built. Additionally, he built Gulberg Town and Model Town, two of the most affluent neighborhoods Lahore had to offer at one time and which are still among the city's finest neighborhoods today.<sup>20</sup> Additionally planned and built under Sir Ganga Ram's direction were the Renala Khurd power plant and the Pathan kot to Amritsar railroad line. A stronger supply of electricity and improved transportation options resulted in significant modifications to the region's infrastructure. In order to insulate people from the heat and cold of the Punjab province's climate and to provide effective and unobtrusive sanitation, Ganga Ram combined arches and other Indian architectural traditions alongside western construction techniques, Bedi noted. Ganga Ram was referred to as "the father of contemporary Lahore" by renowned Pakistani journalist Khaled Ahmed because of the profound impact he had on the city.

Ganga Ram building is another traditional and unique building in Lahore collage for Women University; it is situated where students enter in the premises of the Collage. Mixed architectural elements used by this great architecture show the sense of self-glorification. Its windows, cornices and jials promote beautiful design pattern. This colonial style of architecture reflects the history of Lahore. Huge Doors and windows help to intake fresh air and light. Ceiling Height is also very high which help fresh air to come and move which makes building comfortable in climate of Lahore<sup>21</sup>. This building is used for the Intermediate classes now a days. Principal Office is also there in the building. Building style is from east to West, it is double story building with class rooms with heightened door and windows. It has one Hall in middle of the building, classes in both sided complement its summitry. It has lush backyard with old beautiful trees gives natural environment to the students.

The civil engineer Sir Ganga Ram, who is credited with helping to construct Lahore and is known as the city's "father of modern Lahore," is owed a great deal by the city. Sir Ganga Ram left an inefaceable imprint on everything he did for this city. There is hardly any historical building of the British era which he had not conceived and designed. The Lahore of today was not the city in the middle of the 19th century. It had been the political center of the Khalsa Empire for some fifty years, but it was no longer the provincial center it had been during the Mughals' rule. The most important architectural structures that Lahore is known for today may be dated to the early Mughal era, as can the best works of literature and learning that the Panjab can legitimately claim to have produced during that time.<sup>22</sup> It's crumbling Mughal mausoleums and the ruins of the massive Mughal gardens, which were neglected and being overtaken, were a testament to its former magnificence. The neighboring city of Lahore, Amritsar, had become the center of the empire's economy under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Lahore had 149,000 people in its population in 1881, compared to 152,000 in Amritsar, according to the first thorough census of British India. The colonial state that utilized the city as a representation of its imperial might brought about major changes to the metropolis. A story about a city resurrecting from its Mughal heritage was concocted. Lahore grew in size after the turn of the century, becoming among the biggest cities on the Indian subcontinent. A migrant city was created there. In the district, people who were not born there made up 46.3% of the population in 1911, according to the census.

The British have increasingly begun to appropriate indigenous Indian emblems of authority. In this depiction, architecture was crucial and paved the way for the development of the Indo-Saracenic tradition.<sup>23</sup> The colonial state made an effort to combine conventional structural methods with colonial architecture in this architectural approach. This was a deliberate attempt to present conventional visual representations of British symbols of authority for the enjoyment of the local community. The colonial authorities used architecture as a potent instrument of propaganda. This story was painted on a canvas that included Lahore and other

important towns in British India. The Lahore High Court, the museum, the Post Office Building, Aitchison College, the Anglican Cathedral, and the National College of Arts are only a few of the numerous buildings built in accordance with this hybrid heritage<sup>24</sup> The balconies, columns, and watchtowers of these buildings interplay with the domes, chattris (canopies), arches, and screens. Its Ganga ram who gave new waterworks to Lahore and when he was executive engineer in Lahore for twelve years it called period of Ganga ram Architecture. Safdar Chaudhary mentions in his research about ganga ram that he gave away his immense part of his property and wealth for services of the people of his surroundings. He established Sikh and Hindu widows' homes, Hindu student career society schools and homes for Sikh widows' lady Maynard industrial school was also established for Hindu and Sikh girls. Due to his old faith in Sikh faith he gave his services to them, he constructed a gurdwara at Rampura village situated on Grand trunk road 12 miles away from Lahore. At Amar Sidue Sicthe Guru gurdwara was built near Lahore Cantonment and Model town. He also built canal scheme in Khushab and Pind Daden Khan.

## **B. Sir Ganga Ram: A Philanthropist**

He worked for welfare of the poor, women, and widows regardless of their religion and social status Apart from his contribution as a civil engineer and architect, Sir Ganga Ram was also a great philanthropist. He founded Sir Ganga Ram Trust to run the hospital. Following his death in 1927, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital was also established in New Delhi in 1954 by his family under this Trust. His family moved to India after the partition. The entire life of Sir Ganga Ram was a manifestation of Hundi-Muslim unity. Given his work and vision, he perhaps never imagined the partition of British India and the resultant creation of India and Pakistan as separate countries. He worked for the welfare of the poor, women, and widows regardless of their religion and social status<sup>25</sup>. He started a widow shelter in 1921 and opened schools and industrial homes for women. In the last year of his life he also opened up a shelter for the handicapped.

To review his files and be ready for the day, Ganga Ram would get up early in the morning. Bedi claims that he occasionally sang aloud to himself portions of the Urdu poet Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali's work *Munajat-e-Bewgan* (The Widow's Prayer). When he read the verses, he was frequently brought to tears. It served as the impetus for the work he later performed for widows in traditional Hindu society. In the city of Ambala in the province, Ganga Ram attempted to pass a resolution allowing widow remarriage during a religious Hindu assembly in 1917. After it failed, he started the Widows' Marriage Association and gave it 2,000 rupees—a considerable sum at the time. The organization would increase

understanding of the challenge's widows faced in society. Ganga Ram soon discovered that many of the widows did not wish to remarry, despite the fact that some of them were too old to do so. To provide such ladies with the skills they needed to support themselves, Ganga Ram founded a Hindu Widows' Home in 1921 with the government's blessing. Later, the home would house a dormitory and two schools. The widows would receive training to pass exams and become craft instructors as a result. Additionally, Ganga Ram provided funding for the establishment of Lady Maynard Industrial School for Sikh and Hindu women who were struggling financially. One of the founding members of All India Conference once visited these homes and wrote that he visited industrial school and home founded by Ganga Ram which really impress him. That was splendid work done by Ganga Ram. He wished that there would be a Ganga Ram in Madras who spend large amount on these kinds of works.<sup>26</sup> He was kind and pure who was always in search of logical conclusion as in case of widows for them homes, schools and shops were opened for them until they were fully looked after. As the need arose he pushed his idea further as the need arose. Once some young boys came to him for interview he placed all of them with intelligence if some liked to do manual work they were given manual work. Boys with average intelligence were placed for technical work.

Ganga Ram purchased land in center of the Lahore in 1921 Wazirpur and constructed a building worth 1,31,500. The Sir Ganga Ram Trust was established in the engineer's honor in 1923. The Sir Ganga Ram Free Hospital and Dispensary was founded in the center of Lahore the same year. Purpose of that dispensary was to provide medical relief to the needy people irrespective to color, creed and caste. According to Bedi's book, it later underwent development to become a complete hospital with fully functional surgical and medical departments. According to the book, the hospital was second only to Mayo Hospital, the oldest and largest hospital in the Punjab province. A charitable institution of the Punjab which was well equipped medical and surgical, Dental, X-ray, modern clinical laboratory and women departments as well. In addition, the foundation founded the Sir Ganga Ram Business Bureau and Library and the Hindu Student Careers Society in 1924 to aid Hindu students in finding jobs. During his lifetime, Ganga Ram established the Hindu Apahaj Ashram on two acres of land, which was his final humanitarian Endeavour. For the aged, the disabled, and the infirm, this served as a residence<sup>27</sup>.

Sir Ganga Ram was well known for his technical prowess and could be credited with being a pioneer in establishing world-class educational institutions in Lahore. He was also a significant figure who contributed to the development of the city's infrastructure. In accordance with his intentions, Sir Ganga Ram's bones were interred next to Hindi Apahaj Ashram and deposited in his tomb in Lahore, close to Karim Park, after his death in London in 1927.<sup>28</sup> Some of his ashes were strewn in the Ganges. The Ganga Ram Samadhi, his mausoleum, still stands in this location even after the ashram has left. Bedi claims that famous Urdu author Khawaja Hassan Nizami expressed his regret for Sir Ganga Ram's passing in a



piece, saying that if he had the option, he would have donated his life to extend it by a number of years "so that he might have lived longer and rendered even greater services to the distressed women of India."<sup>29</sup> Punjab Chief Minister Parvaiz Ilahi recently visited residence of Ganga Ram in Taxali gate Lahore and announced that residence of Ganga Ram will be converted to the museum for visitors. His great granddaughter who is senator in Us visited Ganga Ram home in Lahore and showed gratitude towards the people of Lahore.

## **Conclusion**

For the sake of people, Sir Ganga Ram devoted his life. He was a kind donor, supporting the construction of hospitals, schools, and among other charity endeavors. Generation after generation of Pakistanis who want to improve the lives of others are motivated by his legacy. Numerous famous buildings and structures that contributed to the modernization of Lahore's infrastructure were designed and built by Sir Ganga Ram over the course of his illustrious and lengthy career. As a skilled architect and engineer, Sir Ganga Ram created and built a number of amazing structures, including the Mayo School of Arts, Aitchison College, and the Lahore Museum. In order to shield people from the weather and provide effective sanitation, his buildings combined western construction techniques with Subcontinent architectural customs. Millions of people in Pakistan still receive medical care from the renowned Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, which he founded in Lahore. The most important factor to Sir Ganga Ram's success as a civil engineer was his education. He was able to take on challenging projects with confidence and competence thanks to his extensive academic background and real-world work experience. Furthermore, throughout his career, his dedication to lifelong learning allowed him to stay at the forefront of his field, innovate, and make significant contributions. He earned like a lion and gave like a saint. No doubt this man was not simply a founder of hospital and trust but he built homes for the widows and schools and collages for the orphanages. He gave away large portion of his wealth for the welfare of his fellow human being without any hesitation. Ganga Ram was institution in itself who work splendidly wherever he went his presence was felt by the people. General public was benefited by this single man's services. Ganga Ram built each of these renowned buildings in Lahore. He changed the city's landscape by working with the colonial government to reflect the splendor of this new dominion. From the ruins of its Mughal history, a new city that was even more magnificent than the first had emerged. The architecture of Lahore was evidence that a new ruler had taken control of the city. This colonial city's legacy is carried on in many ways by the Lahore of today. As a representation of the state, it still exists today. Both the Orange Line and Metro Bus initiatives serve as authority figures. Creating this story involved Ganga Ram. The city was changed by him and is still known as a proverb. More than it would want to admit, Ganga Ram is responsible for a lot of what Lahore is today. In honor of him, the Sir Ganga Ram Trust was founded, which aided in the establishment of the Lahore-based Sir

Ganga Ram Free Hospital and Dispensary. With well-equipped surgical and medical departments, the hospital expanded into a full-fledged facility.

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