

## **AN ELABORATE PICTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF RAM PIYARI MAHAL MUSEUM GUJRAT**

**Javairia Naaz<sup>a</sup>, Mamoon Kanwal<sup>a,b\*</sup>, Raja Adnan Razzaq<sup>a</sup>, Bushra Zeshan<sup>a,c</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>School of History & Pakistan Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>b</sup>Department of History, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>c</sup>Department of Pakistan Studies, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan.

### **Corresponding author:**

**Mamoon Kanwal:** [mamoon.his@mul.edu.pk](mailto:mamoon.his@mul.edu.pk)

School of History & Pakistan Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan.

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the significance of establishing a dedicated museum and art gallery in Gujrat, Pakistan, with a focus on the historic Ram Piyari Mahal as the proposed site. Museums play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, showcasing technological advancements, and reflecting the historical narratives of communities. Despite Gujrat's rich history and vibrant culture, the absence of such institutions limits opportunities for education and engagement with the region's past. The Ram Piyari Mahal, an architectural masterpiece that combines Neo-Gothic design with local craftsmanship, offers a structurally sound and strategically located venue for this initiative.

The proposed museum aims to house a diverse array of artifacts, including ancient coins, weapons, and items from the Indus and Gandhara civilizations, while also highlighting local craftsmanship and honoring regional heroes. This study employs qualitative research methods, including interviews and case studies, to gather insights into the historical context of the Mahal, its architectural features, and the potential benefits of the museum for the local community. The findings underscore the importance of cultural institutions in fostering a deeper appreciation of heritage and promoting community engagement, ultimately enriching the cultural landscape of Gujrat for future generations.

## **1. Introduction**

Museums play a crucial role in our national life, serving as a treasure trove of our culture, technological advancements, natural resources, and industrial achievements. They are educational spaces that help us appreciate our heritage and accomplishments. The history of our city is intertwined with the stories of its rulers and influential figures who built remarkable structures that reflect our cultural legacy. These sites are essential for understanding the region's rich history, showcasing contributions from philosophers, poets, artists, and educators across various fields (1, 2). Despite its historical significance and modern growth, our city lacks a dedicated museum and art gallery. Establishing these institutions would greatly enhance awareness of our traditional past and contemporary local art, enriching the experience for future generations (3-5).

Ram Piyari Mahal, a stunning blend of Neo-Gothic architecture and local craftsmanship, has been chosen as the site for a new museum and art gallery. This double-story building, covering an area of 2 kanaals, is well-suited for its new purpose, with three entrances, although only one is currently in use (6, 7). Conveniently located at the intersection of two major roads near Fawara Chowk and close to the General Bus Stand and Railway Station, the Mahal remains structurally sound and secure, requiring minimal modifications for its transformation into a museum. Inside, four galleries are filled with fascinating artifacts, while others showcase coins, weapons, jewelry, and items from the ancient Indus and Gandhara civilizations, as well as ethnological treasures. The industry gallery highlights local craftsmanship, particularly the renowned pottery from Gujrat. Additionally, a photo collection features images of three Nishan-i-Haider winners, celebrating local heroes. After the project's completion, a team from the DGM&E and the Planning & Development Department assessed the museum, providing valuable observations and recommendations for further improvements. This initiative promises to enrich the cultural landscape of the region and engage the community with its rich heritage (3, 8, 9).

The evaluation of the museum project revealed some important insights. While the procurement of materials has been satisfactory, many items are still sitting unused, and a lack of staff has affected the museum's overall functionality. Despite these challenges, the project has successfully established a strong foundation for cultural education and heritage conservation. However, to truly realize the museum's potential as a valuable resource for both residents and international visitors, more efforts are needed. By addressing staffing issues and

ensuring that all artifacts are properly showcased, the museum can become a vibrant hub for learning and appreciation of our rich history (10, 11).

## **2 Research Design and Methodology**

This research employed qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues surrounding the Gujrat Museum (Ram Piyari Mahal). The qualitative approach included the use of questionnaires, interviews, photography, and data collection regarding the history and narrative of the museum. To gather information, a case study methodology was utilized alongside various fact-finding strategies that incorporated mixed methods. Historians specializing in the history of Gujrat Museum (Ram Piyari Mahal), Ram Piyari, and her family were consulted to obtain insights and memories. Interviews were also conducted with the librarian of the Gujrat Museum in Pakistan and individuals connected to Ram Piyari's Mahal, focusing on the museum's history and status. Extensive information on the restoration, rehabilitation, and usage of the Gujrat Museum building was gathered from primary and secondary sources, including the Directorate General of Archaeology, Punjab, the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), and the Punjab Board of Revenue and Settlement.

Pictorial studies of the Gujrat Museum (Ram Piyari Mahal) involved professional photography of the building, including its architectural designs, layouts, and textures, as well as its rooms, roofs, windows, pillars, floors, and corridors. Frequent visits were made to verify and confirm the accuracy of the collected facts. This data provided valuable insights into the cultural traditions and lifestyles of the people from that era and region.

## **3 Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 History of Ram Piyari Mahal**

The members of the Khatri tribe in Gujrat strongly condemned Sundar Das for breaking family traditions by remarrying, and they politically boycotted the announcement of his marriage. Sundar Das's first wife, Kushal Devi, resided in Dinga and showed little concern for his second marriage. As a result, Sundar Das Chopra was unable to bring his beloved Ram Piyari to his home in Dinga and had to keep her in Gujrat. Considering this situation, a prosperous contractor decided to provide Ram Piyari with a residence in Gujrat. This accommodation became a reflection of both his ego and his prosperity, serving as a symbol of his marriage to Ram Piyari, intended to be showcased before family and community.

Ram Piyari Mahal, one of the notable imperial structures from the pre-partition era in Gujrat, showcases a captivating blend of ancient Greek, Roman, and Indian architectural

traditions. The road on which the Mahal is located was originally named Ram Piyari Road but was later renamed Circular Road; it now runs alongside Sohni Bazar, known for its pottery and ceramics within the walled city. The entrance to the main hall is supported by pillars designed in Greek architectural styles, specifically the Doric and Corinthian orders, which remain intact to this day. These pillars are uniquely adorned with floral motifs and figures resembling an Asian priest, rather than traditional Greek designs. The flooring is made of Indian tiles, which have worn down over time, while the walls are embellished with French tiles that still retain their vibrant appearance. The Mahal comprises over 40 rooms and features four basements. The pillars that support the entrance to the main hall exemplify the Doric and Corinthian architectural styles. The upper section of the building features three galleries, one of which is the Gujrat Gallery, dedicated to showcasing information about the city's heroes (3). The features of the building are as under: -

1. It is a double-story building covering an area of 2 kanaals.
2. It has three entrances though only one is being used presently.
3. The building is situated on the conjunction of two central roads connected with the main G.T Road near Fawara Chowk and not far from the General Bus Stand and the Railway Station.
4. It is intact structurally sound and secure.
5. Minimum additions/alternatives were required to convert it into a museum.
6. The structures available are suitable for office and security staff.
7. The backyard hill is ideal for Lectures/ Seminars.





**Figure 1.** Ram Piyari Mahal





**Figure 2.** Ram Piyari Mahal

### **3.2 Galleries of Piyari Mahal Museum**

The Ram Piyari Mahal Museum in Gujrat features six galleries that showcase local art and culture, including portraits of local heroes. The museum is housed in a historic palace built in the early 20th century and has been upgraded to display various antiques significant to the region. The Punjab government has planned to enhance the museum's offerings with additional features. All Galleries are on ground floor. Here are the details:

#### **4.2.1 Prehistoric Gallery**

This gallery contains the objects of Mahargarh Civilization and Indus valley civilization. The Prehistoric Gallery of the Gujrat Museum serves as a vital repository of artifacts from two significant ancient civilizations: the Mehrgarh Civilization and the Indus Valley Civilization. These civilizations are crucial for understanding the early development of human societies in South Asia, particularly in the context of agriculture, urban planning, and trade. The Mehrgarh Civilization, dating back to approximately 7000 BCE, is one of the earliest known agricultural societies in South Asia. Located in what is now Balochistan, Pakistan, Mehrgarh is significant for its early evidence of farming, domestication of animals, and the development of pottery.

The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC), flourishing around 2500 BCE, was one of the world's earliest urban cultures, known for its advanced city planning, architecture, and social organization. Major sites include Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, located in present-day Pakistan and northwest India.

##### **4.2.1.1 Key Artifacts**

###### **Pottery**

The gallery features a variety of pottery styles, including painted pottery with intricate geometric designs. These artifacts illustrate the artistic capabilities of the Mehrgarh people and their use of pottery for both functional and decorative purposes.

###### **Tools and Implements**

Stone tools, including grinding stones and sickles, highlight the agricultural practices of the Mehrgarh inhabitants. These tools were essential for harvesting crops and processing food.

###### **Figurines**

Small terracotta figurines found at Mehrgarh provide insights into the spiritual and cultural practices of the people. These figurines often depict animals or human forms and may have been used in rituals or as toys.

###### **Grain Storage**

Evidence of granaries and storage facilities indicates the community's agricultural productivity and the importance of grain storage for sustenance and trade.



The gallery showcases a collection of seals made from steatite, often inscribed with symbols and images of animals. These seals were likely used for trade and administrative purposes, serving as identifiers for merchants and goods.

### **Weights and Measures**

Standardized weights made from stone demonstrate the advanced trade practices and economic organization of the Indus Valley people. These artifacts indicate a sophisticated understanding of commerce and measurement.

### **Pottery**

The Indus Valley pottery is characterized by its high quality, diverse shapes, and painted designs. The gallery displays various pottery types, including storage jars, bowls, and dishes, which reflect the daily life and dietary habits of the civilization.

### **Jewelry and Ornaments**

Artifacts such as beads made from semi-precious stones, gold, and shell jewelry highlight the craftsmanship and aesthetic sensibilities of the Indus people. These items provide insights into social status and cultural practices.

## **3.2.2 Gandhara Civilization Gallery**

This contains the objects of Gandhara Civilization and stone and metallic statues of Budha. The Gandhara Civilization Gallery at the Gujrat Museum showcases a rich collection of artifacts from the Gandhara region, which flourished between the 1st century BCE and the 5th century CE. This civilization is renowned for its unique blend of Hellenistic and Indian artistic influences, particularly in Buddhist art.

### **3.2.2.1 Notable Artifacts**

#### **Fasting Siddhartha**

This sculpture is a prime example of Gandhara art, illustrating the Buddha's struggle for enlightenment. It captures the emotional intensity of Siddhartha's journey with remarkable detail.

#### **Miracle of Sravasti Stele**

A densely carved slate depicting the Buddha performing miracles, surrounded by numerous figures, showcasing the narrative style prevalent in Gandharan art.

#### **Statue of Hariti**

This figure represents the goddess Hariti, known for her transformation from a child-eating demon to a protector of children, symbolizing the moral teachings of Buddhism.



**Figure 3.** Stone Statues of Budha

#### **4.2.3. Ethnological Gallery**

The Ethnological Gallery at the Gujrat Museum offers a captivating glimpse into the daily lives, traditions, and cultural heritage of the residents of the Gujrat region. This gallery is dedicated to showcasing the artifacts that reflect the everyday practices, craftsmanship, and social customs of the local communities, as well as the traditional jewelry that holds significant cultural value. Cultural Significance: The Ethnological Gallery serves as a repository of the rich cultural tapestry of Gujrat, a region known for its historical significance and diverse population. The artifacts on display highlight the unique lifestyle, traditions, and artistic expressions of the people who have inhabited this area for centuries.

#### **Clay Pottery**

Traditional clay pots, often used for cooking and storage, showcase the craftsmanship of local artisans. These pots are typically handmade and may feature intricate designs that reflect the cultural motifs of the region.

### **Wooden Utensils**

Items such as wooden spoons, ladles, and serving trays demonstrate the practical yet artistic approach to daily life. These utensils are often carved from local wood and may include decorative elements.

### **Handwoven Fabrics**

The gallery features samples of traditional textiles, including shawls, rugs, and garments. These fabrics are often handwoven using techniques passed down through generations and may incorporate vibrant colors and patterns unique to the region.

### **Embroidery**

Detailed embroidery work on clothing and household items is a hallmark of the local culture, with designs that often carry symbolic meanings.

### **Traditional Farming Implements**

Tools such as plows, sickles, and harvesting equipment provide insight into the agricultural practices of the region. These items reflect the agrarian lifestyle that has sustained the community for generations.

### **Traditional Lamps and Lighting**

Oil lamps and lanterns used in homes highlight the lighting practices of the past, often crafted from metal or clay and adorned with decorative motifs.

### **Storage Containers**

Various containers for storing grains, spices, and other essentials are displayed, showcasing the practical aspects of daily life.

### **Traditional Jewelry**

The gallery features an array of necklaces, often made from silver, gold, or beads. These pieces may include intricate designs and motifs that symbolize prosperity and protection.





**Figure 4.** Utensils as antiques





**Figure 5.** Utensils as antiques





**Figure 5.** Utensils as antiques







**Figure 6.** Ornaments as antiques



**Figure 6.** Ornaments as antiques

### **3.2.4 Miscellaneous Gallery**

In this gallery weapons of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and musical instruments are displayed. The Miscellaneous Gallery at the Gujrat Museum offers a fascinating collection of artifacts that reflect the cultural and historical diversity of the region. Among the notable exhibits in this gallery are weapons from the 18th and 19th centuries and a variety of musical instruments. These artifacts not only serve as reminders of the past but also encapsulate the artistry and craftsmanship of their time.

The Miscellaneous Gallery is designed to provide visitors with a broad understanding of the historical context and social practices of the region, showcasing items that played significant roles in both warfare and cultural expression. The gallery reflects the evolution of technology, artistry, and cultural practices in Gujrat and its surrounding areas.

#### **Types of Weapons:**

##### **Swords and Sabres**

The gallery features an array of swords, including curved sabres and straight blades, often ornately decorated with intricate designs. These weapons were not only functional but also symbols of status and power among the elite.

##### **Firearms**

The collection includes flintlock pistols and muskets, which were significant in the 18th and 19th centuries. These firearms reflect the technological advancements of the time and the changing nature of warfare.

##### **Daggers and Knives**

Various types of daggers, such as the traditional "kris" and "pesh-kabz," are displayed. These weapons often feature elaborate hilts and sheaths, showcasing the craftsmanship involved in their creation.



**Figure 7.** Weapons as antiques

### **Musical Instruments**

#### **String Instruments**

The gallery features traditional string instruments such as the "sitar," "sarangi," and "dilruba." Each of these instruments has a unique sound and playing technique, reflecting the rich musical heritage of the region.

#### **Percussion Instruments**



Instruments like the "dhol," "tabla," and "naal" are displayed, showcasing the rhythm and beat that play a crucial role in local music. These instruments are often used in folk music and celebrations.



**Figure 8.** Musical instruments as antiques



**Figure 9.** Coins as antiques



**Figure 10.** Books as antiques



### **3.2.5 Local Art Gallery on 1<sup>st</sup> floor**

This gallery features a diverse array of artworks created by local artists, reflecting the unique cultural identity of Gujrat. The pieces often incorporate traditional themes and modern interpretations, providing visitors with a comprehensive view of the region's artistic evolution.

#### **3.2.5.1 Portraits of Local Heroes**

This section honors notable figures from Gujrat's history, showcasing their contributions through detailed portraits. These artworks serve to educate visitors about the local heroes who have shaped the community and its legacy.

#### **3.2.5.2 Folklore and Statues Gallery**

Statues representing key figures from local folklore are displayed here, bringing to life the stories and legends that are integral to Gujrat's cultural fabric. This gallery aims to connect visitors with the rich narrative traditions of the area.



**Figure 11.** Antiques of Art Gallery







**Figure 12.** Antiques of Art Gallery



**Figure 13.** Statue of Art Gallery



**Figure 14.** Statue of Art Gallery

#### **4. Architectural Features of Building**

##### **4.1 Style and Design**

The architecture of Ram Piyari Mahal is a blend of Greek and Indian styles, showcasing a fusion that is characteristic of early 20th-century colonial architecture in the region. The building features grand Doric and Corinthian columns that add to its majestic appearance.

##### **4.2 Façade**

The exterior of the Mahal is adorned with intricate tile work and decorative motifs. The façade is characterized by large windows and balconies that provide an airy and open feel, allowing natural light to flood the interiors.

##### **4.3 Spacious Layout**

The Mahal is designed with spacious rooms and high ceilings, which contribute to an overall sense of grandeur. The layout includes multiple halls and chambers, each with its unique features and historical significance.

##### **4.4 Interior Decoration**

Inside, the Mahal is embellished with ornate woodwork, decorative ceilings, and vintage furnishings that reflect the opulence of its time. The walls may feature murals or paintings that depict scenes from local history and culture.

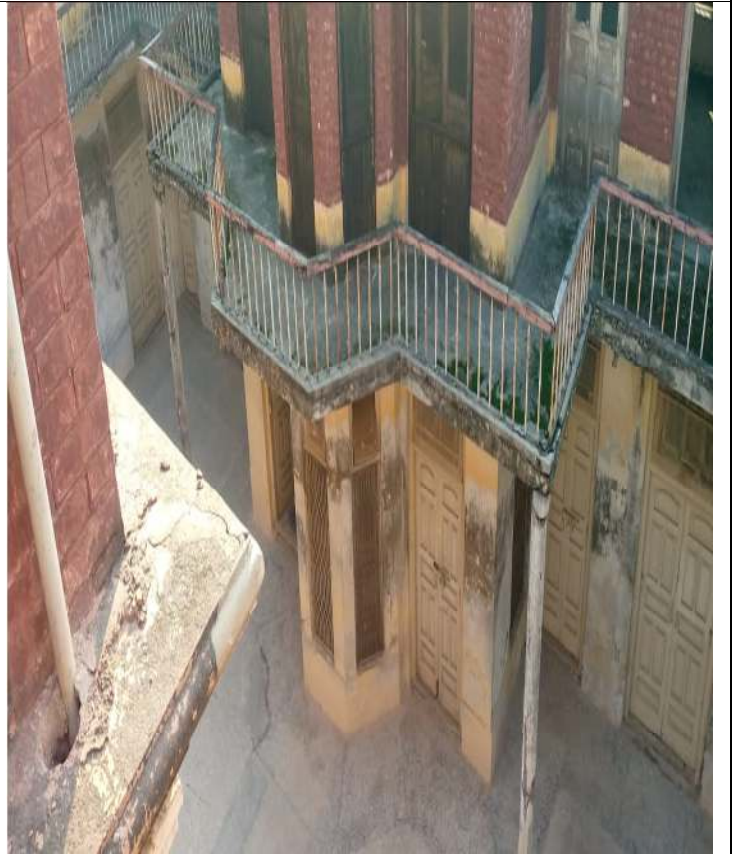
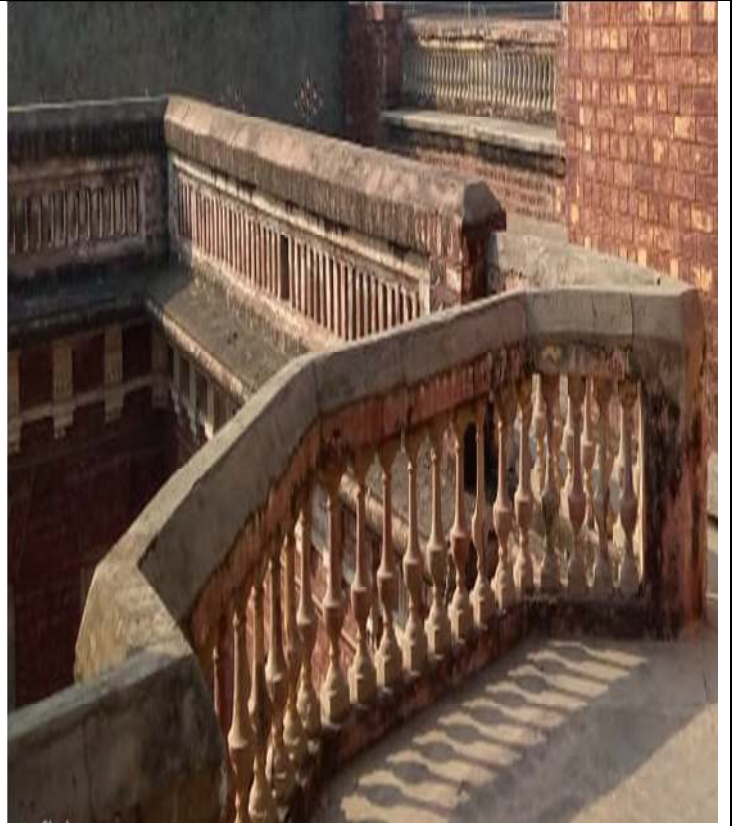
#### **4.5 Gardens and Surroundings**

The Mahal is set within beautifully landscaped gardens, which enhance its aesthetic appeal. The gardens are often designed with pathways, fountains, and seating areas, providing a serene environment for visitors.

#### **4.6 Materials**

Constructed using locally sourced materials, the building showcases the craftsmanship of the artisans of the time. The use of brick, stone, and wood in its construction highlights the traditional building techniques of the region (9, 12).





**Figure 15.** Construction Styles of the Building







**Figure 16.** Construction Styles of the Building





**Figure 17.** Construction Styles of the Building



**Figure 18.** Construction Styles of the Building

## **5 Current Use**

Today, Ram Piyari Mahal serves as a museum, housing artifacts, antiques, and artworks that reflect the rich cultural heritage of Gujrat. The building itself is an attraction, drawing visitors not only for its exhibits but also for its architectural beauty and historical significance. The combination of its stunning architecture and the cultural treasures it houses makes Ram Piyari Mahal a must-visit destination for anyone interested in the history and culture of Pakistan (13-16).



**Figure 19.** Construction Styles of the Building

## 6 Conclusion

The establishment of the Gujrat Museum at Ram Piyari Mahal represents a significant step toward preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the region. This initiative not only provides a dedicated space for showcasing the historical and artistic treasures of Gujrat but also serves as a vital educational resource for both residents and international visitors. The museum's diverse galleries, which encompass artifacts from ancient civilizations, ethnological items, and contemporary local art, create a comprehensive narrative that highlights the area's historical significance and cultural diversity. The architectural grandeur of Ram Piyari Mahal itself enhances the museum experience, offering visitors a glimpse into the region's colonial past through its unique blend of Greek and Indian architectural styles. Despite the challenges faced, such as staffing shortages and the need for improved artifact display, the groundwork has been laid for a vibrant cultural hub that can foster community engagement and appreciation for local heritage.

Moving forward, addressing the operational challenges and expanding the museum's offerings will be essential in realizing its full potential. By investing in staffing, enhancing visitor experiences, and promoting educational programs, the Gujrat Museum can become a key player in cultural preservation and education, ensuring that the stories of the past are not only remembered but also celebrated by future generations. In doing so, it will contribute

significantly to the cultural landscape of the region, instilling a sense of pride and identity within the community while attracting interest from beyond its borders.

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