

Wooden Balconies in Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate- *from Bhāṭi Gate to Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān*

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Abstract

Walled City of Lahore is a complex of old and new constructions. Commerce has brought the need of multi storied buildings within the existing surroundings. Contemporary trends of the buildings do not always embrace unique ornate features which are present in some of the old buildings that are badly neglected in current situation. Wooden balconies of old historical houses in the Walled City are the most attractive feature for the tourist and historians. A few wooden balconies from Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate are selected for this paper. Intention is to document this rich tradition of stylistic and conventional construction of wooden balconies which is ghastly disappearing and to raise and address complex issues associated with the preservation of this priceless heritage.

Key Words: Traditional Wooden Balconies, Priceless Heritage, Decay, Conservation.

1. Introduction

Walled City of Lahore possesses most vulnerable heritage in form of extraordinary historical masonry works, doors, windows, and wooden balconies as regular feature of many buildings. This treasure is unique and priceless. In the urge to explore and investigate this treasure of wooden balconies in Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate this study is conducted. Analyzing historical structures of these wooden balconies I came to know a number of causes that are affecting adversely this valuable heritage. Several reasons of structural decay are documented in this paper with an elaborate description of decorative features of these balconies.

Area of study is Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate, which includes some muḥallah/s, kūḥa/s, Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate Bāzār and Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān. This is mandatory describing here that word 'Andrūn' which is used repeatedly in address of houses and text means 'inside'. This area is generally called Andrūn by locals so it is obligatory to write it this way so that the balconies can be easily located.

Balconies that are located in main bāzār are mentioned with directions as Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate Bāzār and Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān. Other balconies that are located in muḥallah/s or kūḥa/s are mentioned with Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate. All photographs included in this research are captured by author.

Visually captivating balconies of Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate reveal the taste of makers and the owners of the houses. These balconies embrace unique ornate features on traditional structural components. The design of wooden balconies is predominantly challenging since balconies are

applied with structural fundamentals. Either a balcony is designed with intricate design details or just with simple geometrical shapes and motifs; a conscious effort of design and symmetry is prevalent in every structure.

It is important to ensure a high level of conservation of these existing balconies before they lose remaining features. Damages that are happening due to ill maintenance would not have been occurred if the understanding of root cause is kept in mind. However, shortage of skilled artisans for urgent problems is also a major cause of such loss.

Illegal encroachments have ruined the real design and planning of Walled City where residential houses were beautifully adorned with rich masonry facades possessing magnificent wooden balconies and doors. Current circumstances have compromised the beauty of centuries old buildings. Physical decomposition of many architectural structures and the demolition and rebuilding in the Walled City are continuously losing its historic ground.

The enduring global profits of cultural heritage are often low-priced against openings for instant domestic economic development. Instead of conservation of valuable heritage many historical features are torn down for modern constructions and what is left is not preserved carefully. Remaining living heritage is neglected or surrounded by inadequately designed commercial development. This commercial development has brought irreversible loss to this heritage.

2. Celebrated Lahore and its Renowned Walled City

Lahore is the traditional capital of the Punjab, a rich, agricultural zone made more fertile by a network of

irrigation canals. It is situated on the left bank of Ravi River, one of the five rivers that give the Punjab its name, with the walled city on an ancient mound in its north quadrant.ⁱ We do not know what the precise limits of the city of Lahore are today. Once 'Lahore' lived only within the walled area. During British period it brought Muzang,

Mughalpura and Mianmir into its municipal and cantonment limits. But, today Lahore has encompassed a vast area between Jallo and in the east to Shāhdara in the west and from Kot Khawāja Sa'id in the north to Muhlanwāl and Rāiwānd in the south and south east. And still, it is ever expanding and enlarging in all possible and permissible directions-particularly towards south.ⁱⁱ

No one knows history that how old is Lahore. The available historical record is insufficient and the archeological statistics are inadequate and full of loopholes. The popular notion that Lahore derives its name from Lov, Loh or Lava, the son of the celebrated Rāja Rāmchandra, does not emerge in the historical documentation until 1695-96 (when a Hindu historian Sujan Rāi mentioned it in his Khulāṣāt al- Tawārīkh). The consent among historians is that Lahore unquestionably predates by numerous centuries the occupation of the area by Maḥmūd of Ghazna in the early year of the 11th century, but it is not assured by how long. The imperfect excavation conducted in 1959 inside the Lahore Fort and the ḥavelī of Dhayān Singh in the Said Miṭhṭha Bāzār allowed to broaden the history of Lahore city back to the 6th century, unless some new verification come to light from excavations at latent sites.ⁱⁱⁱ

The earliest genuine written resources from pre Muslim times pertinent to the history of Lahore dates from 982, in an unidentified geographical treatise, the Ḥadūd-ī Ālam, Lahore is mentioned as a shihir (town) inhabited by infidels with several districts, markets, temples, and orchards.^{iv}

Lahore has witnessed in the past countless historical and cultural shocks through assaults, conquests, settlements, immigrations as well as evacuation. It has many settlements scattered all over the city the name of which reflect their diverse origin in geography and races- or their divisions into different groups pertaining to different professions particularly those devoted to crafts and arts.^v The hierarchies of political power, social status, caste, and calling were visibly represented in its substantial arrangement, whose pattern of urban spaces and street system was comparable to those of other customary cities in the Middle East and South Asia.^{vi}

Various cultural invasions and inroads never took the intelligence, humour and hospitality out of the people of Lahore. They always received outsiders open heartedly, allowed them to establish their separate localities, either according to their mores of geographical origins such as Mughalpura, Muḥallah Kāshigarān, Murādabādi colony, or according to their ethnicity such as Muḥallah Kakkeza'ian, Takiya Sādhuan, Bhāti Dārwāza, or even according to their occupation such as Bāghbān pura,

Ṭhaṭṭhi Malaḥān, Muḥallah Chābak Swārān, Bāzār Patang-Sāzān, Muḥallah Rang-Raizān, Muḥallah Pat-Rangān, Qaṣairah Bāzār, Dabbi Bāzār, Muḥallah Kundī-Gārān, Mūchī Dārwāza, Muḥallah Ṣaḥāfān, Muḥallah Kāghaz-Sāzān, Galī Pātūlyan, Suha Bāzār, Bāzār Dālgrān, etc.^{vii}

During the Mughal period, the Walled City seemed to have developed and extended south east and west from the focal point of the Fort, where all the palaces and ḥavelī/s of the rich were located, ordinary people-craftsmen, artisans and merchants- lived further away.^{viii} Except for the forty years of Māhārāja Rānjīt Singh's rule, the period from the forth decade of the 18th century until the annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849 was one of pillage and anarchy. Little was built, and entire muḥallah/s were destroyed. After this destruction, reconstruction wrought change, and with it an indifference to historic buildings and their maintenance, a situation that has continued unabated to this day.^{ix} Lahore city walls were destroyed by the British shortly after they annexed the Punjab in 1849 access to the Walled City is still joined through 13 gates. Starting with the main gate between the Fort and the Walled City in the north and progressing clockwise, they are named: Raushnī, Masti, Kaṣhmīri, Shāirānwālā, Yakkī, Delhi, Akbarī, Mūchī, Shah 'Almī, Lāhāuri, Mori, Bhāti, and Ṭaksālī.^x

A new settler may come from any part of the country, he may belong to any society, speak any language and even many communicate a different faith, Lahori/s have always been welcoming their guests who arrived here for a momentary visit or for a permanent stay without any let and interference and without any prejudice- racial, religious or linguistic.^{xi} Lahore possesses many exceptional features, that deserve the consideration of both the architectural historian and the urban conservator. Its architecture reflects both its imperial and its regional history. Many rulers of Lahore have encircled the ancient Walled City within arrangement of impressive monuments to their power and taste.^{xii}

Old Lahore with its tapered, crowded dark lanes, decaying historic ḥavelī/s (mansions), takiya/s (Community centers), and baiṭhak (large living room of wealthy people) and a large number of mosques point to a sharp dissimilarity to modern housing scheme and buildings, complexes, super markets and boulevards, which have sprung up all around the Walled City during the past five decades.^{xiii} Within the Walled City, one moves along a complicated road system that defines the nature and extent of the different localities. These can be ranked according to a hierarchy descending from the main "spine" (guzr) to the "neighbourhood" (muḥallah) and finally the Individual Street or cul-de-sac (Band-galī).^{xiv}

Today the Walled City is a densely packed habitation for some 200,000 persons living in 2.5 square kilometers (including the Fort), with around 120 kilometers of streets

and some 20,000 buildings.^{xv} The buildings were mainly residential commercial, service or carriage houses (ṭwailah), and social and religious (mosques, Imām bārgāh shrines, temples, Gurūdawāra, Dharamshālā, marriage houses), punctuated by open square and gardens.^{xvi}

Among the more outstanding examples of Mughal architecture in the Walled City were the great ḥavelī/s. The prodigious economic and political power of their owners is expressed in their awesome size. While the average house of the rich merchant in the Walled City might have occupied a ground area of about 200 to 300 meters each, all of it built upon, an average ḥavelī of the nobility during the height of Mughal rule could cover as much as 2 to 3 hectors. Although there must have been earlier prototypes, the earliest of the surviving ḥavelī/s date only to Akbari period. Those built in Akbar's time and during the region of Jāhangīr were all close to the Fort. However in the period of Shāhjahān the largest of them were built chiefly in the Raṭṭā Maidān.^{xvii} A number of these buildings in Walled City present remarkable architectural elements of inestimable value.

3. Traditional Wooden Balconies in Andrūn Bhāti Gate

The affluent architectural character of Walled City is notable by its Mughal and Colonial constructions with porches, galleries and balconies. In these buildings balconies are characteristically noticeable elements of construction. Wooden balconies in Walled City building constructions are key elements in determining its style, and play a noteworthy role in its appearance and that of the cityscape.

Historically, balconies were an extended or projected space outside room where house owners sometimes could find a secluded alteration into their buildings. These are exterior living space, and a place to meet and communicate with neighbors and greet visitors from above. Their overhangs also protect windows and doors below from direct sun and rain, allowing them to stay open during rains.

Many wooden balconies of Walled City have been disappeared with the course of time and we do not find any remains of them and many houses have been transformed into modern construction of concrete. These balconies have a valuable manipulation, not only for the interior, but they are an attractive part of the streetscape.

In view of the fact that wood structures in exterior applications are subject to weathering and high moisture levels which is another factor in this loss. And presently poor alterations and replacements in original designs are unavoidable due to the negligence of owners or tenants residing in these buildings. This is highly important to raise awareness of the historical value and preservations of this rich cultural heritage of Walled City to be secured. Bhāti Gate is the area of focus for this research and to raise a few dialogues of worth importance a few other

balconies from modern localities have also been added to highlight some contemporary trends in installation of old wooden balconies in modern houses.

Name of the Bhāti Gate is derived from the Rājput Bhāt/s, or Bhātiyā/s, later to be called Bhattis, who were the original rulers of Lahore. These Rājputs still live in the villages to the west of Lahore right up to Sheikhpura.^{xviii} While passing through Bhāti Gate Bāzār, known as Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān one can observe adversely affected traditional balance of residential and non-residential use. Majority of residential houses are either completely in commercial use or sometimes the ground floor is transformed into shops. In one house many families are living mostly belong to labour class. This is the reason that a residential zone is showing vulnerability to expanding commercial pressure. Commercial use requires amendments and alterations as per the requirement of business. These alterations and new constructions are modifying original designs and this is the reason houses are not in their original form any more. If the historical, cultural and artistic heritage is to be preserved for our coming generation then this is high time to apply basis improvements to save decay and destruction which is speedily changing the real essence of walled city culture.

In Bhāti Gate Bāzār a number of buildings towards Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān and Ṭibbī Bāzār have projected wooden balconies. Entering from Bhāti Gate heading towards north is main bāzār famously known as Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār. Continuity of this bāzār leads to Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān and further directs towards Ṭibbī Bāzār. This main bāzār gives access on both sides to a number of galī/s, muḥallah /s, ṭwailah/s and kūḥa/s. Some of them that are focused for the study of wooden balconies are, Muḥallah Islām Khān, Galī Maḥzan walī, Muḥallah Chawmālān, Muḥallah Ghauthiyah, Nūr Muḥallah, Ṭwailah Shaikhān, Muḥallah Jalūkiān, Muḥallah Pat-Rangān, Muḥallah Jalūtiān, Galī Ma'i Gulābū, Kūḥa Mūnshī Ladhda, Kūḥa Kabābiyān (band)^{xix}, and Jaugī Muḥallah. (Plate.1)

Wooden balconies of several houses are normally extended from the face of the building, generally 76cm to 1.21 meters and typically do not include an extended roof structure above rather a separate projection of wood covered with corrugated tin sheet to protect it from climatic effects. These balconies act as outdoor corridors frequently on one level and infrequently on two levels across the façade, supported by columns or posts. In some cases, galleries are protected by an extension of main building roof whereas frequently with a separate extended roof of wood applied by corrugated tin sheet.

These wooden balconies are made up of many components. These components work all together to complete an incorporated and amalgamated visual, corresponding to architectural and structural principle that is attribute of a building's type and style. It is important to communicate that all balconies do not have

all components rather they vary in style and design. Most common components are roofing, ceiling, frieze, wood ornaments, flooring, privacy screen, balustrade, columns or posts, or brackets. Areas covered by a balcony included windows, doors and wall surface which require less maintenance, nevertheless components of balcony require regular maintenance due to exposure to sun, wind and rain.

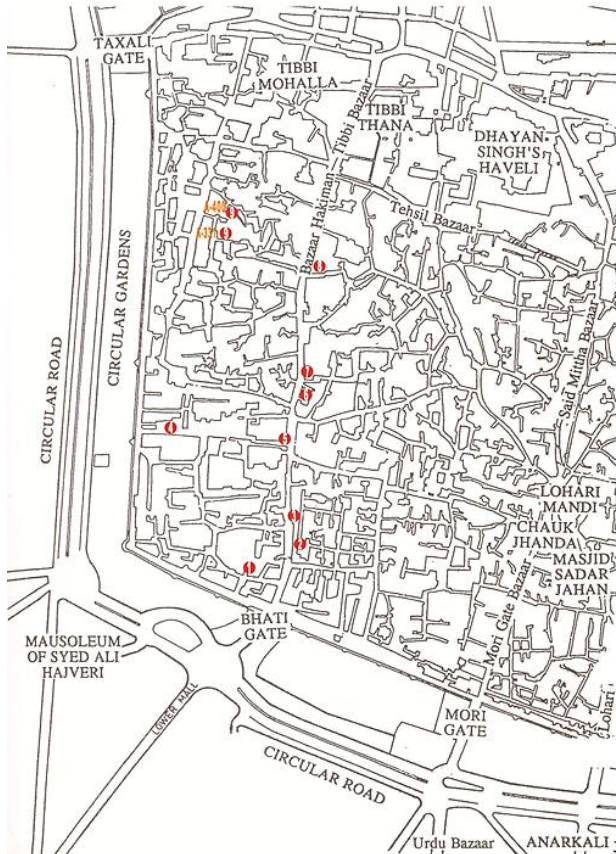


Plate.1 Location of Wooden Balconies in Andrūn Bhāti Gate, on Map of Walled City

3.1 House # B/217, Muḥallah Islām Khān, Galī Shar Dil, Andrūn Bhāti Gate

Muḥallah Islām Khān, Andrūn Bhāti Gate, was an area of great political importance before partition due to the center of Muslim community. House # B/217 in Muḥallah Islām Khān, Galī Shar Dil famously known as Makhzan House and thaikaidāron ki havelī, is owned by a family of great political standing who participated in Pakistan Movement. In 1940 this house was declared as Muslim League house. The house was also honoured due to the publishing of Makhzan magazine where Māulāna ‘Abd al-Qādir Āzād and Ḥafiz Jālandhrī were editors.^{xx} (Plate.2) Building of the house is approximately 400 years old, covering area roughly one kanal and possesses unique woodworks and stained glass adorning interior of the house and also includes a well preserved wooden balcony which is titivating the main façade of the house.

Length of the balcony is approximately nine meters and width is 76cm. Height of the balcony from front is 2.43 meters and from the edge attached with wall is 2.59 meters developing 16cm slopping roof. Ceiling of the roof is made of wooden planks joining with the frame of louvers. Wooden bars of louvers are always angled which let light and air come in but keep out rain, straight sunshine, and noise. Whole structure of the balcony is painted in light blue as one of the best ways to protect wood features is standard painting but sometimes disproportionate over layering of paint destroy the details of the delicate wood carvings.

Front of the balcony is divided by five big and four small multi-foil arched openings supported with Chamfered posts. These chamfered posts are redecorated with a vase shaped base. Decorative wood elements such as frieze, fret work or spandrels adorned with visual concentration and are précised to a building's style and period of construction. Spandrels of these chamfered posts are decorated with carved flower and leaves pattern drawn symmetrically on both sides of big openings whereas small openings have three divisions of carved motifs to bring a different design balance. Upper section of these openings has sets of louvers in each section. Bigger openings have four sets and small openings are with two sets of louvers. Above these louvers is saw toothed frieze which is beautifully carved with delicate symmetrical geometric patterns.



Plate.2 Makhzan House, House # B/217, Muḥallah Islām Khān, Galī Shāir Dil.

Area above frieze is cornice which is divided into two running grooves. Simplicity of the frieze in appearance adds grace to the balcony and brings a balance to the structural design. Furthermore roof of the balcony is covered with corrugated tin sheet to save wood from

weather effects specifically rain water. Though balcony is well preserved but some of the components are deteriorating and require repair and regular maintenance such as joints and decorative fan shaped fringes of projection. Lower section of the columns is fixed balustrade divided by symmetrically set grooved compartments in square and rectangular shapes. Exterior of these compartments is decorated with fine grooves however inner side has flat divisions without any decorative elements and reveals over layering of paint that was applied during years. Sophistication and simplicity in design divisions and motifs applied to balcony add grace to the whole structure and giving it a remarkable appearance.

3.2. House # 597-B, Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate Bāzār

Walking out of the Muḥallah Islām Khān, Galī Shar Dil back to the main Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate Bāzār is house # 597-B displaying a board of Hero Band fastened with its balcony that faces main bāzār. This building is surrounded by many other musical bands including Geo Band, Millat Band, Bādshāh Band, Faryād Band, and Rājah Sāhib Band. Munīr Hussain, master of Hero band, possesses the ownership of the house. (Plate.3)

This house owns historical value due to the stay of National poet, Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal in this house from 1900 to 1905, which is mentioned on the metal plate displayed on façade of ground floor. Area of the house is roughly 1.75 Marla. Facing façade, access of the house is through narrow stairs on left due to the shop on ground level. Climbing up stairs one enters in main room of the house which is richly decorated with musical instruments hung on the walls along with other memoirs in form of photos and trophies. Photos including, Quaid-i Āzam, Allāma Iqbāl along with some religious images and text on one wall and the other wall shows Master Munīr Hussain receiving awards and in a few along with his maestro.

This room in west leads to roughly seven meters long wooden balcony richly painted with bright blue colour. Interior of the rooms is also painted in same bright blue.

Though this house enjoys historical importance and is center of interest for visitors but much attention is not paid to preserve the balcony of this house which is the only and the most prominent feature of this small house. Despite the fact that the structure of this wooden balcony is very old many weights are tied with the structure with various ropes. These include framed portraits of musicians printed on small flexes and a big hoarding of Hero band which is fixed in the center of balcony hiding half of balcony's character. One of the most agonizing acts is brutal nailing in this wooden structure to fix main electric wires and some cables. This behavior shows the ignorance of the house owner about the historical value of the house as an important part of our heritage.

The design of wooden balconies is predominantly challenging since balconies are applied with structural

fundamentals. Optimization of mathematical divisions of these wooden structures is significantly focused. Either a balcony is designed with intricate design details or just with simple geometrical shapes and motifs; a conscious effort of design and symmetry is prevalent in every structure. This balcony demonstrates five small and four big openings supported with chamfered posts in its structural design from front. Rectangular formation of big opening is given arched shape with simple cusped spandrels without any decoration while small openings are round cusped arches with a centrally carved leaf motif. Some of the openings have lost pieces of spandrels. Entire structure displays simplicity of design and only decorative feature is balustrade roughly 46cm high with decorative metal balusters. Above the openings of balcony is clerestory where fixed glass is also painted with same blue which is applied on the wooden structure. Each big opening which is roughly one meter in width and 1.28 meters in height has four sections of glass in clerestory whereas the small section has one but due to the thick application of paint on glasses this clerestory has lost its functional meanings. Some of the glasses of clerestory are missing that shows the ignorance and carelessness of the house owner. Balcony inside is kept so untidy and the side openings are closed by fixing wooden bars with small intervals. Height of the balcony from front 2.37meters and from the wall side is 2.68 meters that develops roughly 31cm slopped roof which is made of wooden planks and from outside is covered with tin corrugated sheet. This disregard to such an important structure is excruciating. Proper guidance to the owner of the house is required to save this historically important house and the important features of this balcony.



Plate.3 House # 597-B, Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate Bāzār.

3.3. House # B-1100-A, Galī Jauhriyān (band), Muḥallah Jalūtiān, Andrūn Bhāṭi Gate Bāzār

Wooden balcony of House # B-1100-A in Muḥallah Jalūtiān, Galī Jauhriyān (band)^{xxi}, is another example of laxity in preservation of this valuable structure. Wood is neither painted nor polished therefore deterioration due to weather effects is evident. Decay of various features of

the structure is making it a picture of recklessness. Overall structure of the balcony is traditionally divided into openings but symmetry of these sections is different from balconies mentioned before. Central seven arched openings are of equal size however two openings on both ends of facade are smaller than central. Due to this dissimilarity in size of central and side arches the further division of clerestory above on both ends display a different geometrical division. (Plate.4)

Facing façade shockingly two opening on left are closed by constructing brick wall and on its right two sections with wooden planks which makes no sense at all. Traditional cusped arches are supported with polygonal columns with decorative base and capital. Base of these columns possess double lotus bud motif and same lotus bud is applied in capital composed in an upside down manner. Floral section of the base ends on a square section which is adorned with carving with applied motif of star. This way the column involves both geometric and floral patterns in round and relief for adornment that brings diversity in design and makes it more appealing.

Same star pattern is applied in carvings of wooden strips that are adorning the projecting joist beam. It is revealed in the form of a running strip below railing with regular intervals that are created with dividing lines to break continuity of motif. This decorated carved strip is followed by one more parallel strip of carving with quatrefoil pattern. This double decorative strip on the edge of projection is a unique feature of beautification. Carvings on both running strips are intricately done and demonstrate remarkable skill of artisan. Pieces of both decorative strips are no more joined appropriately and with the passage of time gapes have developed which are not mended. Since the balcony is neither painted nor polished therefore moisture accumulation at joints weakened the grip of structural components. This is the clear reason that various elements lost grip and structural damage occurred. Many pieces of lower quatrefoil patterned strip are missing and the underside of the balcony flooring is also scantily damaged. Wooden planks of underside of balcony are hanging down from their original position which is somehow very dangerous. A vertically hanging wooden bar with remains of fringes is the only evidence that projection may have regular fringe ornamentation which is completely disappeared.

Another ornamental component of the structure is decorative metal balusters, designed in a combination of straight and spiral lines. In various balconies these metal balusters are either forged or welded frequently following geometrical designs.

An additional exclusive feature of this balcony is double clerestory, first above arches and the other developed with a wooden frame in between cusped area of arches. Spandrels display carved rosettes which give grace to the surface. Frieze above clerestory is adorned with delicate geometrical fringe made of thin wooden strips which partly remains rest destroyed. This delicate

fringe is a remarkable ornamental feature of this balcony. The artisan has skillfully expressed the spirit of material in the making of this fragile fringe.

It is important to ensure a high level of conservation of these existing balconies before they lose remaining features. Either a financial assistance to residents should be provided or some valuable strategy can be set to educate people about the value of such structures.



Plate.4 House #6, Galī Jauhriyān(band), Andrūn Bhati Gate Bāzār.

3.4. House # B-388-A, Muḥallah Chawmālān, Andrūn Bhāti Gate

Walking in Muḥallah Chawmālān towards Faṣil road at its far end is House # 388-B.

House is in a very dreadful condition, it has turned to be ruined due to settlement from foundations which can be clearly seen in the disposition of brickwork of walls. This settlement of soil has dilapidated complete structure included its balcony. (Plate.5)

Wooden balcony of this house is characteristically unique in style but completely frayed though residents are daringly using it. None of the components are in good condition, nonetheless, basic image of the structure shows symmetry with seven small divisions and six big but in most of the parts symmetry is lost due to alterations. Now it represents a combination of various designs due to alterations that are made with the course of time. Openings of this nine meters long balcony are trabeated in style, showing windows and doors. One door is secured by fixing wooden bars but broken from lower quarter which is traditionally fixed with balustrade, though; none of such security measures are taken for the other door. Two other sections are fixed in bistrā style with movable wooden planks which is a known Kashmiri design.^{xxii} These wooden planks are in shreds though in actual design they are adjustable and can be moved and fixed to control the required amount of wind and light.

Above these openings clerestory is designed in arc shape following geometrical patterns in wooden framework. A conscious effort of symmetry is evident while bringing variation in design. Very few pieces of glass remain in

clerestory and most of them are missing. Louvers of structure follow two variations of designs but every section is frayed. Most of all the beam joist is also dilapidated and whole structures seems to be ruined. Wooden planks of ceiling are absent and most of the area is only covered with tin sheet. A reason of heritage loss in Walled City is rapid economic conversion. Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār has shops on the ground floor and residential quarters above. Most of the residents are not owner rather tenants. They are least bothered about the repairs and maintenance of the buildings. Economical change often wins out over the consciousness of cultural heritage preservation. Buildings have been modernized or altered to fulfill the requirement of economical growth. Even at national level departments working for heritage protection do not give assurance that a major cultural asset will live to tell the tale. The enduring global profits of cultural heritage are often low-priced against openings for instant domestic economic development. Instead of conservation of valuable heritage many historical features are torn down for modern constructions and what is left is not preserved carefully. Remaining living heritage is neglected or surrounded by inadequately designed commercial development. This commercial development has brought irreversible loss to the heritage.



Plate.5 House # 388-B, Mūhallah Chawmālān, Andrūn Bhāti Gate.

3.5 House # 598-A, Galī Mā'i Gulābū, Nūr Muḥallah Mauḥ, Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār

Double balcony of House # 598-A, Galī Mā'i Gulābū, flamboyantly painted in bright green convincingly captures the attention of visitor. Owner of the house Muhammad Saleem is not the resident of this building however he has his shop on ground floor. He said "I bought this building in 1995 for business and to save my money. Total area of this house is 3.5 Marla. I kept ground floor for my own business and rest of the building is given on rent."^{xxiii} (Plate.6)

Gigantic structure of its balcony is spread over two sides including façade on two levels continuing to side lane and looks attractive even if viewed from distance.

Remarkable craftsmanship is evident in the making and selection of decorative patterns and motifs. The prominent characteristic of this balcony is its ornamentation possessing a continuity and plentitude of decorative elements with a profusion of adornment. Overall design is created by the repetition of same motifs or forms applied for the handling of ornamentation. Every decorative element worked together and developed the overall form further enriched with other embellishments. Balcony looks richly decorative but none of the ornamentation is excrescence or superfluous.

In appearance two styles are applied in its structure, trabeated on lower level and arcuated on upper. Total length of the balcony adding both sides is approximately 16 meters displaying ten wide and eleven narrow divisions on both stories. Wide openings on lower level are closed with doors and protected with 61cm high wooden balustrade with wooden balusters. A few additional wooden bars are also fixed to raise the protection level. Arch shaped clerestories are designed with geometrical floral pattern that follows strict mathematical rules for accuracy of design. Clerestory is set with glasses that are painted with same colour which is used on wooden structure of balcony. Paint application on glass pieces ruined the function of glass that let light come in. louvers exist with customary intervals and roof covered with corrugated tin sheet. Ornamentation on doors arises from the construction; none of the additional idea of embellishment is applied on them. Beam joist is decorated with fan like fringe that partly exist on façade, rest of the area has lost this ornamentation with the course of time due to ill maintenance.

Upper level displays arcuated balcony where each arch is supported with polygonal columns with lotus motif adorning the base and capital. In ornamentation motifs are isolated device, sometimes symmetrical or asymmetrical, simple or complex in nature. Motifs when used in a rhythmic mode to fabricate design, theoretically extending to infinity, shape a 'pattern' or also 'unit' or fundamental. Motifs when used as single in an ornate style they are known as bounded designs and such bounded designs are known as 'finite' or predetermined designs.^{xxiv}

Overall condition of balconies in appearance seems good but a few alterations have damaged structure at various places. Disposition of joints have not been paid attention and most of all brutal nailing in structure at various points have damaged delicate details. Due to nailing some of the ornamental details cracked and it is irreversible loss. While proper repairing of the broken parts of balustrade it is tied with rope. Walled City possesses most vulnerable heritage in form of remarkably historical masonry works, doors, windows, and wooden balconies as regular feature of many buildings. This treasure is unique and priceless. Current situation of the immeasurable loss require attention of concerned

departments for the conservations of these historical features. Most of the times reasons of loss are left unobserved and then we have to face an irreversible loss. Damages due to ill maintenance would not have been occurred if the understanding of root cause is kept in mind. However, shortage of skilled artisans for urgent problems is also a major cause of such loss.

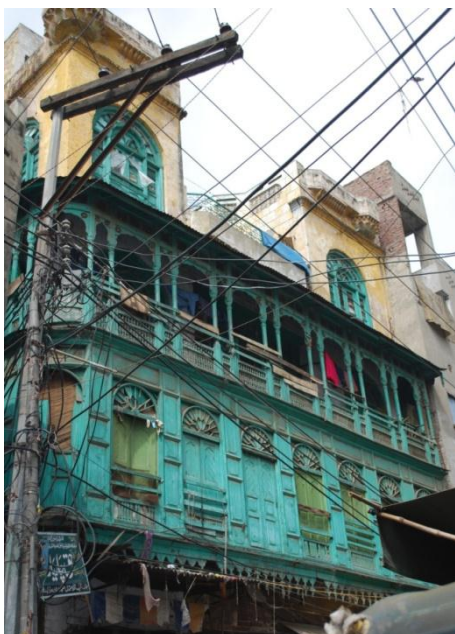


Plate.6 House # 598-A, Galī Mā'ī Gulābū, Nūr Muḥallah Mauṛ, Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār.

3.6. House # 2115-A, Kūcha Mūnshī Ladhda, Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār

Kūcha Mūnshī Ladhda is opposite to Galī Mā'ī Gulābū, and house # 2115 is the property of Ḥājī Jamshaid Chaththā, popularly known as Bholā Bīr. He owns many houses in Kūcha Mūnshī Ladhda. Area of house # 2115-A is 5.5 Marla. Façade of this house from the side of bāzār is adorned with two identical bistrā balconies on two levels. (Plate.7)

Bistrā balcony is a local term as mentioned before and is a known Kashmirī design. Both balconies are identical in shape, size and design. Central section of the balcony is three meters and both angular sides are 91cm in width, whereas the height of balcony is three meters. An air conditioning unit is installed in upper balcony and room cooler in lower. Structure of the balcony is supported with metal outriggers.

These balconies are not separate projections in front of rooms divided by walls rather when seen from inside they are extended area of floor that are increasing the total size of room. The clerestory of this balcony is covered with wooden planks from inside deadening the function of this section though from outside it holds a structure of fixed glass symmetrically divided in squares and rectangles. Whole structure of this balcony is freshly

painted with grayish blue colour from inside though lost layer of colour from exterior.

Balconies on both levels have five openings supported with fluted columns with lotus base and capital and spandrels with carved rosettes. Each opening can be described in two components, Balustrade and movable wooden planks. Wood is exposed from exterior surface of balcony which shows the poor maintenance of this balcony from outside. Glass pieces of clerestory are also broken but as glass cannot be seen from inside so one cannot pay attention to that loss. Very few parts of decorative fringe projected from cornice remain; a big area has lost this ornamental feature. Same damage has occurred with lower decorative fringe which has completely disappeared from two sections and partly remain in other. Balustrade of the balcony and other movable wooden planks are equal in size and from outside hold ornamental geometrical divisions which follow design symmetry. Originally movable planks of openings were fixed with hooks which are mostly replaced with available latches now.

Lower balcony is showing same kind of damages because delicate decorations are partly missing. These delicate ornamental features are exposed to weather and require additional maintenance or replacement which is completely neglected in these structures. As a part of regular maintenance customary painting is also required, this is done from inside but neglected on exterior.

One very diverse component of this balcony is an adjustable stenciled screen in the lower movable plank. Two perforated wooden planks horizontally move in a wooden frame with the help of a wooden handle fixed in the center. By adjusting it one can control amount of light that enters the room. Other than this balcony, this house adheres to many other valuable wooden articles in its construction.

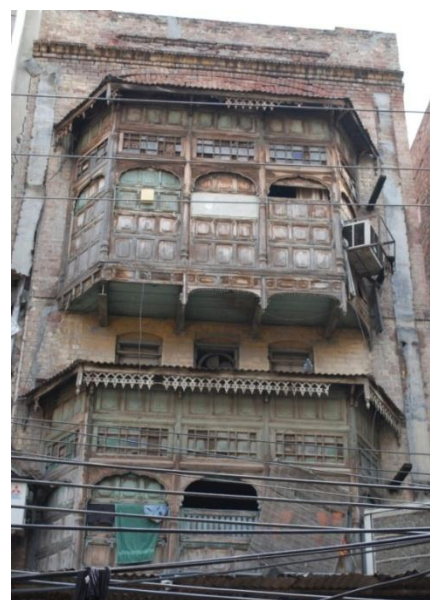


Plate.7 House # 2115-A, Kūcha Mūnshī Ladhah, Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār.

3.7 House # 2117-A, Kūcha Mūnshī Ladhha, Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār

Hāji Jamshaid Chaththa owner of House # 2115-A, in Kūcha Mūnshī Ladhha, also possess ownership of House # 2117-A. Daughter of Hāji Jamshaid Chaththa is living on ground floor while above stories of the house are given on rent. Façade of this house is also decked out with same bistrā style wooden balcony. This building is popularly known as 'Leaning Tower of Bhāti Gate', because the whole structure of the building has leaned to one side. (Plate.8) Balcony of this house displays similar design on exterior with few minute variations but the most annoying experience was the inside situation of the room from where the balcony is accessed. House lady has blocked the accessed to the balcony by fixing a huge cupboard in front of it. This kind of behaviour clearly shows the negligence of people about the value and function of this historical structure.

Historic houses of Walled City have served generations of families. Mostly new generation is not happy living in these narrow streets with unplanned and disorganized constructions have been added due to commercial needs, therefore, many have moved to modern societies. Houses are given on rent to families and people running small industries and they are not concerned about the preservation of the building components that are damaged or deteriorated. Not only the real design of Walled City is compromised due to commercial use, houses are also suffering alterations due to the demands of businesses that are run in these buildings. Structures of many houses are at risk and becoming a danger to the inhabitants.

Illegal encroachments have ruined the real design and planning of Walled City where residential houses were beautifully adorned with rich masonry facades possessing magnificent wooden balconies and doors. Current circumstances have compromised the beauty of centuries old buildings.



Plate.8 House # 2117-A, Kūcha Mūnshī Ladhha, Andrūn Bhāti Gate Bāzār.

3.8 Lāl Havelī, Plot #11/H, 1237, Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān

Wooden balconies in Walled City physically evolve a complex representation of assorted life styles leaving behind an articulate history of cultures developed under the influence of rulers and religions. Wooden architectural features in the buildings of Walled City such as balconies are unique cultural entity and encompass historical profile, cultural taste of ornamentation, inherited tradition, technique and artisan's remarkable skill. Ornate elements and carvings transformed these balconies into significant art form which was an integral part of architecture and life of people of Walled City. Such astonishing craftsmanship is evident in the design of balcony beautifying the façade of distinctively known Lāl Havelī constructed on Plot # 11/H, 1237 in Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān. (Plate.9)



Plate.9 Lāl Havelī, Plot # 11/H, 1237 in Bāzār-i Ḥakīmān.

Visually captivating balcony is projecting the taste of maker and the owner of the house. It embraces unique features in which basic structure is following traditional bistrā style with movable wooden planks in between openings, additionally these multi-foiled arched openings are holding windows of metal mesh with decoratively design framework. Arches are supported with fluted columns with traditional lotus base and capitals and spandrels are decorated with conventional sunflower motif. At the same time all movable wooden planks between arched openings are decorated with carved octofoil pattern. Another remarkable decorative feature is its balustrade. It displays stencil carving, known as pinjrā work,^{xxv} with précised geometrical sections making patterns. This ornamentation shows remarkable skill of the artisan. Same ornamental work is applied above arched openings. This kind of incredible skill shows, there once was living a community who was dedicated to such artistic pursuits. This was the contribution of those master builders and skilled craftsmen who added grace and magic of such creations. And expressed and depicted the soul of society, religion and nature.

Metal mesh windows are with an exclusive feature of this balcony. Metal mesh windows are used to prevent

from insects and bugs specially house flies and mosquitoes that cause various diseases. These metal mesh windows are formed with geometrical design within the frame that gives strength and support to the mesh. Hinge joints of some windows are broken and need repair. Some other damages are also evident in the structure such as fringe adorning the cornice.

Balcony is in good condition and all of its components are in order. Movable planks of openings have sets of hooks to fix these planks, both on sides and upper section. All components are in working condition which shows the regular maintenance of the structure.

3.9 House # A-331, and House # A-400, Jaugī Muḥallah, Andrūn Bhāti Gate

Structure of each wooden balcony holds some common customary components though we find variation in embellishments. Two houses of Jaugī Muḥallah, A-331 and A-400 are worth mentioning here due to their exceptionally decorative balconies with stained-glass.

Though, with the course of time these centuries' old houses have faced structural damages included masonry ornamentations as well as ornamentations of balconies. Since centuries stained glass is taken as a sacred element in architecture. Light streams in and is filtered through these coloured glass and create such magical atmosphere having magnitude.

Stained- glass in balcony of A-331 is set in clerestory within the frame work of geometrical patterns. (Plate.10) A few remains also exist in the stencil carvings of spandrels. A number of stained glass pieces are disappeared from the clerestory frames. Complex design of clerestory above big openings has partly lost its wooden frame as well. That may have been the cause of loss. Because the repair and maintenance of wooden frame that holds these coloured glass pieces is of prime importance. Symmetry of design has been applied in all sections. While viewing from inside light that reflects through coloured glass brings a whole new dimension to interior of house.

Balcony of House # A-400 holds a different scheme of stained glass application. (Plate.11) Stained glass is not only applied on clerestory, it is also applied on small sections between openings above balustrade. Many pieces are damaged and many sections have completely lost coloured glass. A very simple geometrical scheme is applied to fix these coloured glass pieces in wooden frames set in small sections of openings.

All the way through analyzing various designs of balconies in Walled City, one finds sensible and intelligent use of functional ornamentation which remained persistent characteristic of most of the structures. This sensible use of ornamentation on balconies is understandable among people who wished to maintain certain customary forms of sanctified ornate motifs by

religious connection. Such as frequent presence of lotus motif as base and capital of columns and some repeatedly used geometrical designs in ornamentation of structures have religious significance. Whatever reason behind the use of such decorative motifs is, the intention is quite apparent in richness of effect, strength and clarity.

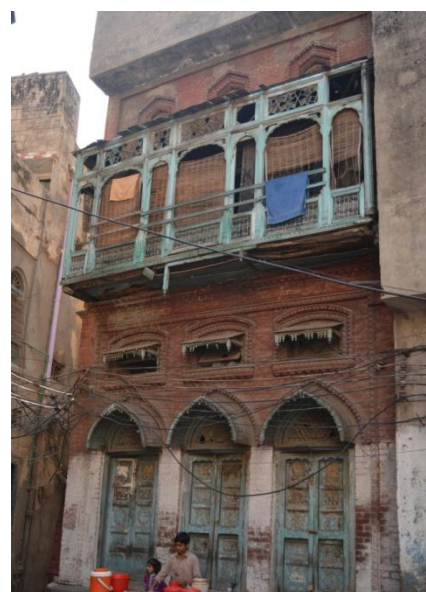


Plate.10 House # A-331, Jaugī Muḥallah, Andrūn Bhāti Gate.



Plate.11 House# A-400, Jaugī Muḥallah, Andrūn Bhāti Gate.

3.10 Swiss Avenue, Āhshiyāna, 72-B, Gulberg-3, Lahore

Today Walled City's infrastructure is critically vulnerable. Physical decomposition of many architectural structures and the demolition and rebuilding in the Walled City are continuously losing its historic value. In order to safeguard its historical and cultural links rapid implementations of cultural heritage conservation plans are required. Most important step that does not involve much funding is educating the residents of Walled City about the cultural value of these magnificent structures.

While surveying various structural loss and damages of wooden balconies in Andrūn Bhāti Gate I noticed that the culture which is vanishing so fast from the area it belongs is transferred in modern houses. People who have knowledge and taste are adding components of old architectural tradition in their newly built houses. One such example is the house of Saleem Jilani, an engineer by profession, resident of Swiss Avenue, Āhshiyāna, 72-B, Gulberg-3, Lahore. (Plate.12)

Backyard of house is adorned with many architectural components brought from old houses of various area of tradition. These components include old doors, balcony balusters etc. He said, "Balustrade of the backyard balcony was once a part of house at Jain Mandir, I bought it when house was demolished and installed it in my newly designed balcony."^{xxvi} Same application is seen in various parts of house and now the building is a fusion of tradition and modernity.



Plate.12 Swiss Avenue, Ahshiyana, 72-B, Gulberg-3, Lahore.

Conclusion

Preserving heritage is not about saving bricks it is about saving profound layers of knowledge about lives of our ancestors. If we do not save our heritage we erase the narratives of our history, as if the communities who came before us never lived with art and aesthetics. Historically important buildings add to our cultural identity.

The Walled City is centre of the cultural and architectural heritage of Lahore. Elegant ḥavelī/s, multi-storey houses, wooden doors, windows and above all splendid wooden balconies are some of the celebrated features of Walled City architecture. Since long these balconies, doors, and other features have fascinated the tourists and antiquarians.

Wooden balconies, most appealing feature of Walled City architecture is fallen into poor condition. New areas have become the centre of interest for investment. Now Walled City is a business hub and residential buildings are rapidly converting into business centers or small industries due to their commercial value. Existing balconies are unbelievable examples of superb craftsmanship. These artisans were expert in making

sensible selection of materials and ornamentation motifs. This is the reason that surviving balconies are till today possessing magnetism and capture the sight of tourists.

Delicate ornamentations of these structures are target of weather, and poor maintenance. None of the structure is completely safe or properly restored. Damages to certain degree are evident in structure of every balcony. In many cases the residents are not owners of house rather they are tenants and are not aware of the importance of this valuable living heritage. Raising awareness about the value of this heritage is of fundamental importance. Otherwise, there is not much time that we will lose significant chapters from our past.

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- ^x Ibid.11.
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- ^{xiv} "The Walled City of Lahore" (Lahore: SDWCLP, 2009), 12.
- ^{xv} Ibid., 37.
- ^{xvi} Ibid., 40.
- ^{xvii} Ibid., 31.
- ^{xviii} Majid Sheikh, "Lahore Tales without End" (Lahore: SAHI, 2006), 286.
- ^{xix} Word mentioned in addresses as (band) is Urdu word, means cul-de-sac.
- ^{xx} Miyan Salman, interviewed by Samina Zia Sheikh, Lahore, Pakistan, April 05, 2015.
- ^{xxi} 'Band' is an Urdu word which means cul-de-sac.
- ^{xxii} Bistrā, a local term used for a specific design of balcony, with sliding wooden planks in openings that can be folded and fixed as per requirement of air and light.
- ^{xxiii} Muhammad Saleem, interviewed by Samina Zia Sheikh, Lahore, Pakistan, April 05, 2015.
- ^{xxiv} Jay Thakkar, *Naqsh, "The Art of Carving in Traditional Houses of Gujrat"* (India: S.I.D, C.E.P.T, 2004), 55.
- ^{xxv} Pinjrā, is a local terminology used by wood carvers, who make intricate and précised designs by stenciling out the wood from wooden plank.
- ^{xxvi} Saleem Jilani, interviewed by Samina Zia Sheikh, Lahore, Pakistan, April 03, 2015.

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