

Managing

Committee

Vikram Singhal
Sameer Khara
Alka Smart
Rati Desai
Jaideep Verma
Sandhya Gajjar
Jal Patel

Editorial Team

Avi Sabavala
Arati Desai

Design and Layout

Swapna Kothari

Write to us at

302 A Square
Building, 82 Urmi
Society, Productivity
Road, Vadodara
390007, India
heritagetrustvadodara@gmail.com

Or visit us on

<https://www.heritagetrustbaroda.org/>

And on Facebook
[@heritagetrustbaroda](https://www.facebook.com/heritagetrustbaroda)

From the Editor's Desk

The last three months have seen the world and our lives face some of the biggest challenges of our times. The ongoing pandemic has ensured that in future, the way we work and live will need to adapt to a very different world. However, in challenges lie the seeds of opportunity and in disruptions lie ideas for innovation. Indeed, many businesses have benefitted greatly from a new trending mantra of “disruptive innovation.” These times have certainly brought this concept to the fore. Remote working and using tools of connectivity are now the new norm for us. On a positive note, it has given us an opportunity to step back and focus on our interests and relationships. Humans have realized that time and space is no barrier for reaching out to each other.

The deluge of webinars has made words like Zoom, Webex and a host of other platforms commonplace. It has connected people through business meetings as well as talks that provide excellent knowledge sharing with speakers from across the globe. Heritage enthusiasts have greatly benefitted by such interesting talks delivered right into the comfort of our homes. So, as we prepare to adjust to the new normal, let us take advantage of these modern-day tools to add to our knowledge about our favorite subjects! This issue takes a new focus in discussing how the culture of our city has actually grown from being a homogenous tightly knit community to a more heterogeneous, modern industrial city. While change and advancement are the order of the day, Swapna Kothari's Urbane Column highlights how geographical communities are increasingly having conversations about preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of the past for the future generations. A good blend of modernity that embraces our vibrant heritage augurs well for the quality of life of a community.

A very interesting and vibrant part of our heritage centers around religion and the places of worship within a community. The temple architecture of our country showcases some of the most magnificent structures in the world that not only show advanced structural prowess that withstands the ravages of time and tide, but also great aesthetic beauty and spiritual appeal for any visitor. In this issue, Arati Desai takes us on a journey to explore two iconic temples of our city each having a history and significance of its own.

We invite our readers to share thoughts and experiences related to heritage and wish you good health and safety!

Avi Sabavala

Travelling in time spiritually - a look at two Temples in Vadodara

Nothing speaks more about a city than its history and people. Connecting the population of an ever growing metropolitan, the city's temples are symbols of not only spirituality but also of the community and culture. While temples serve as a community centre of worship, a sacred destination, they also become a landmark around which ancient arts, community celebrations and economy flourishes.

Not only does Vadodara have several popular places of worship like the EME temple and the Isckon temple which are on the list of tourist spots; but the city is home to several historically significant temples too. Dating back to the 19th century, there are some beautiful temples like the Dhundiraj Ganpati Temple in Wadi, the Tarkeshwar Mahadev Temple at Sursagar, the Kamnath Temple on the Ghats of Vishwamitri, the Surya Narayan Mandir near the General Post office, the Amba Mata mandir in Mandvi and the Kubeshwar Dutta temple in Kirti Mandir, each standing tall with a story to tell.

Dhundiraj Ganpati temple: Located in the Wadi area of the old city, The Dhundiraj Ganpati Temple was built during the Gaekwadi era by Gopalrao Mairal, a Sardar in the erstwhile Baroda State. This temple is also known as Mairal's Dhundiraj Ganapati Temple.

This 176-year-old Ganpati temple is a unique blend of Maratha Wada and Gujarati temple architectural styles. Though no longer as majestic as it was in its full glory, this serene temple retains several aspects of its old grandeur. To go in the temple, one must enter a three storey building which houses the shrine. The vahana of Ganpati, Mushak, normally positioned at the feet of the deity, is placed on a pedestal, outside the shrine, facing Lord Ganesh. Idols of the two wives of Lord Ganesh, Riddhi and Siddhi flank the marble idol. The wooden carvings and pillars of the temple display the unique style of carving that is similar to that seen in Tamedkar Wada. It is said that the temple was constructed by labourers from Rajasthan, Mumbai and Hyderabad. Till date the Mairal family continues to be the caretakers of this private temple. Story goes that there lies hidden treasure beneath the fountain of the temple!!

Tarkeshwar Mahadev Temple: On the northern bank of the Sursagar Lake, the Tarkeshwar Mahadev temple was built in memory of Maharani Jamnabai's daughter, Tarabai, who died at a young age. Maharani Jamnabai, the wife of Khanderao Gaekwad, gave birth to Tarabai shortly after the demise of her husband. With the birth of a daughter, it was Malharrao who was crowned the king. But in 1875, after a 5-year rule comprising of bad leadership and tyranny, he was exiled to Madras and Gopalrao, better known as Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III was appointed the ruler of the state.

Near the Sursagar lake, tucked away in a courtyard in the midst of trees, this temple offers serenity in the middle of the bustling city. In order to reach the temple, one has to pass through a bustle of shops and if you don't know where to look you are most likely to miss this temple. Built in the south Indian style of temple architecture, the temple is built on a high plinth and has a sabha mandap and *garbha griha* which is crowned on the exterior with a shikhara. As with the other Shiv temples in the city, the month of Shravan sees devotees throng the temple on the auspicious Mondays. Shivratri also is celebrated in a big way at this temple.

Like many ancient monuments, old temples like these form a significant part of our heritage. Though they remain a testament to the living heritage of a city and continue to enjoy the patronage of the public, it is now necessary to consider their preservation, as each has a story weaved into history, to tell.

Arati Desai

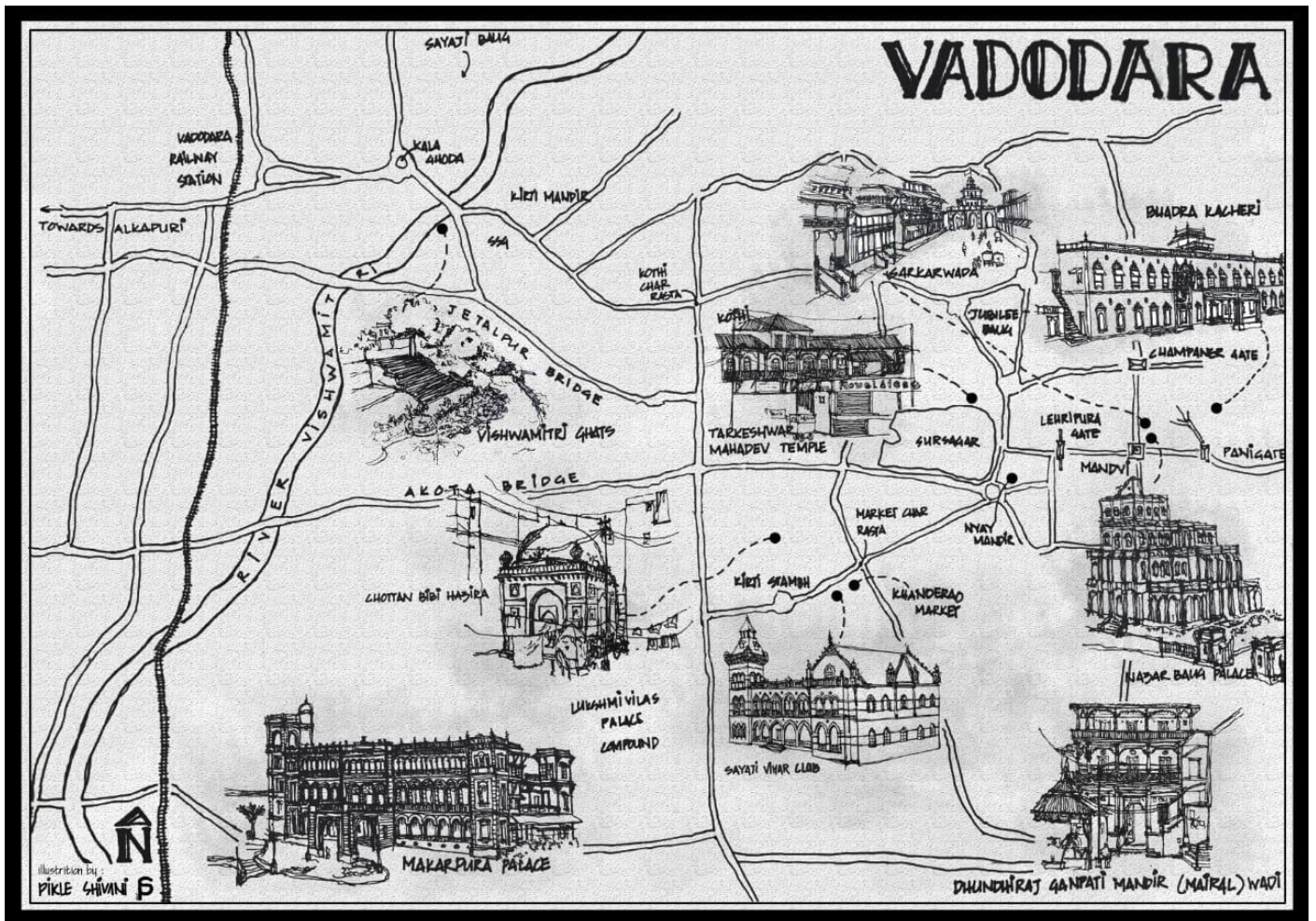
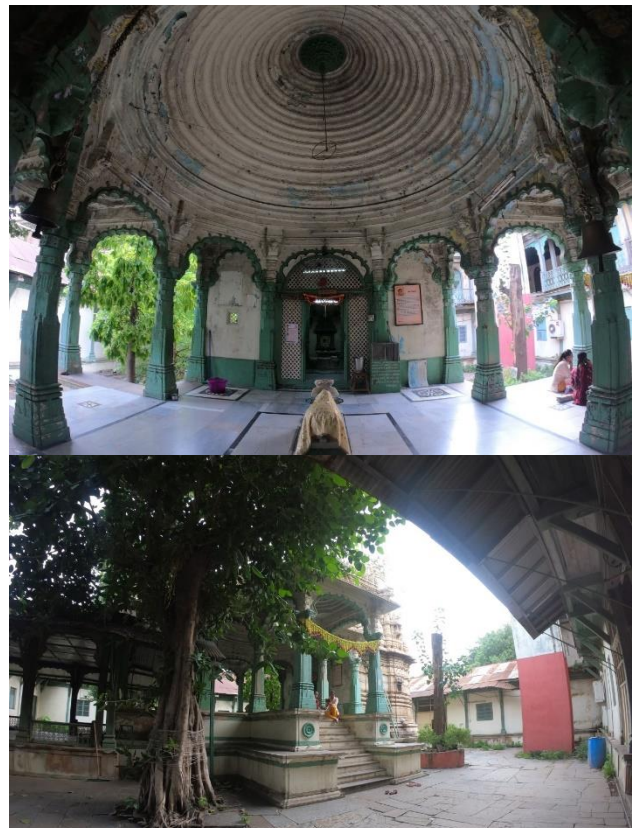
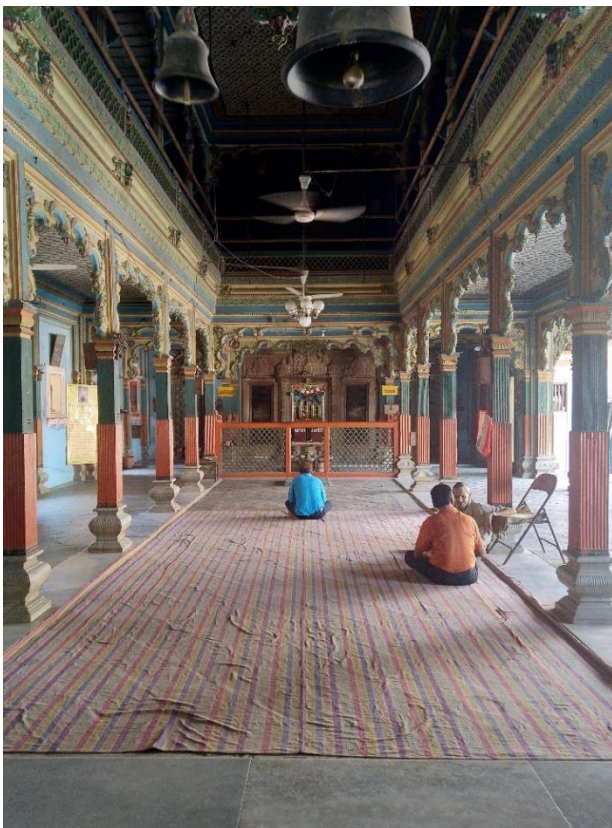


Image Caption: (Top) Mapping of some of the hidden spaces in our city east to the Vishwamitri; (bottom Left) Inside the Dhundiraj Ganpati Temple. Source: Shivani Pikle; (bottom right) Tarkeshwar Mandir inside the mandapa and the Wada around it. Source: Krishna Shah



The Urbane Column

(Disclaimer- Taking the conversation to an academia-oriented outlook, the column is an excerpt from the author's work looking at cultural geographies and the role of heterogenous community in the making of a place. It will be a continuing piece and will cover instances in detail in the next issue)

Over the last decade and more, Vadodara has been struggling to maintain a continuous and sustainable relation with its physical places and historic fabrics. Yet there lies hope, due to individuals and communities who have been part of the city's changing geo-political and cultural landscape from a long time. They are gradually becoming interested in formulating inclusive narratives that would highlight their sense of pride in being part of the collective. There are instances where individuals are able to engage in society in their capacity, be it reusing industrial or famed historical spaces as seen at Space Studio and café's in the once industrial block, to opening up private residences for the occasional traveler via Maddhav Bagh or Arudh Mahal, to celebrating annual urban folk festivals in Navratri and the Vadodara's People Heritage Festival- all that have developed from a sense of collective culture and more. Looking within, the city now encourages a conversation amongst itself to celebrate the interaction with its micro culture.

Heritage has generally remained the preserve of cultural geography. The field of cultural geography looks at places and the way people make sense of them, and while occupying landscapes how the culture evolves creating an identity of both place and people. Although spatial in nature, the field has generated many place-making narratives and traditions evolving to include cultural features of a society, as a collective of different individuals, having grown via its interaction with the local physical and natural environment. 'Culture is a phenomenon that tends to have intensely place-specific characteristics thereby helping to differentiate places from one another' (Allen Scott, 1997), thus human settlements are strongly conditioned by structures from the past while acting as a culture's nucleus. In contrast to well-established narratives of many other Indian historic settlements, small cities like Vadodara (Gujarat) might not be globally acknowledged with monumental architectural markers or widespread representation of its cultural practices but it hosts a multiethnic society with original roots of many still visible.

Despite the earlier known settlements of Ankotakk (3rd BC to 500 AD, present-day Akota area stretching up to the Bhimnath temple complex in SayajiGunj) and its subsequent eastern neighbor Vatapatraka (500-900 AD) situated on a higher elevation (present-day Kothi area)- the city has always been prominently known as the once princely state Badode, ruled by the Gaekwad's from mid-18th century up until Independence. This cultural reference to a people-place narrative has continued in essence in many parts of the city even today. Vadodara has also been under the Gujarat Sultanate, Mughals, and the British influence too, each of whom have left invisible social and cultural hierarchies and lattices. So while the landscape is dotted with notable cultural infrastructure including a World Heritage Park (Champaner-Pavagadh), 11th century fort wall remnants, institutional and cultural landmarks from the 18th and 19th century and primarily Gaekwad period- it is the intangible traditions and communities that intersperse these spaces, and primarily form the city narrative. But post-independence, due to the loss of direct patronage combined with industrialization and globalization, the city's once small and tight knit communities began losing their essence. Slowly it could be tangibly mapped that, '... bonds of kinship, of neighborliness and the sentiments arising out of living together for generations under a common folk tradition' (Louis Wirth, 1938) began to weaken. These were primarily due to increase in heterogeneity within the fabric of the traditional communities- due to migrating families or change in land use that rendered proximity unsafe.

Vadodara's communities in its historic core as well as suburbs including places like Brahmapuri (where the court Brahmins resided), Mogul Wad (officers of Moghul reign), Mehta Pol (among others named after a caste), Race Course (used to be a race track for nobles, now a residential area), have now not only lost original populations but also function and traditional roles.

The Urbane issue for the cultural narrative- both for place and people has primarily been marred by the absence of clear visions and frameworks (even today). With the historic fabric of the city eroding as early as the 1980's, its socio-physical fabric has been threatened by opportune land usurpers who have found the loopholes in dialogue over heritage. Like-minded heritage enthusiasts and professionals grouping together (Heritage Trust) back then provided the city one of its first attempts to highlight the cultural geography of the city. With solidarity bonds with and within the community, enthusiasts since then have tried to hold together 'a folk society' despite the lack of formal control mechanisms, by finding a diverse but strong sense of belonging. Since then collectives have also began forming, introducing the now cosmopolitan society to the city's rich past. Increased and visible conversations around tangible and intangible cultural past now get carried forward not only by the Heritage Trust but also via an INTACH Chapter, concerned individuals and traditional communities. These have led to interactions of physical, economical, emotional and spiritual needs, and old neighborhoods and denizens are beginning to perceive their places, as influenced by personal experiences and memories. Although complex in nature and sometimes consensus appears hard to achieve, given the cacophony of different owners and interests, and lack of empirical documentation, the outputs that now dot the city's cultural landscape are more evolving and diverse. They embody visual, aural, tactile and gustatory events and spaces that have sparked a spatial-cultural activism. Their participants and stakeholders now generate other important material or 'places' associated with heritage conservation.

Swapna Kothari



Performances have made places, in turn defining the cultural geography of a space. This capture of an European tightrope walker performing before a large crowd in Baroda by an unknown photographer in mid-18th century highlights the very need of people to make a place's culture. Source: British Library, <https://imagesonline.bl.uk>

Become a member

As a non-profit, we rely on your support as our member and encourage you to send more heritage enthusiasts our way.

Patron Member

Rs. 100,000

Donor Member

Rs. 25,000

Life Member

Rs. 5,000

Ordinary Member

Rs. 1000 / year

Student Member

Rs 200 / year

Corporate Patron

Member

Rs. 2,00,000

Corporate Donor

Member

Rs. 50,000

Corporate Member Rs.

25,000 / year

Have an idea you would like to explore?

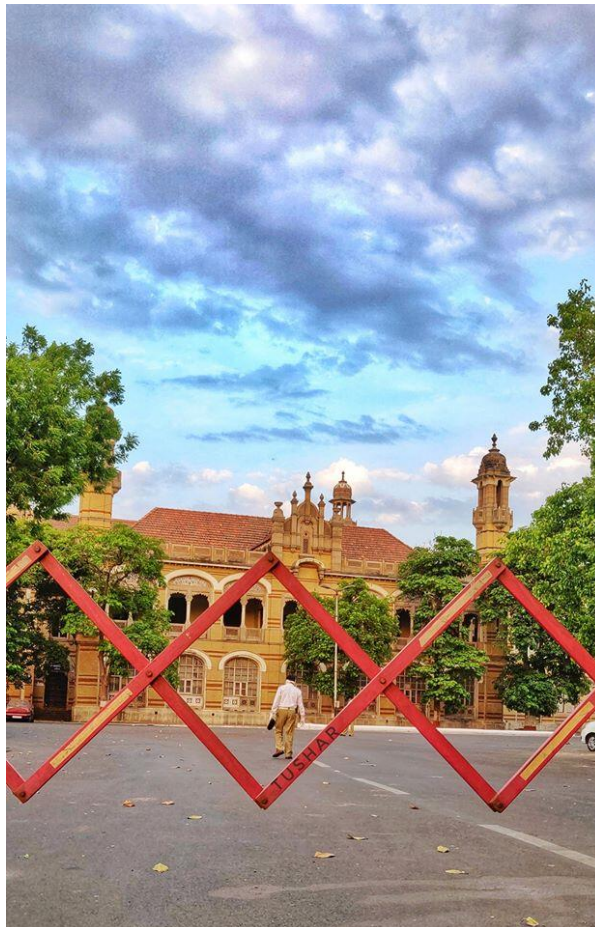
Want to collaborate or organize an event virtually?

Get in touch with us!



“When did constantly making pictures of your food become a thing?”

Humor- Did you notice the rise in food posts in lockdown? Served us well, we after all can't wait to get back to heritage food walks!! Source: As credited on image



Click of this Quarter- We couldn't wander, but dedicated news reporters made sure the city's heritage wasn't forgotten. Source: Tushar Tere, Times of India

Publications

Looking for books as gifts? The Trust has published more than half a dozen books, four of which have been on Pavagadh. Three other books on Baroda, one of which is for children, and is still available in print. These would make great corporate gifts in the coming festive season.

Available:

Once Upon a Time...there was Baroda- Rs. 3000/- copy

Children's book on Baroda (Gujarati) - Rs. 20/copy

Future Events:

We hope to come back with physical events soon, but till then we will be planning for online lectures- look out for announcements on our social media!