

Dharohar | a quarterly newsletter

Dharohar

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had named it after His Highness in compliment to the latter's noble work of popular education, and had thrown it open to the public of the Baroda city free of charge. When he was shown that some of his collections of books would have a wider public utility in the Central Library, where unrestricted facilities were given to the public, he readily transferred his Vernacular and Sanskrit collections to the newly founded Central Library. The Palace Library, being His Highness' private Library formed from time to time according to the special requirements of His Highness' study, consisted of a very limited number of vernacular books. Shrinant Sanpatrao's hand of his vernacular books was therefore very welcome as it enabled the Central Library to start its Vernacular branch forthwith. Similarly his collection of Sanskrit books formed a valuable addition to the Sanskrit Branch.

At the commencement of this work of reconstruction, H. H. the Maharaja Sahib was also graciously pleased to increase the library budget. The Palace Librarian, an annual budget of Rs. 3,000. This increase of Rs. 1,000 per year in considerable various books were purchased and formed and to making the Central Library a model library State. The Maharaja Sahib's generous support of newspaper and

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In March of 1911, therefore, Mr.
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the Bombay University or men wi
qualifications and six undergrad
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to appoint, after one year's success
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lower grade of Rs. 30 to 50. Altho
was in the first instance, intended to train
librarians required for the Central Library
but His High-

NEW YORK LIBRARY ASSOCIATION'S ADDRESS TO HIS
HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA AMARI



The first of the three libraries in the city is the Venetian Library, which was founded in 1562 by the Venetian Republic. It is the largest of the three libraries and contains a vast collection of books, manuscripts, and printed materials. The library is housed in a building that was originally a Venetian residence and is now a museum. The collection is divided into several sections, including a section for the Venetian Republic, a section for the Venetian Empire, and a section for the Venetian Republic's colonies. The library is open to the public and is a popular destination for visitors to the city.

The second of the three libraries is the Public Library, which was founded in 1773 by the Venetian Republic. It is the second largest of the three libraries and contains a vast collection of books, manuscripts, and printed materials. The library is housed in a building that was originally a Venetian residence and is now a museum. The collection is divided into several sections, including a section for the Venetian Republic, a section for the Venetian Empire, and a section for the Venetian Republic's colonies. The library is open to the public and is a popular destination for visitors to the city.

The third of the three libraries is the Private Library, which was founded in 1800 by the Venetian Republic. It is the smallest of the three libraries and contains a vast collection of books, manuscripts, and printed materials. The library is housed in a building that was originally a Venetian residence and is now a museum. The collection is divided into several sections, including a section for the Venetian Republic, a section for the Venetian Empire, and a section for the Venetian Republic's colonies. The library is open to the public and is a popular destination for visitors to the city.

[illegible]

The Library Training Class.

For all this work of reorganization it was obvious that a large staff of librarians and assistants was necessary and that this staff should receive a scientific training in librarianship on the most modern lines. In March of 1911, therefore, Mr. Borden received sanction of His Highness' Government to the creation of a *Library Training Class*.

(a) *Its formation.*

The *Library Training Class*, which was organized in 1911, was divided into three sections: (1) *Reading Room*; (2) *Circulating Room*; (3) *Reference Room*. The *Reading Room* was to be a branch of printed books and manuscripts. To these were added in course of time (4) a *Children's Section*, (5) a *Ladies' Section*, and (6) a *Reference Section*.

rooms in this size, it was a new stream of knowledge, deep plunges every day and refreshed and invigorated many of the books in the library are signs of this and constant association with books on the H. H. the Maharaja Sahib. Like a true son of his Highness devoted himself heart and soul to the worship of the Goddess of Learning and with him, like a true *Zens* (student) of old, who went that badge of learning, his favourite whether he was watching a cricket or a tennis or mounting the hill of Favagadh, or boating in Ayra Lake. Many a book of those times from

ary Department of Baroda had its Laxmi Vilas Palace Library of H. H. Jagmaji Gaekwad. This Palace Library served for the personal use of the present Maharaja. It contained a fine collection of the early-seventies and eighties, when Baroda was studiously undergoing an educational and cultural renaissance. The library was rich in Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts, and in the early part of the nineteenth century it was enriched by the donations of H. H. the Maharaja Sahib for the cause he had made his own. It gave in the first instance a splendid collection of nearly twenty thousand volumes to form the nucleus of a great Central Library of the State, and it enabled Mr. Borden to lay out his future plans on a large and comprehensive scale. Mr. Borden then got permis-

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his intellectual odyssey. In many of the books in those times still in the Central Library are signs of this intense and constant association with books on the part of H. H. the Maharaja Sahab. Like a true son of Saraswati, His Highness devoted himself heart and soul to the worship of the Goddess of Learning and carried with him, like a true *Duta* (student) of old, wherever he went, that hodge of learning, his favourite book, whether he was watching a cricket or a tennis match, or mounting the hill of Pavagadh, or boating in the Ajwa Lake. Many a book of those times proudly bears

ally transferred 11 Vemacular and Sanskrit books to the newly founded Central Library. The Library, being His Highness' private Library, from time to time according to the special requirements of His Highness' study, consisted of a very limited number of vernaacular books. Shrinant Sampat's of his vernaacular books was therefore very welcome enabled the Central Library to start its Vernaacular book forthwith. Similarly his collection of Sanskrit books formed a valuable addition to the Sanskrit Branch. At the commencement of this work of reconstruction, the Malabaja Saheb was also graciously pleased to assign the Library budget. The Palasa Library had annual book budget of Rs. 2,000. This was now raised to Rs. 12,000 every year. In consideration of the very being formed and with a view 1 Library a model Library for the library had no Reading Room of individuals. A separate grant of

In March of 1911, the formation of His Highness' training library at the Bombay University was completed. The qualifications for a scholarship of 1000 rupees to be appointed, after passing higher qualifications, Rs. 60 to 100 for the lower grade of students was in the first instance for librarians required.

THE MALABAJA SAHEB
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of modern library
expert to any



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Water. Water everywhere!

The much-awaited monsoon with the forecast of above-normal rainfall due to the La Nina effect was a welcome omen for our country. Obviously, it meant that a certain preparedness was required to ensure that the rains provide an opportunity for storing water in the reservoirs as well as recharging our ground-water with the concurrent preparedness to ensure that civic infrastructure is maintained so as to not affect normal life of our city. Sadly, what should have been a boon, turned into a harrowing experience for our state and our city. We hope all our readers are safe and that this experience proves as a wake-up call to our city leaders for the future.

As our Heritage Trust turns 40, it's a time to look back with satisfaction at our achievements and more importantly to look forward to taking a proactive role to showcase our unique heritage to Barodians as well as those visiting our city. This year the signages project is one such effort that is ongoing and we share a report on the further progress of this project. We will be having more engaging programmes for you, especially during People's Heritage Week in November. The Vadodara Municipal Corporation organized a Symposium on Re-imaging Vadodara. Our trust was a collaborator and President Sameer Khera made an interesting presentation. Read more about the seminar in this issue.

On August 21st, 2024. We lost one of our long-time and an active member, Mr. Jal Patel. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and pay tribute to his long and dedicated services to Heritage Trust.

For those who missed the exciting walk at Sursagar, a special screening of the documentary covering the walk was held at Gazra Café.

Happy reading

Avi Sabavala

Private Screening of the **Sursagar**

Heritage Walk Documentary

On April 21st, 2024, the Heritage Trust of Baroda organized an early morning heritage walk around the historic precinct of Sur Sagar Lake, originally known as Chandan Talav. This iconic site, a landmark in Vadodara's rich history, is surrounded by equally significant structures that narrate the city's vibrant past. The walk was curated by our founder-member and renowned art historian, Sandhya Gajjar, alongside eminent Gaekwadi historian, Chandrashekhar Patil. The event was held in collaboration with Maharani Chimnabai Stree Udyogalaya (MCSU) and Our Vadodara, drawing a group of 80 participants.

A video documenting the walk was produced. To mark the event of the 66th death anniversary of Maharani Chimnabai II, a private screening of the documentary was hosted on August 23rd, 2024, at Gazra Café, a social initiative by MCSU, which also featured as the final stop of the walk. The café holds special significance, as it is named after Maharani Chimnabai II, whose maiden name was Gazra. The screening was graced by Her Highness Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad of Baroda, who narrated the 20-minute documentary and appeared in the film, providing her voiceover throughout.

The screening commenced with a two-minute silence in memory of Mr. Jal Patel, a cherished member of our Trust who recently passed away. Following the film, an insightful open discussion took place, featuring HH Radhikaraje Gaekwad and the Heritage Trust President, Sameer Khera. The conversation centered on making Vadodara's rich history and heritage more accessible to the public, raising awareness, and exploring ways to conserve and celebrate the city's past. Audience members also shared their ideas.

The documentary, shot by Light Drizzle Films, goes beyond mere documentation of the walk, offering valuable information on the structures visited. We look forward to releasing this documentary to the public soon on our official YouTube channel, where it will further our mission of preserving and promoting Vadodara's cultural heritage.

Sriparna Seal

Celebrating Vadodara's Forgotten Landmarks:

The Vadodara Historic Landmark Project

Launched last year, the Vadodara Historic Landmark Project is a unique initiative by the Heritage Trust of Baroda aimed at shining a spotlight on the city's rich historical heritage. The project involves identifying around 100 historic sites and structures across Vadodara, many of which are often overlooked and have faded from the public memory over time. These are places that people pass by every day without realizing their historical significance or the stories they hold.

To bridge this gap, the Heritage Trust is installing permanent steel plaques in front of these monuments. Each plaque features concise information about the site's history and importance, presented in both English and Gujarati. The goal is not just to commemorate these structures, but also to educate the public and encourage them to appreciate the cultural legacy embedded within the city's landscape.

To date, plaques have already been installed at 20 prominent locations:

- Mandvi Pavilion
- Central Library
- Nyay Mandir
- Lal Court
- Sursagar Lake
- Raopura Clock Tower
- Khanderao Market
- Kirti Stambh
- Tambekar Wada
- Juni Kothi
- Kothi Kacheri (Old Kothi)
- Jaisinh Library (Baroda State Library)
- Kamati Baug
- Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery
- Sevasi Vav
- Panigate
- Gendigate
- Lehripura
- Champaner Gate
- Central Library

The remaining plaques are in the process of being installed, and the project is well on its way to reaching its full scope. Designed by the Heritage Trust itself, these plaques have been made possible through the generous support of various sponsors who share our passion for preserving and celebrating Vadodara's historical legacy.

We hope this initiative not only raises awareness about the city's architectural and cultural treasures but also instills a greater sense of pride and connection with Vadodara's past.

Sriparna Seal

Symposium on Vadodara's Nomination as UNESCO Creative City for Design

The Heritage Trust, in collaboration with the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC), organized a symposium under the "Reimagining Vadodara" theme to brainstorm and discuss the nomination of Vadodara as a UNESCO Creative City for Design. The day-long event featured several prominent dignitaries, including Shrimant Samarjitsinh Gaekwad, Mrs. Pinky Soni (Mayor), Dr. Sheetal Mistry (Chairman of the Standing Committee), Shri Balkrishna Shukla (MLA and Chief Whip), among others.

The symposium included various presentations and panel discussions that highlighted the architectural and temporal heritage of Vadodara, including cultural elements such as Garba. There was also a focus on creating opportunities for fairs, exhibitions, and celebrations to be held annually. As a result of the discussions, the Heritage Trust was given the mandate to begin the formal process for Vadodara's nomination as a UNESCO Creative City for Design.

In addition to speeches by the dignitaries, the event featured four panel discussions:

1. **Heritage and Architectural Design Legacy, Town Planning, and Urban Transport:**

Moderated by Pratyush Shankar (Dean, Navrachana University Vadodara), this panel included Shri Anirudh Dehade (Past President, IIID), Shri Hemant Patel (Chairman, Advisory Committee at CREDAI), Shri Alpesh Majmundar (City Engineer), Shri Narasimha Komar (IPS, Commissioner of Police), and Shri Sanjay Shah (CMD, Loksatta Jansatta).

2. Temporal Heritage and Design Economy: This panel discussed the intangible cultural heritage of Vadodara, with panelists including Smt. Kakoli Sen (Audio Visual Artist), Mr. Junaid Azim Mattu (Former Mayor of Srinagar), Shri Mayank Patel (VNF), Shri Ramesh Thakkar (OSD, TCGL), Shri Ajay Dave (Media Representative, The Sayaji Samachar), and Smt. Manisha Vakil (MLA, Vadodara City). The session was moderated by Mr. Harsh Purohit, a communication and sustainability expert.

3. **Vadodara Art and Design Festival: Building on the Legacy of the Baroda School of Art:**

Moderated by RJ Kshitij Banker (Radio Mirchi), this panel explored Vadodara's artistic heritage and featured Shri Chandrashekhar Patil, Smt. Tejal Amin (Educationalist), Shri Deepak Kannal (Art Historian), Shri Pankaj Sharman (Director of Museums, State ASI Officer), Mr. Manish Pandya (Executive Editor, Divya Bhaskar), and Shri Yogesh Patel (MLA, Manjalpur).

4. **Business, Startups, and Incubators: Building a Creative and Design Economy:**

The final panel focused on fostering entrepreneurship and innovation. Panelists included Mr. Nikhil Suthar (Lead Partnerships, India Accelerator), Shri Piyush Shah (Hospitality, Surya Palace), Mr. Barhat (Joint Industrial Commissioner), Mr. Sandeep Sagale, Mr. Nishit Dand (Space Suit Designer approved by NASA), with RJ Mohini as the moderator.

A special guest at the event was Mr. Junaid Azim Mattu, the former Mayor of Srinagar, who played a key role in securing Srinagar's nomination as a UNESCO Creative City.

The symposium highlighted Vadodara's rich design legacy and offered a platform for dialogue on how to strengthen its creative economy. With the Heritage Trust now leading the nomination process, the city moves closer to realizing its potential as a UNESCO Creative City for Design.

Sameer Khera & Sriparna Seal

The Jewels of my Queendom

For many years, the small dilapidated building on the way to the Fatesinh Museum in the Laxmi Vilas Palace complex with the high tiled roof, exposed brick walls and wooden windows that let in the northern light, would be pointed out as the famed painter Raja Ravi Varma's Studio when he was in Baroda, at the turn of the last century, painting the several artworks he was commissioned to by Maharaja Sayajirao III. However, there was something endearing about that building, though, that caused one to stop by and catch your breath – it was as if the benign ghost of the artist hovered about the place moving around that single room, flying gently about the trees that were slowly enveloping the building. Over the years, the abandoned studio-building continued to collapse, slowly but steadily, yet somehow managed to withstand my small town's intense summers, sudden torrential rains and flooding, sometimes even a slight nudge by an occasional earthquake. Much like the reputation of its famed but much-maligned artist whose artistic worth underwent similar ups and downs.

Then I heard that Delhi's Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) had bagged the assignment to rebuild the studio and establish its own Regional office in the space so that it would be used and in the process, be well looked after. Local architect Aniruddha Dehade worked on the building, and sensitively re-structured it, large windows et al, along with ventilators high up near the ceiling to let the rising warm air out of the studio. The IGNCA, Vadodara Regional Centre, soon began operating out of the Raja Ravi Varma Studio holding talks, exhibitions, residencies and workshops there. It has now become another impressive cultural landmark not just on the LVP campus but in my small town as well.

On June 28, in association with the Heritage Trust, the Centre kicked off its Kalanusandhan Lecture Series 2024-25, with a talk on Turban Jewels: Symbols of Divine Authority by Dr. Radhikaraje Gaekwad. Fortunately, Radhikaraje had earlier given a general talk on the Jewellery of the Gaekwads for the Heritage Trust. It was quite well-researched and I was impressed since I knew nothing on the subject. Just like Radhikaraje, young inheritors of centuries-old jewellery design firms largely in Paris, but also in other places in Europe (Cartier, Mellerio dits Meller et al), have also become aware of the amazing and invaluable jewellery design inheritance they are heirs to.

While Radhikaraje has been researching the regal jewellery of the Baroda Gaekwads, she has also been academically associating with these young persons from global jewellery design firms to access, if possible, documents, correspondence, sketches made for future commissions, and the like.

Post the Delhi Durbar in 1911, a number of royal families across India looked towards the West to access jewellery with non-traditional accents. For examples, tiaras, especially, became popular with the Indian royal ladies. And so the early and mid- 20th century saw Indian royalty becoming some of the most treasured customers of European jewellery houses, big and small. I vividly remember the fabulous picture of Maharani Gayatri Devi (her mother, Indiraraje's father was Sayajirao III of Baroda) wearing the Cartier Tutti-Frutti necklace featured in Dr. Amin Jaffer's wonderful book, *Made for the Maharajas: A Design Diary of Princely India*, when Dr. Jaffer visited Baroda a few years back and gave an illustrated lecture with reference to his book.

Anyway I come back to Radhikaraje's talk that centered around only the Turban Jewels, essentially the *Sarpech*, considered the ultimate crowning glory amongst jewellery available traditionally for male adornment. Believed to have had its genesis in the head ornaments worn by male deities in the Hindu Pantheon – Krishna's crown-like headband with a peacock feather and Shiva's top-knot adorned with a crescent moon – Radhikaraje followed up that argument with examples of Mohenjodaro's bearded Priest-King wearing a headband with a centre pendant, the Gandhara and Gupta sculptures of the Boddhisatwa and the figures in the Ajanta murals who sported decorated headgear. The *Shri Pech*, worn by the Hindu Nepal Royals, is one of the most elaborate in Asia.

Apparently, there are scholars who believe the origin of the *Sarpech* could possibly be in Persia too, its design inspired by the decorative comb/crest or *kalgi* on the heads of exotic male birds. It was no wonder that often ornamented *Sarpeches* added an actual feather too! For the Moghul rulers, the *Sarpech-adorned* headgear symbolized kingship as illustrated in a miniature painting (1656-57) showing Jehangir lovingly offering his *Sarpech-studded* headgear to Prince Khurram, a personal documentation of transfer of power.



All in all, these examples do point to the fact that Turban Jewels could be interpreted as invested with some kind of divine authority. Added to which is the immense sense of self-respect and personal/family honour that is attached to the *pagdi*/turban/head-dress worn by male members in the family, royal or otherwise. In fact, there is a Gaekwad tradition that whenever they sport their signature headgear with the *Sarpech*, they always wear the red tikka on the forehead as a sign of respect to their *pagdi*.

Then, concentrating on the Gaekwad *Sarpeches*, she highlighted the introduction of the Turra to the headgear, which was a large tuft of threaded pearls and precious stones (largely diamonds), hanging near or behind one ear. The jewellery-loving Gaekwad brothers -- Khanderao and Malharrao -- who ruled most part of the 19th century, were connoisseurs of precious stones and metals, and experimented with gold and silver to be made into cannons and carriages. They designed their jewellery and frequently reset the stones. Radhikaraje also talked about the importance of precious stones, that often had religious significance, sometimes were won as loot in battle, were seen as talisman of good luck, long life, and hence there was an emotional attachment to these products. (It was Khanderao who commissioned the Pearl Carpet in 1865, which he intended to send as a gift to adorn the Prophet's tomb in Medina, but he died in 1870 before this could be done. The Carpet is now in the permanent collection of the National Museum of Qatar.)

Both the brothers preceded Maharaja Sayajirao III who reigned between 1875-1939. He had court jewelers cut and set precious stones and fashion them into swashbuckling pieces of stunner jewellery. It was his wife, Maharani Chimnabai II, who invited Cartier to Baroda. Sayajirao almost commissioned Cartier to reset all the Baroda jewels in platinum, but he was advised against it by his local royal jewellers. Both Cartier and Mellerio created drawings for jewellery they were commissioned to make (even though the commissions did not materialize) and these drawings are carefully archived by the jewellery houses. Though *Sarpeches* were only worn by the men in the family, Maharani Chimnabai II, appropriated some of its glory by using its image on the personalized stationery, stamp and monogram used by the royal ladies!

Sandhya Bordewekar Gajjar

(An edited version of this article appeared earlier in Sandhya's Substack on the Internet.)



Special announcement

Excited to announce a Heritage Trust initiative, as part of the effort to create an audio-visual archive about Vadodara; a documentary on the ecological, natural and cultural heritage of the Vishwamitri ecosystem. Proclaimed film maker, Rishiraj Mistry will be the filmmaker anchoring this effort.

Sameer Khera

Obituary



In loving memory of Shri Jal Patel, a cherished member of our Heritage Trust family. His warmth, wisdom, and unwavering dedication will be deeply missed. Our hearts are heavy as we remember a true friend and guide.



Shri Jal Patel

17th September 1937 – 21st August 2024

In the news



Sameer Gaikwad receiving the Atulya Varso Identity Award 2024 on behalf of Heritage Trust.

Atulya Varaso has been honoring people and organisations who are involved in various fields in Gujarat and are striving to bring out the heritage of Gujarat through the Atulya Varaso Identity Awards since the year 2022.

Heritage Humour



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