



...ing Class.
...ation.
...reorganisation it was obvious
...librarians and assistants was
...this staff should receive a scientific
...relationship on the most modern lines.
...therefore, Mr. Borden received sanc-
...Government to open a class for
...and to admit therein six graduates of
...iversity or men with higher educational
...and six undergraduates, on a monthly
...s. 25 for one year and with a promise
...one year's successful training, men with
...ions to the higher grade of librarians of
...and men with lower qualifications to
...s. 30 to 50. Although this library class
...instance, intended to train up a staff of
...ed for the Central Library, yet word
...at His Highness the Ma-
...um we may glad to give the benefit
...y training under the American Library
...persons coming from any part of India.

ધરોહર



Core Committee

Sameer Khera
Sameer Gaikwad
Arati Desai
Rati Desai
Jaideep Verma
Sandhya Gajjar
Jal Patel

Editorial Team

Avi Sabavala
Sandhya Gajjar
Arati Desai
Alka Smart

Design and Layout

Pranjali Ambekar

Write to us at

623, GIDC Industrial
Estate, Makarpura,
Vadodara, Gujarat, India,
390010

[heritagetrustvadodara@
gmail.com](mailto:heritagetrustvadodara@gmail.com)

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Heritage Trust turns 40!

Completing 4 decades is indeed an achievement in an era when the life span of many organisations is challenged by the rapid changes in the economic, social and cultural environment of our times. It is a tribute to the resilience and adaptability of our organisation that it has been able to see a movement that embraces change while still keeping the original spirit of creating awareness about conserving our wonderful heritage. The 40th year that is 2024 was heralded with much enthusiasm by our Trust and it is our endeavour to showcase the varied expressions of both tangible and intangible heritage that lies within our city.

Our collaborative efforts in supporting initiatives of other organisations and individuals have resulted in a greater outreach especially amongst younger audiences. The initiative for putting up signages on heritage buildings in collaboration with the Vadodara Municipal Corporation is gaining momentum. Signages have an interesting legacy and Arati Desai shares an interesting insight into the history of this practice.

Our quarterly event Varsa ni Vaat held in early January brought three enthusiastic lady travellers from different continents to showcase their wonderful moments exploring the spirit of India in its myriad forms. We saw a good mixture of walks, talks, workshops and exhibitions that brought in enthusiastic participation from different sections of the population of our city. The exhibition in collaboration with SEDA gave viewers a glimpse of the changing architecture of our city. The two workshops for students were received with great enthusiasm. Our workshop in collaboration with Chaap foundation on monoprinting was a one of its kind and the sole male participant Alok Desai who is from the creative field shares his experience with us.

Our regular walks include the Makarpura Medley, Alavi Bohra walk and the Church walk have been received with great enthusiasm and showcase the diversity of our population in terms of both culture and economic activity. Read Sandhya Gajjar's Substack which shares her experience of a unique walk entitled Vadodara – In the Presence of Absence, which was part of a 3-day academic program, Re-imagining Documentation organized by SEDA and Heritage Trust, and held at the Alembic Heritage City.

Avi Sabavala

Signages through time: a brief history

Bearing on the fundamentals of communication, signages have an ancient history that is well known. From the cave paintings dating back to 40,000 years ago, the methods of communication can be seen in the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt to the carved symbols on terracotta and stone in ancient Greece to the street signs made from wood, brick, stone, and marble made during the Roman Empire. Pre 19th century was considered the golden for advertising and signages due to trade expeditions.

Ancient Indian inscriptions and edicts are regarded as the most reliable sources of our history as they generally talk about facts. The first inscriptions discovered were from the 3rd cent. B.C in Prakrit. During Ashoka's reign this practice of inscribing became popular and seals, stone pillars, pebbles, copper plates and temple walls can be found with inscriptions and engraved imagery.

An interesting fact: in 1389 King Richard III made it mandatory for all taverns and ale houses in the country to display outdoor signs so the monarch could easily locate them for quality testing. In the 1700s English laws required innkeepers and tavern owners and all establishments to put up signs outside the premises. Illuminated signs using candles were also used before the invention of electricity. The 18th century saw King Charles II ban outdoor hoardings, and this is when the storefront signs came into being. The first neon sign was gas powered and invented in France in 1910.

After World War 2, between 1940 and 1990s, there was a need for signages that could be produced fast and in bulk at a cheap price. These were the early waterproof banners and inflatable signs that are typical today, Adhesive vinyl was first used in 1958. The 1980s saw the introduction of digital vinyl cutting machines which allowed fast and easy cutting of logos and text which could be applied directly on walls and windows. Then came the neon and fluorescent lights in acrylic banners, flags, and A- frame signs.

Post 1990, digital technology enabled signs to be created on the computer and the increase of large format printing and digital technology made sign production faster and cheaper.



Printing technologies like UV printing, dye sublimation from the early 2000s paved the way for digital sign and graphics techniques for digital output devices.

Even today, one encounters signs everywhere from digital displays to marking places and advertising products and people. The production of signages depends on the usage: whom and what are these signs meant for. The material used to create signs determines its intended life span. Advertising, promotions and mapping, all lead to the fact that these signages are meant to relay information. In today's digital age, infographics is the need of the day. Signages are used for multiple purposes, be it for aesthetic decorative purposes, way finding, photo backdrops or political usage. In most cases information sharing is the reason that we see so many signages.

In its efforts to create awareness and share the significance of Vadodara Heritage, in collaboration with the VMC and with the help of sponsors, Heritage Trust has installed several signages at important sites in the city like Mandvi gate and the Sevasi vav to enable visitors to know more about the monument.



Arati Desai

Unravelling the Heritage of Baroda-

An Initiative by **Heritage Trust Baroda** supported by **NISV**.

In the Heritage Trust's continuous endeavour to ignite a spark of appreciation for heritage among the young minds of our city, the second phase of the project involved organizing a workshop and field trip aimed at educating school kids about the rich tapestry of Baroda's heritage and the importance of preserving it for future generations.

On the 12th of January 2024, a workshop for the 7th graders of Navrachana International School Vadodara (NISV), titled 'Unravelling Heritage of Baroda: Water Stepwells, Society and Sustainability'. The workshop delved into the fascinating world of vavs or stepwells, a unique architectural marvel native majorly to Gujarat. Despite their historical significance, many of these stepwells are sadly neglected.

The objective of the workshop extended beyond mere physical conservation, to raising awareness of their historical significance, aiming at making the students to actively participate in the preservation of our heritage. The workshop was anchored onto the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The workshop was an interactive experience that encouraged the kids to share their thoughts and perspectives on heritage. Delving into the broader history of Baroda, this session also encouraged kids to share their thoughts on heritage, to express and share their own perspectives, fostering a sense of community and shared understanding. At the end of the workshops, they also get a specially curated kit. The kit contains a map of the city of Baroda, a badge, a booklet, a bookmark and a certificate all designed specifically for the kids by the Heritage Trust.

The second part of the workshop was a field trip to the Sevasi Stepwell on the 20th of February. Sameer Gaikwad, from the Heritage Trust, introduced the students to the historical significance and other aspects of water conservation, use of stepwells as a space for socializing by women, religious significance, sustainable approach towards water conservation. For almost all of them, it was their first encounter with a stepwell, and the student's enthusiastic engagement highlighting the importance of such educational initiatives much needed to foster a sense of ownership and pride in our heritage.

Sriparna Seal



Looking for 'Presence amongst Absence' in my Small Town

Last Sunday morning (March 3) I went for a truly unusual Heritage Walk. It took me to look at buildings that were no longer there! The Walk, titled Vadodara – In the Presence of Absence, was part of a 3-day academic program, Re-imagining Documentation organized by SEDA and Heritage Trust, and held at the Alembic Heritage City. Designed and curated by Vishvesh Pathak, Asst. Prof. at School of Environmental Design & Architecture (SEDA), Navrachana University, and Researcher at SEDA's Centre of Heritage Research, the Walk resonated with some of the questions that were raised regarding the different tools of documentation – tradition, modern, digital, futuristic – and offered an altogether different take on the subject.

Traditionally, cities and towns that pride themselves on their 'ancient-ness' try to look after their heritage buildings as these 'document' and are proof of that 'ancient-ness'. But buildings don't live forever and all buildings, no matter how precious and well-looked after, will one day bite the dust and make way for, hopefully, new architectural wonders. Vishvesh's endeavor was therefore out-of-the-box – he identified buildings in my small town that should have been looked after and saved but that did not happen. However, their current 'absence' still speaks about their once upon a time significant 'presence'. This can only be established by hearsay that is well-supported by historical research and documentation, which he had painstakingly studied to map this Walk.



The Walk began from Ghantiada, a lane the off-shoots from the road that links Mandvi and Gendigate. The first building that registered its presence via its absence was Sureshwar Desai's haveli. A spanking new white-washed Jain Swadhyaya Mandir stands in its place. This haveli was almost 250 years old. It was already in a dilapidated state when the Heritage Trust was trying to find funding to help save and conserve it in the mid-1980s. In fact, it was one of the first projects undertaken by the Trust and I believe a couple of trustees went and met the then descendants of the family to understand their needs and position regarding its conservation. But nothing worked. Then many years later I saw it myself when I was working on a Heritage-Trust project, 'Do-It-Yourself 4 Walks in the Walled City' map sometime around 2004 or thereabout.



The roof had already caved in and the once luxurious home was ready for the bulldozer to finish the job.

Who was Sureshwar Desai and what did he do for my small town? Sureshwar Desai was an astute financier who lived in the walled city towards the fag-end of Moghul rule in Gujarat (around 1730s) when Baroda was administered by the Babi Nawabs who were Governors appointed by the Moghul Emperor in Delhi.

In the wake of the 3rd Battle of Panipat (1761) in which the Marathas were roundly thrashed by the Afghan invaders led by Durrani, the Maratha Sardars with their own armies broke away from the weakened Peshweshahi of Pune and returned to strengthen their own regional fiefdoms. It is believed that Desai, along with Dala Patel and Pratap Margha, took the opportunity to invite the Marathas (Damajirao) to Baroda. There are khatpatra-s (daily diaries) that Desai used to maintain, two of which have been translated into English by Prof. Sulabha Gokhale from Dept. of History, MSU, which reveal a lot about life in this town a couple of centuries back. The Sursagar lake, originally Chandan Talav, was also built by him. (I used to believe, quite logically, that Sursagar got its name from the Music College on its banks. But that is not the case.) The khatpatra-s reveal that Desai has big plans for the urbanization of Baroda. Apparently, he was fed up with the frequent plotting and petty quarrelling incited by one Lad Bibi amongst the then powers-that-be and wanted Baroda to have a steady and strong ruler so that it can achieve the potential he envisioned for it.

A little walk ahead and we reach another 'Presence in Absence' building – the Tankshal or the Mint (which minted the first coins of independent Baroda state in silver). The Shree Sayaji High School (estd. 1906) stands there now, fortunately another institution that schooled several eminent Baroda personalities, including the late Dr I G Patel, former Governor, RBI. The descendants of Damajirao Gaekwad had wasted no time in establishing their own kingdom here though they still paid obeisance to the Peshwa who had again become powerful in spite of the fact that they had lost the north of India. The Gaekwads built the Sarkarwada near Mandvi and Sayajirao I had begun to rule from there.



This was not lost on Nana Phadnavis, an astute minister in the Peshwa administration, who wanted to control this growth and get Baroda back under the Peshwa thumb. So he began to find ways to create trouble for them. Sayajirao I buckled under the pressure but his brother Fatehsinh (or Baba Fateh as he was known) was made of sterner stuff and he was the one to establish the Tankshal. It is believed that he even moved to stay near the Tankshal and ruled from there.

Amongst the lanes and by-lanes that criss-cross the inner areas of the Walled City, there is one straight road that enters from Ghadiali Pol (on M G Road), moves under the specially-created semi-circular bypass near the Tankshal and emerges from Ghantiada (on Gendigate Road). This road houses several large temples and small shrines alongside. But, till a few months back it also housed the fabulous Haribhakti Haveli, another 'Presence in Absence'. The Haveli was the ancestral property of the Haribhakti family tracing itself back to Haribhai and Bhaktidas, two brothers who were moneylenders and lived in the immediate post-Sureshwar Desai era. The Gaekwads were getting stronger with their ruler Govindrao expanding their territories and handling the political manipulations of the Peshwas with skill and cunning. When Phadnavis was suddenly arrested and jailed and supposedly died in prison (there are many different stories regarding this), the Afghan soldiers guarding the prison refused to release his body unless they were paid a fairly vast sum that was owed to them by the Peshwas. It was Govindrao who prevailed on the brothers Haribhai and Bhaktidas to pay the Afghans and release the body to the Phadnavis family.



We then walked to the nearby Amba Mata temple at the mouth of the Ghadiali Pol. While this temple is one of the most important in that area with the vast following, what is most significant is that behind this temple, enclosed in a tiny area that is no longer accessible and neither visible from the outside, is a shrine to the legendary Raja Vikramaditya of Ujjain (105 BC to 15 AD). It is believed that Vikramaditya was on a pilgrimage to the Harsiddhi Mataji temple near Rajpipla when he stopped at the Amba Mata temple on his way back. Apparently, he is believed to have breathed his last somewhere near where the Mandvi pavilion stands today. The shrine at the back of the Amba Mata temple was created in his honour. Another 'Presence in Absence'.

From here we walk towards the remnants of the Sarkarwada, the first modest Wada-style palace of the Gaekwads in Baroda, reduced to bare wooden pillars and floors. Then behind that, the ruins of the Nazar Baug Palace (their second, European-style, much more luxurious 6-storey high palace from where they could keep a 'nazar' on the surrounding areas!) and where a forlorn Mall has now come up. Sadly, we see some of the adjacent old buildings nearby currently in the process of being torn down. All 'Presences' in 'Absences' created in recent years.

Not exactly a Walk that left you in an uplifted mood, but certainly one that offered much food for thought ...

Sandhya Gajjar

References used by Vishvesh:

1. *Brahmashila* by Ramesh Joshi
2. *A Study of Two 'Khatpatra-s' of Sureshwar Desai in the context of History of Baroda*, Research Paper by Sulabha Gokhale, Dept. of History, MSU
3. *Vadodara: Ek Adhyayan* by Prof. R. N. Mehta
4. *Vadodara: Jaanyu chata Ajaanyu*, Vadodara Smart City Development Ltd.
5. *Reformist Maharaja and his Dynasty*, Directorate of Archeology and Museums, Govt. of Gujarat