



...reorganisation it was obvious that librarians and assistants was that staff should receive a scientific education on the most modern lines. I, therefore, Mr. Borden received sanction from the Government to open a class for students, and to admit therein six graduates of the University or men with higher educational qualifications and six undergraduates, on a monthly stipend of Rs. 25 for one year and with a promise of one year's successful training, men with qualifications to the higher grade of librarians and men with lower qualifications to the lower grade. Although this library class, I instance, intended to train up a staff of students for the Central Library, yet word was sent to His Highness the Maharaja that he was glad to give the benefit of the training under the American Library system from any part of India.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Heritage in many forms

Close to Vadodara in the neighbouring Panchmahal district, lies a hidden gem - Panch Khobla. The 12th century temples are an excellent example of carvings from a bygone era. It's definitely worth a visit to appreciate the beauty of the temples set against a serene landscape. Our member Mr. Raju Saxena shares more about this place along with an interesting folklore of the Tadiya lake in his article.

There are many talented photographers in our city and an online contest was held in August where two of the best photographs were selected. The winners were awarded prizes at our Viraasat lecture programme on August 25.

Our Viraasat lecture was a book talk, "The Other Mohan in Britain's Indian Ocean Empire: A personal Journey into History" by the author Amrita Shah. She traces the journey of her late great grandfather, Mohan Killawala in his life and journey from Surat to South Africa. With hardly any information about him and not even the name of his wife who was her great grandmother, the author begins her search across countries to trace his odyssey in what remains in the archives. Her talk was the stuff that a detective story is made off which is carried in this issue. If detective stories interest you, reading the book for this real life story will surely engross you!

The condition of Mandvi Gate is a matter of concern to heritage lovers in our city. We bring you an update on this structure.

We are very happy that our Municipal Commissioner, Arun Mahesh Babu IAS is proactively spearheading efforts to develop our city. Heritage and environment is high on his list. VMC's Summit 2025 on "Urban Innovation and Infrastructure" was a step in the right direction. Our Vice President, Mr. Sameer Gaikwad chaired a panel discussion on "Urban Heritage, Tourism and Knowledge Economy." The distinguished panelists were our patron, HH Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad of Baroda and the Municipal Commissioner himself. We eagerly look forward to very positive Initiatives in our city in the coming days!

Come November and its time for the people's heritage week. We at Heritage Trust are planning some exciting events to showcase various facets of heritage in our city. We look forward to your participating in large numbers.

We wish all our readers a joy filled festive season!

Avi Sabavala

Panch Khobla

A little less than 60 kms from Vadodara there is a quaint little village by the name of Panch Khobla in the Panchmahal district. Nestled in the valley of the Pavagadh Hills this village has monuments and structures of significant heritage value. The Panch Khobla village situated on the bank of the lake Tadiya, is a lesser known and even lesser explored place even though it is just one hour's drive from Vadodara.

In and around the Panch Khobla village are two significant heritage-value structures comprising a Shiv mandir and a Hanuman mandir. These temples, reminiscent of the Khajuraho temples, are carved out of stone. It is not specifically known as to who constructed these temples. It is said that the Chudasama dynasty probably constructed them during 12th century. It is hard to believe this, since the Chudasama dynasty mainly ruled in the Saurashtra region much to the west of the Panchmahals. As per the information obtained from the villagers, neither the ASI nor the village panchayat nor the district administration is looking after the preservation and conservation of these invaluable heritage structures. Both are already in the state of ruin, and subject to the vagaries of the climate and societal neglect.

As regards to the Tadiya lake there is an interesting and mystifying folklore. According to it, King Dashrath, father of Lord Rama, had accidentally killed Shravan (the legendary son who carried his parents on his shoulder for pilgrimage across the country) on the bank of this lake. The parents of Shravan cast a curse on King Dashrath and said that no one shall drink the water of this lake and should any one drink the water of this lake he/she will turn into a murderer or a thief. During my three hours of stay on the bank of this lake. I did not witness any person filling or using water from the lake.

The ubiquitous presence of motorcycles and cell phones in the region has not affected the linguistic, social and cultural life style of this typical rural society of Panch Khobla.

The Panch Khobla site can be visited by road from Vadodara by taking a right turn from the Ajwa Lake, through the busy village of Rameshur, with a bustling bazaar, and further 25 kilometres on the right.



Panch Khobla Temple



Detail of the sculptures at the Panch Khobla Temple

R. C. Saxena

Viraasat

From Ancestors to Archives: Tracing Living Heritage

Our most recent Viraasat Lecture was held on August 25, 2025 at Sanskriti Conference Hall, Alembic City. It was delivered by author Amrita Shah, who spoke on her book *The Other Mohan in Britain's Indian Ocean Empire*. In her talk, *A Personal Journey into History*, she traced the journey of her ancestors across the Indian Ocean world, while reflecting on how personal memory and historical forces intertwine.

Shah reminded the audience that the Indian Ocean was once bound together by the circulation of Indian textiles, used as currency across trade routes, before colonial economies restructured India into an exporter of raw materials and manpower. Against this backdrop, she introduced the life of her ancestor, Mohanlal Parmandas Killawala, an interpreter and teacher in Natal. His defiance during the 1908 Satyagraha in Johannesburg—when he was deported and later imprisoned for resisting registration laws—placed him within the orbit of Gandhi's early activism in South Africa.

Through such stories, Shah wove together themes of migration, identity, and resistance, offering both a deeply personal account and a reflection on broader currents of history. Her lecture invited the audience to see heritage not as a distant abstraction, but as a living continuum of memory and struggle.



Amrita Shah addressing the audience

The evening's richness lay in its diversity—scholarship, personal storytelling, design practice, and artistic celebration came together to affirm the mission of the Heritage Trust of Baroda: to preserve and promote heritage through awareness, dialogue, and community engagement. With every seat filled and every listener attentive, the lecture series once again demonstrated that the stories of our past continue to resonate deeply in our collective present.



Houseful Viraasat lecture

Designing Walks: Sandhya Gajjar and NUV SEDA Students

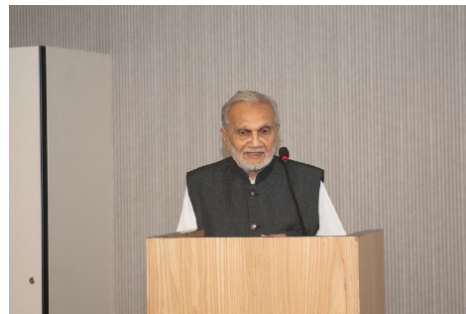
Adding another layer to the evening, Sandhya Gajjar spoke on the design of heritage walks—emphasizing how narrative, place, and participation create experiences that connect communities with their built environment. She also presented selected works by Navrachana University's School of Environmental Design and Architecture (NUV-SEDA) students, whose explorations illustrated the role of architectural education in fostering heritage awareness. Their creative approaches brought fresh perspectives on how heritage can be engaged with in contemporary ways.



Sandhya Gajjar



Sameer Khera



Lord Bhikhu Parekh

Celebrating World Photography Day: Heritage through the Lens

Heritage Trust marked World Photography Day on August 19 with a social media event Heritage Photo Contest on Instagram, inviting participants to capture the timeless beauty of Vadodara's historic sites. The contest drew an enthusiastic response, with heritage lovers and photographers showcasing their unique perspectives on the city's architectural and cultural treasures.

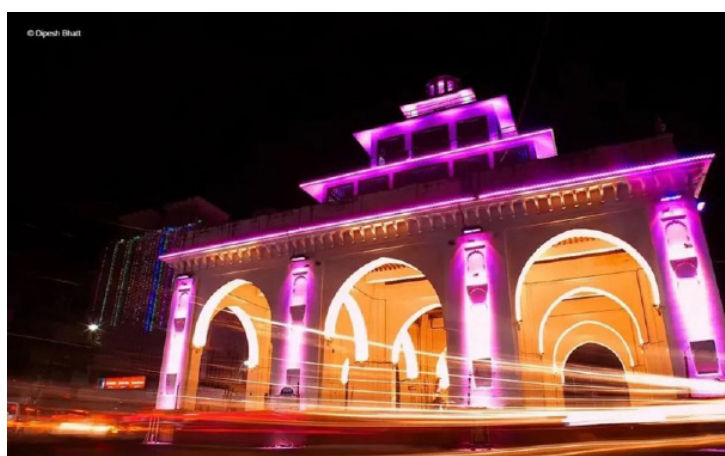
After careful review by our esteemed jury — Tushar Tere (Times of India) and Nafis Khan (VNM TV) — two photographs were selected as winning entries, each reflecting the spirit of preservation and storytelling through the lens. The winners were Mr. Dipesh Bhatt and Mr. Manish Vyas.

The awards were presented during the Viraasat Lecture by our distinguished Guest of Honour, Lord Bhikhu Parekh. The recognition not only celebrated the talent of the winners but also reinforced the Trust's mission to engage the community in safeguarding and appreciating our shared heritage.

Tanvi Tanna



*Mr. Manish Vyas
Royal Ganesh Visarjan at Laxmi Vilas Palace*



*Mr. Dipesh Bhatt
Mandvi Gate*

Mandvi Gate, Vadodara:

Safeguarding a Living Monument of History and Identity

Mandvi Gate, located at the centre of Walled City of Vadodara, is one of the most enduring monuments of the city's heritage. Constructed in 1511 under Sultan Muzaffar Shah II, it originally functioned as a central pavilion to collect tax (octroi) from traders passing by at the crossroads of the four principal streets in the fortified town. During the Gaekwad rule, the gate was expanded with additional storeys and ornamentation. The upper stories were initially built in timber, but at a later stage they were replaced with reinforced concrete, which altered both the load behavior and the character of the structure. In 1856 Ganpatrao Gaekwad introduced a clock, further establishing Mandvi Gate as the civic centerpiece of Vadodara. Its distinctive combination of Islamic arches, Maratha detailing, and colonial-era interventions reflects the layered cultural identity of the city.

The conservation of such a complex and historically significant monument requires careful planning. The process begins with documentation through photographs, condition mapping, and drone survey to capture details of inaccessible areas. Stabilisation measures, such as propping, are introduced at the earliest stage to prevent collapse. Foundation inspection is equally crucial, as the manhole of the main drain passes close to the base of the most damaged pier, creating the risk of weakening from below. Laboratory testing of stone and mortar samples is used to design compatible repair materials. Structural strengthening typically includes lime-based grouting to consolidate the masonry core, stitching of cracks with stainless steel helical bars, resetting displaced stones and bricks, and replastering with breathable lime mortar. All interventions must be coordinated through a Detailed Project Report (DPR), which provides a roadmap for conservation. A DPR records the historical background, documents damage through photography and drone imagery, includes structural analysis and laboratory results, details methodologies for repair, sets out cost estimates and timelines, and outlines a framework for maintenance and monitoring. This ensures that conservation proceeds in a structured and transparent manner.

The declining state of Mandvi Gate has drawn significant attention in recent months. The Heritage Trust of Vadodara has become actively involved, recognising the urgent need to safeguard the structure and initiating dialogue with both local authorities and technical experts. On April 20, Her Highness Maharani Radhika Raje Gaekwad, accompanied by Sameer Khera, Nimish Makadia, and the Helifix team, visited the site and emphasised the need for immediate action. Shortly after, on April 24, a team of structural experts from Mumbai inspected the monument, and their formal report, submitted on 1 May, confirmed the seriousness of the situation.

The assessment revealed that the mortar between brick joints had deteriorated to a powdery state, causing instability in several courses. Vertical and diagonal cracks were traced across critical portions of the structure, while stone elements at the base showed signs of crushing under load. Temporary steel props had been installed as a protective measure, but the experts warned that these could not substitute proper structural intervention. The report made it clear that failure was likely if timely repairs were not initiated.

By late August 2025, the condition of the monument had become more alarming. Large areas of plaster had fallen off, exposing fragile masonry. Bricks were loose in multiple zones, cracks had widened, and pieces of stone had detached from the base.

The core of the masonry pier was also found to be heavily damaged, with the deterioration extending deep inside the section rather than being confined to the surface. This internal weakening indicates that the damage is progressive in nature, advancing gradually but steadily, and poses a serious risk to the overall stability of the gate if it is not addressed promptly.

Mandvi Gate is more than an architectural monument. It is a living symbol of Vadodara's cultural identity, having stood witness to royal processions, civic gatherings, and daily urban life for centuries. To allow it to decay further would be to erase a vital link with the city's history. Its conservation is not optional but essential, and it requires collaboration between technical experts, heritage authorities, and the local community. With a well-prepared DPR, careful foundation inspection, compatible repair strategies, and sustained commitment, Mandvi Gate can be preserved as a proud legacy for future generations.



Photographs as on 28-08-25- show further deterioration. It has been more than 4 months since we had submitted our structure report made by a professional consultant from Mumbai.



It can be observed from the photographs that the deterioration is rapid and the stress on the damaged column is now being transferred to the other column.

Nimish Makadia

The Urban Innovation & Infrastructure Summit

The Urban Innovation & Infrastructure Summit was held at Vadodara on September 13, hosted by the Vadodara Municipal Corporation focusing on the transformation needed for future cities.

The topics covered Digital & Smart Infrastructure, Municipal Finance and Housing, Resilient and Sustainable ecosystems, Critical Infrastructure and Energy with focus on new ideas to strengthen a municipal corporation. Experts in their respective fields shared their experiences.

Heritage Trust was invited to moderate the last and final session on Urban Heritage Tourism and Knowledge Economy which was ably handled by our Vice President, Sameer Gaikwad.

His panel consisted of experts from premier universities, the VMC Municipal Commissioner Arun Mahesh Babu and HH Radhika Raje Gaekwad. The deliberations yielded some influential commitments to enable the city of Vadodara work with the academia and industry to find effective solutions to make the city resilient.

We thank Navrachana University and Elets Technomedia for the opportunity.



Panelists at the Summit



Sameer Gaikwad with VMC Municipal Commissioner Arun Mahesh Babu and HH Radhika Raje Gaekwad