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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Heritage Trust's innovative new programs

The last quarter of 2025 saw a plethora of exciting new events by our Trust that drew in a number of heritage enthusiasts from our city. Beginning October was an art talk by Bose Krishnamachari followed in November by Vadodara Peoples' Heritage Festival.

A number of new walks were curated by our members as well as the much-acclaimed Kamatibaug walk which was fully registered and demanded a repeat show. There were new events including a special paid event that showcased the Premiere of the Documentary "Traditional Bhavai of Vadodara" shot by Heritage Trust which was followed by an enchanting Bharatanatyam performance by Arupa Lahiri, this event proved that our city has a discerning audience that values quality programs.

An equally innovative and interesting Mehfil program, "Manranga" inspired by the art of Raja Ravi Verma saw a large and appreciative audience that came together at the iconic Raja Ravi Verma studio to enjoy the evening.

During the week, Heritage Trust members were invited by the small and progressive Alavi Bohra community to visit their burial grounds which have an old well dug in 1742 CE. It was an interesting insight into the history of the community that is an integral part of the city.

If November was eventful, December was equally interesting with the popular Makarpura Medley event. Heritage Trust was privileged to be invited to partner with Gujarat Tourism and IGNCA for the Champaner Festival. The Trust organised walks and musical events with the backdrop of these famous monuments.

We bring you a recap of these events with an article of the timeline and details of HT's efforts in getting Champaner Pavagadh the title of the first UNESCO Heritage Site of Gujarat.

As we enter the cold month of January 2026, we wish our readers a wonderful New Year and look forward to your active participation at our forthcoming events.

Happy reading!

Avi Sabavala

From Kochi to the world:

Biennale Learnings with Bose Krishnamachari

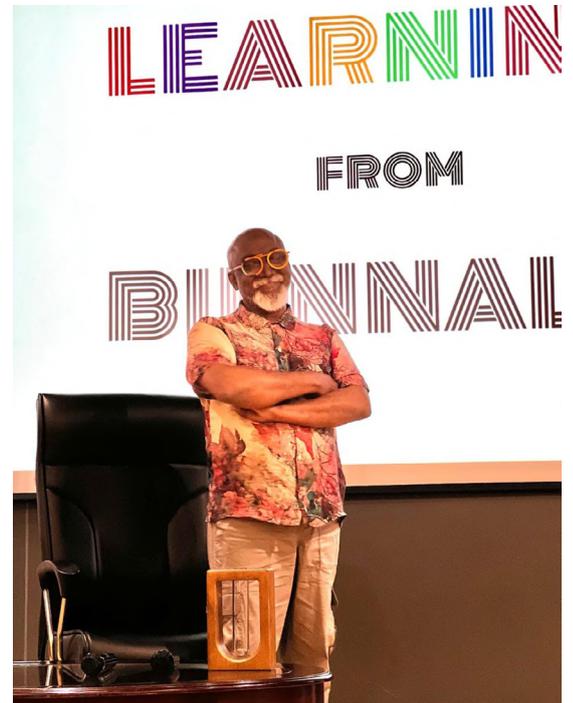
There are talks you attend, and then there are talks you absorb. Bose Krishnamachari's session on "Learning from Biennales," hosted at the FGI auditorium by Parul University in collaboration with the Heritage Trust, firmly belonged to the latter.

As someone who collects and encounters art with equal parts curiosity and emotion, I've admired Bose's work for years: the boldness of his abstractions, the pop-infused colour fields, the geometric rhythms that seem to think aloud. But hearing him speak in person felt different. It felt like watching an artist open the studio door a little wider.

What stayed with me most was his journey through biennales across the world. From Havana to Venice, Sharjah to Gwangju, he didn't just map geographies - he mapped cultural resonance. Each biennale, he reminded us, reflects its people and its politics, its rebellions and its risks. It was fascinating to hear how these global experiences shaped both his curatorial lens and the birth of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale.

And Kochi, for me, has always been a personal favourite, a place where art spills out of white cubes and breathes with the sea breeze, where history becomes a collaborator. Listening to Bose describe the behind-the-scenes reality - the improvisations, the faith, the sheer stubborn hope, felt like revisiting those very lanes and godowns.

What I appreciated most was the candour. He did not romanticize the process. He contextualised it. He showed us how biennales become classrooms: for artists, for organisers, for citizens, for anyone willing to pause long enough to look. Sitting in that auditorium, surrounded by students, faculty, collectors, and cultural thinkers, it felt like we were participating in that same classroom; one shaped by questions rather than conclusions.



Bose Krishnamachari delivering An Art Talk: "Learning from Binnales"



President Sameer Khara felicitating Mr. Bose

As I walked out, I found myself thinking about how art movements begin. Often quietly, often uncertainly, but always with conviction. This talk was a reminder of why we keep returning to art - to be reoriented, to be humbled, to be reminded of the larger, slower arc of cultural change.

For that evening of insight, honesty, and global perspective, I am deeply grateful.

Krupa Saraiya



Interesting Q & A session with a full house in attendance

A city ready for a **Cultural** Renaissance: **Heritage Week 2025**

The Vadodara Peoples Heritage Festival held in November every year always brings with it a soft nostalgia, a feeling that the city pauses for a moment to look inward, to listen to its own stories again. But this year felt different to me. It felt as though Vadodara allowed itself to breathe a little deeper, to experience heritage not just as memory, but as emotion, rhythm, movement, and rediscovery.

What I felt throughout the week was a quiet but certain shift. Vadodara is ready, ready for nuanced storytelling, for layered performances, for heritage that moves beyond preservation into experience.

And the Heritage Trust is nurturing this shift beautifully. Through thoughtful curation and a willingness to explore new formats, the Trust is gently guiding the city toward a deeper, more emotional connection with its own legacy.

As the week ended, I found myself hopeful. Not just for what we showcased, but for what we sparked - curiosity, connection, and a renewed cultural rhythm that I believe will only grow from here!

Across the week, two experiences in particular, Prāntath and Manrangā, stayed with me long after they concluded.

Prantath: Where the Evening became a Shoreline

The evening opened with a screening of Traditional Bhavai of Vadodara, a documentary that rooted the audience firmly in the soil of Gujarat's folk theatre traditions. Unembellished, community oriented, and deeply performative, Bhavai reminded us that heritage often begins in public squares and everyday gatherings, shaped by voice, gesture, and shared memory.

Prantath arrived in Baroda after its premiere at the NMACC, but here, it felt as though the performance had finally come home. With Bharatanatyam and Dastangoi flowing into each other, the evening opened up like a coastline; revealing Gujarat's maritime past in a way that was lyrical and quietly powerful.

As the dancers and storytellers carried us across oceans and centuries, I was reminded that heritage isn't always rooted in place. Sometimes it exists in the journeys our people once made, striding in salt-laden winds, in songs that crossed borders, in stories carried back in the folds of memory.

It was a performance that didn't just teach us about the past; it made us feel the vastness of it.



Arupa Lahiry gave a stunning performance



Bhavai documentary premiere



Felicitating the artists of Bhavai: P. Chari with the mike, along with Bhavai Artists- Chandravadan Patel, Dakshesh Patel, Chintan Patel and Shailesh Purohit of the Verai Mata Mandir

Manrangā: When Art began to Breathe

Later in the week, the focus shifted from performance to immersion.

Manrangā was, for me, a deeply fulfilling experience - an idea nurtured over a month, envisioned as a tribute to Raja Ravi Varma within the very studio that still holds his light and legacy.

Designed as a sensory walkthrough, the experience moved audiences through seven selected oleographs, each embodying a distinct emotion. As one travelled from painting to painting, art revealed itself slowly, not to be merely seen, but felt.

For each emotion, Dharma Originals composed an original song, allowing sound to become an extension of the visual. This was followed by dancer Mohashweta Das's evocative interpretations, where movement and expression entered into quiet dialogue with the paintings themselves, bringing them to life.

Watching Ravi Varma's world come alive through music, performance, and space felt like witnessing heritage breathe again - a reminder of how thoughtfully curated cultural experiences can make the past feel present, and deeply relevant.



Heritage Trust Patrons & Members with the Manrangā artists



Dharmadev and his troupe performing

Holding Space for the Keepers of Culture

As the Heritage Week drew to a close, moments of felicitation across the programmes quietly foregrounded those who sustain Baroda's cultural life - artists, practitioners, and custodians whose work keeps heritage alive beyond the stage.

The continued patronage of the Baroda Royal family, presence of civic leaders including Shri Arun Mahesh Babu, IAS, Municipal Commissioner of Vadodara, Dr. Hemang Joshi, Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), and members of the city's art fraternity such as Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, underscored a shared responsibility: that heritage endures not merely through events, but through people who continue to carry it forward.

Krupa Saraiya

Honouring Heritage: **Baroda** Past- Framed in the Present

As part of the National Heritage Week 2025 celebrations, Heritage Trust, in collaboration with Eclipse Global, presented “Baroda Past – Framed in the Present.” Hosted at the Eclipse Experience Centre in Makarpura from November 22nd to 25th, this evocative exhibition offered a soulful tribute to the city’s rich legacy.

The showcase featured a curated collection of watercolours, sketches, and photographs by artists Rahul Gajjar, Amit Solanki, Manish Chauhan, Shivani Pikle and HT President, Sameer Khera. By capturing the grandeur of Champaner and Baroda, the exhibit invited visitors to rediscover their roots, bridging the gap between historical splendour and contemporary artistic perspectives.



The display of pictures at the gallery

Statues of Kamatibaug

Statues of Kamatibaug, a heritage walk curated by Sandhya Gajjar took place on the 22nd of November. This walk had to be repeated on demand and held again on the 13th of December. Sandhya enticed the participants with stories of how these statues came to be and shared information on the history of Kamatibaug also.



Sandhya Gajjar conducting the Statues walk at Kamatibaug



Second edition of the Statues of Kamatibaug walk due to popular demand

Here is what our participant, Mr. Pradeep Marwah had to say..

On the early, cool morning of 13th December 2025, the Kamatibaug statue walk was truly mesmerizing. It was my first experience of a heritage walk in Baroda, and it left a lasting impression on me.

A fitting comparison comes from a dialogue in the movie *Guide*: “When a guide speaks, even stones begin to talk.” That is exactly what I experienced during this walk.

Since the 1980s, whenever I visited Baroda, a trip to Kamatibaug with the kids was a must. However, I never really paid attention to the statues, or the bandstand scattered around the garden. This time, they seemed to come alive with stories and history.

Shri Kashirao Gaekwad’s Chattri caught my eye for the first time on this walk. Just after entering the garden through the North Gate, the fountain was mesmerizing, displaying a beautiful rainbow—visible on sunny days until about 9:00 a.m. A few steps ahead, the sighting of a peacock was a delight to the eyes.

The lush greenery and vibrant flowers left me spellbound. Overall, the walk through Kamatibaug was refreshing, educational, and sweetly nostalgic, filled with memories of the surroundings. Sincere thanks to Ms. Sandhya for her efforts in helping us understand our heritage.

Alavi Bohra Cemetery: Heritage Walk

23rd Nov 2025 AD, Sunday, 3:30 pm, a heritage walk was organized in the Alavi Bohra community's heritage cemetery-qabarastaan, in which interesting information was given on how the well dug in the 1742 AD, was revived.



At the Cemetery



The Well at the Cemetery

The History:

About 300 years ago, the 34th Da'i-missionary of the Alavi Bohra community, Saiyedna Shehaabuddin Saheb, safeguarded and protected 7 wells in the cemetery having fresh drinkable water. With the passage of time, only one well remains today, which was closed since 60 years during the time of 43rd Da'i Maulaa Nuruddin Saheb, as it was left as nothing but a dumping site. The period of 34th Da'i is the time when the Gaekwadi Raj started here in Baroda under the headship of Pilaji Rao and the Mughal rule ended. It was due to the Gaekwadi authorities that 34th Da'i succeeded in managing and maintaining such a huge land bought from farmers and it was his will that he should be buried in one of the corners of this cemetery so that people start to bury their blessed ones in every nook and corner here.

By the order of the present 45th Da'i Saiyedna Haatim Zakiyuddin Saheb, this well was revived, from which the water is used in the entire cemetery through the web of systematic tapping at designated places in such a way that believers could easy wash the graves, do rituals, water nearby plants, purify the flowers and surrounding place.

The well is 50 feet deep and when the work of removing the garbage started, the water source was tapped at only 40 feet. In May 2019, Mukaasir Maulaa Saiyedi Nuruddin Saheb and Mulla Aliasghar Dholkawala worked untiringly for 3 months and removed waste of nearly 60 tractors. Water pumps were deployed round the clock for 10 days to get the desired result when Mukaasir Maulaa stepped into the well and drank the first glass of its crystal-clear water. During the entire work many miracles happened, and it has been documented in cemetery records.

Today, the people of the entire Alavi Bohra community consider this water to be the water of healing and health. This is the only holy place of the entire community where 11 generations are buried after the migration from Ahmedabad to Vadodara in 1699 AD. The Da'i, head of the community, keeps the records of birth and death in all the families and clans. Such type of extraordinary records are kept in private registers since 1884 AD. Each family has a special demarcated place where their loved ones or ancestors are buried. On the occasion of death anniversary, gents and ladies come together in the morning after morning prayer to pay their respect near the burial when someone from the spiritual family come there to perform holy rites and explain the facts of worldly and eternal life circles.



The Well appropriately rebuilt and covered

Among the members who attended the heritage walk included heritage enthusiasts Sandhya Gajjar, Sameer Gaikwad and Avi Sabawala and others learned interesting facts of history of different graves made before 150 years by Umrethi and Kapadwanji artisans with floral designs and Arabic name plates. Those present requested such type of amazing walk again in coming days.

Mukaasir Maulaa Saiyedi Nuruddin Saheb added that, "Originally this cemetery was very vast and included today's half of Pratapnagar railway station, Dabhoi road and Zenith school areas. With the passage of time and under different rulers, Da'i donated different pieces of cemetery for development of the city and education of the society." Dr. Bhaisaheb Zulqarnain guided the participants and provided useful information about history and heritage value of the graves, its types and status.

Nurrudin Bhaisaheb



Heritage Trust members with senior members of the Alavi Bohra community at the Cemetery.

Urban Narratives- A City Walk

A heritage walk was organized in collaboration with School of Environmental Design and Architecture (SEDA), Navrachana University. The walk was organized on Saturday, 29th November 2025 at 8:00 am. About 25 people participated in the walk. It was curated by architects Vishvesh Pathak and Advaita Janan. Vishvesh Pathak described the idea of publicness through architectural characteristics of the key public buildings surrounding the Sursagar Lake.

Whereas Advaita Janan's narrative focused on the contribution of Sir Patrick Geddes, a Scottish biologist, geographer, town planner, and a sociologist who was invited in 1915 by Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad III to Baroda to prepare a Masterplan of the Sursagar Precinct.



Urban Narratives- A City Walk

Champaner Heritage Festival

Heritage Trust collaborated with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) who organised the Champaner-Pavagadh Heritage Festival 2025 with the support of ASI, Gujarat Tourism, Panch Mahotsav and the Panchmahal District Administration, on the 28th of December. This festival unfolded as a thoughtfully curated, day-long celebration of history, scholarship, art and living traditions at the UNESCO World Heritage Site. From the first light of dawn to the quiet resonance of nightfall, the festival wove together movement, music, learning and performance across Champaner's layered historic landscape.

The day began with a Heritage Run and Women's Bike Rally from Kabutarkhana, supported by the Vadodara Marathon and flagged off by Ms. Tejal Amin, setting an energetic rhythm for the celebrations. A serene classical flute recital by Pt. Nityanand Haldipur marked the conclusion of the Heritage Run, allowing participants to pause, listen and absorb the rhythm of the historic landscape.



Flagging off the Heritage Run



Women Bikers getting ready for flag off

This was followed by Heritage Walk I on the Pavagadh hill, where Dr. Jayaram Poduval guided participants through sacred terrains, culminating in a deeply resonant Dhrupad recital by Shri Thanura Madhugeth at the Lakulish Temple.



Dr. Jayaram Poduval conducting the Heritage Walk of the sacred landscape of Pavagadh



Dhrupad Recital by Shri Thanura Madhugeth at Lakulish Temple

Heritage Walk II, led by Dr. Kurush Dalal, revealed Champaner's mosques and water systems, opening windows into the refined Indo-Islamic urban fabric of a medieval city.



Dr. Kurush Dalal addressing the participants about the Mosques and Water Systems of Champaner



The Helical Stepwell at Champaner

The dialogue deepened at Kevada Masjid through an academic panel discussion featuring Dr. Alka Pande, Dr. Kurush Dalal, Dr. Jayaram Poduval, Ms. Divya Rawat, Shantanu Jadau, Shri Sameer Khera and Prof. Pratyush Shankar, Provost, Navrachana University.

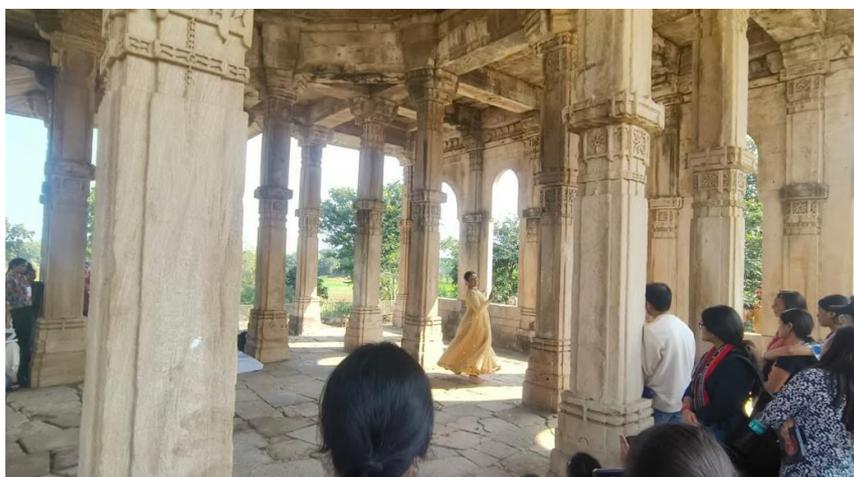


Academic Panel Discussion featuring eminent scholars



Ms. Susmitha Eppalapally, SDM of Halol, addressing the panel and audience

This was followed by a Kathak site-responsive performance by Vidushi Gauri Diwakar, unfolding alongside Dastan-e-Champaner by Shri Sukrit Sen and team, where scholarship, movement and storytelling converged in a shared moment of reflection.



Vidushi Gauri Diwakar performing Kathak at Kevda Masjid



Shri Sukrit Sen & Team performing Dastangoi - Dastan-e-Champaner

The festival further came alive through art and craft workshops, a vibrant Lok Yatra, and evocative folk and tribal performances by Rathwa artists, Talwar Ras performers and Dang Mask performers.



Lok Yatra - A Cultural Procession of Tribal & Folk Ensembles

As dusk descended, the historic Jami Masjid became the setting for the festival's most luminous moments—Tasleem... Absolute Surrender, a thematic Kathak presentation by Vidushi Gauri Diwakar and ensemble with Iranian musicians, followed by a stirring classical-fusion concert by Ustad Taufiq Qureshi and Pt. Rakesh Chaurasia, and a soulful Qawwali finale by Nizami Bandhu.



Tasleem... absolute surrender - A thematic Kathak presentation by Vidushi Gauri Diwakar & Ensemble

A Classical Fusion Concert by Ustad Taufiq Qureshi & Pt. Rakesh Chaurasia



Festival Finale - Qawwali by Nizami Bandhu

As the final notes faded into the ancient stone, Champaner seemed to listen—its walls bearing witness once more to stories sung, danced and spoken into the present. The festival reaffirmed that heritage is not merely remembered here; it is lived, felt, and passed on, breath by breath, across time.

The **Makarpura** Medley

The Makarpura Medley is now a regular event organized by Heritage Trust at Bodhi, Makarpura. This event allows participants to try their hand at block printing under the expert guidance of Pradeep and Mala Sinha.



Mala Sinha guiding participants to use blocks for printing



Participants showing off their block printed scarves

Review by Pradeep Kumar Marwah

I was pleasantly surprised to find a fabric printing house nestled within the bustling engineering industrial complex. Ms. Mala and Mr. Pradeep Sinha's enthusiasm to explain the process was infectious. They simplified the process of producing high-quality print fabric while honoring our rich heritage of block printing.

The first time I touched a block, it felt like stepping into a whole new world of skills. Practicing on new paper gave me the confidence to experiment with various blocks and colors. It was my first-hand experience of handling blocks, smearing colors, and placing them on objects to be printed with precision.

Printing became a meditative experience for me. Creating my own design on virgin cloth filled me with a sense of accomplishment and a newfound appreciation for the techniques I had learned.

After the workshop, we enjoyed a delicious traditional lunch at Lucky Restaurant. We savored the crispy fried brinjals, the flavorful sarsoo kaa sag, and the warm makki ki roti.

Overall, the entire block printing process was a worthwhile experience that left me with a deep appreciation for this art form.

A big thanks to Ms Sandhya and Ms Tanvi for organizing and managing this event.