

ધરોહર



Core Committee

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

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

World Heritage Day weekend brings many facets of heritage alive

The weekend of April 18th and 19th saw a plethora of events to mark World Heritage Day. These were under the banner of DACH (Design, Art, Culture, Heritage) Collective which is a collaboration of Heritage Trust with VMC and IGNCA. We bring you a write up of DACH and how you can be part of this initiative.

From the Viraasat lecture by K.K. Muhammed to events as a nature walk covering heritage trees and a cyclothon, to exhibitions and panel discussion there were interesting events for all.

June 21st is celebrated as International Yoga Day. For yoga enthusiasts, Heritage Trust organised yoga sessions at different venues across the city.

At the time of going to print, the regional Vibrant Gujarat exhibition is being held in Vadodara on June 29th and 30th. The Heritage Trust stall received many visitors. The role of our Trust in getting the UNESCO World Heritage Site tag for Champaner-Pavagadh is well known. Read more about the role of how the early members of our Trust made Herculean efforts in bringing this project to fruition in the ensuing pages.

We greatly appreciate the participation of our members in our programs and activities and look forward to your continued support.

Best wishes

Avi Sabavala

Cyclothon- Ride for Heritage

Participant Responses

Thanks to Sameer Gaikwad for sharing brief history of places which we have seen but don't know their importance. Today's surprise place for me was Jaisinh Rao Library which I have not seen in Baroda though I have been staying here since last 50 years. Also Countess of Dufferin Hospital Building and Bhadra Kacheri Palace. However I was disappointed as some of the places had significant importance but for some reason they were not maintained, I hope due care is taken of all heritage places in Vadodara by concerned authorities.

Thanks to TCCB and Heritage Trust for organizing such a wonderful event.

Shekhar

Dear Shekhar

Do join the Trust as a member and help us in our efforts!

Sameer Gaikwad

Today we rode for a beautiful cause- to know the heritage of Baroda.

For years we all would have travelled through the roads of Baroda unknowingly past heritage monuments which are mostly unseen but have their own importance in the city's history.

Today we got an opportunity to unfold their historic importance before our eyes, to understand the history of these monuments and how it played a pivotal role in the life of Barodians.

A few monuments also took us back to old dynasties even before Gaekwads ruled Baroda.

Our ride started with: Kirti Mandir, Countess of Dufferin Hospital, Jaisingrao Library, Kothi Kacheri, Raopura Clock Tower, Jubilee Baugh, Tarkeshwar Temple, Bhadra Kacheri, Faculty of Performing Arts and Yavateshwar Temple.

I was mesmerised with the history and vision of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III and his pivotal role in shaping the future of Baroda.

Thank you Heritage Trust and our guide Mr. Sameer Gaikwad sir for guiding us through the history and importance of these monuments.

I pray that such rides happens regularly and we all get an opportunity to be a witness of such beautiful historic rides.

Maku

Dear Maku

Thank you for your kind words. Do join the Trust as a member and help in our activities.

Sameer Gaikwad



*Heritage Cyclothon on World
Heritage Day*



Enthusiastic participants of the cyclothon at Juni Kothi

Heritage in Dialogue, **Heritage in Performance**

An evening with **DACH Vadodara**

As dusk settled over the sprawling greens of Kamatibaug, more than 350 citizens gathered at the open-air amphitheatre for an evening that embodied the spirit of DACH Vadodara—a newly launched collective for Design, Arts, Culture, and Heritage that seeks to bring people, institutions, and ideas together around the city’s cultural future. The evening opened with a panel discussion on “Leveraging Vadodara’s Cultural & Heritage Legacy for Building a Sustainable & Resilient Future.” Bringing together distinguished voices from the worlds of heritage, governance, conservation, and culture, the discussion featured HH Radhikaraje Gaekwad, Dr. K. K. Muhammed, Padma Shri, conservation architect Aishwarya Tipnis, Municipal Commissioner Shri Arun Mahesh Babu, IAS, communication strategist Harsh Purohit, and cultural commentator Dr. Jayaram Poduval. Questions of conservation gave way to discussions on participation: how institutions, universities, corporates, governments, artists, and citizens might collectively become custodians of the city’s future. What emerged was not a singular vision, but a shared one. Heritage was spoken of not as a relic of the past, but as an ecosystem, one that thrives through dialogue, stewardship, and engagement. Whether through restoring historic structures, activating heritage sites through public programming, expanding green cover, or creating new spaces for cultural exchange, the conversation repeatedly returned to a simple idea: cities flourish when their people feel connected to their stories. The symbolism of the crocodile, **Nagar no Magar**, as the emblem of Vadodara’s Creative City identity emerged as a powerful metaphor for resilience and continuity. Following the discussion, the gathering transitioned into Rendezvous with Culture, where heritage found expression through performance. The audience was first treated to Arpanam, an evocative Odissi recital led by Lipsa Satapathy, along with Princess Panigrahi and Priyanka Das.

Through fluid movement, expressive storytelling, and the sculptural grace that defines the Odissi tradition, the dancers transformed the stage into a living canvas, reminding viewers of the enduring vitality of India's classical arts. The evening concluded with a Dhrupad recital by Shri Chintan Upadhyaya, accompanied by Shri Vaasu Parikh on the Pakhawaj. Among the oldest surviving traditions of Hindustani classical music, Dhrupad traces its origins to the chants of the Samaveda and remains deeply rooted in the philosophy of Naad Yoga. The performance unfolded as a meditative journey through sound, where voice and rhythm merged to create moments of contemplation and stillness beneath the night sky. Together, the dialogue and performances reflected the essence of the DACH initiative: that heritage cannot thrive in isolation, it is not merely something to be preserved in archives or monuments, but something to be experienced, interpreted, and continuously renewed by the communities that inherit it. If the Cultural Weekend was a beginning, it was one that affirmed Vadodara's enduring capacity to draw strength from its past while imagining new possibilities for its future.

Krupa P. Saraiya



Panel discussion featuring distinguished voices from the worlds of heritage, governance, conservation and culture.

Heritage Nature Walk

Discovering the Stories of Trees at Sayaji Baug, Vadodara

I honestly did not know what to expect. I am a plant lover, my pudina is growing on my windowsill, but a nature walk? That was new for me. So when Heritage Trust organised a Heritage Nature Walk at Kamati Baug on World Heritage Day, I thought, let me just go and see what I can learn. And I am so glad I did.

Kamati Baug, or Sayaji Baug as it is formally known, is West India's largest garden and it is 145 years old. But here is what I did not know before this walk. The garden was not just planted casually. Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III got it designed by a German botanist who was employed in the Kew Gardens in England, the same person who also later worked on Lalbagh in Bangalore and the Mysore gardens. Think about that. The Maharaja was barely 16 or 17 when he started thinking about giving something like this to Baroda. That kind of foresight is what makes you genuinely proud to be from this city.



The Heritage Nature Walk was held on World Heritage Day at Sayaji Baug (Kamati Baug), Vadodara, guided by botanist, Dr. Jitendra Gavali

Our guide for the walk was Jitendra Sir, a naturalist who knows these trees like old friends. He started the walk with a simple but powerful message: the oldest trees in this garden were already here before the garden was even designed. They were left untouched, allowed to grow as they are. And our job now is to make sure they are never cut. Because the older a tree gets, the bigger its role in the ecosystem becomes.

We saw so many incredible trees that morning. There is Chandan, the sandalwood tree, growing naturally in this garden without anyone planting it. Birds eat its fruit, the seeds pass through their digestive system, and that is how it spreads. Chandan is actually a parasite in its early years, drawing nutrients from nearby root systems before it becomes independent. That is why growing it in a nursery is so difficult. And the real fragrance? It comes from near the roots, not the upper wood. No wonder the smugglers always go for the base of the tree.

Then there is Saptaparni, the seven-leafed tree. Rabindranath Tagore started a tradition at Shantiniketan where every student receives a leaf of this tree at convocation along with their degree. We have Palash or Kesudo, our very own saffron-blooming tree whose flowers you can soak in water overnight and bathe with the next morning. It keeps skin healthy and even helps with heat rashes in summer. These are not just trees. They are a whole pharmacy, a whole culture, growing right next to us.

The grand finale was Nari Kela, also called Buddha's Coconut Tree. It is the tallest tree in Sayaji Baug, a Southeast Asian native, and it is breathtaking. Its roots have wide buttress support at the base and Jitendra Sir pointed out that this very design has been copied in metro pole construction. Nature figured it out first. He has been measuring this tree's canopy, height, and circumference as part of an upcoming book on heritage trees of the garden.

One thought stayed with me long after the walk ended. Jitendra Sir said that if you are a Barodian, your grandfather also walked under these same trees when he was your age. Three generations of one family have passed under its shade, breathed its oxygen, and the tree has seen all of them. But not one of them ever learned its name. That felt like something worth changing.

I came back from this walk with a real sense of curiosity and a little guilt too. I have walked through this garden so many times and never truly seen it. Going forward I know I will look at trees differently. And if you have not been on one of these walks yet, please do. You will not just learn about trees. You will learn about Baroda, about history, and honestly, a little about yourself too.

Monica Bisht

[localguide_monika](#)

DACH Vadodara

Vadodara has long been celebrated as a city where creativity flourishes and where art, design, culture, heritage, industry, and community have together shaped its unique identity. Building on this legacy, DACH Vadodara (Design, Arts, Culture & Heritage) has been conceived as a collaborative initiative of the Heritage Trust, Vadodara, in partnership with the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA).

More than an organisation, DACH is a city-wide collective, a space to connect people, ideas, and initiatives through exhibitions, public programmes, conversations, workshops, and city-wide collaborations. Representing this spirit is Nagar ka Mugger - DACH's mascot inspired by the Vishwamitri crocodile, an enduring symbol of Vadodara's natural and cultural heritage. Curious, resilient, and deeply rooted in the city, the Mugger embodies the collective's vision of bringing together diverse voices while celebrating what makes Vadodara unique.

By fostering meaningful partnerships across disciplines, DACH aims to make culture more visible, accessible, and participatory while reinforcing Vadodara's identity as a vibrant Creative City. Whether by showcasing talent, preserving heritage, supporting public initiatives, or enabling new collaborations, every individual and institution has a role to play in shaping the city's evolving cultural narrative.

Krupa Saraiya

Viraasat Lecture

As part of World Heritage Day, Heritage Trust invited K.K. Muhammed, Padma Shri, to share his experiences of restoring 200 temples in the Chambal area of Madhya Pradesh. It was no mean achievement considering it meant raising many structures that were in decrepit condition to their former glory. The additional challenge was this region was the heartland of dacoits. Heritage enthusiasts were treated to an engaging talk that took them through the journey of restoration coupled with astute human relations with stakeholders. Heritage Trust also honoured Dr. Jitendra Gavali, widely known as the Tree Man of Baroda.



Shri K.K. Muhammed sharing his experiences

Echoes & Interventions

As part of the celebrations of World Heritage Day, organized in collaboration with Heritage Trust Vadodara and the Vadodara Municipal Corporation, a special exhibition curated by the IGNCA Regional Centre, Vadodara, was held at the historic Raja Ravi Varma Studio on 18–19 April 2026. Presented as part of a larger programme of talks, events, and cultural activities organized during the festival, the exhibition featured works by six artists from the Studio Takeover Residency: Prajith Elampilal, Neelima Nath, Meenakshi Nihalani, Vishal Kumar Gupta, Joseph J. Joseph, and David Malaker.

Selected by an esteemed jury of renowned artists, the residency brought contemporary artistic practices into dialogue with a significant heritage space. The exhibition received an enthusiastic response from visitors, art enthusiasts, and distinguished guests, including Shri Arun Mahesh Babu (IAS), Commissioner, Vadodara; Shri Sameer Khara, President, Heritage Trust Vadodara; Dr. Jayanti S. Ravi (IAS), and Aishwarya Tipnis.

In view of the overwhelming appreciation and public demand, the exhibition was extended until 4 May 2026, providing a wider audience with the opportunity to experience this vibrant showcase of contemporary art within the iconic Raja Ravi Varma Studio.

Shivangi Krishnan, IGNCA

Vibrant Gujarat Summit

Heritage Trust of Baroda was pleased to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit held at GSFC University on 29 and 30 June as part of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) pavilion. The two-day event brought together government bodies, institutions, businesses and citizens, creating a vibrant platform to showcase the city's achievements, aspirations and unique cultural identity.

A special highlight of the summit was the launch of Heritage Trust's new range of heritage merchandise, developed as "Souvenirs of Vadodara." Rooted in the belief that a city is more than its monuments—it is a collection of stories, memories and identities passed down through generations—the collection celebrates Vadodara's rich heritage through thoughtfully designed tote bags, coasters and magnets featuring original illustrations of the city's iconic landmarks and lesser-known architectural treasures. Accompanied by the DACH Mascot Nagar Ka Mugger, the merchandise invites residents and visitors alike to carry home a tangible reminder of the Cultural and Creative Capital of Gujarat while fostering a deeper appreciation for the heritage that surrounds us.

The summit also provided a proud moment for Heritage Trust with the official launch of its coffee table book, *Once upon a Time... There Was Baroda*, on the esteemed summit platform by the Vadodara Municipal Corporation. The launch marked another significant step in the Trust's ongoing efforts to document, celebrate and share the city's rich history with a wider audience. The enthusiastic response received at the stall throughout the event reaffirmed the growing interest in heritage-led initiatives and highlighted the important role such endeavours play in strengthening civic pride and connecting communities with their shared cultural legacy.



Heritage Trust Merchandise & Publications displayed at the VMC pavilion



The Municipal Commissioner, Shri Arun Mahesh Babu, MLA Shri Balkrishna Shukla & Mrs. Tejal Amin promoting the DACH Collective



Visitors at the summit checking out the 'Souvenirs of Vadodara'



Engaged visitors browsing Heritage Trust's collection of coffee table books



Prominent city leaders and dignitaries promoting Heritage Trust's curated range of heritage merchandise.



VMC launching our coffee table book Once upon a Time... There Was Baroda at the Vibrant Gujarat Summit

Souvenirs of Vadodara

A city is more than its monuments, it's a collection of stories, memories and identities passed down through generations. Our curated collection of heritage souvenirs is an invitation to carry a piece of Vadodara with you.

Featuring original illustrations of the city's iconic landmarks alongside its hidden architectural gems, each tote bag, coaster, magnet and coffee table book celebrates the places that define Baroda's unique character. Bringing these stories to life is our beloved mascot, Nagar Ka Mugger, reminding us that heritage grows with us.



Tote Bags in 4 designs

Every piece is thoughtfully designed to inspire conversations, foster cultural pride and encourage a deeper appreciation for the city we call home.

Whether purchased as a cherished keepsake, a meaningful gift or a souvenir from the Cultural and Creative Capital of Gujarat, these products embody the spirit of the city. For corporate orders, we also offer the option to customise selected products with your organisation's logo, creating thoughtful keepsakes that carry both your brand and the spirit of Baroda.

Thoughtful, memorable and distinctly Baroda, each piece is a celebration of place, people and preservation. Take home more than a souvenir, take home a story worth sharing and keep the Baroda legacy alive! Details on how to place your order will be shared shortly.



Baroda Monuments Set of 4 Coasters



Nagar Ka Mugger Set of 2 Coasters



Set of 5 Fridge Magnets

A brief note on the role of **Heritage Trust** in taking Champaner-Pavagadh to UNESCO World

It was in February 1987 that Prof. R N Mehta, retd. Head, Department of Ancient History & Archeology, Faculty of Arts, M S University of Baroda, first invited the members of the Heritage Trust to visit Champaner with him. For many years in the 1970s decade, this department had received funds to excavate Champaner, the prosperous medieval capital of Gujarat ruled over by the Gujarat Sultanate. However, as these funds dried up, Prof. Mehta and his team, 'closed' the excavation, leaving only the Amir's Manzil 'open' as an example of a 'rich man's home' in those times. Since Prof. Mehta felt that his work was not yet finished and he was moving to Ahmedabad post retirement, he wanted to leave Champaner in 'safe hands'.

So accompanied by a few members of Heritage Trust including Hasmukh Shah, Nila Shah, Karan Grover, Nisha Grover, Sandhya Gajjar along with Dr. Nalini Thakur, India's first formally trained Conservation Architect, teaching at SPA, New Delhi, the group ventured to Champaner. Dr. Thakur was accompanied by her teacher, Sir Bernard Feilden from ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), Rome, one of the world's best-known, most highly respected and influential conservation architects. This first visit to Champaner was memorable as Prof. Mehta took the group on a detailed trip around almost all the standing monuments at Champaner. On return, there was a meeting called and it was decided that Heritage Trust would take the responsibility of Champaner from then on. The Archeological Survey of India (Vadodara Circle) protected 39 monuments and their immediate environs (taking the count to 71 monuments; but when the Heritage Trust's team surveyed the entire site, they identified 114 monuments). Since the destroyed city of Champaner was spread over many square kilometers, it was decided that ASI must be persuaded to protect the entire site as a whole, and not just individual monuments.

The Trust decided to organize a Conference, inviting international experts, to discuss how the conservation and protection of Champaner could be taken forward. Architectural Conservation of heritage monuments and buildings was just emerging as a new subject that could be formally taught in Schools of Architecture across the world. Sir Bernard Feilden authored most of the textbooks. Until then, protection and conservation of heritage monuments was largely the responsibility of archeology and archeologists. In December 1987, the Trust organized the first 3-Day Workshop on the Architectural Conservation of Champaner, led by Sir Feilden, with the support of the ASI (Vadodara Circle) and INTACH (New Delhi) and it was attended by more than 70 architects, archeologists, conservationists, culture enthusiasts, artists, art historians, and environmental journalists from across India. It was held at Champaner itself. As luck would have it, a couple of violent seismic blasts from the nearby quarries shook the monuments enough for the terrified participants to scramble out of the monuments. They had experienced first-hand, what the Heritage Trust was trying hard to explain in words. It made the group understand that the first step forward would be the stopping of quarrying activities in the immediate radius of the monuments. Without that, there was no point initiating any activity related to conservation of any of the monuments.



The President of India, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam unveiling the plaque of World Heritage Site at Champaner in 2006

Post the Workshop at Champaner, as an initiative to introduce architectural conservation as a subject of study in the future, the Trust helped organize a 7-Day ICCROM Workshop on Education in Architectural Conservation for faculty and students held in collaboration with the Dept. of Architecture, M S University.

The Trust made several efforts to stop/control the quarrying, including meeting with the Chief Minister to explain the situation. An order was issued by the government to stop the quarrying but was withdrawn in less than a fortnight, apparently due to the pressure exerted by the strong quarry owners' lobby. When all else failed, in 1995, the Trust finally filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Gujarat High Court, to ban quarrying in the environs of Pavagadh and Champaner. In an effort to drum up public support from the people of Baroda for Champaner, to create awareness about this wonderful historic and naturally bountiful site so close to Vadodara (only 45 kms), Heritage Trust decided to hold the Champaner Festivals to get people from Vadodara to come to Champaner and appreciate and enjoy its beauty. While a lot of Barodians did often go to Pavagadh Hill to the Mahakali temple at its summit and youngsters looked on it as a great trekking and picnic spot, very few bothered to visit the ruins of Champaner that lay at the foot of Pavagadh Hill.

So, in 1995, the first Champaner Dance Festival was organized at the site with Darpana Academy's Mallika Sarabhai and troupe performing the 'Story of Champaner-Pavagadh' across several platforms at Champaner, ending at the Vazu behind the Jami Masjid. More than 250 persons came over from Vadodara to see the performance followed by dinner at the Wada Talav.

In 1996, the second Champaner Dance Festival was organized with Astad Deboo performing to the live rendition of Dhrupad singing by the Gundecha Bandhu. This was sponsored by General Motors which had their manufacturing unit in the neighbouring Halol and were hosting the US Ambassador to India, Frank Wisner, along with 40 heads of American corporations, travelling to India to explore business opportunities, who attended the event, along with those persons invited by Heritage Trust.

In 1997, hope finally dawned. Since years, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Govt. of India, was fighting a case against quarrying and mining in forests and reserved forest areas and it came up for hearing in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruling banned all kinds of quarrying to be banned in forest and reserved forest areas and directed all state governments not to renew quarrying licenses henceforth. As more than 80% of the area covering Champaner-Pavagadh is designated forest and reserved forest, quarrying gradually and automatically stopped.

Then Heritage Trust got into action. It decided that if the Trust worked towards getting UNESCO World Heritage Site status for Champaner-Pavagadh, then the responsibility of looking after the site would be that of the Government of India, and not of an NGO like the Heritage Trust which had neither the political clout nor the money to make sure that the site was protected and conserved. Since the final goal was identified, the Trust developed a strategy to be followed till the goal was achieved.

And it went as follows ...

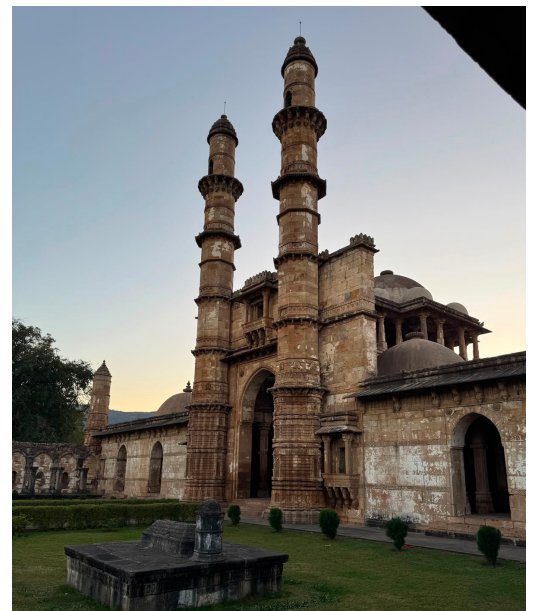
In 1999, the Trust successfully nominated the site to New York's World Monuments Fund's prestigious list of Year 2000's 100 Most Endangered Sites of the World, identified by World Monument Watch. Consequently, the Trust received a grant of US \$ 20,000 from General Electric Global Fund via WMF towards creation of a Comprehensive Management Plan for Champaner-Pavagadh. The CEO of General Electric was in the contingent that accompanied Ambassador Wisner and had personally experienced the site! That was the game changer for the site. The US Ambassador himself came to Baroda to hand over the cheque to Heritage Trust. This helped the State Government sit up and take notice and a Task Force Committee led by the Chief Secretary was formed in Gandhinagar to look into issues at the site and how the various government departments which were stake-holders at the site could come together and work towards looking after the site. This offered Heritage Trust much easier access to official departments responsible for various works to be implemented at the site.

But most importantly, this fund helped the Trust embark on the complete and detailed documentation of Champaner-Pavagadh. The task was given to young conservation architects Sumesh Modi and Sonal Mithal Modi. Prof. Ghanshyam Joshi, a retired Economics teacher and long-time resident of Champaner, who knew the site extremely well, was a strong friend and well-wisher to the Heritage Trust and the site's most well-informed guide. He supported Sumesh and his team wholeheartedly. The team tented camp at the Machi plateau (which then housed the Gujarat Tourism's modest guest house and canteen), along with some of the students they taught at an architecture school in Surat/Bardoli, and over a year, during long weekends, end-semester breaks and vacations, they painstakingly measure-drew and sketched each and every monument, even those that barely appeared like one, and mapped the entire area (that is now termed 'Archeological Park').

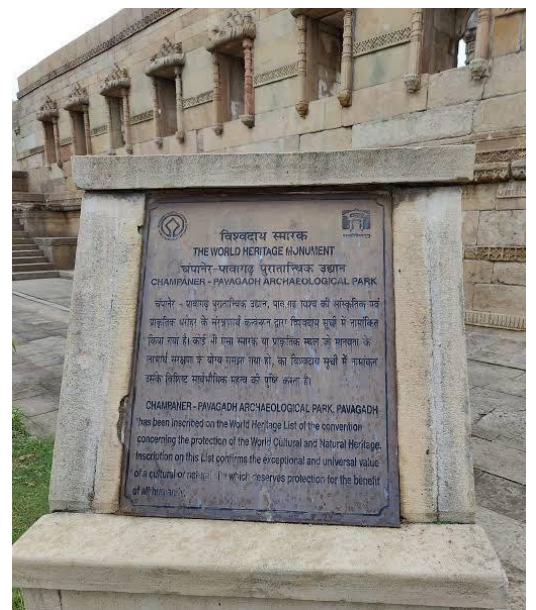
At the same time, as they wandered about the site, Sonal Mithal Modi and a group of her students began speaking to the locals – the shopkeepers, priests, elderly pilgrims, residents on the hill as well as the plain, tribal witch-doctors – and wrote down interesting and unusual stories they recounted related to the origin of Pavagadh and the river Vishwamitri whose source is in this hill, the appearance of Kalikamata, the curse she yelled at the King who dared to grab her hand as she danced the garba, the several stories about Mehmud Begda and his officers and the descendants who ruled for a short while after his death, the destruction of the capital by Humayun, and so on. This was a fascinating compendium of stories which the Heritage Trust divided into Myths (stories with basis in religious texts and mythology) and Legends (stories based in recorded history but could have a magical/supernatural twist). Given their engaging narratives, the Trust commissioned artist Jaidev Thakore, whose sardonic humor infused his illustrations with great appeal, matching that of the stories. This compilation, which may appear a somewhat whimsical exercise when it was done, played an extremely critical role when Champaner-Pavagadh came up in front of the UNESCO jury for evaluation.

In a celebratory mode, in late 2002, the Trust organised the third Champaner Dance Festival, featuring Sharira Shakti Ascending, choreographed by Chandralekha, performed by Tishani Doshi to live music by the Gundecha Bandhu. That year, the Trust's dossier proposing Champaner-Pavagadh as India's nomination to UNESCO's World Heritage Sites was finally accepted by the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, and dispatched to UNESCO. In early 2003, we were informed by UNESCO that a third party examiner from ICOMOS will be travelling to India to check out the site and discuss any issues that may have been raised by the UNESCO jury.

In September, Sri Lankan conservation architect, Dr. Gamini Wijesuriye from ICOMOS, arrived in Baroda for a 3-day examination visit of the proposed site. Impressed and overwhelmed by the site itself, Dr. Wijesuriye carefully went through the documentation that Heritage Trust had put together and pointed out some of the simple corrections that needed to be made. He was most excited by the rough, computer-printed, spiral-bound copy of the Myths and Legends of Champaner-Pavagadh, that was also displayed along with the other documents. The reason was that from 2004 onwards a sixth Criterion was to be added in the Cultural Sites – ‘To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance’ – that is, the intangible aspects of the cultural site, which were very evocatively captured by the documents of the myths and legends that were remembered and recounted by the local people even today. This Criterion was introduced by the Japanese, and Dr. Wijesuriye believed that it would work very strongly in favor of Champaner-Pavagadh. Heritage Trust quickly got to work on the recommendations made by Dr. Wijesuriya and submitted the same to UNESCO.



In June 2004, at their meeting in Suzhou, China, the UNESCO accepted the nomination and Champaner-Pavagadh became Gujarat's first and India's 26th UNESCO World Heritage Site.



It was the coming together of the Trust's continuous and sustained efforts in the face of numerous hurdles and opposition from different quarters that signaled this amazing achievement on the part of just a small town NGO. It paved the way for Gujarat's understanding of its own heritage and tourist potential (not really acknowledged till then), and the proposals prepared (and subsequent acceptance of) the Patan Rani ki Vav Stepwell, the Harappan site of Dhola Vira and the Historic City of Ahmedabad (India's first World Heritage City) as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in quick succession.

The members of Heritage Trust engaged in the active work on Champaner-Pavagadh for almost 25 years were Karan Grover, Hasmukh Shah, Sandhya Bordewekar Gajjar, Jal Patel, Rahul Gajjar. They were supported in the extensive technical ground work and architectural documentation at the site by conservation architects Sumesh Modi and Sonal Mithal-Modi, students of Prof. Nalini Thakur, who recommended them to the Trust. On site, at Champaner-Pavagadh, the pillar of support was always Prof Ghanshyam Joshi. Post the nomination, UNESCO required a law to be passed that would comprehensively cover all aspects of future protection and conservation of The Archaeological Park of Champaner-Pavagadh. This document was drafted as a bill by R.C Saxena, accepted and passed as a law in the Gujarat Vidhan Sabha without a single change.

It was formalized by being printed in the next Gazette of Government of Gujarat.

The name of the Bill was Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park World Heritage Area Management Authority Bill 2004 which became an act in 2006. This act was repealed in 2023 by Government of Gujarat and replaced by Pavagadh-Champaner Authority which was appointed by government of Gujarat.

Sandhya Gajjar

Heritage Humour

