

Managing**Committee**

Vikram Singhal

Sameer Khera

Alka Smart

Rati Desai

Jaideep Verma

Sandhya Gajjar

Jal Patel

Editorial Team

Avi Sabavala

Arati Desai

Design and Layout

Swapna Kothari,

Shivani Pikle

Write to us at

302 A Square

Building, 82 Urmi

Society, Productivity

Road, Vadodara

390007, India

[heritagetrustvadodara](mailto:heritagetrustvadodara@gmail.com)a@gmail.com**Or visit us on**<https://www.heritagetrustbaroda.org/>[trustbaroda.org/](https://www.heritagetrustbaroda.org/)

And on Facebook

@heritagetrustbaroda

From the Editor's Desk :

A visit to a museum opens the eyes of a visitor to the hitherto unknown facts about the history, culture, life-styles as well as the natural history of a region.

While visiting any part of the world, I have found it particularly useful to visit a local museum before embarking on exploring the area as it gives an insight and understanding of the significance of the country or region. Our country is blessed to have some really world-class museums that have creatively show-cased some of the best arts and artifacts that are available. Indeed our museums in Baroda are excellent examples of this and it is a treat to view some of the finest collections on display.

Team Dharohar brings you this issue on the important role that museums play in our lives. We have two interesting articles – Role of Museums in Enriching Society by Dr. Ambika Patel and on Home Museums and Collections by Ms. Arati Desai. While appreciating and admiring the collections showcased by museums, we are fortunate to have enthusiastic individuals in our city who have opened their homes and unique collections to viewers to appreciate and understand some interesting and not so well known hobbies. Perhaps while disposing of some off some old items which may ultimately find its way to shukrawadi bazar, it may be useful to stop and consider whether we are actually doing away with a family heirloom that can be a treasure trove of information and tell a unique story of a bygone era.

Heritage Trust had an interesting online presentation on the Stepwells of Ahmedabad by three young architects and Shivani Pikle shares an interesting synopsis of the programme.

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Heritage Trust was dismissed by the Gujarat High Court. Advocate Jaideep Verma shares an update in this issue.

What better way to conclude than with a touch of humour! Swapna Kothari shares some heritage humour to help us unwind and relax after a hectic day.

We wish all our readers a healthy and safe time.

- Avi Sabavala

Role of Museums in Enriching the Society

The Oxford Dictionary describes museum as "a building in which objects of interest or importance are stored and displayed". For the common people, the prime function of the museum is usually considered to be the preservation and display of artefacts of archaeological and historical interest. The majority of museum visitors are unlikely to give a thought to the wider role of museums in society. However, from my personal experience, when asked, the museum goers generally opine that museums are worth to visit.

For children, museums are viewed as sites for exposition and as repositories for preserving valuable, unique and unusual objects of the past. A nine-year-old child from Baroda, was asked about her reflections on museum and her response was; "museums preserve mummies and stuffed animals and skeletons and are kept for public viewing as we could see in Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery." This view reflects the preservation, exhibition and collection missions of the museum. In this light, if we look back to the year 1870, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York founded with a proposed mission that, "the new institution not only cultivate a pure taste in all matters connected with the arts, but also provide the people of New York city with a "means for innocent and refined enjoyment". When we see the situation in Europe, the South Kensington Museum later termed as V&A, kept its doors open during the evening hours for the common man to visit and enjoy. The conversion of the Louvre from a palace to a museum in the immediate years after French Revolution indicated its multiple manifestation in purpose. At present, a museum is no longer only measured by its internal possessions such as collections, endowments, staff and facilities, but by 'an external consideration of the benefits it provides to the individuals and communities it seeks to serve'. Luke (2002) opines, "Museums possess a power to shape collective values and social understandings in a decisively important fashion".

Scholars in the field of Museum describe museums as "living institutions" (Spalding 2002) which are constantly changing and regularly revisiting their purposes. Of late, the significance of museums as social institutions to serve society has become more relevant to significantly position itself within the social rubric.

While exploring the role of museums in enriching society, innumerable dimensions, right from their existence to extension can be elucidated. The museum is the social space for interaction, gathering, dialogue, discussion, performance, display, education and enjoyment. The people who visit the art museums generally look forward to enjoy the timeless beauty of the classical artworks in relaxing environments which promotes "reflection, contemplation and discussion". For the teachers and student communities, the museums act as a supplement for the formal learning offered in schools and colleges and also as a "symbol of lasting value". With regard to accessibility and inclusion, museums are slowly evolving as the spaces for the physically challenged, visually impaired, mentally and emotionally challenged, special segment of the society. Museums are adopting various ways and means to recreate its galleries and spaces in order to facilitate visitors with down's syndrome, autism and similar other special segments of the society who needs attention.

All over the world, museums are continuously evolving in their role, functions and services and have started welcoming the community to participate in actions and activities whereby community engagement and participation becomes the core function of the museums. Museums are trying to learn what the community needs and further fit the museum ideas and activities to those needs so as to make the museums as a social entity relevant to the community and society. The museums in collaboration with community take initiative to co-create and co-curate exhibitions enabling them to tell meaningful stories to the public through the lens of the community perceptions, which are more appealing and acceptable.

With the application of digital and information technology museums attempt to reach out to the society and public. Through this effort the museum collections and spaces become more accessible to those who cannot otherwise reach museums due to various barriers. To cite an example, museums in UK provide educational services by conducting video conferences with schools and thus reach out to larger number of young children. The museum studios are used to communicate and transmit the shows by using methods of demonstration, storytelling, enactment, puppetry and many more. The Museo buses and vans otherwise called as "museum on wheels" goes to the community with a view that, "if the people cannot come to museum, let the museum go to the people." An excellent example is the Museum Bus by the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai and many

museo-buses operated by science museums under national science council museums of India. The regional science centres through their mobile museo buses reach out the unreached, the rural people and provide scientific information and updates.

To conclude, museums keep evolving and changing their role in serving society as informal educational institutions and community participatory spaces while trying to make themselves vibrant and their presence felt. They keep reaching out to people and the symbiotic relation and collaborative events should take the museums to further heights in the days to come in serving the public and the society. In the near future, museums will continue to evolve in its role and application and services through the application of information technology, virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial intelligence. Application of technologically advanced gadgets and social media platforms will enable the museums to create their identity and maintain the same and create a far-reaching impact in times when museums are expected to be more responsive towards their audience and roles they play in society.

- Dr. Ambika Patel
Head, Dept.of Museology
Dean of Students, Faculty of Fine Arts
President - ICOM India

Reference:

Luke, T.W., . 2002. Museum Politics, Minneapolis. University of Minneapolis.
Spalding, J. 2002. The Poetic Museum: Reviving Historic Collections, New York.



Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery, Illustration by : Shivani Pikle

Of Museums and Collections

The word 'museum' conjures a very typical idea in most minds. Images of art, archeology, general, natural history and natural science, science and technology and history come to mind. But there is so much more to the institution. Extensive research and work goes into creating every single collection of a museum. The roles that museums play go beyond its functionality of exhibition. They establish the backbone for study in the historical, educational as well as cultural context of a living society.

Founded to serve several purposes like that of a scholarly and recreational venue, a minefield of educational resources, museums contribute to the quality of life of the area where they are located even by attracting tourism to the region and also by promoting civic pride or nationalistic endeavour. While having a variety of purposes, each museum is unique in its form and content. While the function of a museum is predominately to collect, preserve and display objects of historical, scientific, artistic, and cultural interest, it has a responsibility to both the exhibits and the viewers which it serves with one of its most empowering facets - the power of social engagement. Hosting unique events and bringing exhibits from other museums, are some of the means which work at encouraging more foot fall.

A unique concept of the museum is the Home Museum, where the collection is housed by the collector who opens his home to the public for viewing. This venture by an individual or family does just as much service to the community as a museum. It is the individual's enthusiasm for collecting and knowing one's history and culture that gives birth to these incredible collections. Though many do have their own private collections, the importance of it is sharing knowledge via the collections with the public and the readiness to continuously strive to contribute to the preservation of our past, makes these museums/collections so very distinctive.

The legacy of these home collections and home museums, are a remarkable testament to an individual's passion for knowledge sharing and most certainly does deserve more recognition and support. All these collectors are bound by a common goal: the preservation and interpretation of some material aspect of society's cultural consciousness.

We are fortunate to have many such home collections/ museums in Baroda. Though they may not be open to public every day, they are accessible when the collectors decide on showing publicly (and often on request). Several collections have been on display during special events like the Vadodara Peoples Heritage festival held during the National Heritage week over the years.

A look at some of the amazing collections of local collectors in the city, many who do display at their home museums.

1. Collection of 501 Water Pots of all materials, shapes and sizes – Mr. Atul Shah
2. Collection of Traditional Lamps, PaanPeti, and Vintage Books - Mr. Manubhai Nirmal,
3. Collection of Children's Wheeled Toys - Mr.Trushar Rana
4. Collection of Baroda State Antiques - Mr. Kiran Shah
5. Old Camera and Pocket Watch Collection - Shri Raj Panchal
6. Baroda State Medals and Envelopes - Vinod Shah
7. A Collection of antique traditional Lamps, PaanPeti, glasses, Boxes, Ash trays -Shri Abhaysing Baria
8. All About Teeth, Dr. Chandarana's Dental Museum
9. Baroda state Palaces and Sayajirao statues Exhibition: a photographic collection - Shri Vijay Shirke
10. Coins of Baroda State - Jeekysingh Chouhan
11. Malkhamb Films collection - Chandrashekhar Patil
12. Collection of Calligraphy tools: Ink pots, Quills, Nib Pens- Manish Soni
13. Collection of hand-written manuscripts (hasta likhit granth) -Shri Harshad Kadia
14. Collection of Calendars - Arun Majumdar.
15. Artist Atul Padia has been an avid collector of Match Boxes for many decades.
16. Collection of Chocolate Wrappers - Jayanti Chavda

For more details on the home museums and collections please visit the Vadodara Peoples Heritage facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/VadodaraPeoplesHeritageFestival>

-Arati Desai



Home Museums of Vadodara, Image Source : Shivani Pikle

Water, Wells and Well Being of Heritage

With the world going online due to the COVID crisis, the Heritage Trust followed suit and went digital by organizing it's first ever online lecture in association with the School of Environmental Design & Architecture, Navrachana University to celebrate the World Heritage Day 2021. Titled 'Stepwells of Ahmedabad : Water, Gender and Heritage' the lecture was delivered by three young scholars namely Priyanka Sheth, Ashini Sheth and Tanvi Jain who were introduced by Prof. Pratyush Shankar dean of School of Environmental Design & Architecture.

The lecture was based on the recently published book of the same name authored by the aforementioned scholars. A part of the 'Stepwell of Ahmedabad' initiative Ashini Sheth is an architect graduated from CEPT University with a keen interest in Landscape and Architectural History. Priyanka Sheth an architect as well, currently working at Beyer Blinder and Belle, New York is lead researcher for Stepwells of Ahmedabad, she also has a Masters degree in Architecture from Yale University. And last but not the least Tanvi Jain is an architect who is currently doing M.Phil from Cambridge with 'Water Traditions of Semi Arid India' as a topic for her design thesis.

If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water and this magic is what has enabled humans and great civilizations to thrive and transform into the mega cities that we see today. The lecture walked the audience through the ecology of the water systems that allowed cities to thrive in the semi-arid areas of Gujarat majorly focusing on those of Ahmedabad.

Ashini explained " all the little settlements outside the walled city were called 'Puras' following a basic Talavdi(Pond)-Vaav(well) ecology that allowed the people to create water reserves for the arid months of the year. Each settlement was formed on a higher ground situated near a water body which would capture the surface runoff and recharge the groundwater. The people then tapped into these groundwater reserves by digging wells that penetrated deep into the ground, which were accessed through several flights of steps and hence the 'stepwells' ". As time wore on, these structures grew more elaborate and lavish, making them places for socialization and places of respite for distant travellers who took shelter in these structures to protect themselves from the scorching sun.

Later, Priyanka explained a little more about how these amazing structures were built and the many communities that flourished by erecting these great edifices. The communities like the 'Odhs' were the ones that took upon the work of digging wells, followed by the Sompuras who were the stonemasons that assembled the intricately carved stone pillars, and the sculptures often seen decorating the walls of these stepwells. There was also a community called the 'Bhishtis' who were just dedicated to carrying water. These people used to accompany caravans, armies and such with leather sacks full of water to supply the former.

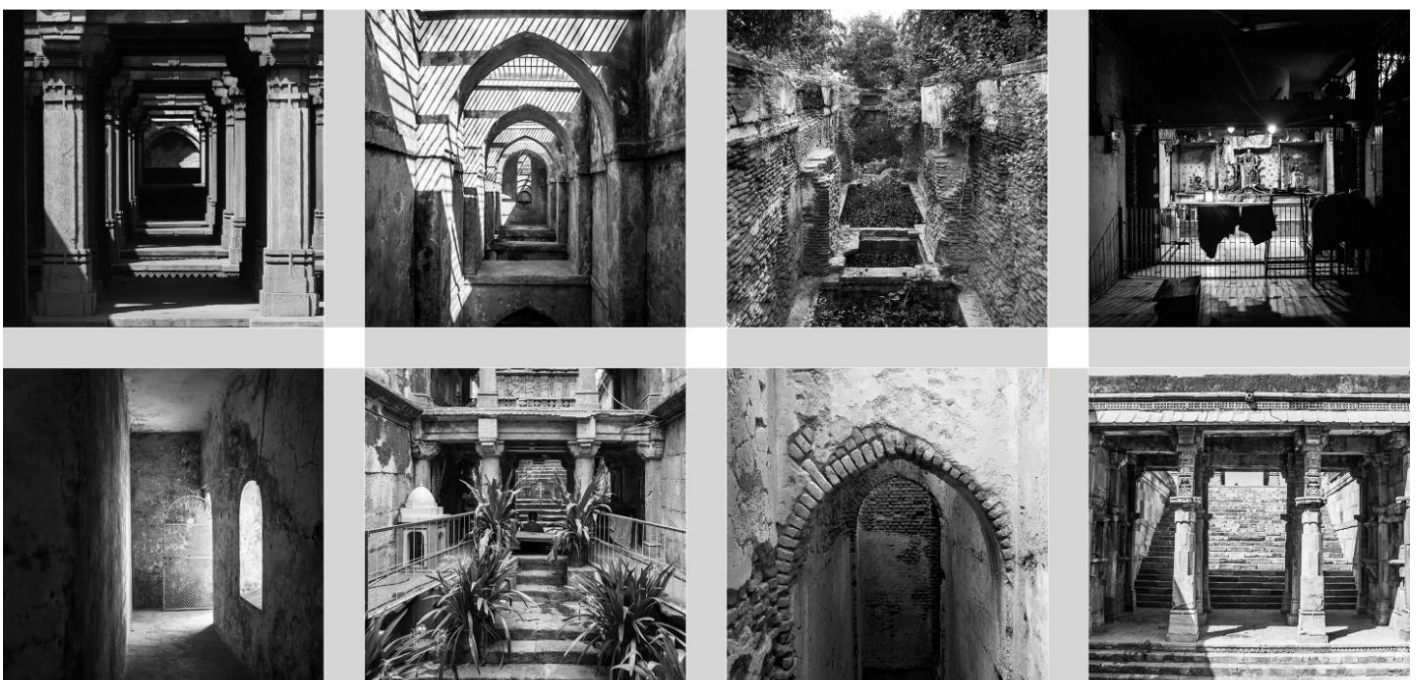
Coming to the current state of the stepwells of Ahmedabad, she explained that the wells lie in different states of conservation, some pristinely protected while some have fallen in states of disrepair and many more are being built over owing to the developmental pressures.

The lecture was summed up by Tanvi, who talked about making these structures the agent of change to go from water depletion to water renewal, recharge and regeneration. She explained that to solve the rising water crises that is seen in several cities and especially in Ahmedabad, a middle way can be found between modern and heritage water infrastructure. Policies can be made to make this shift from total dependence on modern water supply infrastructure to harvesting rainwater in heritage water structures and then using it during the dry months of the year.

Subsidies can be made for restoration of the underground tanks to incentivize for implementation of these policies. These steps will increase community based harvesting. Not only will this take some of the load off the modern supply systems, but it will also breathe new life into these edifices of the past.

To conclude, going forward into the future we need to make room for the past by conserving already available resources and by making better choices to make our planet a more ecologically sustainable place.

-Shivani Pikle



A patchwork of Stepwells of Ahmadabad, Image Source : Tanvi Jain

Plight of Pratap Vilas

Heritage Trust, Vadodara had filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before the Gujarat High Court seeking a stay on the construction of buildings by National Academy of Indian Railways (NAIR) in the immediate proximity of the Pratap Vilas Palace. The PIL was admitted on the first hearing and after a series of marathon hearings has been dismissed by a 91 page judgment.

It is the considered view of HT it fails to adequately safeguard the concerns of preservation of the Heritage (structural as well as environmental) of Vadodara & the judgement is required to be set aside on the various legal doctrines like Public Trust. Hence, HT is considering an appeal to the Supreme Court.

HT is a group of common citizens of Baroda who are dedicated and committed to the preservation of the heritage of the city ; and in the past has actively led campaigns in the courts and in the public domain for the preservation and conservation of Pavagarh-Champaner and other structures of heritage importance.

- Jaideep Verma

Become a member

As a non-profit, we rely on your support as our member and encourage you to send more heritage enthusiasts our way.

Patron Member

Rs. 100,000

Donor Member

Rs. 25,000

Life Member

Rs. 5,000

5 Year Member

Rs. 500

Corporate Patron

Member

Rs. 2,00,000

Corporate Donor

Member

Rs. 50,000

Corporate Member Rs.

25,000 / year

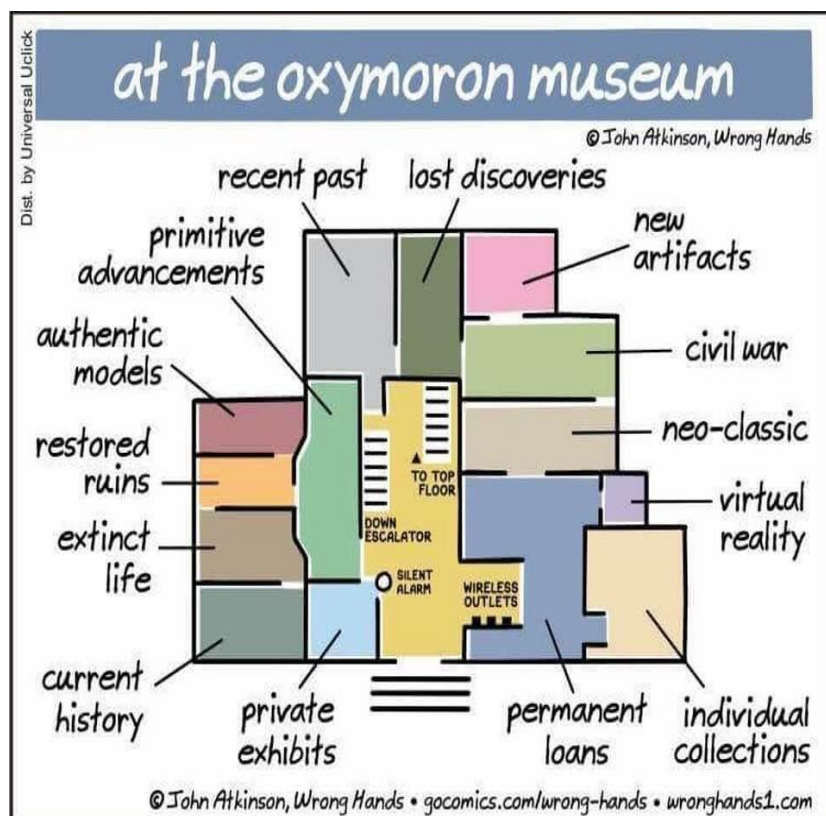
Have an idea you would like to explore?

Want to collaborate or organize an event virtually?

Get in touch with us!



Humor :
Museum humour for the established and the non-established



Publications

Looking for books as gifts? The Trust has published more than half a dozen books, four of which have been on Pavagadh. Three other books on Baroda, one of which is for children, and is still available in print. These would make great corporate gifts in the coming festive season.

Available:

Once Upon a Time...there was Baroda- Rs. 3000/- copy

Children's book on Baroda (Gujarati) - Rs. 20/copy

Future Events:

We hope to come back with physical events soon, but till then we will be planning for online lectures- look out for announcements on our social media!