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From the Editor's Desk:

Viraasat Lecture showcases a turnaround story

The second quarter of the year has the World Heritage Day on April 18 every year. Heritage Trust's much awaited Viraasat Lecture was held on April 16. It was delivered by Ar. Aishwarya Tipnis an award-winning architect and heritage conservationist on "Heritage and Us: What citizens can do?" The speaker effectively brought home to the audience how this task could be successfully achieved through a slide show of beautiful photographs of the erstwhile French colony of Chandorenagar near Kolkata. After the talk, The Baroda Collective, a publication that Heritage Trust had commissioned, was released by Shrimant Samarjitsinh Gaekwad. Read more about this well received program in this issue.

Closer home, we bring you articles on an iconic institution located in the well-known Kothi premises viz., the Jaisingrao Library, and the cleaning of a few step-wells jointly with the Vadodara Municipal Corporation.

This issue carries a special article on "Reimagining Heritage" contributed by Navrachana University's Centre for Heritage Research.

We hope you enjoy reading about the varied flavors of heritage in our city and look forward to receiving your feedback.

With the onset of the monsoon season, we are looking forward to respite from the summer heat and wish our readers an enjoyable but safe time in the rains.

Avi Sabavala

Heritage and Us : What can Citizens do ?

After a gap of 3 years, Heritage Trust once again celebrated World Heritage Day (April 18) by hosting the Viraasat Lecture this year. Eminent award-winning conservation architect, Aishwarya Tipnis, delivered the talk, Heritage & Us: What Citizens Can Do, on Saturday, 16th April, at LVP Banquets. As the Talk was open to and free for all, it was widely attended. After the Talk, Shrimant Samarjitsinh Gaekwad released the first stage of the inventory record, The Baroda Collective that Heritage Trust has commissioned Conservancy Works and Research Shop (CWRS) to put together.

Conservation architect, Aishwarya Tipnis has worked on several projects related to the conservation of historical monuments. In 2015, her work on the century-old Main Building of the Doon School received the Honourable Mention, and in 2016, her work on the bastions of Mahidpur Fort in Madhya Pradesh was given the Award of Merit, both under the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. In 2018, she became the youngest architect to be appointed the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government for her preservation work of French heritage in India, particularly Chandernagore in West Bengal. Tipnis was part of the UNESCO expert team that prepared the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. She has been recognised as a Global Cultural Leader by the European Union in 2016. In today's post-pandemic world, bottom-up, community-led initiatives for heritage conservation have been recognised as the key to achieve sustainable development, especially in the area of heritage conservation. In this Talk, Tipnis will discuss the challenges and opportunities of citizen-led urban conservation work in India through a case study of Heritage & People of Chandernagore Project, a decade-long engagement towards conservation of the urban heritage in Chandernagore, West Bengal.

Aishwarya Tipnis delivered a thought-provoking talk, highlighting a lot of practical, on-the-ground challenges that are faced when a conservation project for a heritage monument is proposed, accepted and begun, and the various ways to deal with them. It was covered in detail by the print and digital media. She offered detailed guidelines to the young functionaries of Heritage Trust on ways and methods to deal with imagining, perceiving and successfully finishing heritage conservation-related projects. This will surely help strengthen the foundation of the Trust. She said, "I really wanted to openly share my triumphs and failures so others can benefit from them and I am so glad that has resonated with all of you." She went through the book on Baroda that the Trust gifted to her and responded by saying, "I enjoyed the book very much. In fact my mother and I were flipping through the pages and connecting some dots and seeing the familiar landmarks. As I mentioned, we had some family (my atyas/aunts) who lived their entire lives in Baroda and my aji's (mother's mother) grandparents were from the Ambegaokar family of Baroda too. After they passed, we haven't really visited but it was nice to be back 23 years later."

Sandhya Gajjar



Glimpses from the Viraasat Lecture

Image Source: Sameer Gaikwad

A Library in Distress

On 1st March 1877, the very first library of Baroda and one of the first libraries of India - The State Library, was inaugurated by Maharaja Sayajirao III in two huge rooms of an educational institution - The Vernacular College of Science.

The library started with 61 members who paid 2 Anna's per month in order to use the library. In 1882, the Gaikwad government built a two floored building opposite the Raopura Kothi Kacheri and the state library shifted there. It had a separate Children's section, Ladies section, Reading room and a Reference room.

In 1924, Shakuntala Raje Gaikwad helped the library financially and in return the State Library adopted the name of her husband and acquired it's present name - Shri Jaisinhrao Sarvajani Vachnalay.

When all the states of the country were integrated after India attained freedom, the library took a turn towards deterioration. It no longer received government grants. Several donors came to it's rescue and it pulled along comfortably for some more time. The library which had around 25,000 books and 500 life members charged only Rs.7 as membership fee. The reading room of the library used to have atleast 1000 to 2000 people visiting there per day to read Newspapers, Magazines and Journals.

Till 1983 - 84, the library was also known for holding inter-school competitions like Dramas, Debates etc for children. But gradually it discontinued because of lack of interest on the part of children and their parents. Thanks to the advent of Television and Mobile Phones.

The library contains many rare books and manuscripts that cannot be found elsewhere. These were kept on the first floor and were put on display during special occasions.

Now the library belongs to the State government and has to pay one rupee per month as rent. Despite this it is not in a position to maintain the building premises due to lack of interest on behalf of the government or social institutions.

The library which was once considered as a Citadel of Learning and played a useful role in not only educating the people but also strengthening their cultural bond is crying for the attention of the people of Vadodara.

Today the libraries of the world have taken a turn towards modernization and INFLIBNET has come into the picture, but still places like the Jaisinhrao Library reminds us of our rich heritage. Can we allow it to crumble before our very own eyes?

Alka Smart



Left : Before and After images of Clean Up @ Jaisinhrao Library, Vadodara

Above : District Collector Shalini Agrawal & Mayor Keyur Rokadia @ the Jaisinhrao Library

Image Source: Sameer Khera

VMC – Heritage Trust Clean Up Drive

The cleanup drive was a collaborative effort of the Vadodara Municipal Commission and the Heritage trust. This project by the city and the people took place once a week. A site was decided upon by both parties to clean and preserve. The areas around the Jaysingrao Library, the Navgruh Stepwell, the Bhadra Kacheri, the precincts of Yavteshwar Mahadev Mandir, the Gaekwad substation, the Deep stambh and the closeby stepwell were all cleaned up carefully by the VMC, revealing so many hidden treasures so often overlooked.

-Arati Desai



Top : Before and After images of Clean Up @ Nuvgrah Stepwell

Center : Clean Up @ Bhadra Kacheri

Bottom : Clean-Up @ the Electrical Substation

Image Source: Sameer Khera, Arati Desai, Sameer Gaikwad

Reimagining Heritage: A Collaborative Initiative of Navrachana University's Centre for Heritage Research and Heritage Trust Baroda

Exhibition and walking tours were organized as part of the event Reimagining Heritage, by the Center for Heritage Research of Navrachana University along with the Heritage Trust Baroda. These two organizations collaborated for these events in order to raise awareness about different heritage issues of the city.

The Centre for Heritage Research (CHR) was established in September 2020, with the intent of providing guidance to local bodies, evolve specialized solution through research-based processes and engaging with communities wherever pertinent. Vadodara has this long-standing history of being one of the progressive princely states during the period of Gaekwads, alongwith its patronage towards art, architecture, nature, innovation, technology, education, and social reforms. Hence, projects identified and considered under CHR were recognized on basis of their relevance and association with either city, community, socio-cultural values, education, or technological innovation with architectural explorations.

The activities undertaken under CHR are:

- Documentation and Research of Heritage Resources
- Design Social Outreach Programs and Initiatives
- Consulting Projects
- Repository Based Projects

This question of heritage is often associated with a bygone past that existed centuries ago. But recent histories of modern, technological, or natural heritage do not figure in popular discourses. The exhibition Reimagining Heritage unpacks these recent histories and provides a fresh perspective to the debate on "what really constitutes heritage?". It is an attempt to shift the gaze away from the obvious and the romantic notion of heritage and towards areas that might have more relevance today.

The exhibition Reimagining Heritage showcased some of the modern, technological, and natural heritage of Vadodara. This was a public event organized from 25th to 27th March 2022 at the Art District of Alembic City displaying exhibits and models from below mentioned projects, alongwith walking tours on Laurie Baker Buildings and Narrow-Gauge Railway.

The exhibition showcased important projects researched by the faculty members and students of School of Environmental Design and Architecture (SEDA) at Navrachana University. The projects are as follows:

1. Laurie Baker in Vadodara
2. Narrow Gauge Railway Heritage of Vadodara
3. Vad (Banyan Tree) of Vadodara
4. Heritage Publications

The exhibition was inaugurated by Mr. Amit Gupta, DRM, Vadodara Division, and by an eminent architect Mr. Gurjit Singh Matharoo (Principal Matharoo Associates), an Academic, and an International Fellow, RIBA. The occasion was marked by presence of Ms. Tejalben Amin (Chairperson Navrachana Education Society), Ms. Sandhya Gajjar (Member Board of Management NUV), Prof. Pratyush Shankar (Interim- Provost and Dean SEDA, NUV), Dr. Sandeep Vasant (Registrar NUV), Mr. Sameer Khera, President Heritage Trust Baroda, Prof. Shalini Amin - Program Chair B. Design (Interior), Prof. Pragya Shankar – Program Chair B. Design (Landscape), NUV Faculty members, Heritage Trust members and other esteemed guests. The space was full of students from SEDA, other institutes, professionals, and others.

Walking Tours: The Laurie Baker in Vadodara walk was curated by Prof. Pragya Shankar along with Ms. Sandhya Gajjar. Focusing on the architectural values and the experiments carried out to resolve various challenges while designing the three buildings mentioned above and the design decisions taken by Laurie Baker for each of them. The uniqueness of these buildings in terms of their design approach and reflection of the experimentation with architectural language and material expression was emphasized as well.



Glimpses from Inauguration of Re-Imaging Heritage Exhibition on March 25th, 2022 - Art District, Alembic City.



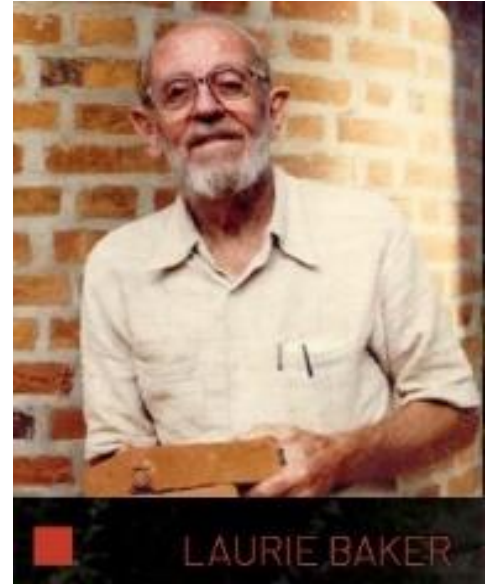
Photos of the exhibits of drawings and models of various projects.



The Centre for people with disability, Navrachana School, Sama is a unique building on many fronts, from conception of space to adaptations in construction techniques.



The Administrative Block at Jyoti Ltd. is a 6-storey building with RCC frame structure and brick walls as infills. This is one of its kind buildings designed by Laurie Baker



Experimentation with filler slab and brick walls at Primary Health Center at Jyoti Ltd.

The narrow-gauge walk curated by Prof. Shalini Amin focused on innovation in technology and its influence on social and physical fabric of the city at large. Ms. Manju Meena (Sr. DCM) and her team of technical officials from railway explained the technicalities and demonstrated various mechanisms used in narrow gauge then and now leading to lot of curiosity-based questions and interesting discussions. The walk concluded with the visit to the Pratapnagar Railway Museum showcasing exhibits of evolution of narrow gauge in global context, original - tickets, handwritten communications, equipment used on station, and so on.



Photos from narrow gauge railway walk along the tracks, discussions around narrow gauge mechanisms, visit to various types of carriages and Pratapnagar Railway Museum.

About Projects:

1. Laurie Baker at Vadodara:

This project was led and initiated by Prof. Pragya Shankar with team consisting of Mr. Darshil Patalia and a group of students. The background of this project is that the architect Laurie-Baker was invited by Vadodara-based industrialist Mr. Nanubhai Amin, then Chairman and Managing Director of Jyoti Industries Ltd., in around mid-1970's to design buildings for Jyoti Ltd. and Navrachana Education Society. The significance of this project is about the progressive outlook of Nanubhai to get Laurie Baker to design environmentally responsive buildings for an industrial setup. The three buildings studied and documented for this project were unique and diverse in functions as well. Out of them Administrative Block, Primary Health Centre are at Jyoti Ltd., and Centre for people with disability is at Navrachana School, Sama. Each of these buildings posed a unique challenge in terms of construction techniques, access to material and trained local artisans, arriving at universally accessible design solution for differently abled people and also achieving climatically responsive building. These projects became testing ground for Laurie Baker as concerns generated during design and construction of these buildings guided him to arrive at customized solutions for each of them.

2. Narrow Gauge Railway Heritage of Vadodara:

This project was conceptualized by Prof. Shalini Amin in 2018 as part of B. Design (Interior) Program. It was undertaken as a studio project primarily examining the possibilities of converting the railway salon shed for adaptive re-use. For which her team comprising of Ms. Sanjana Samel, Mr. Chirag Choudhary and students studied and documented the salon shed prior to proposing design solutions for same. Later, it was formalized into a research project under CHR reviewing complex layers of narrow-gauge railway heritage. It was laid out in three phases out of which phase one is completed and next would be commencing shortly. Then in 2020-21 it was taken up by one of the students of final year B. Design (Interior) as a thesis project under Collaborative Research Project (CRP) duly guided by Prof. Shalini Amin.

3. Vad (Banyan Tree) of Vadodara: A community participatory mapping project:

This is a community-based multi-disciplinary project initiated by Prof. Pragya Shankar alongwith her team comprising of Prof. Priyanka Kanhare, investigating the natural and cultural heritage of Vad of Vadodara meaning

banyan trees and its relevance to city. Here, geo-tagging has been used as a tool in mapping of banyan trees all over the city and neighboring areas. This project is spread out into multiple phases. Currently, phase one comprising of geo-tagging and mapping of banyan trees is going on. The idea of using geo-tagging tool facilitates the process of mapping and the ease of access of tool encourages public involvement in the process. The larger intent is also to sensitize people towards our natural heritage. This research was also taken up as a CRP thesis project by final year B. Arch student, where she conducted detailed socio-cultural study and mapping of Vad of Vadodara under guidance of Prof. Pragya Shankar.

4. Heritage Publications: Dwellings of Western India:

Publication can become a powerful tool to pass on knowledge and generate awareness about any subject matter. Built on this central idea CHR is also undertaking publication of series of booklets based on related study program undertaken by SEDA students studying, recording, and documenting context -based built form in varying regions of India. This project is overseen by the publication team comprising of team of faculties Ms. Krunali Rathod, Ms. Manali Bhadra, and Ms. Anjal Patel alongwith group of students.

This article can be concluded on this note that heritage cannot be protected, revived, or carried forward by singular effort undertaken in isolation, but it is a joint multi-disciplinary endeavor, achieved through initiatives and collaborations taken up by all sectors of society for betterment of community at large.

Photo credits: SEDA, and Heritage Trust Baroda

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25,000 / year

Have an idea you would like to explore? Want to collaborate or organize an event virtually?

Get in touch with us!

Me planning my life at 2am vs me the next morning



Heritage Humour : With many procrastination reels doing the round on social media, here's some cultural humour



Click of the Quarter : 'Fallen Angel' (Detail of a Column Base of a Haveli @ Vadnagar) Source – Shivani Pikle

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!