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Upcoming Events

18 Nov 2018 -
Viraasat Lecture -
Dr. Ganesh Devy
(Look out for the
announcement on
our Facebook page)

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From the Editor's Desk

Champaner- Pavagadh Archeological Park has the proud distinction of being Gujarat's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. This beautiful historic group of structures was once neglected and I vividly recall when, as a new resident of Baroda and was visiting Pavagadh, my curiosity of what lay on the road ahead, led me to the magnificent Jami Masjid which stood in lonely splendor. The equally lone and bored watchman waved us inside and what lay beyond was a real treasure trove of beautiful monuments steeped in medieval history. While Barodians at that time were familiar with Pavagadh, sadly most did not know about Champaner and the beauty of its monuments.

The efforts of Heritage Trust and especially of the founder Trustee, Mr. Karan Grover and his dedicated team in spearheading the campaign to get UNESCO to declare it as a World Heritage Site are really laudable. This issue carries an article penned by Karanji on his journey along with the many trials and tribulations he faced in getting Gujarat on the map of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The Virasat lectures organized by Heritage Trust are an eagerly awaited event for their varied topics and the excellent insight into our rich heritage that they offer. Read about our last lecture delivered by the renowned heritage expert Dr. Rohit Jigyasu on "Heritage at Risk." Dr. Jigyasu also conducted a special half day workshop in the morning for various stakeholders. Do mark your dates for the next Virasat lecture to be held in November by Dr. Ganesh Devy.

Publications brought out by Heritage Trust provide wonderful reading about our city's heritage and can be presented as valuable gifts. We bring you an interesting account of how Heritage Trust published the coffee table book "Myths and Legends of Champaner – Pavagadh," and the role it played in the UNESCO nomination.

We welcome views and feedback from our readers to make further issues of Dharohar more interactive. .

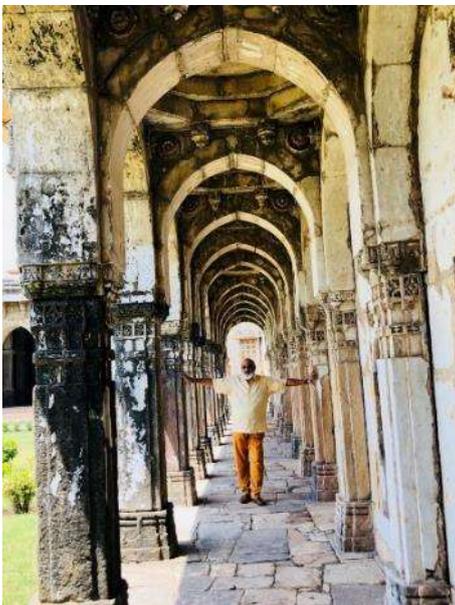
Our next issue will be published in December end. We wish all our readers a Happy Diwali and Prosperous New Year!

Avi Sabavala



I came to Baroda in 1969 to study architecture. It was a five year course at the Department of Architecture, M S University of Baroda which was among the top three institutes of architecture in the country. I was also an ace swimmer for the 100M, 200M, 400M freestyle and had first represented India for the Asian Games. After the first day at college I went to the pool and for the first time met the renowned archeologist Dr. R. N. Mehta who, amongst his many extracurricular activities, was also in-charge of the pool. "Can you swim?" he asked me. "I am Karan Grover" was my answer. This conversation went on 3 minutes in this vein until I was forced to admit I was Karan Grover, India's Superstar Swimmer.

We became friends. Every weekend he took me to a site called Champaner, 40 kilometers from Baroda where he had worked for 30 years excavating and documenting a 2000 year old buried city with 3000 foundations of buildings below the ground and 115 buildings (many inaccessible) above the ground. It was an extraordinary experience. One day he asked me to give 30 years of my life for Champaner. He shook my head and asked me to honor my promise.



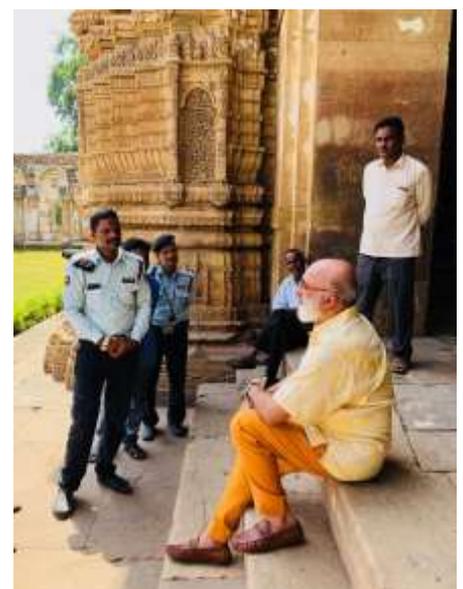
The next day I went to his house to see the drawings he had made. I asked his family if I could meet him. "He died last night," they said sounding happy that I had agreed to look after the site. I started crying; I had lost my mentor; they were smiling as I would continue his work. Putting 30 years to my promise, I was able to make Champaner-Pavagadh a UNESCO World Heritage Site; the first by an NGO (Heritage Trust) and its President Emeritus – myself!!

The mission was impossible. India was not interested in any of its priceless heritage monuments. UNESCO did not want to talk to individuals – they represented countries and want to interact with the Government of its member countries. On the other hand I tried to engage UNESCO to look into India's incredible heritage. But the more I strived to make this happen, the more India expressed its interest in promoting the country's industrial ambitions.

The Heritage Trust documented all the monuments – buried and above the ground. An initiative – the first of its kind in the world – "Children in Conservation" was started. Children cleaned the buildings under strict supervision and were made aware of the heritage they came from.

The idea of the Champaner Festival was later initiated to introduce the inhabitants of Gujarat to come and experience the site. Persons like Mallika Sarabhai and Astad Deboo introduced the story in the narrative of their performances at Champaner.

We got President Kalam to lay the UNESCO plaque at Champaner. He requested us to suggest some principles that he could introduce at Rashtrapati Bhavan which we did. Soon it became a household name. The visitors went beyond those religious devotees who want to pay their respect to the Devi at the temple on top of Pavagadh hill. All buildings above the ground became accessible to visitors. The book "Myths and Legends of Champaner" lavishly illustrated by one of Baroda's famous artist Jaidev Thakore was extremely well received and become one of the premier books on Heritage in India.



Compiled by Sonal Mithal Modi, Paintings by Jaidev Thakore, Photographs by Rahul Gajjar

In 2001, Heritage Trust received funding from World Monuments Fund, USA, to research and document the architectural monuments in the entire six square kilometer core area of Champaner-Pavagadh Archeological Site. The Trust gave this rather onerous task to conservation architects Sumesh Modi and Sonal Mithal Modi, both trained under Prof. Nalini Thakur from SPA, New Delhi. Team Modi set base at the Toran Guest House at Machi plateau, and began their detailed explorations of all the heritage buildings they could identify in all stages of preservation as well as disrepair and neglect that they could find on the Pavagadh Hill as well as the Champaner plain. It took them almost a year of measurements, drawings, photography and documentation to present to the Trust a fabulous manuscript of 114 monuments that they had found as against the ASI's protection of 37 groups of monuments (covering less than 70). This documentation was the backbone of the dossier we created for Champaner-Pavagadh as India's nomination for UNESCO World Heritage Site status for 2004.

But, while working on the actual tangible architectural and archeological heritage, Sonal Mithal Modi encouraged some of the team members to collect stories, popular and recounted over and over again, by engaging in casual chatter with the pilgrims, the elderly locals, the mendicants, the priests, the shopkeepers, the donkey-herders, and especially those selling small booklets, audio and video cassettes recounting the tales of Champaner-Pavagadh in words and songs. It was amazing – what they managed to get together, little gems of intangible heritage that had survived in oral storytelling. These wondrous stories – some imagined, some real, but mostly extraordinary – embroidered with the wisdom of ages blended elegantly with deliberate or mischievous dramatization!



The Jama Masjid façade and corridor at Champaner, captured by photographer Rahul Gajjar

We edited the stories, making them readable and crisp. But we also wanted to relate each story with a natural or manmade element at the site to establish that special relationship of the tangible with the intangible. So we selected only such stories and then further divided these stories into **Myths** (stories of Kali, Vishwamitra, Luv and Kush, Hanuman, of an age far, far, far back in mythical time), and **Legends** (stories of the Jain, Rajput and Sultanate rulers, from a historical age).

We then decided to make it into a form of a book. Now, came the difficult part – the stories were so remarkable that mere photographs of the places and spaces they represented would offer no justice at all to the power of the stories. An artist's imagination would be needed here and I knew exactly who that artist would be – Jaidev Thakore. He could bring these stories alive with his bright colors, flat drawings and a quirky sense of humor. Karan Grover agreed with me, and sure enough, Jaidev turned out some truly delightful watercolors that mirrored the sentiment and feeling of the stories right away. The book was designed to fit the exact square size of Jaidev's water-colors.

If Sumesh Modi's documentation was the backbone of the dossier for UNESCO, Sonal Mithal Modi's book, *Myths and Legends of Champaner-Pavagadh*, became the dossier's soul. For in 2004, the importance of Intangible Heritage became one of the critical six key considerations against which a proposed nomination site would be selected. Champaner-Pavagadh won hands down.

The book was priced at Rs. 2000, and so sold slowly, but helped create a small fund to support the activities of the Trust. No copies are available now. Those who are fortunate enough to have a copy must know what a treasure they have!



The Maqbara at Nagina Masjid, photography by Rahul Gajjar



Dr. Rohit Jigyasu



Ar. Sanjeev Joshi, INTACH Vadodara Chapter



Mr. Sumesh Modi and VMC



Events in the last quarter

Heritage at Risk- Virasat Lecture Series and Workshop

It was a privilege for Heritage Trust to host Dr. Rohit Jigyasu for the latest edition of the Virasat Lecture series held on the 20th August, 2018. Dr. Jigyasu, a well-known conservation and risk management consultant, is the UNESCO Chair professor at the Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan and also spearheads several organizations like ICOMOS India and Indian Institute for Human Settlements.

In the first half of the day, Dr. Jigyasu conducted a workshop and interactive session on *Heritage at Risk*. Over 20 participants, from a wide cross section of stakeholders comprising VMC engineers, Heritage conservationists, owners of heritage properties, representatives of INTACH as well as personnel from the ASI and students of planning took part in the workshop. It highlighted how natural and man-made risks to historic sites could be reduced through effective responses as well as preparedness, and how recovery could actually increase the values of local communities or structures and continue to be appreciated over time. Participants, via local heritage buildings, went through a hands-on session to identify priorities of each and presented steps for risk management for the structures.

Snippets from the morning workshop with Dr. Rohit Jigyasu and stakeholders including Ar. Sanjeev Joshi, INTACH members, Smt. Bhavna Rana, Sumesh Modi, VMC, MSU professors and students, ASI, and other concerned conservationists.



Dr. Jigyasu's evening Virasat lecture, '*Heritage at Risk*', brought forward the significance of relearning from our heritage. Just as learning from history has shown the way for the future, our cultural heritage has a lot to teach us. The conservation of one's heritage relies on the understanding of this. Natural disasters as well as urban development have a negative impact on our heritage structures as well as cultural communities. In this lecture, Dr. Jigyasu gave us insights into the necessity of preserving our heritage and the importance of considering it as an asset. He emphasized on using heritage structures as they were intended to be in the past and not to label them simply as antiquities. History shows us how cultural heritage structures served their purposes in tandem with the environment. Talking in depth about development versus conservation, Dr. Jigyasu emphasized on the requirement to advocate the continuance of craft skills, lest it become a thing of the past and that development has to be guided by the past. Citing some intriguing examples of intervention during the Nepal earthquake, Dr. Jigyasu pointed out ways in which cultural heritage could be preserved and eventually restored. The lecture held the houseful audience in rapt attention, sending home a strong and clear message that heritage should be seen as a fundamental aspect in the building of resilient communities through traditional knowledge.



Snippets from the evening lecture with Rohit Jigyasu and an engrossed audience

Comments Section

'धरोहर'नी भूख ज़रूर हती. तमे ते काम हाथ धरी सुपेरे संलब्धुं छे. ते माटे मारा हार्दिक अभिनंदन स्वीकारवा विनंती छे.

- Prof. Jyoti Bhatt on the first issue of Dharohar

"Superb idea! Shabash"

- Karan Grover on the first issue of Dharohar

"A different take on understanding heritage via the modern day risk it faces and the 'resilience' it offers"

- Attendee from the evening Virasat lecture

"Great Interaction module, need more such technical sessions to explore heritage"

- Student from the morning workshop

Aditya Birla World Academy- Educational trip

The Trust hosted tenth grade students from the Aditya Birla World Academy Mumbai who were in the city on September 7th, 8th and 9th 2018 for an education trip. These young minds were in the city with a specific agenda to understand traditional water conservation techniques, food heritage and their impacts on today's lifestyles and also to gain more information on textile traditions. They got to visit the Laxmi Vilas compound and see its unique water and natural heritage, then had traditional food and visit cloth markets in the old city along with the Vitthal Mandir water *tanka* there. From water storage in travel pots in a house museum to a water harnessing via vaavs and elaborate water systems at Champaner, the students were also taken to the Bodhi factory outlet in GIDC, where they got to learn firsthand the importance of textiles and how traditions can be taken forward. Added bonus was the water conservation techniques used by the organization in becoming self-reliant. The trip ended with a much needed visit to the heart of our city, the Kamatibaug and students were educated about its connection with the artery, the Vishwamitri. Overall the trip was an excellent way of engaging with young minds and creating a new narrative to keep them engaged yet focused on the issues at hand for a better future.

Achievements

We are pleased to announce that the Trust's publication *Once Upon A time...there was Baroda* has been acquired by the United States Library of Congress' New Delhi office. It will soon be available as part of their online catalogue with the Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC) as part of research on South Asia.

If you have not bought a copy, do it soon by writing to us or contacting us via social media.

For this *Dharohar* issue, we have a sneak preview of the book' contents, so scroll down to catch a glimpse of the treasure of knowledge within.



Snippets from the two day trip with students- being explained to the importance of water and Champaner and Sandhya Gajjar, textile traditions by Pradeep Sinha at Bodhi, of the river Vishwamitri by Dr. Jitendra Gavli and Chandrashekhar Patil and Atul Shah of travelling with water.

