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## Upcoming Events

18 Nov 2018 -

Viraasat Lecture - Dr.  
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details will follow)

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## From the Editor's Desk

We welcome you to this first issue of Dharohar, an e-newsletter of Heritage Trust that will be brought out every quarter. It is our effort to connect with our members by sharing news of our activities as well as forthcoming programs and interesting articles on heritage.

One of the most awaited events of Heritage Trust is the Viraasat lecture series wherein eminent speakers share their wealth of knowledge with an enthusiastic audience. In this issue we bring you a write-up of the last Viraasat Lecture delivered by HH Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad that gave us new and interesting insights into the crown jewels of the Princely Royal Baroda State.

Availability of water for human consumption has always been a perennial issue. In our country this assumes significance as most of our yearly water requirements are fulfilled by the South-West Monsoon that lasts for about three to four months. As the rain gods have been very benevolent at the start of this season, the question arises is how do we manage the heavy downpour that often floods our city? How did people in a bygone area manage their requirements? Read Sameer Gaekwad's article that gives an interesting insight about the ancient and well-adorned stepwells that dot our city, of which many are unfortunately in dilapidated condition.

Heritage Trust has received good support in its various activities in the last year. Our special gratitude and appreciation to Linde Engineering India Pvt. Ltd for being our Sponsor for the many events that we had last year, Ark Gallery and especially Mr. Atul Dalmia and Ms. Seema Dalmia for hosting our meetings round the year and our website designer Mr. Parag Sane of Viewfinder for ensuring that we have a good online presence. We would love to hear from you our readers about your feedback as well as receive original articles relating to heritage which would be considered for publication in our forthcoming issues. Do mark your diaries for our forthcoming events.

Happy reading,

Avi Sabavala



## Viraasat Lecture

The Viraasat Lecture held on the 21st April, 2018, in the Lakshmi Vilas Palace, had special significance for the citizens of Baroda. HH Radhikaraje Gaekwad held a full house enthralled with her talk on "The Crown Jewels of Baroda".

Taking the audience through different periods in the history of the Gaekwad era, Radhikaji spoke not only about the acquisition of the famous jewels of the Baroda state, spanning from the beginning of the Gaekwadi Rule till post-Independence, but how these jewels became a part of the story of the traditions and heritage of the royal family.

With intriguing detail, recounting how personal preferences of the Maharajas and the influence of the western design seeped into the royal jewels that were acquired, the audience was given an insight into the life of the Royals of Baroda, one that only a Royal herself could know and tell.

Making the personal public, Radhikaji took us back to the time of the rule of Gaekwads, where wealth, in terms of jewelry, was considered a symbol of power, whether it be the gold and silver canons, the splendid pearl and diamond encrusted Pearl Carpet or the Star of the South and the Dresden diamond.

The history and journey of certain treasures and how they have reached their current ownership added to the knowledge regarding these magnificent jewels. This Viraasat Lecture truly took us all back to the grand times of the erstwhile rulers, the Gaekwads. It was an opportunity to felicitate Rajmata, HH Shubhangini Devi Gaekwad by our past President, Shri Karan Grover.

- Arati Desai



## Introduction to Stepwells – with a brief insight to Vadodara

- Sameer Gaekwad

Stepwells are the wells or ponds in which water is reached by descending a set of steps. They may be multi-storied with the use of a water wheel to raise the well water to the first or second floor. They are most common in Western India and are also found in the more arid regions of the Indian subcontinent, extending into Pakistan. The construction of stepwells is mainly utilitarian, though they may include embellishments of architectural significance, and could also be used as temple tanks or a part of it

Stepwells are examples of the many types of water storage facilities that were developed in India, mainly to cope with seasonal fluctuations in water availability. A basic difference between stepwells and general purpose wells, is to make it easier for people to reach the ground water and to maintain and manage the well.

The builders dug deep trenches into the earth for dependable, year-round groundwater. They lined the walls of these trenches with blocks of stone, without mortar, and created stairs leading down to the water. The majority of surviving stepwells originally served a leisure purpose as well as providing water. This was because the base of the well provided relief from daytime heat, and this was increased if the well was covered.

Stepwells also served as a place for social gatherings and religious ceremonies. Usually, women were more associated with these wells because they were the ones who collected the water. Also, it was they who prayed and offered gifts to the goddess of the well for her blessings. This led to the building of some significant ornamental and architectural features, often associated with dwellings and in urban areas. It also ensured their survival as monuments.

Stepwells usually consist of two parts: a vertical shaft from which water is drawn and the surrounding inclined subterranean passageways, chambers and steps which provide access to the well. The galleries and chambers surrounding these wells were often carved profusely with elaborate detail and became cool, quiet retreats during the hot summers. Many are very simple structures with stairways leading to the well to help fetch water.

Most step wells found in and around Vadodara are claimed to be built by the trading community of that era and hence such wells also marked the possible trade routes of those times. The notable stepwells of Baroda are the Navlakhi Vaav located inside the Lukshmi Vilas Palace premises and the Vidhyadhar Vaav located at Sevasi. However the sad fact is that many lesser known but documented stepwells in Baroda and its neighbourhood lie in utter state of neglect. These need to be restored and preserved as they are our living links of our historical connection to water conservation and the flourishing of Baroda as a city today.

#### 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. 10,000

#### Ordinary Member

Rs. 1000 / year

#### Student Member

Rs 200 / year

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Rs. 2,00,000

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#### Member

Rs. 50,000

#### Corporate Member Rs.

25,000 / year

#### A list of the activities conducted in 2017

Viraasat Lecture titled 'G.H. Krumbiegel: A legacy in landscaping (1865-1956)' by Suresh Jayaram an artist, art historian, arts administrator and curator from Bangalore;

Viraasat Lecture of the year titled 'Getting the City back to its People: How Ahmedabad became UNESCO World Heritage City' by Shri Debashish Nayak, Director, Centre for Heritage Management Ahmedabad University, preceded by an invitation-only workshop on 'Understanding and Interpreting Historic Settlements in Kutch';

The World Heritage week was celebrated with a series of exciting activities including two informative exhibitions, 4 heritage and nature walks, and Viraasat Lectures, one by Dr. Gauri Parimoo Krishnan, Director, Indian Heritage Centre, NHB, Singapore who spoke on 'Heritage, Diversity and Identity: The Making of Singapore's Indian Heritage Centre' and the second by Dr. Tsewang Namgail, Director, Snow Leopard Conservancy (India Trust) who spoke on 'Preserving the Natural and Cultural Heritage of Ladakh and the Home Stay Program';

A photography workshop with Rahul Gajjar was organized for the Linde Engineering group as an extension to its sponsorship of the Heritage Week in their office at Chhanni;

The Trust continues its dialogue with the VMC for active protection of the city's heritage and has sent timely notes on this effect to the authorities.

#### Publications

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

Available:

*Once Upon a Time In Baroda*- Rs. 3000/- copy

*Myths and Legends*- Rs. 2500/copy

*Childrens book on Baroda (Gujarati)*- Rs. 20/copy

