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From the Editor's Desk :

The quarter ended September 2020 saw a relaxation in the restrictions imposed in the lockdown due to the pandemic. Unfortunately there has been no respite in the number of those afflicted by this virus and this is a dampener on celebration of festivals.

While we continue to miss our lively walks and talks on heritage, our Trust continues its support for the preservation and conservation of some of the iconic structures in the heart of the city. The future of Nyay Mandir continues to be a discussion that involves the local government as well as concerned citizens of the area to ensure that it's future use would be for the benefit of Barodians. Many suggestions are being put forth to ensure that it is not only preserved in its original glory, but also that it is a place for people to visit and appreciate. Sandhya Gajjar shares her thoughts about the future of this building.

An equally iconic building that has seen much discussion is the grand Pratap Vilas Palace that currently houses the National Academy of Indian Railways. There is a proposal to construct a multi-storied building in front of the palace that will not only hide the beautiful facade but also destroy the old trees which would be felled. The royal family of Baroda has expressed great concern and our patron, H.H. Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad had started an online petition to oppose this ill conceived move. Heritage Trust actively supported this initiative and used its various social media platforms to encourage people to sign this petition. Read more about this in the article by Vice President, Sameer Khara. With these concerted efforts, it is heartening to note that our M.P. Ms. Ranjanben Bhatt raised this issue in the Lok Sabha. We are very hopeful that this ill-conceived project will be shelved and a more viable solution to house the expansion of the Indian Railways will be found.

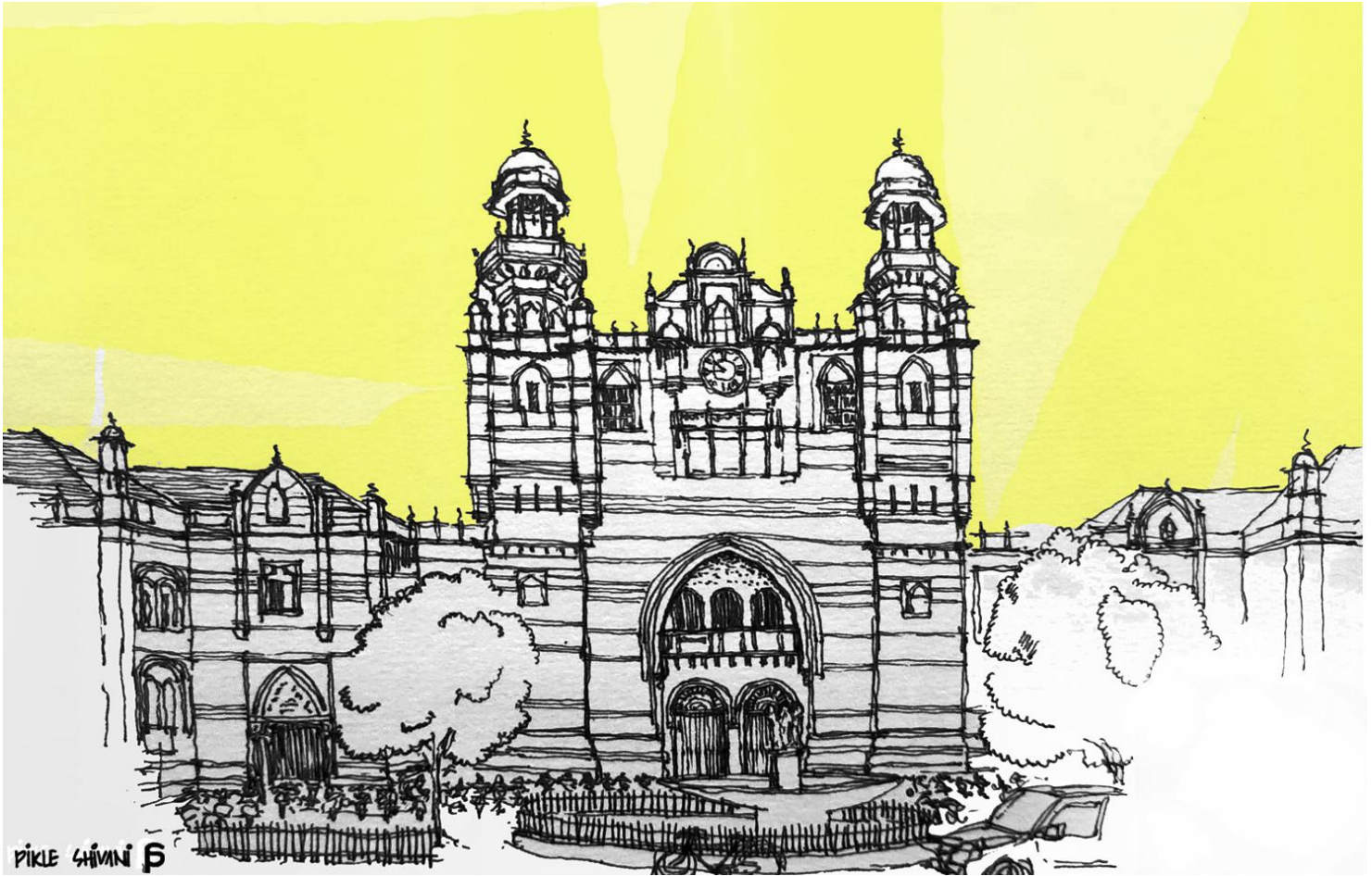
Kamatibaug or Sayajibaug is an integral part of the daily life of Barodians. For the fitness freaks, the art lovers, nature enthusiasts or any one just interested in unwinding after a long day there is something for all. Arati Desai takes us on an exciting journey to explore the interesting, history, art, culture, imposing structures and beautiful old indigenous trees. So next time you go for a morning walk, do take a look at the different aspects that encompass a lively fusion of structural, material, intangible and natural heritage.

This time Swapna Kothari brings a different flavour to the Urbane Column where she reminisces about the city gone by. We will miss Swapna as she will soon be relocating to Surat. Team Dharohar thanks Swapna for all her contribution in making this newsletter an interesting read and wishes her all the best in her future endeavours.

We invite our readers to share their ideas and thoughts about future areas that could be covered. Heritage Trust also requests your support both financial and participative to strengthen our activities towards heritage conservation.

We wish you all a Happy Deepawali and New Year in advance and trust you all stay safe and well.

Avi Sabavala



Nyaya Mandir Source: Shivani Pikle

Adaptive Reuse Draft Proposal for Nyaya Mandir

Introduction: The Nyaya Mandir is an exquisite Moorish style building located in the heart of the old city of Vadodara. For a number of years since Independence, this building was used as the local Court in the city. Now that the Court has moved to its own premises, the Nyaya Mandir building is largely vacated and we believe it is under the ownership of Gujarat High Court at the moment. Following the death of Maharani Chimnabai I in 1885, the first wife of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, the ruler asked Robert Fellowes Chisolm to build a structure in her memory that would be fit for public use and dedicated to the people of Baroda State. There is a statue of the Maharani in Italian marble sculpted by Felici, the Italian sculptor at the Gaekwad Court, installed in the building. In 1896, the Chimnabai Mandir and Town Hall (as Nyaya Mandir was initially known) was inaugurated and initially planned to house a vegetable market. This idea, however, was soon abandoned and the majestic building was decided to be used as a Town Hall. There have been many illustrious programmes that the Town Hall hosted including public lectures by stalwarts such as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta,

Among others musical performances, theatre events and so on. There was a large ground in front of the building where the royal Dassehra Festival was annually organised. After 15 years of being used as a Town Hall, the building was adapted to house the imperial Gaekwad court and rechristened the 'Maharani Chimnabai Nyaya Mandir'. That is how the building has got the name by which it came to known, and is still known.

What should be done now: The Nyaya Mandir is one of the most beautiful and majestic building created in the style of Indo-Saracenic architecture of which Gaekwadi Baroda offers some of the most striking examples in modern-day India, and go a long way in establishing the heritage-rich character of Vadodara city. Fortunately most of these buildings are still standing. Though the Courts moved out of Nyaya Mandir quite a few months back, the state of disuse (and therefore very little or no maintenance and cleaning on a regular basis) of such a huge structure, has resulted in the building already falling into a state of disrepair. The building was designed and commissioned by Maharaja Sayajirao for the people of Baroda. We should now find an excellent purpose for the building now that it is available to us and offer programmes there that all citizens can participate in and enjoy. We propose the following way forward:

1. We need to find out the legal standing of the building first.
2. Depending on who will continue to be or become the legal owner of the building and the land it stands on, we need to find out how they plan the future uses of the building and the funding to sustain its maintenance.
3. Heritage Trust is willing to take the custodial responsibility of the building, do the short-term and long-term planning for the conservation and cultural re-adaptation of the building so that it becomes a major tourist attraction for the city.
4. The project can be carried out in phases starting with the proper architectural documentation of the building, followed by a careful condition assessment and then execution of restoration works that are required. These works could be then taken up with the various stakeholders who have time and again put forth the issue of reusing the structure.
5. The Inner areas will be designed to meet various contemporary needs that the space can accommodate so that ALL citizens can participate actively and enjoy the beautiful heritage building throughout the year. The Outer areas will also be designed for cleanliness; available open spaces will be marked for vehicle, preferably two-wheeler/bicycle, parking.

Heritage Trust is confident to get the necessary funding to implement this project as part of the CSR initiatives of local industries as funding for heritage is highly recommended by the Company Act for CSR. Moreover, Vadodara city itself has enough talented professionals in the fields of heritage conservation, architecture and urban planning, art history, museology, archaeology and history, and the allied fields of photography and the fine and performing arts to be able to work on this project and save Nyaya Mandir for future generations of this city.

-Sandhya Gajjar

Kamati Baug: A public space for community and cultural exchange since 1879.

Baroda State was considered one of the most progressive states and the credit for this goes to the vision and foresight of one of its most iconic rulers, H.H. Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III. The noteworthy development in the diverse fields of education, judicial, agricultural and socio-economic reforms laid the foundation for the modernization of the city. Being a Maratha ruler of a Gujarati state, Sayajirao Gaekwad III made several efforts to build a vibrant and cosmopolitan population. Engaging communities, educating and exposing them to the best facilities and faculties available, was part of Gaekwad's manifesto. Apart from promoting education by the means of establishing schools and institutions, the Maharaja also understood the importance of cultural education, which was meant to reflect not only upon one's own culture but to learn and appreciate the culture of others. The creation of a public space like Kamati Baug, to promote cultural education is proof of this ruler's incredible ability to assimilate and adapt various elements to create a unique combination of form and ideas for the benefit of his people.

This large public park, often called Sayajibaug, was the Maharaja's gift to the state of Baroda. The garden is probably one of the earliest and most accessible of the many public spaces created by the Gaekwads. Commissioned in 1879, spanning over an area of 113 acres, one of the largest in western India and located in the centre of the city, Sayajibaug enabled the Maharaja to bring the aesthetics of western art, and knowledge of the sciences within the reach of the common mans reach (something which otherwise was accessible only to the wealthy and the educated at that time).

Sayajibaug is home to a zoo, a planetarium, the Baroda Museum and Picture gallery, a cable suspended bridge, a miniature train, (now replaced by a larger toy train)an amphitheatre, a huge floral clock and several beautiful fountains and bronze statues dating back to the time of Sayajirao Gaekwad III. Though the amphitheatre and planetarium are more modern additions to the garden, the original suspension bridge was built at the same time as the garden, by the John Fleming and Co. Engineers, Bombay using European technology. This modern looking structure is said to have been damaged in 1965, and in 2016 the present bridge was constructed on the lines of the original one. Also in Kamati Baug, standing till today is the Maharani Chimnabai Ladies Club. This interesting building was also called the mobile palace as it was moved to Delhi in 1911 as the Maharaja's residence and then was moved back to Baroda.

The Baroda Museum and Picture gallery commissioned in 1887 designed by Robert Chisholm and Major Mant, on the lines of London's Victoria and Albert Museum. It was completed in 1894 but the Picture gallery was completed in 1914 but opened much later in 1921 due to a delay in the procurement of artworks from Europe because of the World War I. Built in 1878, the building housing the Health Museum was used as a guest house accommodation for the royal guests. Though the Baroda museum houses an impressive art collection, the neo-classical figures and numerous urns and vases on public display, around the Bandstand area, are incorporated into the very design of the garden. The Bandstand serving for a venue for live music for the public was an ideal location for these statues. Executed by Ganpatrao Kashinath Mhatre (1934), one of the most successful sculptors in colonial India, is the notable equestrian figure of Shivaji, installed south of the Museum. With an attempt to blend the western aesthetic with Indian sensibilities, the only other Indian figures to be seen are two statues of The Brave Boys of Dhari; these sculptures are tribute to the bravery of two village boys from

Amreli, Hari and Arjan Koli, who put up a fight against a tiger during a hunting expedition of Sayajirao Gaekwad III, presumably saving the king's life.

The lungs of the city, Kamati Baug, emphasizes not only the importance of green spaces but serves as a place of learning through the variety of flora and fauna seen here. In the Bandstand area, supporting local biodiversity, there are seven Andraxh trees, of which the oldest is approximately 120 to 140 years old. Many Asopaloav trees opposite the Rinchkhkhana are approximately 134-140 years old and a massive Neem tree near the lion enclosure in the zoo is estimated to be over 120 years old. Apart from these, a couple of Haldu/Haldarvo trees, a Shimlo tree near the Commissioners bungalow and the Modal tree all over 100-110 years old are native trees and found in naturally growing forests and their presence indicate that they were not disturbed during the planning and development of the garden. Though urban public parks have always been an important setting for cultural programs, this garden, has been encouraging community engagement for over a hundred years, and continues to do so till this very day, Kamati Baug functions not only as a conscious tool for learning and revitalization but helps to define the shape and feel of the city.

- Arati Desai

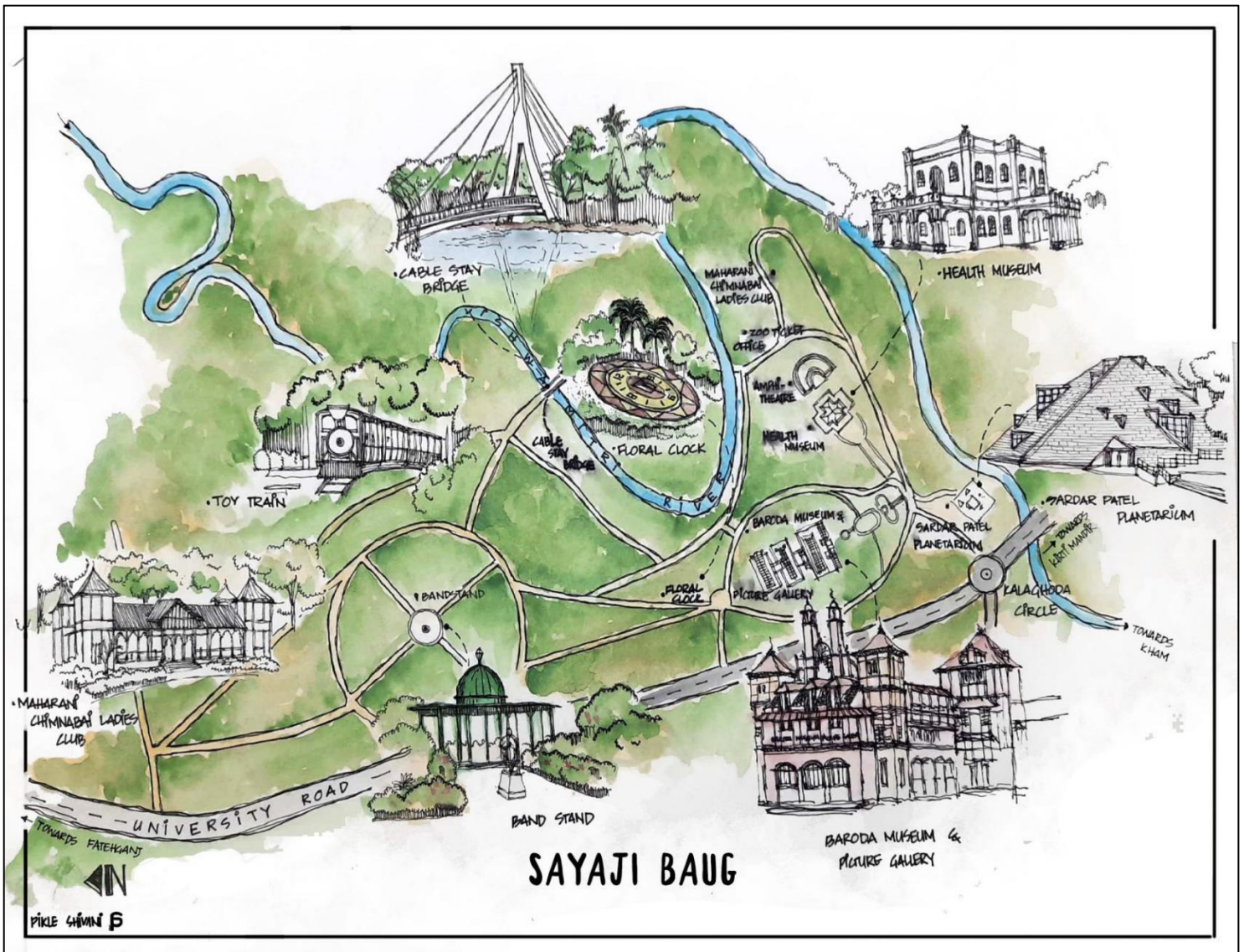


Image Caption: An illustrated map of the Sayaji Baug (Source: Shivani Pikle)

Heritage - The Train to Nowhere

The present controversy regarding the proposed new building on the Railway Staff College campus, now called the National Academy of Indian Railways (NAIR), situated in front of the impressive heritage building – the Pratap Vilas Palace –has brought to the fore, several issues related to the state of Vadodara's Heritage Buildings. Vadodara has some of the finest examples of Indo-Saracenic architecture from the 19th and early 20th century, designed by British architects, as also very few surviving examples of Gujarat Sultanate, Maratha, and vernacular Pol architecture.. We have seen the imposing Nazar Baug Palace bite the dust before our very eyes. The wonderful Tambekar Wada stands precariously mutely watching the ASI and the Municipal Corporation battle over its existence. The future of Nyaya Mandir continues to baffle citizens who have reached out to all possible official avenues to save it from continuing neglect and a very possible destruction scenario, with no success.

The proposed plans for construction on the NAIR campus was brought to the attention of Heritage Trust by H.H. Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad, Patron of Heritage Trust. A petition initiated by her was shared widely using the various social media handles available to the Trust. The petition on date has more than 13000+ signatories. Heritage Trust also made a formal representation to the District Collector and the Municipal Commissioner. In addition, Heritage Trust also reached out to the NAIR authorities as also to NRTI to engage with them on the relevant plans as proposed . However the engagement was extremely reserved and did not yield much information or interaction.

However, we at HT will continue to engage with authorities at the District, State and Central levels to bring about a conversation in how heritage structures can be better managed and preserved for our future generations.

- Sameer Khara



Image Caption: Pratap Vilas Palace (Source: Change.org)

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. 1,00,000

Donor Member

Rs. 25,000

Life Member

Rs. 5,000

Ordinary Member

Rs. 1,000 / year

Student Member

Rs 200 / year

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!

The Urbane Column

The dusk to dawn, a stationery journey.
Awakened by cries uncanny,
not your usual human patter
rumbling machines are now more common passers.
Brilliance of dawn rays I have long forgotten,
dominating surrounds seem to have overtaken ...
The once majestic metallic rumbles and screeching halts
now merge into the noon horns and bouts of hush
Sheltering now those who were once cordoned
patrons I once had, have long gone ...
Standing in the midst of private wheels,
getting darker and hollower like the starless dusk
knowing not the end, when it would be near.

(An ode to the nameless heritage, Amidst the traveler's parked two-wheeler Platform no. 6, Old Time Baroda)

-Swapna Kothari

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!



Humor- Aren't we all debating between getting that academic subscription!? Source: Rob Murray