

Of Milestones, Cultural Heritage and old city Vadodara

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Abstract - Abstract: Heritage comprises the full range of our inherited traditions, architecture, objects and culture. It includes tangible and intangible aspects of who we are. Those aspects has a great impact on the way we live, behave, think, idealize and progress in our life. It also acts as a link to understand the peoples/place's past and promotes a sense of social and common identity. To follow and preserve those cultural heritage in order to pass it on to the next generation is our moral responsibility. A city which was developed nearly beginning of the Christian era, at the right bank of Vishvamitri River, is now known as *Vadodara – the cultural city* because of its strongly rooted inheritance covering all above mentioned aspects. The city was fortunate enough to grow under the few great and visionary kings which sculpted the identity of Vadodara/Baroda.

Key Words: History, Cultural Heritage, Heritage

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's Vadodara has witnessed range of kingships such as Gujarat Sultanate rulers, the Moghuls, the Maratha Gaekwads and the British, who have left their marks on the development of the city. The Amalgamation of the different eras are preserved in many ways represented in buildings, traditions, systems, food habits and social behaviours. It was once a known as Baroda State in various stages has its governance which operates to enable the non-academic, non-historian population to be aware of their past through a different medium or a platform. The need to preserve the past was felt more by the former princely state.

The erstwhile princely states were the ones who were the patrons of all forms of cultural manifestations from which later on heritage was created. The public history is available in many forms. If categorized, by and large it falls into the conventional categories of cultural history which displays itself in form of institutions like palaces, buildings, dance, music, folklore etc. The Baroda state or the present day Vadodara, also boasts of rich heritage and even richer public

history, which has earned it a reputation of being the cultural city of Gujarat. The pioneers were the Gaekwads who made the physical and mental reform in the city and established the identity of the society. Among all, Sayajirao Gaekwad III had left his ideological imprints on the city the most. This paper aims to understand how the architecture, governing systems and a visionary ruler can establish a city's identity.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The former state of Baroda completed its process of unification by the early nineteenth century. By 1818, that is, after the final defeat of the Maratha federation and the Peshwa, Baroda state could define clearly its geographical boundary which was a maze of few adjured districts. The political development of Baroda state was absolute and they fell perfectly into the western module, set up by the British Government. That became the reason to focus towards social and cultural development of the state. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Ganpatrao Gaekwad and his brother Khanderao Gaekwad made some contributions in the same direction. However it was during the reign of the next ruler Sayajirao-III that a scenario of overall development was caused which consciously or sub-consciously materialised into designing the public history as a source of information for the public. Sayajirao-III as is well known was one of the most enlightened rulers of his time. He was one visionary and therefore his actions had a futuristic tint to it. Under his reign, the princely state of Baroda emerged as the cultural epitome of Gujarat. His considerations added to the domain of public history and became the heritage of Baroda city and Gujarat. In that connection he took personal interest in different sectors and hoped that his directives would enable the community to enable and understand the past, present and the future.

His primary focus was on education, as he believed that only through education he could create a sensibility amongst his people. Education was the foundation, through which the Maharaja wanted to construct a new society and a new social structure. Therefore it is relevant that these institutions, which enabled this purpose needs a principal mention and hence, creation of landmarks came into existence.

3. Formation of Landmarks

Education: *Maharaja Sayajirao University*

In one of his significant speeches, delivered at Aligarh in 1901, Sayajirao declared: "Education is the basis of all reforms and is the only way of salvation from our present condition....Educationally our people are little better than beasts."¹.

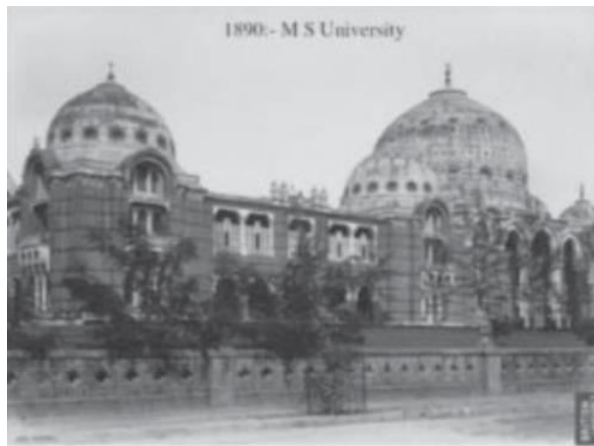


Fig -1: M.S.University, 1890

Sayajirao's contribution and visionary directives in the field of education has been documented and frequently written about, however his contribution towards creating the consciousness can be seen through the series of reforms that were made in this field of education.

In the field of education he came up with the idea of a college which was known as Baroda College and which later on proceeded to be the *M.S. University of Baroda* in 1949. The Baroda College was established in 1882 and affiliated to University of Bombay. In 1890, it started a number of courses in Arts and Science. The college building is one of the heritage buildings, which contains a magnificent dome, largest in India.². The college was designed by Mr. R. F. Chishlom in Indo-Saracenic style. The construction of the college initiated in 1878 and finished in five years at the cost of Rs. 8 lakhs. The main Central Hall which is 60' by 60 has a large dome hoisted on arches after the mode prevailing in Golghumaz at Bijapur. The Baroda College continued to exist for a few more years following the Gaekwad's demise by his grandson, Pratapsingh Gaekwad, who assumed the throne and on 5 September 1947, following the independence of India, ordered the appointment of a commission to look into the establishment of a University of Baroda.

Preserving the Past: *The Baroda State Archives*

Sayajirao had a deep inclination to preserve the past in an organized manner. He deeply believed in serving the people with right history and in that connection he made an observation in the speech at the Grantha Sampadak Mandali on the 17th of April 1901. He said, "In the days

of the past Maharajas, works of their own taste were liberally patronized. But in these days we have a very large and diverse public to serve."³



Fig -2: Juni Kothi, 1880

With that effect he understood the importance of maintaining old records. To achieve that, the work of collecting records from all the administrators, Inamdars, Girasdars, Assamdars, Talukdars and others was introduced by a Notification of 1879. In 1896 all the officers in the state were ordered to classify their records according to their importance. To institutionalize the process a building known as a Record Tower was constructed in 1903 in the Kothi compound. System of protection for records from fire and accident was used in this building. In 1912-1913, a new Record building was constructed to accommodate more records. This building is still functioning and houses important documents to understand the numerous historical processes of India and Gujarat in general and of Baroda state in particular.

Demonstrating Supremacy: *Lakshmivilas Palace*

All the royal people, have built palaces to showcase their wealth, power and stature. These palaces have been the centres of political and cultural activities in their days and once the royal houses cease to rule, they became the symbols of power which was prevailing in past. More importantly however they become one of the important source for public to know their past and cherish it as their heritage.

The Laxmi Vilas Palace is again the finest examples of Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. The official residence of the Gaekwads, the erstwhile rulers of Baroda (Baroda now called as Vadodara); it was constructed by Maharaja Sayaji Rao III in 1890. Named after his first wife, the Palace is considered as the most elegant and unique among the palaces of India. Designed by a British Military Engineer Major Charles Mount, its construction work started in 1878 and was

completed in 1890. Set amidst the 744 acres, the palace is adorned with bronze and marble sculptures between banyan trees. Incorporating a large number of different Indian and European architectural styles, the Palace is consisting a combination of turrets, towers, domes, arches and columns, which blend together in great harmony. This 175 m wide palace's interior is as spectacular as the exterior. The palace has around 170 rooms having a collection of old armor as well as bronze and marble sculptures, modern elevators, arches, pillars etc. The palace is adorned with the fine works of the Italian artist, Fellicci, commissioned by the Maharaja. Its interior consisting of beautiful statues, bronze busts of former kings and trophies. The major attraction of Laxmi Vilas Palace is the remarkable Darbar hall which was the venue of music concerts and other cultural events.



Fig -3: Lakshmililas Palace, 1890

Public Open Space: Sayaji Baug/ Kamati Baug

The purpose behind opening up a park, which was called as the 'The Public Park of Baroda' was that the people should have a common ground on which they could all gather on the same traction. Sayaji Baug or Kamati Baug was dedicated to the citizens of Vadodara by Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III in 1879. ⁴

Sayajirao built it, on the river Vishwamitri. The park is the largest garden in Western India, stretching over 113 acres (0.46 km). It has a rich flora of more than 98 species of trees. The garden has a Zoo, a Museum and Picture Gallery, a small museum for Health and Hygiene, a floral clock, a bandstand and a toy train for children and few fun rides. It has well-maintained lawns, decorated with sculptures. The park has fountains

and trees, which make it worthwhile for a visit. The park also has a planetarium. ⁵



Fig -4: Kamati Baug, 1890

Conserving the Glory: The Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery

These two buildings are situated in the Sayaji Baug. The Museum building was completed in 1894. The Museum contains the different section such as industrial art, natural history, ethnology, geology, archaeology and Economic Court. The industrial art section is in two main divisions- I) India and II) Foreign. There are to be found among the collections beautiful specimens of silver, gold, brass, copper, bronze, iron, aluminum, electrotypes and electroplates, plain and engraved, inlaid, ornamental leather work, lacquered wares, carved inlaid and painted wood work; inlaid marbles; stone wares; rare old come wares pottery; terracotta; porcelain and majolica. Doubloon wares and the more appreciated porcelain of Serves and Limoges can also be seen. The showcases are filled with various types of textile fabrics. A large collection of old arms was collected from the Baroda palaces. There is also a nice representative collection of Indian musical instruments of various kinds. Sections are also devoted to Natural History, Ethnology and Geology. The history and heritage for public viewing is more visible in the collection of coins of Baroda kings. This includes the foreign dynasties the Guptas and few other historical ages. The museum later managed to house an Egyptian mummy, which till today is powerful attraction for the people.



Fig -5: Baroda Museum, 1890

ART promotion: *Kirti Mandir*

It is also known as temple of fame. Built by Maharaja Sayaji Rao III in 1936 A.D. to pervade the glorious memories of his ancestors, it has different rooms preserving the statues and the photographs of the royal family. It is an “e” shaped building with domes, terraces, balconies and a central shikhar, of 33 meters height, built in the Hindu style.⁶



Fig -6: Kirti Mandir, 1890

This beautiful building is used to hold exhibitions even today and to hold many liberal discussions and activities, as per the temperament of its unusual mentor. Music is one of the main elements of a nation’s heritage. The musical heritage is the one when the sacred form of music is passed down from one generation to the other generation. The state of Baroda had seen its inception only in the eighteenth - nineteenth century. Therefore their heritage in the field of music was transitional heritage, it was borrowed and pretentious. However it was groomed under the patronization of the Maharaja. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines it, “Heritage is a new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past”.⁷ This inspired him to patronize Indian Classical Music. He was pioneer for technical arts and music education in Central Gujarat since 1879. Ustad Moula Baksh, established the

Academy of Indian Music under the patronage of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad. This Academy later on identified as the Music College and is now the Faculty of Performing Arts of the Maharaja Sayajirao University (M S U) of Vadodara. The Department of Indian Classical Music (Vocal – Tabla) is the biggest department of the Faculty previously known as Gayan Shala established in 1886 by The Maharaja of Baroda later Changed into The Department of Indian Classical Music (Vocal – Tabla) as part of Faculty of Performing Arts. In 1880 when Princess Laksmi Bai (Chimnabai I) of Tanjore married the Maharaja, she brought along with her, the culture of dance. She was trained in Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music and brought along a troupe with her which consisted of two dancers, two nattuvanars (leaders of Bharatanatyam concerts), and two teachers.

Health care: Public Hospitals & Akhada culture

Just like in all other field, Maharaja was committed to the field of Health care. Sir Syajirao General Hospital was one of the prominent initiative by the Baroda State. It was earlier known as the Countless of Dufferin Hospital, commissioned in 1870s and completed in 1886. This hospital was designed by Major Mant in Indo-sarcentic style. Initially designed to house 56 beds and all the modern facilities such as bacteriological laboratory. Before this, “Jamnabai Hospital” was the first major general hospital of the state. It was originally built as Army headquarter, later on adapted as hospital. It was named after the Sayajirao’s adoptive mother Jamnabai. The building was completed in 1882 by Major Mant. This double storeyed building was a great example of Indo-Sarcentic style. It also allowed the designers to indulge in a design that embraced Buddhist Chaitya, Regional Jarokhas and Islamic architecture as well.



Fig -7: SSG Hospital

Along with the public health facilities, akhada culture was also prevailed in the state of Baroda. During the rule of Sayajirao III, Dattatrya Majumdar started a full-fledged akhada in 1880. The akhada trained youngsters in various Indian sports and physical exercises.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The erstwhile princely state of Baroda, which is now known as the cultural capital of Gujarat, primarily because of its some significant markers of heritage, both tangible and non-intangible. The tangible elements, which are in the forms of monuments and buildings, erected as a part of the dream of its Maharaja, Sayajirao the third. The dream of the Maharaja, itself also becomes a part of the intangible heritage, which defines the culture of the state. His dream and vision was to sensitize the public about its present to delineate their future as a cultural hub. Which is seen to be successful in this time of Vadodara. He was indeed successful to instil this drive in his people.

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Notes

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BIOGRAPHIES



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