



VADODARA VIBES

ARCHITECTS FROM GUJARAT GAVE INTERESTING INSIGHTS ON THE SUBJECT OF PRESERVATION OF LOCAL HERITAGE & FLAVOUR IN ARCHITECTURE

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1. Saat Kaman (Seven Arches) is a historical architectural marvel located at Gujarat's Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

2. A screenshot of the Jaquar Group Design Confab's Vadodara edition.

Architects & Interiors India had leading architects from Gujarat highlight the importance of regional heritage and context in design in the second webinar of the Jaquar Group Design Confab, which took place on November 27, 2020, with a focus on Vadodara. Preservation of regional heritage and culture has largely been compromised as cities develop. However, the webinar revealed that it is perhaps time to revisit the past, rediscover forgotten indigenous design styles and repurpose age-old architectural

techniques to suit the local climatic conditions and context.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

The city of Vadodara has an architecture that is enduring and its chequered history has defined its building scene. Commenting on this, Mohit Hajela, group head, Business Development, Jaquar Group, says, "The real challenge lies in the merging of new architecture with the historic environment, and finding a middle path is the way forward."

Keeping a continuity of the past as a link to the future is



key. Canna Patel, chairperson and director, HCP Interior Design, confesses, "With each project, I ensured that our inspiration comes from the intangible elements from the country that provides the quality of timelessness to our work."

She emphasises the importance of simplicity and flexibility in spaces as a must in design. "We strive to bring innate experiences into our spaces through subtle elements striking a chord with its users. You need to be comfortable with ambiguity and let the imagination of the user interpret the design," adds Patel.

Similarly, place and climate are the only constants and architects must stick to their roots. Dharam Patel, founder, Art and Architecture Associates, opines, "Evolution of architecture has been influenced by various cultures and traditions. Vadodara dates back to the 5th century and architectural influences range from the Chalukyas, Guptas, Solankis and Mughals. Architecture travels with time and the city has an eclectic architecture that has been conserved to date."

LOCAL CONTEXT

It is imperative to incorporate the local ethos into design and craftsmanship, and traditional designs are important determinants of contemporary architecture. Rahul Dalvi, co-founder, Dalvi Associates, explains, "Old is gold and we are lucky to have provided context in our aged structures, which are hundreds of years old and have stood the test of time. Cultural parameters and weather conditions are a must when designing new age buildings. Using local materials and maintaining the old fabric as a guiding force for the future is the way forward."

It is true that heritage architecture is paving the way for



3. Canna Patel in conversation with Mohit Hajela.

4. Mohit Hajela, group head, Business Development, Jaquar Group.

5. Canna Patel, chairperson and director, HCP Interior Design.

6. Dharam Patel, founder, Art and Architecture Associates.

7. Rahul Dalvi, co-founder, Dalvi Associates.

8. Lakshmi Vilas Palace is a famed tourist attraction in Vadodara and representative of its architectural history.

9. The palace is a typical example of richly decorated Indian architecture.



modern design. Mayur Shah, proprietor, MSA India, states, "Vadodara's Lakshmi Vilas Palace is an architectural marvel and native design styles including arches, columns, jaalis and pinnacles are becoming popular inheritances in modern design. Repercussions of building design without local context must be understood and the hard work of artisans of the past must be understood by the architect." Incidentally, Vadodara has seen extensive use of local materials and indigenous detailing by several local architects.

CULTURE CUES

Restoring old buildings while keeping their ethos intact has

helped link the past with the present. Hitesh Modi, founding partner, Modi Srivastava and Associates, who have restored a 100-year-old building, shares, "We felt the best approach was to give them back their pride and we restructured the old façade. We did not add anything, but simply removed slabs and brought the original stone work to the forefront." He adds that when working with heritage structures, retaining the basic material palette and working around it is a must.

Respecting the space and the original design is a way to keep culture alive. Despite having several treasures, modern Indian cities have lost their character as we have lost many heritage structures, points out Dipen Gada, principal designer and founder, Dipen Gada and Associates. He further says, "As a designer, I believe it is important to limit ourselves to certain fundamental materials that gives a palette to any city. The use of Aluminium Composite Panel is a big no for me as it has ruined architectural design and has a short longevity."

In this respect, a constant dialogue between designers is a good way to ensure that a city's cultural ethos is maintained. This is especially necessary between veteran architects and younger architects so that the sensitivity and sensibility of design can be passed on, and the character of the city is not lost.

DESIGN DETAILS

Contextually relevant designs are the need of the hour. Education is important for new architects to understand the fundamentals and evolution of design, as well as for clients to understand that design must be relevant to a place. For instance, a building called Arc is preserving the fabric of Vadodara, despite having a contemporary look. Some designers, on their



10. Kamani Masjid (Kamani Mosque) in Gujarat is another UNESCO World Heritage Site.

11. Lehipura Gate was built in 1558 and served as the western gateway to the old city of Baroda, now Vadodara.

12. Mayur Shah, proprietor, MSA India.

13. Hitesh Modi, founding partner, Modi Srivastava and Associates.

14. Dipen Gada, principal designer and founder, Dipen Gada and Associates.

15. Ruchika Sahay, regional manager - Business Development (West), Jaquar Group.

part, are making efforts to stay true to the local heritage.

Shah says, "As far as residences are concerned, we do incorporate local artisans to add certain elements within a home to enhance the design concept." In fact, many architects tend to add a local touch to make their designs timeless, especially in a residential context.

Incidentally, Jaquar's Queen's Prime series is a hallmark of design excellence that enhances timelessness in design. Ruchika Sahay, regional manager - Business Development (West), Jaquar Group, avers, "Inspired by the Victorian era, this is a collection that takes you back in time. The design is purposeful, fluid and has clean lines, which complement and achieve a fine balance between materials and textures."

Balance is certainly essential. Conservation and maintenance of heritage buildings should be done in conjunction with modern needs. "Finding a new role for old buildings is important as we can learn much from them," says Modi.

Essentially, drawing on local heritage and applying it to create a new urban fabric is how architecture can remain relevant, today and in the future. ■