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BHAVNAGAR

Heritage

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**FREE
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ISSUE**

Garba

From Sacred Folk Dance to Global Cultural Phenomenon

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HERITAGE SPOTLIGHT

SHRI JUVANESHWAR
MAHADEV TEMPLE

- Rajat Gohil

In the bustling heart of Bhavnagar city, at Jashonath Chowk, is a temple that carries more than a century of history, devotion, and royal care. This is the Shri Juvaneswar Mahadev Temple, established on Shravan Vad 11, 1888 CE.

The first thing that strikes anyone visiting the temple is its architecture. Built in the traditional Kathiawadi style, the temple combines strong teakwood pillars with a delicately carved sandstone structure. The wooden pillars are intricately decorated, and the rest of the building is adorned with fine carvings, reflecting the skill of artisans of that era. The traditional tiled roof adds an old-world charm that makes the temple stand out, even amidst the modern cityscape. It is a space where craftsmanship and devotion meet, inviting visitors to pause and admire every detail.

Yet, the story behind the temple is as remarkable as its design. The temple was born from both royal pride and personal sorrow. Maharani Shri Heerjiba, the queen of Maharaja Shri Jashwantsinh of Gohilwad, had two sons: Maharajkumar Takhtsinhji and Rajkumar Juvansinhji. Juvansinhji, the younger of the two, showed extraordinary promise from a young age. He studied at the prestigious Rajkumar College and soon traveled abroad to England to further his education. There, he immersed himself in chemistry and fine arts, learning new skills and gaining worldly knowledge. He even had the rare opportunity to meet the queen of England and traveled across Europe, absorbing cultures and experiences far beyond the ordinary reach of an Indian prince.



Juvansinhji returned to India at the age of 21, ready to embrace life, married, and appeared to have a bright future ahead. Tragically, his life was cut short, leaving his mother, Maharani Heerjiba, grief-stricken. But in her sorrow, she found a way to honour his memory in a lasting and meaningful way. Using her personal savings, not state funds, she established the Shri Juvaneswar Mahadev Temple on Shravan Vad 11, 1944 Vikram Samvat (Sunday). Alongside the main temple, she also built temples for Radha-Krishna and Rukmini Ji, creating a spiritual space that would continue to serve the city for generations.

Maharani Heerjiba's care for her people extended beyond religious devotion. She founded the Juvaneswar Sanskrit School, with the aim of teaching the local population Sanskrit, the language of the scriptures. This school was started over 136 years ago, long before modern educational systems were widely accessible. In addition, she established the Juvansinhji Dava Khana in Lohkand Bazaar, providing medical care for the city's residents. Through these actions, she ensured that her son's memory would be intertwined not only with prayer but also with the welfare and learning of the people around her.

The temple holds many surprises for those who step inside. In the sanctum sanctorum, one can see the idols of Mata Parvati Ji, Maa Ganga, and Ganapati Ji with his trunk turned to the right. While most temples place idols of Ganapati Ji and Hanuman Ji outside the sanctum, here, a Shri Suryanarayan Dev idol occupies the space traditionally reserved for Ganapati Ji, making this temple unique and spiritually distinctive.

Despite its central location, the temple often goes unnoticed by those rushing through the city. Many may pass by without realizing the rich story, heritage, and royal care that lie within its walls. It is a place where history is alive, where carvings tell tales of a bygone era, and where a mother's love shaped a legacy that continues to touch lives.

Walking through the temple, one cannot help but feel the strength of its architecture. Every pillar, every carved detail, and every corner reflects careful thought and devotion. The temple is not only a space for prayer but also a space where people can connect with the city's past, understanding the blend of royal generosity, spiritual guidance, and cultural preservation that shaped Bhavnagar.

The story of the Shri Juvaneswar Mahadev Temple is ultimately a story of people - the vision of Maharani Heerjiba, the promise of Juvansinhji, and the artisans who brought the temple to life. For anyone visiting Bhavnagar, the temple offers more than religious significance; it offers a journey into the city's heritage, a glimpse into royal life, and a reminder of the enduring impact of care, vision, and love. Standing in the middle of the city, the temple is a glimpse of history, inviting all who enter to pause, reflect, and admire the legacy of a family who gave so much to their people.

The Shri Juvaneswar Mahadev Temple may not always be in the spotlight, but for those who take the time to explore it, it reveals a story that is as human as it is divine, a story of loss and love, of education and devotion, of a mother who would not let her son be forgotten. And in this quiet corner of Bhavnagar, that story continues to live, year after year, through every prayer offered and every visitor who marvels at its beauty.



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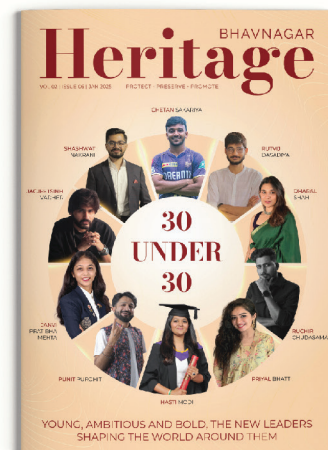
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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

KALAKSHETRA: CARRYING FORWARD A LEGACY OF KATHAK IN BHAVNAGAR

Kalakshetra, Bhavnagar, one of Gujarat's oldest Kathak institutions, has been nurturing the classical arts for over 75 years. Founded in 1944 by the visionary Guru Shri Dharamshibhai Shah, the institution has shaped generations of dancers and musicians, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural fabric of Bhavnagar. Today, the responsibility of carrying forward this legacy rests with trustee Jigar Bhatt, who trained under Guruji himself and now leads Kalakshetra into the future.

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COVER STORY

GARBA: FROM SACRED FOLK DANCE TO GLOBAL CULTURAL PHENOMENON

In the villages of Gujarat, long before the bright lights of cities or the booming speakers of stadiums, Garba was not a spectacle; it was devotion incarnate. Women in intricately embroidered cholis and men in crisp kedias would gather under the open sky. They circled a small earthen lamp called the garbha deep, its flame dancing softly in the breeze, casting gentle shadows across faces etched with reverence and anticipation.

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BHANKAARA: A GLIMPSE INTO BHAVNAGAR'S THEATRICAL ART SPIRIT

Bhankaara is a Gujarati stage play that captures the essence of Bhavnagar's culture while exploring universal human emotions. Adapted from a story by Shaktisinh Parmar, the play was brought to life by a dedicated team led by Vivek Pathak, who handled everything from lighting and music to direction, alongside his sister, Riddhii Pathak. With minimal sets and characters, the production emphasizes storytelling and performance, allowing audiences to connect deeply with the narrative.

In an interview with the team, Vivek Pathak explained the origins of the play: "The story came to me from a friend in just four lines, and I immediately thought, this could be a play. I had been involved in professional theatre in Mumbai since 2015, so I knew what it would take to adapt it for the stage." Inspired by his time performing and learning in Bhavnagar, Vivek was keen to create a play that reflected the city's unique cultural flavor.

The choice of this story was deliberate. Vivek told us, "I wanted a story that could be produced at a low cost but still capture the spirit of Bhavnagar. The characters are few, the sets simple, and

yet it retains all the vibrancy and nuances of our city." With these considerations in mind, Bhankaara became a theatrical production, a celebration of local culture and creativity.

Vivek's deep connection with theatre was matched by his sister Riddhi's keen eye for the nuances of local culture. She explained how much thought went into preserving the authenticity of the Bhavnagar dialect. "The Akwada dialect has a certain rawness," she said, "and while some audience members might not understand it immediately, once they do, it resonates deeply." It wasn't just about language; it was about representing the subtle rhythms and emotions of life in their hometown. Every conversation, every gesture on stage had to feel natural, as if it belonged to the streets and households of Bhavnagar. The story's strength lay not in grand spectacle but in the subtle human experiences it depicted, which made it both feasible and emotionally powerful on stage. Vivek and Riddhi spent countless hours shaping it, discussing every scene, every line, until it felt alive.

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PARAMPUJYA MORARI BAPU'S DIVINE RAM KATHA COMES TO GOPNATH

Gopnath is set to witness a profound spiritual gathering as Parampujya Morari Bapu, one of the most revered exponents of the Ramcharitmanas, will hold a nine-day Ram Katha at Brijeshwari Farm from 4th to 12th October, 2025, graciously hosted by Dariya Mahal, Gopnath. Known for his universal approach to spirituality and his ability to touch hearts across age, religion, and geography, Bapu's Kathas have inspired millions worldwide for over fifty years.

Parampujya Morari Bapu's discourses are rooted in the timeless teachings of the Ramcharitmanas, emphasizing truth, love, and compassion. Yet, his message goes far beyond the conventional boundaries of religion. According to him, true spirituality is not confined to visiting temples, observing rituals, or following fasts; it lies in embracing truth, acting with love, and practicing compassion in daily life. His Katha invites participants to reflect on moral values, personal growth, and universal harmony, connecting ancient wisdom to contemporary living.

Born on 2nd March 1946 (Maha Shivratri) in Talgajarda, Bhavnagar district of Gujarat, Parampujya Morari Bapu grew up immersed in spiritual learning. Under the guidance of his grandfather and guru, Tribhuvandas Dada, he memorized the entire Ramcharitmanas by the age of twelve and began reciting Ram Katha at fourteen. What began as small recitations under a banyan tree in his village evolved into public Kathas at local temples in Talgajarda and Mahuva, eventually leading him to travel across India and the globe to share the message of Lord Ram.

Bapu's journey has been extraordinary. From reciting Kathas at holy Indian pilgrimage sites such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Kedarnath, Somnath, and Jagannath Puri, to hosting gatherings in international cities including London, Paris, Toronto, Sydney, and Vatican City, his discourses have inspired diverse audiences. Unique experiences such as delivering a Katha on a cruise ship, onboard flights, and at Cambridge University, where UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak attended, illustrate the universal appeal of his teachings.

What sets Bapu apart is his approach to his audience. He refers to his attendees not as followers, but as "flowers", highlighting his philosophy of acceptance rather than judgment. His Katha encourages people to rise above jealousy, backbiting, and hatred, fostering an atmosphere of peace, love, and spiritual reflection. Beyond spiritual teachings, Bapu advocates for environmental protection, vegetarianism, and compassionate treatment of animals, emphasizing a holistic approach to life in alignment with the principles of Sanatan Dharma.



The upcoming nine-day Katha at Brijeshwari Farm, Gopnath, promises to be a transformative experience for all. Devotees and spiritual seekers will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the stories of Lord Ram, engage with profound moral and philosophical insights, and leave with a renewed sense of inner peace and universal harmony. Hosted by Dariya Mahal, the event underscores the spirit of community and devotion, inviting everyone, regardless of age, gender, caste, or creed, to participate freely in this celebration of timeless wisdom.

As Gopnath prepares to welcome Parampujya Morari Bapu, devotees can look forward to an enriching experience that transcends ritual and reaches the heart, mind, and soul, reinforcing the eternal values of truth, love, and compassion.





COINS THROUGH TIME: TRADE, CULTURE, AND CIVILIZATION



Long before the concept of money existed, human societies found ways to trade what they had in excess for what they needed. This was the barter system, a method that worked on mutual need. Farmers exchanged grains for tools, shepherds bartered wool for pottery, and communities grew around the rhythm of seasonal and localized trade. Barter worked best in tightly-knit societies where trust was high, but it could not support growing, complex economies that stretched across regions and peoples. The limitations of barter were many. Chief among them was the necessity for a double coincidence of wants where each party had to want exactly what the other had to offer. This made trade inefficient and often impossible. In response, early societies began using items that were widely accepted and valued, even if they were not immediately consumable. These items, known as commodity money, laid the groundwork for more sophisticated transaction systems.

Commodity money varied greatly from region to region. In many parts of Asia and Africa, cowrie shells became a medium of exchange due to their durability, scarcity, and pleasing appearance. In the Indian subcontinent, they circulated for centuries even alongside metal coinage and in both rural markets and royal treasuries. In Ethiopia, bricks of salt were traded like coins, while in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, silver rings or bars were weighed out for payments. These early systems made trade more flexible, but they still lacked standardization. The solution to this problem came with the innovation of coinage, metal pieces of fixed weight and purity, stamped with symbols of authority. This leap forward occurred nearly simultaneously in several ancient cultures, signaling a revolutionary approach to trade, governance, and economic certainty.

The earliest known coins were minted in Lydia, a kingdom in modern-day Turkey, around 600 BCE. These electrum coins bore simple images of lions or seals, signifying state authentication. Their adoption radically changed the dynamics of trade, taxation, and statecraft. In China, around the same time, metal tokens shaped like knives or spades were minted to facilitate trade. These early coins were cast rather than struck and served both economic and symbolic functions. Over time, round coins with square holes became the standard in China, influencing neighboring countries such as Japan and Korea. The Greek and Roman worlds, too, developed robust coinage systems, introducing the idea of realistic portraits, deities, and inscriptions that conveyed the power and values of the issuing rulers. Coins in these empires did more than facilitate commerce. They were instruments of propaganda, asserting authority and spreading cultural values across vast territories.

As coinage spread across continents, it transformed economies, cultures, and statecraft. Coins were portable, durable, and divisible, making them ideal for trade across long distances. Their uniform weight and stamp of authority gave people confidence that transactions were fair. They became instruments of taxation and tribute, strengthening the hands of rulers and empires. Just as importantly, they were miniature canvases of art and ideology. Greek coins displayed exquisite realism, portraying rulers like Alexander the Great with striking detail, while Roman coins chronicled victories and virtues of emperors. In China, the square hole in the middle of the coin allowed people to string them together, symbolizing unity and

practicality. In Africa, kingdoms such as Aksum issued coins that projected their power in gold and silver, proving that coinage was not confined to any single culture but was instead a universal solution to the challenges of exchange.

India entered the world of coinage around the 6th century BCE with the emergence of punch-marked coins issued by the Mahajanapadas, the early republics and kingdoms of northern India. These coins were irregular pieces of silver stamped with multiple small symbols, often multiple punches placed on a single surface. Designs included suns, trees, elephants, bulls, and geometric motifs, each representing a particular kingdom, guild, or authority. Weighed against standards like the ratti seed, they were among the earliest standardized currencies in the world. Literary texts such as the Jataka tales and Manusmriti mention them, proving how deeply embedded they had become in economic and cultural life. Though simple in appearance, they carried the seeds of an organized monetary economy and symbolized the growing sophistication of trade networks.

The Mauryan Empire brought new coherence to Indian coinage. Under Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka, punch-marked coins were standardized in both weight and symbols, reflecting the administrative might of one of India's greatest empires. The Arthashastra described minting practices in detail, highlighting the role of the state in supervising coinage and punishing debasement. Mauryan coins facilitated trade not only within the subcontinent but also along early Silk Road routes, linking India to Central Asia and beyond. For the first time, India had a currency system that could serve a vast and diverse empire, demonstrating the intimate link between money and governance, commerce, and cultural cohesion.



Ancient Barter System



CELEBRATING WORLD TOURISM DAY: TOURISM AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION

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