



Heritage

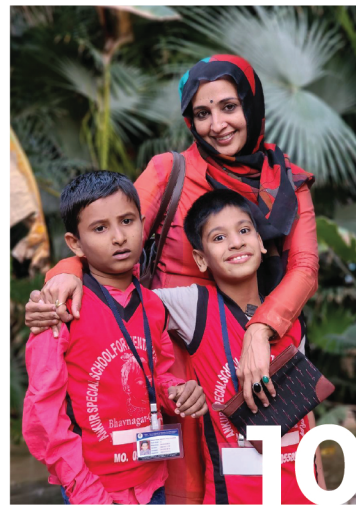
BHAVNAGAR

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DIGITAL
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ISSUE

JULY 1 | Celebrating Our Senior Doctors: Wisdom, Service, and Healing
NATIONAL DOCTORS DAY



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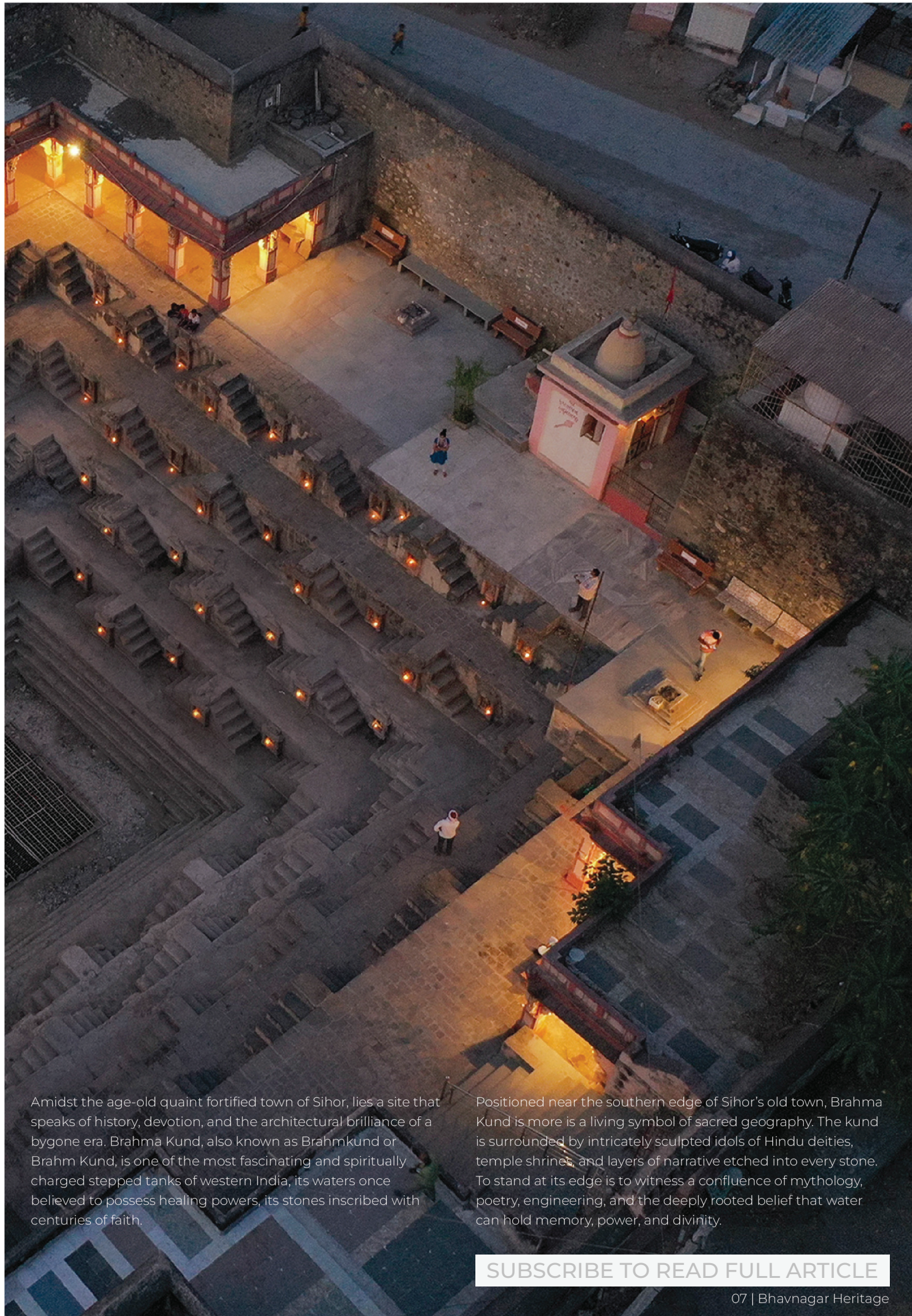
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HERITAGE SPOTLIGHT

BRAHMA KUND, SIHOR

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Brahma Kund is a masterpiece of stepped-tank architecture, an engineering form perfected in western India to store water in arid climates. Yet here, functionality blends seamlessly with aesthetics and symbolism. The kund is constructed in an elegant, symmetrical pattern, with descending steps that guide the pilgrim or visitor gradually toward the central pool.
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Amidst the age-old quaint fortified town of Sihor, lies a site that speaks of history, devotion, and the architectural brilliance of a bygone era. Brahma Kund, also known as Brahmkund or Brahm Kund, is one of the most fascinating and spiritually charged stepped tanks of western India, its waters once believed to possess healing powers, its stones inscribed with centuries of faith.

Positioned near the southern edge of Sihor's old town, Brahma Kund is more is a living symbol of sacred geography. The kund is surrounded by intricately sculpted idols of Hindu deities, temple shrines, and layers of narrative etched into every stone. To stand at its edge is to witness a confluence of mythology, poetry, engineering, and the deeply rooted belief that water can hold memory, power, and divinity.

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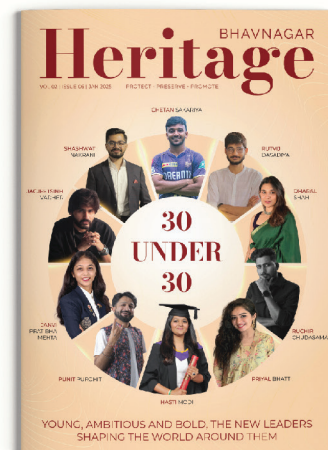
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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

BUILDING A HOME OF HOPE: NEHAL GADHAVI'S MISSION FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN



Nehal Gadhavi needs no introduction to the people of Bhavnagar. Born in Junagadh and raised in Bhavnagar, she has left an indelible mark on the city's cultural and philanthropic landscape. She currently serves as a teacher at Ankur School for mentally retarded children, the only school in Bhavnagar district dedicated to mentally challenged children. At the school, Nehal heads the vocational department, the HR department, and is also the voice of the children, handling everything from funding to branding and beyond.

Ankur School is home to 260 students, and every aspect of their care, from education, medicine, therapy, food, uniforms to transportation, is provided free of cost. The focus is not just on education but on employability, as children who do not earn often become vulnerable and dependent. The school is run by a trust, with Alpeshbhai Sheth serving as the trustee.

As we walk into the room to interview Nehal Gadhavi, we are greeted by the sight of colourful torans, rakhis, and traditional home decor items in red, green, yellow, and orange. Nehalben smiles with quiet pride and explains that the students made all these products themselves. These colours are used because the children can decipher only these colours.

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COVER STORY

CELEBRATING OUR SENIOR DOCTORS: WISDOM, SERVICE, AND HEALING

Observed every year on 1st July, National Doctor's Day is a tribute to the relentless spirit and selfless service of doctors across the country. It is a day to honour those who dedicate their lives to healing others—quietly, diligently, and with extraordinary resilience. In Bhavnagar, this tribute takes on deeper meaning as we shine a spotlight on our senior doctors—seasoned professionals who have spent decades at the heart of the city's medical landscape. Their journeys span years of transformation in healthcare, countless hours of patient care, and a commitment that goes far beyond prescriptions and procedures. Through this special feature, we bring you conversations with five of Bhavnagar's most respected senior doctors, who reflect on their life in medicine, the values that guided them, and the enduring satisfaction of a profession built on service.

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DHOLAVIRA: GUJARAT'S ANCIENT ECHO IN STONE

Tracing the ingenuity, sustainability, and legacy of one of India's greatest Harappan cities

Before modern cities rose across Gujarat, a remarkable civilization thrived amidst the salty plains of the Rann of Kutch. Dholavira, a city of stone and silence, emerged as a beacon of innovation and resilience. Today, its ruins whisper stories of a people who mastered engineering, trade, and survival over 4,000 years ago.

In 1967-68, the vast white landscape of the Rann revealed a forgotten past. Archaeologist J.P. Joshi of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) discovered the remains of an ancient city on Khadir Island. Named Dholavira, after a nearby village, this site soon proved to be one of the most significant urban centers of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Dholavira thrived between 3000 BCE and 1500 BCE, covering all three major phases of the Harappan civilization — pre-Harappan, mature Harappan, and late Harappan. It stood out for its use of stone masonry rather than bricks, and for its advanced city planning. The settlement was divided into three parts: a citadel, a middle town, and a lower town — each fortified and carefully laid out with broad streets, gateways, and open spaces.

Among Dholavira's most outstanding features is its water management system — a necessity in the arid Kutch region. The inhabitants built an intricate network of channels, drains, and reservoirs to capture and store rainwater. Eleven massive tanks, some over 13 meters deep, provided water year-round. This remarkable achievement reflects not only the community's technical expertise but also its understanding of sustainability in harsh environments.

A large ten-symbol inscription in the yet undeciphered Indus script was found at the northern gate of the city — the longest such signboard ever discovered in Harappan ruins. Its size and location suggest it had great importance, perhaps serving as an emblem of power, communication, or ritual significance.

Artifacts found at the site — including beads, seals, copper tools, terracotta figures, and pottery — reveal a vibrant material culture and extensive trade networks. Dholavira was connected to distant civilizations such as Mesopotamia and regions across the Arabian Sea, highlighting Gujarat's early role in global trade.

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THE PALACE WITHIN: HOW BHAVNAGAR'S ROYAL WOMEN REDEFINED POWER

Palaces are often remembered for their grandeur, for arches that stretch skyward, for domes etched in gold, for royal courts that once made decisions shaping the course of history. Yet behind this visible stage, a quieter, deeper transformation was taking place. It unfolded in the inner chambers, through the vision and courage of royal women whose influence reached far beyond the zenana.

As the world prepares to observe Palace Day 2025, with the theme "Royal Women and the Roles They Played in the Theatre Play Known as Court Life," Bhavnagar stands as a compelling example of the strength and foresight of its Maharanis. They did more than occupy their place in history, they reshaped it with intention and purpose.

Among the earliest to do so was Maharani Majirajba, a woman whose clarity of vision allowed her to see potential where others saw only tradition. In a time when the education of girls raised more questions than support, she chose to envision a different future. She believed that Bhavnagar's progress would not be found solely in its palaces or policies, but in its classrooms. The founding of Majirajba Girls' School was a radical step, grounded in quiet conviction. It offered young girls the chance to learn, grow, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Her work inspired a lineage of royal women who followed her path of thoughtful reform. Maharani Nandkunverba, too, looked beyond convention. In 1917, she established the Shri Nandkunverba Zanana Boarding, with the purpose of educating Rajput girls. But she did more than build a school, she dismantled a deeply rooted barrier. The purdah system, which had for generations kept women secluded, lost its hold in Bhavnagar through her efforts. She chose to bring women into public life, to give them visibility and voice.

Her contributions extended into the realm of communication and public awareness. During the Second World War, she launched a Gujarati-language magazine titled *British and Hindi Vikram*. At a time of global crisis and national uncertainty, the magazine served as a source of clarity and connection. It informed the people of Bhavnagar about the war, its wider impact, and the role India was playing in the world. Through her editorial initiative, Maharani Nandkunverba revealed yet another side of leadership, one that relied on information, empathy, and trust.

In the years that followed, Maharani Vijayaba took on the responsibility of guiding the school's future. With quiet resolve and gentle strength, she ensured its continuity and opened its gates wider. What had once been a school for Rajput girls soon welcomed students from every background. The idea of education as privilege gave way to education as a shared right—a belief that every girl deserved access, regardless of lineage.

As Bhavnagar evolved, the institution remained a constant, shaped by the dedication of its royal guardians. Maharani Brijraj Nandini Devi carried this legacy forward, steering the school with care and wisdom. She ensured that the vision begun decades ago never lost relevance. Her leadership helped maintain the school's place as a beacon of learning.

Then, Maharani Samyukta Kumari Gohil stepped into this continuum of care. Her leadership marked a time of expansion and renewal. With the establishment of an English medium school and an Arts and Commerce College, she offered new opportunities to young women in Bhavnagar. For the first time, many girls no longer needed to leave their hometown to pursue higher education. The road that had begun in a single classroom now stretched confidently into the future.



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As we look forward to celebrating Palace Day 2025 at Nilambag Palace with the people of Bhavnagar, we do so in honour of these remarkable women. Their contributions echo through every book opened, every classroom lit with curiosity, and every life touched by their foresight.

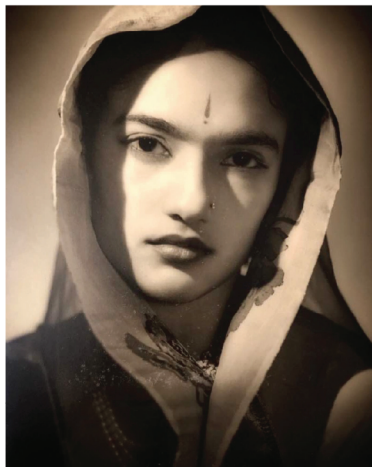
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Maharani Nandkunverba
Saheb of Bhavnagar



Rajmata Vijayaba
Saheb of Bhavnagar



Rajmata Brijraj Nandini Devi,
Princess of Karauli
(Rajasthan)



H.H. Maharani
Samyukta Kumari Gohil

Each of these Maharanis carried a vision larger than the palace gates. They played roles shaped not by ceremony, but by commitment. They saw education as a means to awaken minds, elevate voices, and prepare women to take their rightful place in society. Through schools and magazines, reforms and quiet acts of courage, they carved a legacy that continues to shape Bhavnagar today.

As we look forward to celebrating Palace Day 2025 at Nilambag Palace with the people of Bhavnagar, we do so in honour of these remarkable women. Their contributions echo through every book opened, every classroom lit with curiosity, and every life touched by their foresight.

Bhavnagar's royal women led from within. They saw possibility where others saw tradition, and they chose progress without fanfare. Their story is not only part of the past, it is a guiding light for the present, and a promise for the future.

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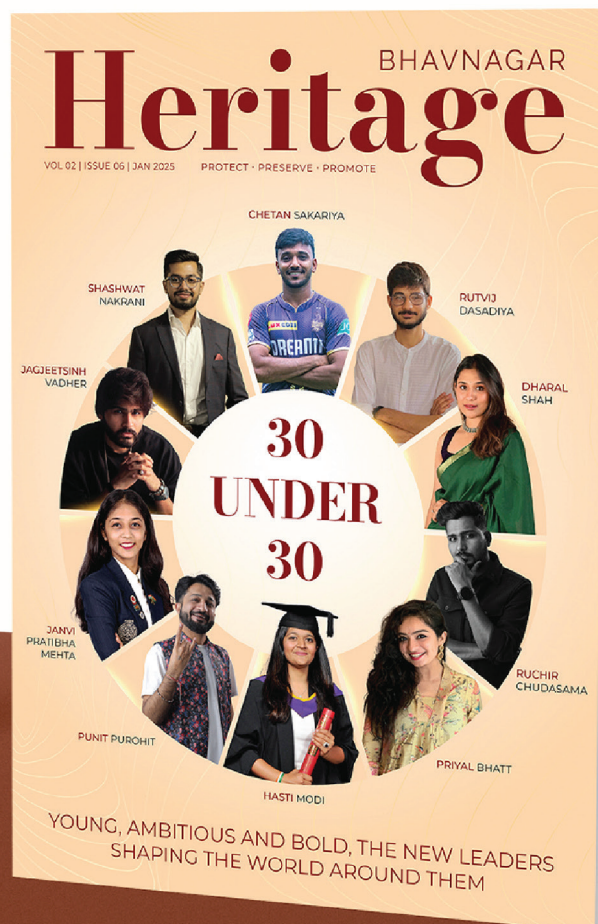


Bhavnagar Heritage Magazine is your window into the rich history, culture, and art of Bhavnagar. Each issue explores untold stories, iconic landmarks, and local traditions, offering a deep connection to the region's vibrant heritage.

- Exclusive insights into Bhavnagar's history & culture
- Featured articles from heritage experts & historians
- Get updates on local heritage events & cultural festivals
- Timeless stories of art, craft, and legacy

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN HERITAGE PRESERVATION: THE CASE OF VANARASHI VAV, BHAVNAGAR

by- Aashka Kamdar (Student of MA Managing Archeological Sites, University College London)

Gujarat is dotted with stunning stepwells- architectural marvels like Rani Ki Vav and Adalaj Vav that date back to the 10th and 15th centuries.

But tucked away in our very own Bhavnagar is a lesser- known treasure: Vanarashi Vav. Unlike its more famous cousins, this stepwell was built more recently, yet it holds deep local significance. Located just off the Bhavnagar-Veraval highway near Vavd village in Ghogha taluka, Vanarashi Vav is easy to miss —but once you see it, you won't forget it. A small inscription on the middle arch of the second storey reveals its origin: it was built in 1902 (Vikram Savant 1958) by Maganlal and Pramandas in memory of their father, Vanarashi Jadavaji. This three-storied stepwell features elegant arches and carvings of the Hindu goddess Durga, who is still worshipped here today. That's what makes this stepwell not just a monument, but a living heritage site.

What's even more remarkable is the role the local community played in saving it. When a highway project threatened to bury the stepwell, villagers rallied in protest. Their efforts paid off — the highway was eventually rerouted to pass above the Vav, preserving this cultural heritage site. It is a powerful example of how ordinary people can protect their own heritage, something that is highly valued in the heritage sector. In recent years, the field of heritage management has increasingly focused on managing changes in the urban cities, finding ways to reach an equal ground with new government policies for urban development and preserving such old historic ruins and buildings. Vanarashi Vav is an excellent example of co-existence of preserving heritage sites along with urban development. In fact, it was restored and inaugurated in 2019 by the royal family of Bhavnagar, adding to its value and significance. For those working to promote Bhavnagar's cultural legacy — especially initiatives of Bhavnagar Heritage — this success story is a beacon of hope. With continued community involvement, proper documentation, expert assessment, and increased awareness about local history, Vanarashi Vav can lead the way in showing how heritage sites can be both preserved and celebrated.



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