Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative

a joint initiative by Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), CRDF and Avichal Heritage Foundation

Annual report

August 2023



This report summarises activities conducted by CHC and Avichal Heritage Foundation under Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative from April 2022 to August 2023.







Timeline of events and activities

April 2022

First phase of dismantling work at Mukhi Delu

May - June 2022

Careful dismantling of the back wing of Kalidas Jethabhai House

July 2022

CEPT Professional Program (CPP) on 'Non-Destructive tests on Historic Buildings' at Mukhi Delu and Kalidas Jethabhai House

August 2022

Event: 'Meet at Dharmaj'

- Exhibition of student work from Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) and Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR), Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University.
- Open House at CEPT Conservation Site Schools: Mukhi Delu and Kalidas Jethabhai House
- Young Heritage Explorers Program (YHEP) in collaboration with H.M. Patel English Medium School

January 2023

Event: 'Celebrating the Cultural Heritage of Dharmaj'

- Open House at CEPT Conservation Site Schools: Mukhi Delu and Kalidas Jethabhai House
- Young Heritage Explorers Program (YHEP) in collaboration with Tri Gi Mishra Shala and VN High School.
- Exhibition of student work at Kalidas Jethabhai House and Bhagol (clock tower square)
- Commencement of Architectural Conservation Studio, MCR, CEPT University
- Directed Research Projects (DRP) by Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) and Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR), Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University

March 2023

Pilot Project on Mukhi Delu as part of the Endangered Wooden Architecture Program (EWAP)

May 2023

Event at CHC:

CEPT Conservation Site Schools as a pedagogical tool.

June 2023

Webinar:

Conservation and the Community: Dharmaj with Dharmajians







Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative (DHC)

Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), Ahmedabad and Avichal Heritage Foundation, Dharmaj have collaborated in an effort to safeguard the heritage of Dharmaj.

A series of four initiatives focusing on the conservation and regeneration of valuable heritage assets of the village has been proposed through educational, research and outreach activities.



Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC)

Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), Ahmedabad has a vision of becoming the focal point in research, advisory and capacity building of the practice and policy of heritage conservation in the country. With a firm belief in the ethics of conservation and sustainability, the Center intends to inform practices on the ground to create sustainable and equitable solutions.

Address:

Near AES Boys Hostel Campus, University Ground, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad - 380 009

Email: chc@cept.ac.in



Avichal Heritage Foundation

Avichal Heritage Foundation is a non-profit organization established with a vision to implement the engagement of the NRI diaspora and next generation through rebuilding and repurposing of Heritage Homes and public spaces in Dharmaj, with Rhodesia House being the first example to tell the story of the Indo-African connection through events or workshops to build awareness on restoration, preservation initiatives and cultural tourism.

Address:

Rhodesia House, Station Rd, Opp. Akhada,

Dharmaj, Anand - 388 430 Email: info@avichal.org





Digital Interactive Map of Heritage Assets

The project is envisioned as a digital platform that enables residents and diaspora of Dharmaj to virtually explore, learn about, and reconnect with the history and heritage of their homeland. The interactive map will serve as a digital repository of cultural heritage assets, oral narratives and traditional knowledge systems of Dharmaj. The platform will also allow residents and diaspora to contribute to the map by sharing information and insights about the place and its people.



Activities conducted

Architectural Conservation Studio (Semester II)
January - May 2023
Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR)
Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University



This studio focused on imparting and developing essential skills and understanding of conservation processes with an aim to build student's capacity for engagement with complexities of built heritage conservation. The studio was led by conservation experts Khushi Shah and Benny Kurikose, and assisted by Sneha Anand. Students worked with three sites in the historic core of Dharmaj – Kalidas Jethabhai House, Mukhi House and Shri Krishna Bhavan through the following processes:

Documentation: All three sites were recorded manually for a week by groups of students. The present condition of the structures were recorded and this led to the students presenting their individual analysis on the reason for the deterioration and the various repair strategies that can be adopted.



Material Understanding: A detailed understanding of traditional building materials identified at the chosen sites, their properties, life cycles, and deterioration processes was produced through hands-on exploration and laboratory analysis. Students were able to propose appropriate conservation action using materials compatible with that used in historic structures.

Analysis: Tools and methodologies for studying historic elements, buildings, precincts, sites, and landscapes were applied to each of the chosen sites. Students presented their analysis of the historic structures and their contexts through creative visual representation and identification of heritage values associated with the sites.





CEPT Conservation Site Schools

CEPT Conservation Site School is an initiative that is conceptually based on a premise that many heritage sites that are highly valuable for their historic importance are neglected due to lack of active use or lack of funds and resources. The imperative of conserving such sites and structures lies collectively among the citizens. These sites are a great repository of historic knowledge and present an opportunity for conservation training and knowledge sharing.

The initiative seeks to actively engage local residents, heritage professionals, architects, site managers, craftspeople and students through workshops, short courses and volunteering opportunities. The larger aim is to initiate action for heritage conservation in Dharmaj through training and capacity building. Once conserved, a new use for the site may be proposed based on a process of community consultation and the consent of the owner.

Under DHC, two Site Schools have been adopted as pilot projects to demonstrate the process of conservation for people who own a house in Dharmaj and wish to give it a new life by conserving. CHC, CRDF and Avichal Heritage Foundation have entered into a financially non-binding agreement with the owners of both these sites under which CHC will carry out educational and outreach activities at the site and in the process, conserve the building.

Site School 1: Kalidas Jethabhai House



Site School 2: Mukhi Delu

























Site School 1 | Kalidas Jethabhai House

Kalidas Jethabhai House has been adopted as a Conservation Site School at Dharmaj as part of 'Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative', a joint effort by Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), CRDF and Avichal Heritage Foundation to safeguard the heritage of Dharmaj. The site, located within the historic core of Dharmaj, is under the ownership of the heirs of Kalidas Jethabhai Patel. CHC, CRDF and Avichal Heritage Foundation have entered into a financially non-binding agreement with the owners of the house under which CHC will carry out educational and outreach activities at the site and in the process, conserve the building. Once conserved, a new use will be proposed for the site in consultation with the owners and community.

Activities conducted

Careful Dismatling Of The Back Wing | May - June 2022

After safeguarding the building, the next stage of work was the careful dismantling of the back wing. From May to June 2022, CHC took up the careful dismantling of the dilapidated back wing. Safety protocols were followed by the labourers and anyone on site at all times. The process included gradually bringing down the roof followed by the walls of the first and second floors. The entire dismantling process was done manually and atmost care was taken to minimise damage to material. Timber members like doors, that are heavy were partly dismantled and then brought down. Care was taken to salvage building material with the intention of reusing them during reconstruction. Most of the walls and floors at the ground level are retained as they were found to be in fairly good condition compared to the rest of the structure.

Material Inventory | June - July 2022

As the dismantling was being carried out, timber members and samples of building materials like lime plaster, mud mortar, bricks etc were being segregated and labelled based on the location they had been taken from. This was done to later test and record any difference in the composition of materials. A material shed was constructed on the open ground to stack the labelled materials that were recovered during dismantling. A few samples were brought back to be documented and stored at the Conservation Laboratory. As and when the need arises, tests will be conducted on these samples which can later be used as a guide to understand the ratio and composition of materials that could be used during reconstruction of













the back wing. Part of the brick bat and rubble is stored on the site to be recycled and reused during the reconstruction of the back wing.

Open House events at Kalidas Jethabhai House

Open House1 (December 2021): After safeguarding the front wing. Open House 2 (August 2022): After dismantling the back wing along with a display of the recovered material.

Open House 3 (January 2023): Display of student work by the Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) and the Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR), CEPT University.

CEPT Professional Program on Non-Invasive Testing Methods for Historic Buildings | 26th to 30th July 2022

This workshop conducted by Conservation Engineer, Nigar Shaikh, CHC, CRDF was designed to help participants to develop the skill of conducting Non-Destructive Tests and Minor Destructive Tests for historic buildings through hands-on engagement. These methods of material investigation are imperative for retaining maximum historic fabric, while providing useful information regarding the building material and structure. The participants collected samples of mortar, plaster, bricks and prisms from the recovered material of the back wing to test them for compressive strength. The workshop included a series of sessions by experts in the field of conservation.

Directed Research Project (DRP)

January - May 2023

Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR), CEPT 'Understanding the material fabric of Kalidas Jethabhai house through the Characterisation process'

The research aimed to understand the materials used at Kalidas Jethabhai House over time and its behaviour with other materials. Samples were collected and tested to understand the composition of materials and their strength. The findings of this research can be used to arrive at compatible repair materials that can be used in the restoration of Kalidas Jethabhai House.

Ongoing activities

The educational activities and on-site work carried out at Kalidas Jethabhai House is currently informing a 'Conservation-led design' at the site in collaboration with the heirs of Kalidas Jethabhai Patel and an Ahmedabad-based design studio.







Site School 1 | Mukhi Delu

Mukhi Delu has been adopted as a Conservation Site School at Dharmaj as part of 'Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative', a joint effort by the Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC), CRDF and Avichal Heritage Foundation to safeguard the heritage of Dharmaj. The site is located within the historic core of the village and is owned by Harish Patel, a former resident of the village, now based in the USA. CHC, CRDF and Avichal Heritage Foundation have entered into a financially non-binding agreement with the house owner under which CHC will carry out educational and outreach activities at the site and conserve the building in the process. Once conserved, a new use for the site will be proposed in consultation with the owner, the community and administrative stakeholders of the village.



Activities conducted

Careful Dismantling - Phase 1 | April 2022

Elements of the third floor parapet of the building were severely dilapidated. After consultation with structural engineers, they were carefully removed. To achieve this, the stone parapet on the second floor was dismantled carefully. The overhang too had to be dismantled to furthur reduce the load. The whole process of dismantling was challenging and had to be done carefully due to the limited open space available. With little to no space between houses, care had to be taken not to cause any damage to the neighbour's property. Safety of the workers at site was ensured at all times.



Open house at Mukhi Delu

- Open House 1 (August 2022): After safeguarding and careful dismantling of dilapidated elements.
- Open House 2 (January 2023): The site was open to visitors and the diaspora community as part of the event 'Celebrating the Cultural Heritage of Dharmaj'



CEPT Professional Program on Non-Invasive Testing Methods for Historic Buildings | 26th to 30th July 2022

This workshop conducted by Conservation Engineer, Nigar Shaikh, CHC was designed to help participants to develop the skill of conducting Non-Destructive Tests and Minor Destructive Tests for historic buildings through hands-on engagement. Due to limited access to the entire structure, students conducted tap tests on the timber elements to gauge strength. The workshop included a series







of sessions by experts in the field of conservation.

Digital Documentation | EWAP Pilot Project

As part of the Endangered Wooden Architecture Program (EWAP), Mukhi Delu was chosen as a Pilot project for digital documentation of wooden architectural heritage. It was documented with the help of LiDAR scanning, Aerial Photogrammetry (demonstrated by the agency) and partial Terrestrial Photogrammetry.









Testing timber of Gujarat's wooden architectural heritage

Parth.Shastri@timesgroup.com

Ahmedabad: A team from the Centre for Heritage Conservation (CHC) at CEPT University has embarked on an 18-month project to document 60-odd wooden structures across the state both through drawings and 3D mapping, techniques to put the state's architectural heritage on a global map.

Prof Jigna Desai, centre head and principal researcher at CHC, said that it's a project with grant from the Endangered Wooden Architecture Programme (EWAP) by the UK-based Oxford Brookes University.

"Under the project, we will be identifying the havelis primarily using wood as structural material and document them in detail. While we carried out pilot projects with satisfactory results for 3D scans, we will be taking about 10-12 samples from five regions of Guja-Saurashtra, Kutch, North Gujarat, Central Gujarat and South Gujarat. Thus, the final project will include 60odd structures from the state,' she said. "Properties in Ahmedabad will also be part of the initiative."

CHC officials said that the project is important as it's for the first time the EWAP has identified Indian beneficiaries for the grant. Apart from Gujarat, another such initiative has commenced in Jammu & Kashmir this year. Saatvika Pancholi, research associate at the CHC, said that one can understand the scale of the work based on the fact that they found 90-odd havelis that fit the



PEERING INTO ARCHITECTURE

 The project will study the type of wood used the probable age of the wood, its source, and regional peculiarities

• The project will also include a master carpenter to understand the joineries and specialties of the regions. For example, several joineries in Kutch were found to be unique as they were made by the same artisans who built ships

 The project will give a record for posterity in terms of 3D mapping, a technique which will be handy if a property gets damaged or is not physically on the ground anymore

• The region-wise architectural style will also be documented to understand typology and plan layout which evolved over the decades with influence from different countries in terms of motifs, designs, and ornamentation

criteria. "Average age of these private properties — several of which are still used as residences — is about 100-150 years. We'll be finding the best representation of the regional architecture with distinct styles and different periods," she said. Mrudula Mane, programme director (documentation), said that a 3D laser scanner is used for the project along with

techniques such as photogrammetry and geo-referencing, "The outcome will provide an interactive 3D structure where one can see both interiors and exteriors. Due to the nature of the project, we also developed consent forms based on international standards so that we can safeguard the privacy of the property owners," she said.





Regeneration of M D Sarvajanik Pustakalay

The initiative aims to modernise the Shree Motibhai Dahyabhai Sarvajanik Pustkalay for the residents of Dharmaj as an interactive place with improved access to books and archival resources on the history and heritage of Dharmaj while parallelly digitising rare books from the collection for preservation. During a preliminary visit to the Shri M. D. Sar Pustkalaya, Dharmaj on 13th June, 2021, team members of DHC found that the place has a historic value for the region. The significant collection of the library and the structure represent the institutional push towards education by the leaders of the region. The experts have proposed three projects:

- A. Creating a Digital Archive of the Material at the Library: Identifying the nature of the archive, its value and current accessibility and digitising the valuable resource with the support of external funding.
- B. Conservation and Regeneration of the Structure and the Site: Conserving the structure through a series of training and capacity building programs and preparing a maintenance manual to facilitate continuous repairs to extend the life of the structure.
- C. Setting up a Resource Center: Enabling the center to become an important anchor for scholars, students and professionals to visit for the purpose of knowing more about the history, architecture, ecology and environment of the region.

Activities conducted

Cataloguing the collection

A call for volunteers was announced in June 2021 to support DHC in cataloging the library collection comprising of over 8500 books. Approximately 30% of this collection was reviewed by August 2021 which marked a step further towards identifying the nature and accessibility. Further work on the collection will be taken up once DHC receives funding for the project.









Owner's Guide to Conservation

The project is an effort to channel the existing awareness of heritage to actual conservation efforts in Dharmaj. A set of conservation guidelines will be specifically designed for residents and diaspora of Dharmaj who wish to upgrade their houses in a way that preserves and enhances the heritage value of the building. CHC and Avichal Heritage Foundation acknowledge that many residents are aware of the significance of heritage assets that form an integral part of the character and identity of Dharmaj and want to make a positive contribution towards safeguarding them for present and future generations.



Activities conducted

Following the Directed Research projects (DRP) conducted by the Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) and the Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR) students over the past two years, the team will commence the preparation of a Dharmaj Heritage Charter for citizens wanting to conserve their properties.







Outreach events by DHC

Meet at Dharmaj I 26th and 27th August 2022

A two-day event organised by DHC at various sites in Dharmaj with the support and cooperation of Dharmaj Kelavani Mandal. The event included the following range of activities to engage visitors, local comunities and young students:



1) Young Heritage Explorers Program (YHEP), Dharmaj

YHEP, designed and conceptualised by Gauri Bharat, CHC, CRDF, aims to introduce and educate young people about the significance of heritage sites and the role of history and heritage conservation in our contemporary lives.

The program was conducted with students of H.M. Patel English Medium School, Dharmaj at Shri M.D. Sarvajanik Pustkalay (Public Library in Dharmaj). The program was organised with the support of Dharmaj Kelavani Mandal and funded by the Heirs of Kalidas Jethabhai Patel.



2) Open house at CEPT Conservation Site Schools

Activities undertaken at the two Conservation Site Schools were displayed in addition to research on safeguarding and repair of Timber Architecture in Dharmaj, Research on family migration Histories in Dharmaj, Directed Research Project, Masters in Conservation and Regeneration, Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University.



3) Exhibition of student work at Shri M D Sarvajanik Pustkalay (public library)

Student work done as part of the Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) and Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR) programs, CEPT University was exhibited along with an Undergraduate Research Thesis on Transformation of threshold spaces in the residential typology of the historic core of Dharmaj in collaboration with School of Environmental Design and Architecture (SEDA), Navrachana University, Vadodara.















Celebrating the Cultural Heritage of Dharmaj I 11th and 12th January 2023

Atwo-day event was organised by Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative on 11th and 12th January to celebrate the Cultural Heritage of Dharmaj. The event included an open house at both the Site Schools to showcase the extensive work that had been completed, an exhibition of MCR student's work at the clock tower, Heritage walks conducted by the MCR students to share their understanding of the place and activities for school students to create awareness on Heritage Conservation. The meet facilitated interesting conversations between the CHC team, Avichal foundation, owners of heritage properties in Dharmaj and individuals interested in Conservation.

1) Open house at CEPT Conservation Site Schools

The event included an overview of site school activities undertaken by CHC, a display of related research work by Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) and Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR), Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University.

2) Young Heritage Explorers Program (YHEP)

The program was conducted with students of Tri Gi Mishra Shala and V N High School at Shri M.D. Sarvajanik Pustkalay (Public Library in Dharmaj). The program was organised with the support of Dharmaj Kelavani Mandal and funded by the Heirs of Kalidas Jethabhai Patel.

3) Heritage walks by CEPT students

Four heritage walks were curated and conducted by students of the Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) program, Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University on the following themes:

- Dharmaj in the presence of absence

(Curated and conducted: Vishvesh Pathak)

- Timber architecture in Dharmaj

(Curated and conducted: Amriteshwari Arun)

- Art Deco in Dharmaj

(Curated: Pranjali Mathure, Priyanka Baghel, conducted: Priyanka)

- Tobacco as Industrial Heritage

(Curated by Bhanumathi V, conducted by Amriteshwari Arun)

Exhibition of student work at Bhagol (Clock tower square)

A display of academic work from Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) and Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR) programs, Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University.









CEPT Conservation Site School as a pedagogical tool I 19th May 2023

CEPT Conservation Site Schools at Dharmaj are open as prospective sites for studio-based learnings to the tutors of CEPT University. A display of educational, outreach and safeguarding activities conducted by CHC along with potential studio themes for each site led to interesting discussions on the wide-ranging educational potential of these historic buildings and various pedagogical directions that can be undertaken by engaging with them.

The event marked a step forward by the CEPT Conservation Site Schools program towards encourgaing collaborative processes and approaches of academic exploration in Architecture and Design, Landscape Design, Urban Studies and Construction Technology.



Conservation and the Community: Dharmaj with Dharmajians I 3rd June 2023

Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative invited Dharmajians from all across the globe to join for an insightful webinar that aimed to showcase the work done under the initiative, specially focusing on the role of stakeholder-led processes in heritage conservation. CHC along with faculty and students from CEPT University presented their experiences of engaging with local stakeholders in Dharmaj. Stakeholder perspectives on the work undertaken by DHC and its potential long-term contribution to the village was also shared.

Upcoming Activities

Publication on Dharmaj

CHC will be working on a publication that collates all information that has been collected through students work, outreach and educational activities and on-site work by CHC at Dharmaj.

Digital documentation of wooden houses in Dharmaj

As part of the Endangered Wooden Architecture Program, CHC will be identifying and digitally documenting wooden houses in Dharmaj. The pilot project on Mukhi Delu has been completed.







Data collected (June 2021-July 2023)

Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR), CEPT University

Documentation work

Photographs, Measured drawings, Condition mapping, Stakeholder consultation and Architectural Analysis of:

Foundation Studio (2021)

- 1. M D Sar Pustkalay
- 2. Athamni khadki
- 3. Aurobindo Bhuvan

View students' work here.

Architectural Conservation Studio (2023)

- 1. Kalidas Jethabhai House
- 2. Mukhi Delu
- 3. Shri Krishna Bhavan

View students' work here.

Urban Regeneration Studio (2021)

- Historical timeline of the development of Dharmaj
- Social narrative of Dharmaj and the Charotar region
- Maps showing:
- 1. Settlement fabric
- 2. Street networks
- 3. Cultural heritage assets and landmarks
- 4. Building use and current occupancy status
- 5. Architectural styles
- 6. Building heights

View students' work here.

CEPT Winter School

Heritage and Digital Methods of Documentation

- 1. Aerial documentation of Dharmaj
- 2. Street elevations
- 3. Unfolded elevations and views of Kalidas Jethabhai House View the Winter School booklet here.

Volunteer work

- Cataloging of 2800+ books from the library collection
- Analysis on nature of library collection (30% of the collection)







Directed Research Projects (DRP)

Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR), Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University

- A framework for an owner's guide to conservation of traditional timber structures in Dharmaj (Amriteshwari Arun, 2022)
- Art Deco in Dharmaj: Mapping and Inventory (Priyanka Baghel, 2022)
- Cultural Heritage Tourism as a Potential Tool for Regeneration in Dharmaj, Gujarat (Sacheen Pai Raikar, 2022)
- Material Characterisation of Kalidas Jethabhai House, Dharmaj (Jigar Rathod, 2023)

Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR), Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University

- Migrant narratives and their impact on the evolution and transformation of Dharmaj (Meena AL, 2022)
- Tracing the history of Art Deco in Dharmaj (Pranjali Mathure, 2022)
- Artisans of Dharmaj: History of Timber Architecture through the Lens of the Makers (Sriparna Seal, 2022)
- Cultural flows and its influence on the Architecture of Dharmaj (Sushmita Pai, 2023)

Bachelor's thesis in collaboration with School of Environmental Design and Architecture, Navrachana University, Vadodara

Understanding the transformation of threshold spaces in the residences of Dharmaj (Kamya Patel, 2022)

CEPT Professional Programs Course (CPP)

Non-Invasive methods of Testing Historic Buildings
Tests conducted at CEPT Conservation Site Schools during the workshop:

- 1. Hands-on testing: Non-Invasive tests on Kalidas Jethabhai House and Mukhi Delu using Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity tests (UPV), rebar locator, rebound hammer, moisture meters and borescope.
- 2. Tests at CEPT Laboratory: Compressive strength tests on prisms, timber samples, bricks and mud mortar samples collected from the Site Schools.





Acknowledgements

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We thank Chetan Gajjar and his team for safeguarding and Vikikumar Vaghari and his team for their work towards the careful dismantling of dilapidated parts of the building. We also appreciate and acknowledge the local community in Dharmaj for their continued support towards all our work. We thank Nidhi Patel and Dnyanesh Divekar for volunteering their time during various stages of on-site work at the CEPT Conservation Site Schools.

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We would also like to extend our appreciation to students of the Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) program and the Masters in Architectural History and Research (AHR) program, Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University, along with TA, Sneha Anand, the participants of the CEPT Professional Program (CPP) on 'Non-Invasive testing methods for Historic Buildings' and the participants of the CEPT Winter School 2021 on 'Heritage and Digital Methods of Documentation' for their contribution to the initiative through academic engagement.

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