

Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative

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

Annual report

April 2022



This report summarises activities conducted by CHC and Avichal Heritage Foundation under Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative from June 2021 to March 2022.





Timeline of events and activities

June 2021

Virtual Launch of Dharmaj Heritage Collaborative (13th June 2021)
Introduction to proposed projects
Call for Funds

July 2021

Call for volunteers
Cataloging the collection at Shri MD Sar Pustkalay (public library)

August 2021

Commencement of Academic activities through CEPT University
MoU for Mukhi House between owner, CRDF, Avichal

September 2021

Preliminary visual assessment of Mukhi House
Safeguarding strategy

October 2021

MoU for Kalidas Jethabhai House between owner, CRDF, Avichal
Safeguarding strategy for Kalidas Jethabhai House

November 2021

Funds received for Kalidas Jethabhai House Site School
Heritage Week activities by CEPT University
Preliminary Application for Modern Endangered Archives Program (MEAP) grant submitted

December 2021

Safeguarding of Kalidas Jethabhai House
Open House at Kalidas Jethabhai House
CEPT Winter School-'Heritage & Digital Methods of Documentation'
Preliminary Application for MEAP grant successfully cleared

January 2022

Commencement of 7 Directed Research Projects (DRP) in Dharmaj by CEPT University

February 2022

Detailed Application submitted for MEAP grant
Funds received for Mukhi Delu Site School

March 2022

Seminar - 'Cultural Heritage of Dharmaj' at Shri MD Sar Pustkalay
First phase of safeguarding Mukhi Delu



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

Project 1

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

Foundation Studio (Semester I)

August - December 2021

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. Students worked with three sites in the historic core of Dharmaj – the Motibhai Dahyabhai Sarvajanic Pustkalay (the public library), the Athamni khadki and Aurobindo Bhuvan (clock tower house) through the following processes:



Documentation: All three sites were recorded using both, manual and digital documentation tools and techniques. Students explored the application of digital technologies for data capture, processing and representation such as photogrammetry, GPS recording and 3D LiDAR scanning along with conventional methods of measure drawing.

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.



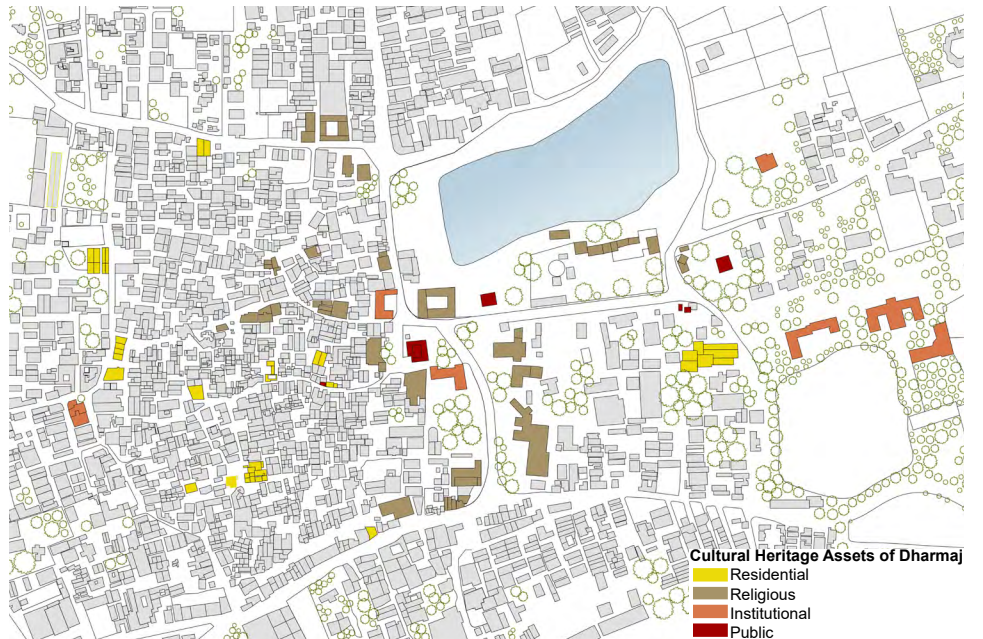


Urban Regeneration Studio (Semester III)
August - December 2021
Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR)
Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University

The studio is based on the premise that living historic cities are persistently subjected to processes of physical, environmental, social, economic and cultural transformation and is positioned within this premise of managing transformation in historic urban environments. The primary focus is on addressing the complex narratives of historic urban sites through the lens of conservation. Students engaged with the historic core of Dharmaj, its inhabitants, and stakeholders responsible for its transformation and were introduced to tools and methods of documenting, mapping, assessing cultural assets of a historic city and stakeholder consultation strategies.



A historic timeline along with multiple analytical maps showing the evolution and character of the settlement was produced through archival research, site observations and conversations. This was followed by mapping of important cultural heritage assets, their history and associations with the residents and diaspora of Dharmaj. Existing issues and concerns surrounding the historic settlement and the impacts of these issues on the heritage assets were identified through fieldwork and stakeholder consultation. Each student developed a deeper understanding of a specific issue using appropriate tools and methods for urban analysis and came up with a comprehensive conservation-led urban regeneration proposal.





Heritage Week at Dharmaj

21st November 2021

As part of the Tracing Ro(u)tes 3.0 initiative by Avichal Heritage Foundation during Heritage Week 2021, students of the Urban Regeneration Studio presented excerpts of their ongoing academic work in Dharmaj. A map of heritage assets and their description was displayed at Rhodesia House along with a presentation on 'Tobacco and its ambivalent evolution as Industrial Heritage', and a heritage walk on 'Dharmaj in the presence of absence' that talked about erasures across the history of the place. The event was attended by heritage enthusiasts from the region and people from local and diasporic communities of Dharmaj.



Ongoing activities

Directed Research Project (DRP)

January-May 2022

**Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR)
and Masters in Architectural History and Theory (MAHT)
Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University**

Students of MCR and MAHT programs are working on individual guided research projects based in Dharmaj. Data gathered and analysed as part of these projects will potentially feed into the digital repository of cultural heritage assets that is being produced for the interactive map.

Data organisation

Systematic collation of data gathered by students of Urban Regeneration and Foundation Studios as a group and individually as part of their academic work is currently being taken up by the CHC team.



Project 2

Conservation Site Schools

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

The site, located within the historic core of Dharmaj, is under the ownership of the heirs of Kalidas Jethabhai Patel. The building is a two-storeyed composite structure comprising of timber framing and brick walls. It has two wings separated by a courtyard, one of which is severely dilapidated. Over the years, the structure has undergone considerable damage due to continuous disuse, weather impacts and the lack of funds and resources for its repair and maintenance.



Activities conducted

Safeguarding strategy

In September 2021, a preliminary visual assessment of the site and structure was done through multiple site visits by the CHC team. Based on observations and consultation with structural experts, the team concluded that the front wing of the building can be safeguarded, repaired and eventually, conserved. On the other hand, the back wing is found to be in an extremely dilapidated state and most of it needs to be carefully dismantled keeping its elements and building material safely stored in order to be later used to rebuild the wing.

In November 2021, funds were received from the owners of the house which enabled DHC to carry out the safeguarding of the front wing and subsequently organise an Open House at the site.



Safeguarding the site

Safeguarding work at the site was carried out from 13th-16th December 2021. The front wing has been propped up from the exterior as well as the interior to prevent it from further leaning towards the roadside. The sidewall of the wing facing the open ground has been supported with shoring. Certain areas of the building such as the upper floor of the front wing and the entire back wing have been barricaded to ensure the safety of visitors and workers at the site.



Open House at Kalidas Jethabhai House

An Open House was held on Friday, 17th December 2021. On-site sessions were held in four time slots following COVID-19 protocols. The event gave DHC an opportunity to interact with members of the community and spread the word about the initiative locally. Participation from students and faculty members from Architecture colleges in and around the Charotar region led to interesting conversations on questions of safeguarding heritage. An inaugural talk on 'Answers to Questions on Caring for Family Heritage' was given by Anupam Sah, head of Art Conservation, Research and Training at CSMVS Museum Art Conservation Center, Mumbai.



A Virtual Open House was organised from 6-7:30pm. Dr. Jigna Desai, Center Head and Principal Researcher at CHC introduced DHC and the Conservation Site School initiative. Ashna Patel, coordinator of DHC at CHC presented the work taken up at the Site School. The session concluded with the talk by Anupam Sah followed by a thought-provoking Q&A session.



Workshop on 'Heritage and Digital Methods of Documentation'

The five-day workshop held from 20th - 25th December 2021 started with the introduction to architectural photography, moving on to photogrammetry on the second day followed by post-processing on the third day and 3D laser scanning on the fourth and fifth day. Imaging heritage and historic structures come along with multiple layers of complexity. There is a potential to compare the varying accuracies and the compatibilities between the output collected from photography, photogrammetry, aerial mapping, and 3D laser scanning. The documented output can be further used to create awareness amongst the locals.



Ongoing activities

Careful dismantling of the back wing and construction of a storage shed to house an on-site material library have been planned as next steps towards the conservation of the site. A tentative schedule of academic workshops at the site has also been prepared.



Site School 2

Mukhi Delu

Mukhi Delu is located near the Athamni Khadki, one of the oldest parts of the historic settlement. The building is a composite structure built in the year 1907 comprising of timber framing with intricate wood carving work and brick walls. The three-storeyed structure has not been inhabited, maintained, or repaired for a very long time due to which parts of it have become extremely fragile and are at risk of falling off.



Activities conducted

Safeguarding strategy

In September 2021, the CHC team in consultation with structural experts has carried out a visual assessment of the site condition and has worked out a phase-wise strategy for safeguarding the structure that involves strutting along the wooden beams and careful dismantling of the parapet.



Safeguarding - phase 1

The first phase of safeguarding the site was carried out on 24th and 25th March 2022. Beams on the ground floor have been supported by wall plates running along either side of each beam. The intention is to offload the beams that are in dilapidated condition to avoid further deterioration of the structure. Visitors were invited during the safeguarding process to understand and learn about the Conservation Site School initiative at Dharmaj. Safety protocols were strictly followed at the site by the CHC team as well as visitors.



Ongoing Activities

Careful dismantling - phase 1

Elements of the third floor parapet of the building was in a severely dilapidated and precarious condition. These elements were carefully removed through a systematic process of dismantling which was closely supervised by the project team.

Digital documentation and condition mapping of the structure have been planned as immediate steps for the site.

Project 3

Regeneration of the Library

The initiative aims to modernise the Motibhai Dahyabhai Sarvajanic 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

Volunteer work

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.



Ongoing activities

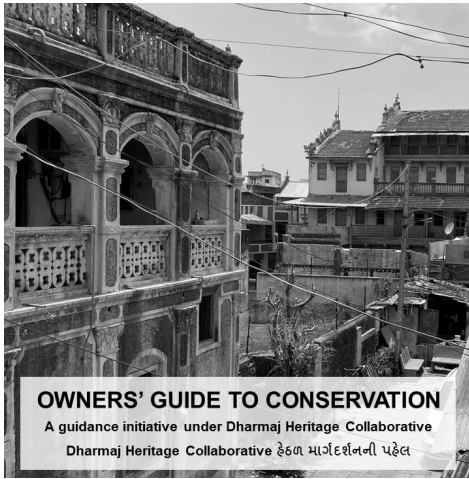
Modern Endangered Archives Program (MEAP) a UCLA Library granting program funded by Arcadia

The grant aims to digitize and make accessible endangered archival materials from the 20th and 21st Centuries. Through this grant, DHC aims to work towards the digitisation and preservation of rare books and records from collection. The DHC team has successfully cleared the preliminary application stage for the grant in December 2021 and has submitted the detailed application in February 2022.

Project 4

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

A brochure has been prepared for residents and diaspora of Dharmaj to explain the initiative, its benefits and potential ways for people to contribute to it.



Ongoing activities

Directed Research Project (DRP)

January-May 2022

**Semester IV, Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR)
and Masters in Architectural History and Theory (MAHT)**

Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University

Students of MCR and MAHT programs are currently working on guided research projects that entail a systematic inquiry into the present condition of traditional timber and Art Deco buildings of Dharmaj and typical issues around the conservation and maintenance of these structures. Work produced as part of these projects is aimed at facilitating the process of gathering data for the owner's guide to conservation.



Data collected (June 2021-March 2022)

Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR), CEPT University

Foundation Studio

Photographs, Measured drawings, Condition mapping, Architectural Analysis of:

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

View students' work [here](#).

Urban Regeneration Studio

- Historical timeline of the development of Dharmaj
- Social narrative of Dharmaj and the Charotar region
- Maps of Dharmaj 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)



DHC team: Dr. Jigna Desai, Ashna Patel, Mrudula Mane, Nigar Shaikh, Zeus Pithawalla, Saatvika Pancholi, Drashti Nakrani, Juhi Bafna and Lakshmi R from CHC and Alpita Patel from Avichal Heritage Foundation.

We thank Dharmaj Kelavani Mandal and our donors and well-wishers for extending their support to the initiative. We thank the Jalaram Temple Trust, Pulin Patel and Vijay Patel for generously supporting student accommodation during fieldwork. We thank Meeta Patel, Avani Patel and the heirs of Kalidas Jethabhai for offering Kalidas Jethabhai House and Harish Patel for offering Mukhi Delu as Conservation Site Schools. We thank Chetan Gajjar, Vikikumar Vaghari and their respective teams for their work towards safeguarding and careful dismantling at the Conservation Site Schools at Kalidas Jethabhai House and Mukhi Delu.

We thank Aastha Desai, Aditi Dalia, Jahanvi Sinha, Khushboo Patel, Nidhi Patel, Purvi Dabhi, Priyanka Baghel, Soumyaa Babaria, Srina Desai, Stuti Pandya, Tanmay Bhavsar and Zalak Pandya for volunteering their time and skills to catalogue the library collection. We would also like to extend our appreciation to students of Masters in Conservation and Regeneration (MCR) program, Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University and participants of CEPT Winter School 2021 on 'Heritage and Digital Methods of Documentation' for their contribution to the initiative through academic engagement.

We thank Dr. Alice Tilche, Anupam Sah, Dr. Gauri Bharat, Maniyarasan Rajendran, Mehul Shah and Ratna Bharati for lending their time and effort to the initiative through their expertise.

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