

Ahmedabad - a brief history



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Ahmedabad is the largest city in the state of Gujarat. It is located in western India on the banks of the River Sabarmati. The city has been under different rulers since its creation and thus had a rich history. The city has been a former capital of Gujarat and has been the home to most important leaders of India like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel during the Indian independence movement. Ahmedabad is also the cultural and economical centre of Gujarat and the seventh largest city of India. (Wikipedia)

Origin of Name

Although fondly called 'Amdavad' by the locals here, there is a very interesting legend associated with the city of Ahmedabad. Towards the beginning of the fifteenth century, the state of Gujarat was ruled by the Muslim Muzaffarid dynasty. Legend has it that once when the Sultan, Ahmed Shah was standing on the banks of river Sabarmati and he noticed a tiny hare chasing a strong ferocious dog. He kept pondering over it. He approached his spiritual advisor and asked for an explanation. The wise man said that, it was the uniqueness of the land that cultivated such rare qualities in people. After having heard this, the Sultan got so impressed that he decided to set his capital in that same location and called it "Ahmedabad" after himself.

Early History

Archaeological evidence also points to the occupation of the site from a much earlier period than that of Sultan Ahmed Shah. It was known in ancient times as Ashapalli or Ashaval. In the eleventh century the Solanki King Karandev I, ruler of Anhilwara (modern Patan), waged a war against the Bhil king of Ashaval. After his victory he established a city called Karnavati on the

banks Sabarmati at the site of modern Ahmedabad. Solanki rule lasted until the thirteenth century, when Gujarat came under the control of the Vaghela dynasty of Dwarka. (Wikipedia)

Muzaffarid Dynasty

On founding the city in 1411, Ahmed Shah invited merchants and traders to the new city, which became a prosperous commercial, trading and industrial city, with textiles as its most important products. Wealthy Hindu and Jain merchants made up the commercial class dominating the community, eventually as the oldest and most established families, while Muslims were the skilled weavers working for them and (until Maratha rule) the government officials ultimately ruling them. (Joshi, 2004). Ahmed Shah built some of the still existing monuments that are spread across the city.

JAMA MASJID, TEEN DARWAZA

It is the largest mosque in Ahmedabad and stands in the heart of the city. Made by using yellow sandstones in 1423 AD, the architecture of this mosque is a blend of Hindu and Muslim styling. This edifice was built using items rescued from the demolished Hindu and Jain temples. Supported by 260 pillars, the Jama Masjid of Ahmedabad consists of 15 domes.

There are different entrances to the mosque. Near the eastern entrance, stands the tomb of the Sultan Ahmed Shah, which houses the graveyard of three great rulers, namely Ahmed Shah I, his son, Mohammed Shah and his grandson, Qutub-Ud-Din Ahmed Shah II. The strong structure of this mosque has been able to withstand the pressure exerted by heat and rough weather.

TEEN DARWAZA

Teen Darwaza is an architectural marvel, the beauty of which is surely going to leave you awestruck. Consisting of gorgeous arched gates, Teen Darwaza is one of the longest as well as the oldest gateways of the Ahmedabad city. It was established in the year 1411 A. D. by Sultan Ahmed Shah, who founded the city of Ahmedabad.

Lying adjacent to the famous Bhadra fort, Teen Darwaza has been intricately carved. Initially, it served as an entrance to Royal Square at Bhadra Fort. The great Mughal emperor Jahangir used to come here along with his beloved wife Noorjahan, to take a look at the procession that started from this grand gateway and went nonstop till Jama Masjid. The walls and pillars of Teen Darwaza are beautifully designed.

Teen Darwaza of Ahmedabad, India is truly an epitome of the fine Islamic architecture. The windows of this fabulous monument are semi circular and adorned using mesh work. The central window depicts the tree of life. Five palm trees are shown that are covered with snakes. This portrayal also serves as the symbol of the Gujarat Government. This regal citadel is one of the most sought after tourist destinations in Ahmedabad. (<http://www.ahmedabad.org.uk/monuments/teen-darwaza.html>)

BADSHAH'S TOMB, MANEKCHOWK

In the middle of the busy street market and the popular food bazaar of Manekchowk, sleeps Sultan Ahmed Shah at the Badshah no Hajiro. The tomb(Badshah-no Hajiro) of Ahmed Shah; the founder of the city, situated just outside the east gate of the Jama Masjid, is square in shape with porticos

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on each side and has perforated stone windows. Women are not allowed into the central chamber. Opposite the Hajiro, across the main road is the Rani-no Hajiro where the queens of subsequent Sultans were buried. (<http://www.chhotikarbala.org/siteseeingplace.htm>) Descendants of royal musicians still play the shehnai here. Around this monument is the city's traditional block prints bazaar.

Sultanate Rule

After Ahmed Shah's reign, Gujarat was conquered by the Sultanate of Delhi at the end of the thirteenth century. In 1487 Mahmud Begada, the grandson of Ahmed Shah, fortified the city with an outer city wall six miles in circumference and consisting of 12 gates, 189 bastions and over 6, 000 battlements to protect it from outside invaders. The last Sultan of Ahmedabad was Muzaffar II. (Wikipedia) Even the Sultan's built impressive structure and contributed to the culture of the place.

Since, Ahmed Shah had already taken the initiative of making Ahmedabad a prosperous city, groups of skilled artisans, merchants etc. were formed. Social institutions to safeguard various economic interests included the mahajans, guilds of merchants, and panches, guilds for artisans. The leader of the community, who came from the Jain business elites, was known as the nagarsheth, who would resolve disputes between mahajans and individuals and who interceded with royal officials. Under the nagarsheth, the city remained free from interference from the state or other powers. (Joshi, 2004) The society in itself was multi-cultural ranging from a strong Jain group to Hindus and Muslims.

SIDI SYED MOSQUE, LAL DARWAZA

Located near Lal Darwaza in Ahmedabad, the mosque of Sidi Sayed is one of the most prominent mosques in the Ahmedabad city. Constructed in the year 1573, the mosque was established by Sidi Sayed, a slave of Sultan Ahmed Shah. Sidi Sayed mosque in Ahmedabad, India consists of ten semi circular windows, the appeal of which is accentuated by the splendid mesh covering them, which is more popularly known as ' Jali'.

AZAM KHAN-MUAZZAM KHAN KA ROZA

According to experts, the Azam Khan-Muazzam Khan ka Roza is also known to be one of the earliest massive brick mausoleums of Ahmedabad, like Darya Khan Ghummat in Shahibaug and is known to be built around 1457. This is more or less the only structure of its type in Ahmedabad and often compared to Mughal architecture with its double corridors, which are often compared to Humayun's tomb.

ROZA, SARKHEJ

Lying at a stretch of 8 kms on the south western side of Ahmedabad, Sarkhej Roza was the home of the spiritual leader of Sultan Ahmed Shah named Ahmed Kattu Gang Baksh, who was a Muslim religious leader. It contains a cluster of monuments, the origin of which can be dated back to the times of Mughal rule in Ahmedabad. (<http://www.ahmedabad.org.uk/monuments/sarkhej-roza.html>)

KANKARIA LAKE

A circular lake built in 1451 by Sultan Qutub-ud-Din. In the centre of the lake is an island garden with a summer palace known as Nagina Wadi. It has a

very beautiful Musical Fountain show (although the music isn't too good, the lights and fountain are worth a trip). The lake is a popular recreation centre surrounded by parks, ' Bal Vatika' - an aquarium, a boat club, a natural history museum and a zoo.

Mughal Rule

After the power of the Delhi Sultans faded, Gujarat was conquered by the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1573. During the Mughal reign, Ahmedabad became one of the empire's thriving centres of trade, especially in textiles, which were exported as far as Europe. Jehangir, son of Akbar, visited Ahmedabad in 1617 but did not like it and called it Gardabad, the city of dust. Shahjahan spent the prime of his life in the city, and also built the Moti Shahi Mahal in Shahibaug. (Joshi, 2004)

For centuries, the city existed without depending on feudal lords or patronage from a single court. An efficient system of lending, banking, credit and accounting developed, and Ahmedabad financiers developed a sophisticated banking network across the country. They were influential in the Mughal Court and loaned money to the ruling classes through the 16th and 17th centuries. (Joshi, 2004)

The people of the city prospered and they were quite self-sufficient by all means. Because of this economic strength of the city, when the British came to Ahmedabad, there was no particular involvement from their side towards the social fabric and they just kept themselves to administering the region.

SHAHIBAUG PALACE

Shahibaug Palace was built during the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, who as prince Khurram spent the early years of his marriage in Ahmedabad as victory of Gujarat.

SHAKING MINARETS, SARANGPUR

At the Sidi Bashir mosque, if you shake one minaret, the other also shakes. Scientists say, the acid in the atmosphere dissolves the feldspar in the sandstone, creating space which shakes the minarets. Feudal lord Malik Sarang built this mosque. More commonly known as Jhulta Minar. A classic example of superb craftsmanship, Jhulta Minar is actually a part of the mosque Siddi Bashir.

Maratha Rule

In the year 1753, the rule of Mughals came to an end and the city came under the rule of Maratha generals Raghunath Rao and Damaji Gaekwad. The power struggle between them eventually led to the destruction of the city.

British Rule

The city was taken over by the British East India Company in the year 1818. The year 1824 led to the setting up of a military cantonment. A major development took place in the year 1864, when railway line was laid that connected Ahmedabad with Bombay. These developments brought Ahmedabad in the map of leading centers of trade and manufacturing. The textile industry flourished and Ahmedabad was soon referred to as the “

Manchester of the East". It is interesting to note that inspite of their reign in the region, one does not find too many of remenants of colonialism.

SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE, KALUPUR

The British gave land to the Swaminarayan sect to build a temple in 1800. The 12 pillars of this colourful temple disguise carvings of the first war of independence of 1857.

HATHISINGH TEMPLE, SHAHIBAUG

Sheth Hathisingh, Ahmedabad's nagarsheth (city head) in 19th century planned this temple in 1840. His wife Harkuvar Shethani got it completed after his death. It combines Solanki, Islamic and Jain styles. An impressive white structure, the Jain temple built of white marble and elaborately carved is dedicated to Dharmanath - the 15th Jina or Jain Apostle. Similar to all Jain temples, this temple to is rich in intricate carvings displaying, among other things, musicians.

MAGANBHAI'S HAVELI, KHADIA

This was the home of famous mill owner Ambalal Sarabhai's grandfather, Maganbhai Karamchand. This wood-carved 19th century haveli used to have Belgian chandeliers and German glass artifacts. Maganbhai had no son so he adopted his daughter's son Sarabhai.

GANDHI ASHRAM, SABARMATI

Mahatma Gandhi's nephew Maganlal Gandhi built this Satyagraha Ashram in 1917. The memorial and library were built by famous architect Charles Correa. Gandhi's Dandi March to protest against British salt laws in 1930 began here.

Post Independence

The post independence period saw the declaration of Ahmedabad as a provincial town of Bombay. On the 1st of May in the year 1960, Ahmedabad became the capital city of Gujarat.

SCIENCE CITY

Located off the Sarkhej Gandhinagar Highway, Science City is an ambitious initiative of the government of Gujarat to trigger an inquiry of science in the mind of a common citizen with the aid of entertainment and experiential knowledge. Covering an area of more than 107 hectares, the idea is to create imaginative exhibits, virtual reality activity corners, and live demonstrations in an easily understandable manner.

Currently the 3D Imax theater, musical dancing fountain, energy park and simulation rides interest visitors. It is hoped that as this place develops, the investment helps to create awareness and sensitivity to better care for our ecology and people through the appropriate use of science and technology.

HUSSAIN-DOSHI'S GUFFA

A quiet refuge in the midst of this bustling city, which is surrounded by trees, art and fantasy, than a visit to this underground cave gallery will do you good. Also popularly known as Amdavad ni Gufa on Kasturbhai Lalbhai campus. It is a creative union of two of India's most imaginative minds, the celebrated architect B. V. Doshi and painter M F Hussain.

It is a lively whimsical fusion of modern art and natural design with undulating interconnected domes inlaid with mosaic tiles. This space also

houses an art gallery by the same name and becomes a nourishing hub of creative exchange.

Although the above mentioned is just a capsule of the history of the city, it gives one an idea of the various factors that influence the culture of Ahmedabad. During our talks with the people of the SCR, we figured out that the history of the city was very much alive. Some of the structures near the Teen Darwaza area of the old city are still used for living and business purposes. The Teen Darwaza area is pretty much the heart of the city with its bazaar of yore still very much alive even today.

A lot of these monuments have spawned areas with shops and small stalls to buy almost anything and everything these days. The Sunday “Jhumri” on the banks of River Sabarmati is another feature of historical relevance – A bazaar that happens once a week on a holiday where tradesmen get together and sell their wares. The co-existence of this with the latest shopping malls amongst other things is what makes Ahmedabad unique.

People are very proud of their heritage and lineage. One will find the old existing side by side the new. The influence of History on the culture of the city from business to behaviour (like taking ownership), food (like the Bhatiyaar galli meat markets) to traditional clothing (like at law garden) and so on can clearly be seen. It is a fascinating and vibrant city with an even more interesting sub-culture.

Change Drivers

“ Nothing endures but change.” (Heraclitus)

The culture of the city of Ahmedabad has also grown with times and a lot of changes have happened over the years as well. During our research and interaction with people, we found that although certain aspects continue to remain the same, some others have resulted in a change or have influenced change in some way or the other.

There have been changes in the past 2 decades since liberalization. Some of them are as follows :

Mall culture

Increased standard of education

Higher standard of living

Growing middle-class

Entrepreneurial success

Media exposure and awareness

NRI factor

Infrastructure development

Progressive governance etc.

The above mentioned factors have changed a lot of things from empowering woman to changing of consumption pattern which will be discussed in detail further in the report.

Current trends

There have been plenty of changes in the city for the past couple of decades. With the advent of mall culture, higher education institutes and better infrastructure, Ahmedabad has caught up with the pace of modernisation and forged its way ahead to become one of the most important cities of India. With globalisation, Ahmedabad has also taken steps to keep up with global standards. The Science city, ISRO and educational institutes like IIM-A, NID, CEPT and the likes have firmly placed Ahmedabad as not just a destination for culture but for quality higher education as well.

Developments in the field of education and IT have been taking place on one hand and on the other infrastructure developments like construction of better roads, highways and the government initiatives to make Ahmedabad a city with a high standard of living have all ushered in a new era.

Even with a lot of urban culture and western culture coming in, Ahmedavadis are still very much rooted to their culture and heritage. They have conveniently adopted the new without losing essence of their true identity and what makes them different.