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The members and the caretakers of the havelis and every single person who was a part of this journey ☺ .

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CHAPTER 1

Shekhawati is simply beautiful. Every street, house and wall has the stamp of an artist's imagination in paint. Wherever you cast an eye, frescoes plastered onto the walls of havelis smile back. The plethora of these murals comes as a surprise in a land which is traditionally known as 'warrior's turf' and also an 'impoverished part of an arid region'. It is in this land of Kings which holds the highest concentration of havelis in the world.

Ever since the origin of these *havelis*, the definition has only been limited to their physical characteristics, which is rather incomplete. When the construction of *havelis* first began, there were a number of other equally large dwellings like mansions and palaces which were being constructed simultaneously and if any of these had a courtyard, they could be classified, albeit incorrectly, as a *haveli*. Taking this into consideration, it can be debated that no physical distinction of a *haveli* would be accurate, relying only on the basis of the presence of the courtyard or the scale of structure. Up till today, the closest definition of the word *Haveli* is given by the Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai*¹, also shown below.

"Haveli generally means a mansion. But, in totality, it symbolizes a generation who articulated their lifestyle that includes architecture, customs and manners, of course arts, crafts and music. The haveli, however are the official residences of umraos, princes, thakurs and others such as dhabhai, purohit, sethji who were given a special status by the rana.² The household of havelis was a complex social organisation, like a joint family which was made up of the owner's extended family and numerous servants or slaves. The number of family members in each haveli could vary, but large havelis held around 200 members, including poor relations³."

Ensnconced within the fortified walls of the towns of Shekhawati are glorious *Havelis*, each telling a tale about the owner and his family. "*Haveli*" as the name suggests is derived from an ancient Arabic word 'haowala' meaning partition. A related word

¹Havelis : A living tradition of Rajasthan

² Havelis : A living tradition of Rajasthan

³ Glynn Sarah, "haveli: a social history, article,2001

`hawaleh' has a slightly different meaning which is `all round' or `round about'. Through the ages, the word *havelis* has taken different forms. For the Persians, it meant the same as a *hawaleh* but with the advent of the Mughals, the word *havelis* changed from simply being known as a partition, to a piece of land, very similar to the meaning of the word “estate”, used by the British⁴. A *haveli*, can also, be defined loosely, as the Indian version of a private mansion, generally with a historical and architectural significance, in terms of the architectural elements and the fresco paintings. This can be seen at a glance in Figure 1, the Double Chowkhani Haveli of Mandawa.



Figure1: Double Chowkhani, Mandawa.

Since time immemorial, India has been garnered considerable attention for its architecture, a domain that has witnessed significant changes over the centuries. The architecture of a structure reflects more than just the basic need for shelter; it reflects lifestyle and culture of the era and the community of that particular period. It is often said that architecture can be seen as a reflection of the architecture of a person's mind. It is

⁴ Jain Shikha, *Haveli : a Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001.

this concept which provoked us to study the architecture of *havelis* and the factors which led to their construction.

Havelis constructed in Rajasthan can be traced back to the 18th century.⁵ Towards the end of the 18th century⁶, the region of Shekhawati witnessed many wars amongst the Nehras and the Muslims. This resulted into some *havelis* being used for protection of rulers and military leaders. The Rajputs too, had a similar purpose which influenced the construction of *havelis* in this period. Smaller *havelis* of military officials were built around the main *haveli* of the residing ruler and some others, to hide the arms and ammunitions, necessary for war.

Havelis also catered to the requirements of families from different castes and of various occupations, being built by their owners in that manner. Along with ably accommodating joint families, each *haveli* was as a mini-replica of the majestic palaces of 'Maharajas'.

Havelis mostly belonged to *thakurs* (village leaders), Muslim nobles, *Rajpurohits* (royal doctors), *Dhabhais*, *Bhandaris* (seafaring warrior castes) and *Dadu-Panthis* (part of the *sahaja* caste). Most of the *havelis* in the Shekhawati region had unique features which became synonymous with them over time. A typical feature was the courtyards-open spaces surrounded by walls and different other sections of the *havelis* such as the *baithaks*, kitchens and other rooms.

Often, discussions on *havelis* revolve around kings and queens who occupied them, their lifestyle, their rich culture, courts full of royal ministers and advisers, the aroma of sumptuous meals being served to members of the royal court, occasions and festivals celebrated with great pomp and show and tales of bravery but seldom has the remarkable architectural features of these *havelis* or their transition over time, in terms of structure of the *havelis* and the lifestyle of its residents, been examined.

⁵ Havelis : A living tradition of Rajasthan

⁶ Thakur Deshraj, Jat Itihasa (Hindi), Maharaja Suraj Mal Smarak 1934, 2nd edition 1992 page 614-615.

Havelis embody the hierarchy present within a society along with that of a family in the financially affluent are distinguished from the rest. Also, by closely examining the frescoes, the different types of rooms and their functions, these *havelis* are able to provide us with information about the caste of its residents and their customs amongst several other aspects of their lifestyle. This is why they are labelled as a living heritage and archive of our glorious past.

Customs and religion are often responsible for dictating the architecture of the *havelis*. For instance, in Muslim *havelis*, there are two separate seating areas for men and women - *Mardana* and *zenana* respectively. Men are not allowed to see a woman who is not their wife. Therefore, they have two separate areas constructed for men and women. This is one of several examples which indicate the architecture and the style in through which a particular *haveli* can convey to us the lifestyle and the customs of its residents. Hence, the close analysis of the architecture of these *havelis* plays an important role.

The *havelis* of the Shekhawati region are artistically and architecturally different from *havelis* in other regions of India. They have a unique structure, which comprises elements like the *jharokhas* which are enclosed balconies, intricately designed, giving an appearance of grandeur and simultaneously serving as a partition between the two sexes, the concept of which is known as the *purdah* system.



Figure 2: Jharokha in Goenka haveli, Ramgarh.

The Jharokhas, as seen in Figure 2, enabled women to see events occurring outside the *haveli* and to prevent themselves from being seen.⁷ Baithaks, the common seating areas, located on each side of the first courtyard were also known as the ‘meeting place’ for family members as well as guests. Another architectural element, the *jali*, was a perforated stone screen with simple, symmetrical patterns which helped partially block sunlight from entering the *havelis*. Other differences also lay in architectural elements such as railings, staircases, and *chajjas*.⁸

However, the most evident earmark of these *havelis* which sets them apart from other *havelis* are the presence of the hand-painted frescoes on the walls, as seen in Figure 3, which employ a technique wherein different dyes extracted from flowers are made into paste and then painted on to the damp wall after which is it varnished with a mixture of lime water onto the plaster. Although there are frescoes present in other parts of India, this region has the largest concentration of such *havelis*, exceeding 5000⁹ in number.

⁷ Jain Shikha, *Haveli : a Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001

⁸ Jain Shikha, *Haveli : a Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001

⁹ Jain Shikha, *Haveli : a Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001

The technique of creating frescoes is quite similar to that of murals. The only difference being that, frescoes are done on wet plaster, allowing the paint to gel with the plaster, thus being able to last much longer than murals which are done on dry plaster. Murals are deprived of the grip wet plaster has on natural dyes, underlining the main difference between these two techniques.

The subject matter in the frescoes is varied. Some artists depicted certain myths such as the Ramayan and the Mahabharat¹⁰, legends and even arbitrary designs such as floral ones on the walls of these *havelis* in the form of frescoes. The mythological events and images of Gods and Goddesses illustrated in these paintings are in no proper order. Figures like Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Lakshmi and Hanuman are very well represented as depicted in Figure 4.



Figure 3 : Fresco depicting Lord Hanuman.

¹⁰ Jain Shikha, *Havelis: Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001.

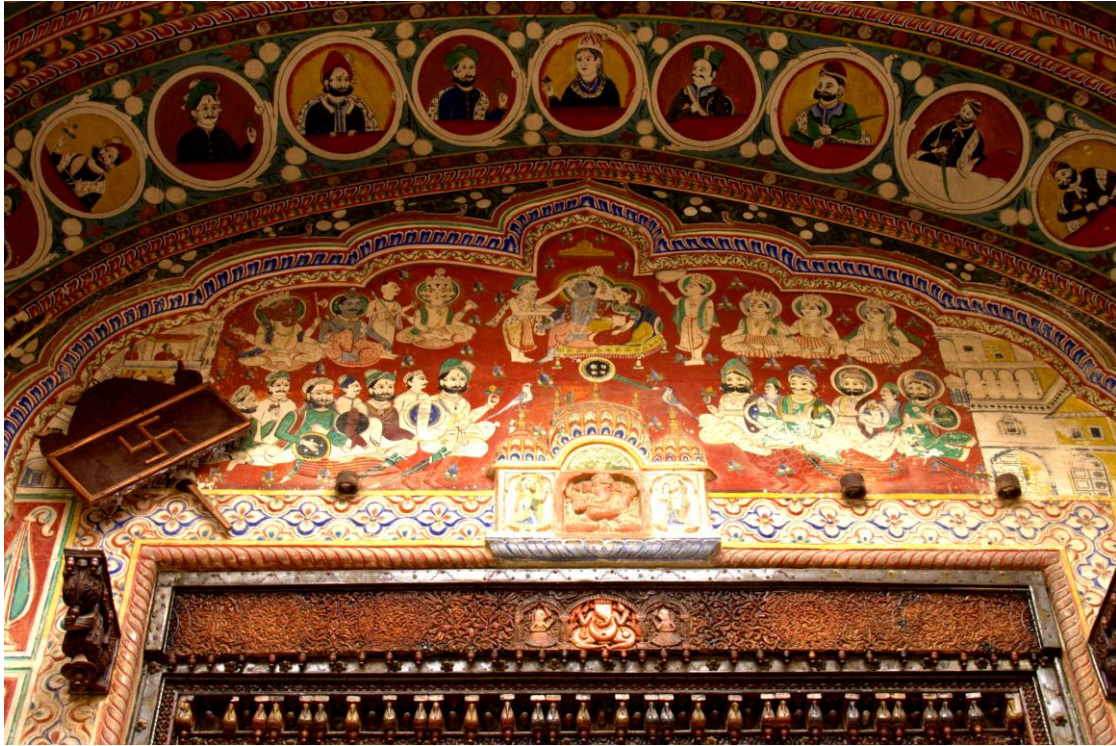


Figure 4: Idol of lord Ganesha, above the main gate, Saraf Haveli, Mandawa.

The artists also entailed well known folk tales of the land and its people on the walls of these *havelis*. Sometimes, the frescoes depicted new discoveries or inventions such as that of the first train in India¹¹ and also that of the coronation of George the VI, clearly depicting the influence of western culture¹².

Owing to the presence of these paintings, many tourists were attracted to visit this small region which helped bring in an exponential growth in tourism¹³ making it one of the primary sources of income generation in the Shekhawati region. The influx of tourists led to the renovation of many of the *havelis*. Few of the owners even converted these legacies into hotels and resorts. Thus, the generation of revenue from these sites also contributes towards their sustainability.

With the advent of time, many owners moved out of the *havelis* and shifted to various metropolitan cities. With this, not only did the painting and houses decay but the

¹¹ Jain Shikha, *Havelis: Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001.

¹² Jain Shikha, *Havelis: Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001.

¹³ Economic times, *Shekhawati holds great tourism potential*, 2002

prominent presence of *havelis*, as a whole started to decline. Some owners, hired caretakers and attendants to maintain their *havelis* when they were away, whereas some, unable to pay for the maintenance costs, sold their *havelis* which were then bought by individual companies seeking to turn these into hotels and museums. It was this transfer of ownership¹⁴ which led to the function of some *havelis* shifting from that of residential to commercial. Unfortunately, there also exist cases of *havelis* being locked up and left unmanned for decades or being rented out to shopkeepers and other tenants who are neither interested nor willing to spend for the maintenance or the preservation of these very rich, cultural and heritage sites.

The conversion of the *havelis* into heritage hotels proved to be a profitable business venture. It entailed the replacement of compound walls, gates, gardens, fountains being replaced with modern designs while the interiors like hand painted frescoes, stone wall painting of ancient era, were repainted by local artists. Some of the *havelis* were also taken over by the government (some of them were privatised.) Most of the *havelis* were repainted, reconstructed, renovated and restored.¹⁵

The construction of the *havelis* is done according to the climate. For instance, sandstone was used in the construction of *havelis*, to absorb and retain heat. Corresponding to the geographic and cultural variations in the region of Rajasthan, the *havelis* of each area exhibit the unique architectural style and building material of the place. Sub-regional variations in construction existed due to a wide availability of different materials. For instance, in Nawalgarh, the red sandstone was easily available and therefore the *havelis* in this region used red sandstone to a large extent for construction purposes.

Stone and brick construction in Rajasthan can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization.¹⁶ This evidence of stone construction for centuries indicates that it must have

¹⁴ Shekhawati holds great tourism potential - Economic Times 2002

¹⁵ Grand Haveli. Shekhawati Hotel, Shekhawati Heritage Hotel. <http://www.grandhaveli.com/about.php>

¹⁶ Glynn Sarah, "haveli: a social history, article, 2001

developed its own vocabulary with time. Although the use of timber can be found in a number of *havelis* in Rajasthan, it was never used for refined architectural purposes. In some cases, a horizontal piece of stone is used in a similar manner to reinforce timber. In case of bigger halls, stone columns and beams are used. Stone brackets and stone slabs (patties) are used for roofing. Foundation and plinth are made in the local stone and lime mortar as such, the walls became very thin on upper floors. The size of the rooms depended on the maximum available length of the slabs. Most often it was mud or kaccha in Mughal cities. Construction technology in stone developed from wooden structures also assimilating techniques from Mughal construction. This dissuaded the members of the family from investing in any such permanent structures. Other *havelis* were normally constructed with stone, sometimes rubber.¹⁷

We wished to explore the architectural diversity that exists amongst the *havelis* in Rajasthan. The Shekhawati region in the north-eastern part of Rajasthan has the highest concentration of *havelis* in the world. Therefore, we chose this region as our destination. We examined *havelis* and the hand-painted frescoes on their walls in the cities of Nawalgarh, Fatehpur, Mandawa, Ramgarh, Dunlod, Churi, Churiajitgarh. The *havelis* which we visited in Nawalgarh were the *Aath haveli* complex and *Murarka haveli*. *Havelis* in Fatehpur include *the Goenka haveli* and *Nadine Le prince Haveli* whereas the *Murmuria haveli* and *Goenka double-chowkhani haveli* in Mandawa. Another aspect of these *havelis* which intrigued us was the transition that some of these *havelis* had undergone, in terms of renovation and restoration.

For our research project, we carried out a comparative study of the architecture of *havelis* in the region of Shekhawati and their transition over a period of 200 years. Comparing the *havelis* of different castes, we examined the regional differences in the architecture and the frescoes they housed.

¹⁷ Glynn Sarah, "haveli: a social history, article, 2001

The comparative analysis of the architecture of the *havelis* interested our group as it involved the examination of intricate details of the various architectural elements, ancient furniture, and antiques of the time of the royals which also act as a peep-hole into their lifestyle in the 18th century¹⁸, the time period in which most of these *havelis* were built. We also examined, in detail, the different types of materials used for the architecture and the presence of a few specific archetypes prevalent in most of the *havelis*, but used for different purposes, an example of which would be the courtyards in these *havelis*.

Our aims and objectives for this project were to learn how the architectural styles are based on caste differences, to study the reasons which led to the transition of family owned *havelis* to heritage hotels and protected sites (archeological survey of India) and to explore the changes in the themes of the frescoes in the late 18th century. We wanted to understand how the change in the subject of these hand painted frescoes in the late 18th century portrayed western culture. Our project will also highlight the social and religious beliefs responsible for the methods of construction in these *havelis*.

¹⁸ Jain Shikha, *Haveli : a Living tradition of Rajasthan*, 2001.

CHAPTER 2

One of the main sources of information, a book authored by Kishore Singh (Kishore Singh, *Shekhawati: A painted township*, New Delhi, 1995) has analysed the paintings, like frescoes and murals. He also gives us an insight to how these paintings are done. He has given details about their technique and the process of making these paintings from natural dyes. He has described some instances from the two great epic poems of India Ramayana, and Mahabharata and paintings of Lord Ganesha, Krishna, Shiva that are depicted in these frescoes.

In the region of Shekhawati, there are several *havelis*. Singh has stated that different castes have different styles of architecture in the *havelis*, like that of the Rajputs, Brahmins, Muslims and the Marwari community. The accessible style of writing by this author helps us to understand the importance of architectural elements like *chowk*, *chattris*, *baithak*, *parinda*, *chandini*, *jalis*, *jharokhas*, *zenana* and *mardana*. The book discusses frescoes and murals in Shekhawati but the architecture of the *havelis* has not been given due importance. It does not give us a clear view about how these paintings have influenced the social, cultural and political dynamics of the society, which are essential for us to know. There are pictures and images in this book, that inform us about the change in the subjects of the frescoes in the late 19th century. The subjects of the frescoes from mythological figures (include the God and Goddesses) changed to either a hookah being portrayed on the walls of the *havelis* or new inventions like trains, cars and of Queen Victoria and Louis V. A painting was done showing a European citizen using a telephone. The telephone was the latest invention in that period and was not yet introduced in India. Apart from all these aspects, he also speaks of various reasons concerning the transfer of ownership.

Sarah Glynn, is an academic and an architect and has received her degree for architecture from Trinity College, Cambridge. The article written by her (Sarah Glynn, *Haveli : a social history*, 1994) is a very informative piece, giving a brief outlook upon the people residing in the *havelis*. This article has helped us look into our research from a different perspective all together. It talks about the residents of the *havelis* in the 18th century and the materials that were used to construct these *havelis*. She also gives a brief

input on the lifestyle of the people who resided in these *havelis*. The author has given a minor insight about the post-independence situation of the families staying in the *havelis*. The shortcomings of this resource is, her article does not mention anything about the frescoes. She talks about *havelis* in general, but not exclusively about the *havelis* of Shekhawati. It does not give us any details about the differences between the architectural elements of the *havelis* of different castes. It does not give us information about how the spiritual and religious beliefs dictated the architecture of the *havelis*. However her article on *havelis* has helped us acquire information and details about the functioning of the *havelis* and the prominent architectural elements like *jharokhas*, *chhatris*, *jalis*, *chowks*.

“*Havelis: A living Tradition of Rajasthan*” by Shikha Jain is probably the most comprehensive book about *havelis* that we came across. In the first chapter, an introduction of Rajasthan is given along with a brief outline of its history which has helped us gain some insight into the context. Jain has very succinctly differentiated the regions of Rajasthan, shedding light on their characteristics and prominent features. Apart from providing the definition of the *haveli*, she has also talked about their patronage, their occupants and their many functions. In the following chapters, she speaks of the different principles determining medieval settlement patterns and the various astrological principles a.k.a Vaastu Shastra which are used as guides in the construction of most *havelis*. She then goes on to talk about the medieval towns of Rajasthan; their form and typology ending with information about how clusters are formed within a *haveli*.

The author also helps identify the different spaces in the different types of *havelis* and their functions giving examples of the centre such as the political centre and the ritualistic centre, spaces in different courts such as the *zenana* and the *mardana*.

In her chapter about the composition of *havelis*, we learnt about information that provided us with extremely detailed descriptions and comparisons of the different architectural elements present in *havelis* of different castes alongside black and white pictures and hand-drawn diagrams. Supplementary coloured pictures also provided a better insight into the real condition of the *havelis* at present.

Towards the end, suitably segregated and classified information on the types of *havelis* and their location alongside traditional Indian architectural terminology and their meanings also provides the reader with valuable information.

While the literature sources were useful in gaining an insight into the prevalence of frescoes and paintings in the *havelis*, not much literature could be found on the relationship between the structure of the *haveli* and the caste of the owner. Also, not much has been mentioned about the changes in the subjects of the frescoes from mythological ones to western subjects. The subjects of the frescoes from mythological figures (include the God and Goddesses) changed to either a hookah being portrayed on the walls of the *havelis* or new inventions like trains, cars and of Queen Victoria and Louis V. A painting was done showing a British citizen using a telephone. The telephone was the latest invention in that period and had still not been present in India. Kishore Singh has not shed light upon, what led to this change and how it started. The frescoes and murals in these *havelis* gave us an overview as to how important the art was in the ancient times.

Without any doubt, our secondary sources have proved to be very useful. However, our research question focuses on the architectural elements and the frescoes and their subject matter. The book written by Mr. Kishore Singh, describes the frescoes and the methods to make them. The article written by Sarah Glynn highlights the materials used for construction and discusses the *havelis* in general. Shikha Jain writes about the *havelis* of different castes and about a few architectural details. None of the authors have stated the differences amongst the *havelis* of different castes or regional differences between *havelis*. Our research question deals with the comparison of architectural elements and the differences of the *havelis* between different towns in Shekhawati.

TOURIST GUIDE MAP OF SHEKHAWATI (RAJASTHAN)



CHAPTER 3

In accordance to our research question, the differences in the architectural elements this chapter, we will be discussing these architectural differences, variations in the subject matter and of the colour palette of the frescoes in *havelis* in the seven places we visited in the region of Shekhawati namely, Ramgarh, Fatehpur, Mandawa, Churi, Nawalgarh, Churiajitgarh and Dunlod. Due to the overwhelming presence of Marwari *havelis*, we focused mainly on them as they too had differences amongst them, despite being located in neighbouring towns. These differences may appear insignificant, but on closer examination, they proved to be anything but.

Figure 5: Refer to the map on page no. 22

3.1 Fatehpur

The first of our stops was a small town named Fatehpur. These *havelis* revealed a little influence of the British, which was then ruling India, seen in the subject matter of the frescoes and of the detailing on the grills and railings. The original owners of the *havelis* in Fatehpur at that time were traders trading through the silk route, dating back to the 18th century. The *havelis* in Fatehpur were constructed according to the traditions and customs of the Marwari community, a relatively conservative community, even today.

The main entrance consisted of two gates, one within the other. The larger gates, known as the *hathi-pol*, were only opened for occasions wherein elephants would enter from and leave the owner of the *haveli* near the inner entrance. The smaller gate was employed for everyday use. Only about 5 feet in height, one usually has to bend while entering, showing a mark of respect to the household in which one was entering. These gates were usually made up of strong and durable materials such as teakwood, brass and iron making them impenetrable for ‘dakus’ (thieves).

Located on either side of the first courtyard, were the baithaks which were used for different activities such as meeting and accountancy. There were two *chowks*, one of which was located before the inner entrance whereas the other was after the inner

entrance. The chowk has a '*tulsi mata*' plant. The *chowk* was mostly used for marriages of a member from the family or for festivals like dhuletti, ghangaur and diwali.

Surrounding the inner doors, which are made of brass and iron, are seven different columns made of wood with elaborate carvings on them. These are known as '*saath so gut*' and were considered to be auspicious.



FIGURE 6: Wooden carvings, Keddar haveli, Fatehpur.

The passage between the two courtyards was called the *poli*. This passageway served as an entrance into the inner courtyard. The poli usually has two doors which are not in-line with each other, serving as a privacy feature.



Figure 7: POLI, Saraf Haveli, Fatehpur.

Walking further in, towards the left of the *chowk*, there are 2 rooms which are known as '*kothadi*' which were also the store rooms. On both sides of this, a *tibari* located which referred to three entrances and *chaubari*, four. This area was used as stables for horses and other animals. This place was also used by housekeepers to stay which is known as *nohra*.

Water rooms, used to store water in *matkas*(pots) from wells, were situated right beside the kitchens and opposite each other across the main *chowk*. The doors of these rooms had carvings on them. They were decorated with different carvings on their doors compared to the kitchen.. The water room door's have holes in them. Mostly flowers with looped petals are found on these doors. The holes were carved out of these doors because during the summer the air flew in this room and made the water in the *matkas* cool, seen in the figure below.

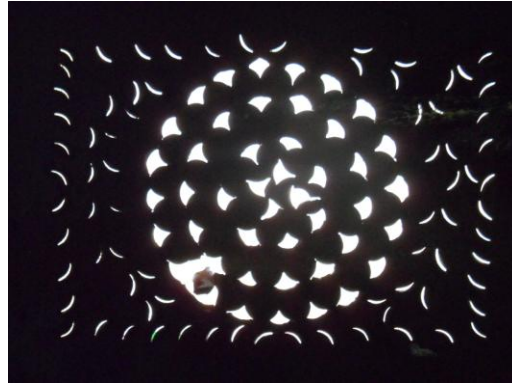


Figure 08: Jali in the water room door, Kedia Haveli, Fatehpur.

There were 2 kitchens located around the main *chowk*, also right opposite each other. There were 2 kitchens located in these *havelis* because the sizes of the *havelis* were large. Right in the centre of the main *chowk*, the temple of the *haveli* was located. There hooks located on the side of the temple for curtains. They would draw the curtains in the night before they went to bed. Drawing the curtains would indicate it is time for the God to ‘sleep’ according to their belief.

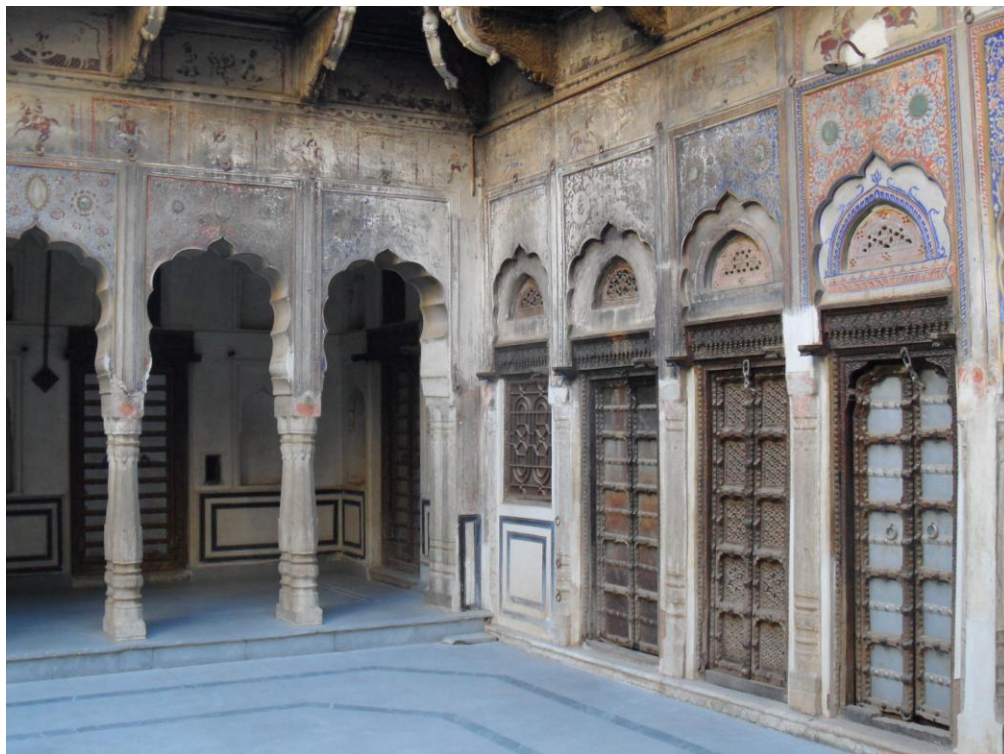


Figure 09: Tibari in Nevetya haveli, Fatehpur.

The rooms in the *havelis* in Fatehpur are mostly huge. They always stayed in joint families and hence needed a large number of rooms. There were 70-80 people residing in them, 45 rooms. The rooms were big enough for 3 people to stay in them. They were highly decorated. There were huge *jhoomar* (chandeliers) to decorate the rooms. Belgium glass was used for the windows of the rooms. One room was divided into 2 sections- one section for the married couple and the other, for their children.

The *havelis* in this town had only one floor, other than the ground floor. The extension on the first floor was known as *chajja*., which is basically a gallery for women. The women would stand out on the *chajja* during any ceremonies of the family. *Toda* is the structure that is underneath the *chajjas* and is joined to the walls of the ground floor for support. The first floor of the *haveli* only had rooms, and frescoes on the exterior as well as interior of the walls.

The frescoes that were painted in the *havelis* of Fatehpur were very interesting and different. There was a variety of frescoes witnessed. The paintings on the exterior wall of the main entrance had Radha, Krishna and the kings that used to rule Fatehpur. A portrait of Queen Victoria is present just outside the main gate, where she is shown smoking a cigar. On the paintings on the exterior walls there were frescoes of '*udan dastri*' which were known as flying Goddesses. The family members considered them very important because they symbolized liberation and they were free to fly where ever they wished to go. There is a fresco of a sage taking *agnee pariksha*. The frescoes outside the main entrance mostly had the use of golden polish. This polish was used by the *rich seths* (merchants), to show off their wealth, and therefore they used the golden polish in frescoes only outside the *haveli* and not in the inside. Another reason why the golden polish was used only in the frescoes outside the *havelis* is because when the sun rays fall on this golden polish is able to reflect light well.

Above the main gate, there is an idol of Lord Ganpatti. The people believed, he brought happiness to the family. Besides this idol, there are frescoes of Lord Shiva and his wife Parvati's marriage ceremony.

The paintings showed how religious and spiritual the members of the family were. There were portraits of the kings and British officials. Mostly the colours used were red, blue and yellow. These colours were the colours that were used in almost all the frescoes in this town. Red is known as '*shubh rang*', and *shanti ka prateek*. The *havelis* in this town had scenes from the 2 epic poems of India, Ramayana and Mahabharata and Lord Krishna playing dhuletti with the *gopiyas*. The paintings inside the *haveli* mostly had floral designs.



Figure 10: Fresco of a modern haveli, Saraf haveli Fatehpur.

Right above the temple in the main *chowk*, there was a fresco of *sankranti* which is the kite flying festival, on the right side of the temple there was a painting of an Indian soldier and on the left there was a painting of a British soldier. These 2 frescoes were opposite each other because the members of the family believed the Indian citizens and

the British lived together in peace. This shows us how there is a variety of subject matter used which is depicted in the *havelis* of Fatehpur. The paintings depict stills from the 2 epics, portraits of kings and Gods, floral designs.

3.2 Ramgarh.

Most of the *havelis* in this town are around 150-155 years old. The main gate was at the centre. The border of the main gate was done with broken tiles, this is also known as mosaic art. Above the main gate was an idol of Lord Ganesha. The Marwari community in Ramgarh, worshiped Him. There were no paintings in the main entrance of the *havelis* in Ramgarh. The main gates were huge and they had a smaller gate within them, like the ones found in Fatehpur. On each side of the main entrance there was a place to keep oil lanterns and diyas. This was made because during the evening the entire *haveli* had to be lit up by oil lanterns and diyas, this was considered auspicious by the family. They thought the negativity would keep away from their families if there was no darkness around. Once you enter the *haveli*, there were stairs that lead you to the inner entrance on the left. The passage between the main entrance and the inner entrance there was a courtyard on the right and *bhaithak* on the left. The outside courtyard was used to keep animals like horses, camels, cows. Agricultural activities in this town were on a rise in the 18th century. Therefore most of the *havelis* had a courtyard for animals outside the inner entrance.



Figure 11 : Baithak in Poddar Haveli, Ramgarh

Bhaithak is used for meetings and work purposes. The *bhaithak* in this region had Belgium glasses of different colours. In the 18th century, there was an inconsistency of electricity, therefore the Belgium glasses were used above the door, which would let sunlight come in. The sun rays, would fall on these glasses and light up the entire *bhaithak* so the work wouldn't not be interrupted. The *bhaithak* has framed pictures of Goddess Laxmi, because they believed Laxmi is the Goddess of wealth.

The inner entrance too, had an idol of lord Ganesha, just like the main entrance. The inner entrance door, had 7 sections. The same as the *haveli* door's in Fatehpur. The interiors of the *havelis* in Ramgarh differ from the interiors of *havelis* in other towns to a great extent.

The interiors did not have any type of frescoes or paintings on their walls. They did not have any carvings on the doors inside the *havelis*. The water room and the kitchen had the same type of the door. The water room door had loops and holes, the kitchen door was a clone.

The *jharokhas* inside the *havelis* in Ramgarh were the only architectural element that was decorated. The *jharokhas* in the *havelis* had floral designs carved on them. The *jharokhas* and the doors were made up of teakwood. Teak wood was used because it was easily available in this region and the furniture made of teak wood lasts for very long, as termites cannot feed on it.

The passage from the inner entrance to the *chowk* is known as the *poli*. The *poli* did not have a *du-chatti*. The *poli* had a *jali* which a net like structure made up of cement. The *jali* was used by the women of the family to who has entered the main gate of the *haveli*. The *jali* was used by women because the Marwari community believed that a married woman of the family, should not be seen by any men who is not their husband. The *jalis* allowed the women to be seen partially from outside, while the women would have a clear view of any visitor.

After the *poli*, comes the main *chowk*. The layout of the main layout of *chowk*, remains somewhat similar to the *havelis* in Fatehpur. It was symmetrical. There was a *puja* room at the centre. 2 kitchens opposite each other, 2 water rooms opposite one another. 4 *tibaris*, around the main *chowk* on the ground floor.

Havelis had one floor, above the ground floor. Each and every window on the 1st floor had a dome like structure constructed around it. The first floor had only rooms. The rooms in the *havelis* of this city are interconnected and not divided into sections. They would have around 20-25 rooms. Since the *havelis* in Ramgarh were not decorated and was very dull looking, the colours that were used were black, and brown for the doors and windows.

3.3 Nawalgarh

Nawalgarh is one of the busiest and the biggest towns of Shekhawati. It was founded in 1737 by Nawal Singh, a son of Shardul Singh. Nawalgarh saw a series of rulers who

couldn't manage to keep the state together. As a result, many of their neighbours gradually came apart. Therefore, it was able to attract a number of rich Marwari merchants who built many richly painted *havelis* here.¹⁹

The Marwari *havelis* of Nawalgarh are very different from the Marwari *havelis* in other regions. The main gate was located at the centre. There was no balcony on the exterior. The main gate was made up of the same materials as used in Fatehpur. The design and structure of the gate was the same. There were 2 gates, a smaller gate within the main gate. The smaller one, was meant for guests to bend down and enter which showed respect towards the members of the family residing in that *haveli*. On the left side of the main gate, there was a small space which was made for the *chokidaar* (watchman) to sleep. This was the first town where this place was existing. The reason this place was made for the watchman was because the owners believed the comfort of the gate-keeper who guards over their own house is very important. On the right hand side of the entrance there was a passage that leads you to the '*nohra*'. Nohra is a place to keep animals and the housekeepers of the *havelis*.

Once you enter the main gate, there is a passage that takes you to the inner entrance. Before the inner entrance, there are 2 *bhaithaks* on either side. There were *du-chattis* present in the *bhaithak*. The *bhaithaks* also had floral carvings which were bordered by black designs. There were no frescoes in the *bhaithak*. The *bhaithak* had double pillars and not single pillars like other *havelis*.

¹⁹ <http://www.rajasthantrip.com/nawalgarh-tourism.html>



FIGURE 12: BHAITHAK IN BHAGAT HAVELI, NAWALGARH.

The inner entrance was located on the right hand side. This entrance takes us to the *poli*. The *poli* had *du-chatti* on either side with floral frescoes on it. There was one floral *jali* in the *poli*, and a small window below the thick *jali* to keep food and drinks. This feature was not present in any other *haveli*. The *poli* leads us to the *chowk*.

The layout of the main chowk, was again similar to the layouts of *chowks* in other *havelis*. The *chowk* had 4 *tibaris*, which had 2 joint pillars, while the first floor was extended and rested on plain, single pillars. The area of the first floor had to be extended because, it was getting very weak. During the monsoons the water would accumulated in and around *the chowk*. The walls of the *havelis* are made up of *chuna*. When the sun rays falls on this wall where the water is accumulated, the water and the *chuna* is mixed, because the sunlight opens the pores in the walls. Due to this, there is a kind of a gas formed within the walls which makes them very weak.

Around the chowk, there were 4 kitchens and 4 water rooms, each on one side of the *chowk*. The *chowk* is rectangular/square shaped. The ground floor had 5-6 rooms and the first floor had 10 rooms. Each and every room had a *du-chatti*. This feature was only prevailing in the *havelis* of Nawalgarh. The *havelis* in Nawalgarh, had 2 floors.



FIGURE 13: Morarka Haveli, Nawalgarh.

As mentioned earlier, the *havelis* in Nawalgarh were richly decorated and painted unlike the *havelis* of Ramgarh. Most of the frescoes had Lord Krishna in them. On the outer wall of the *haveli*, there were paintings of Radha-Krishna. They had a unique painting, which we did not come across in any *havelis* before this. They had a frescoes of 7 women in such a way that gave a shape of an elephant. The surprising fact about the frescoes in Nawalgarh was that, the paintings depicted a cruise, a train, a car which signified modernization. Also, as the caretakers of the *havelis* mentioned to us, these were new inventions in the 18th century. They did not exist in India. Therefore, the owner of the *haveli* would send the local artists to other countries to see the new inventions that were brought up in the world. The owners expected the local artists to return and create a miniature replica of the new ‘magic’ modes of transport.

On the entrance there were paintings of Ganeshji, Lord Vishnu and a few other Mexican artists who contributed to the frescoes of this *haveli*. Above the inner entrance, there was a painting which depicted the *Swayamwar* of Ram and Sita, and portraits of the British rulers, Queen Victoria and the rulers of Rajasthan.

The temple which is located in the centre of the *chowk*, between the 2 *tibaris*, and paintings of Lord Shiva. In this painting, Parvati and Ganeshji are shown resting on either

of his shoulders. The entire *haveli* was decorated with paintings. The paintings around the *chowk* had floral designs, paintings of the Sun God and the scenes from Ramayana. The Sun god was present in the frescoes because the people believed that the sun God gives them positive energy and keeps the family safe.

3.4 Mandawa

Mandawa is one of the main towns in the region of Shekhawati. The *havelis* in Mandawa have more of a mughal influence. This town was one of the important regions during the rule of the British because the route to major earnings passed from this place. The Marwari community in Mandawa was larger than any other region in Shekhawati at that time. The rich merchants would carry on trade through the silk route. Since most of the *havelis* in Mandawa was a home to joint families, the *havelis* were a lot bigger in size and they were richly decorated with imported materials. In joint families the head alone would not have to pay for the decoration, but all brothers residing in that particular *haveli* would have to contribute for it.

The main entrance of the *havelis* in Mandawa was similar to the entrances of the *havelis* in the other 3 towns. The smaller gate however did not have any carvings or paintings on it. The exterior wall did not have any paintings or frescoes on it. Once, you enter the *haveli*, on the left hand side you notice the *bhathak*. The *bhathak* has 4 sections of pillars. Each section holding 2 pillars together. The *bhathak* also has the *du-chatti*. The *bhathak* was used for work purposes like accounting as well as for entertainment purposes like dancing and singing. The *bhathak* was never shared by men and women together. If the woman wanted to use the *bhathak* for dancing and other entertaining activities she would have to inform her husband a day in advance. The *du-chatti* was never in the *bhathak* in the other towns, it was always located in the *poli* or in the rooms.

Opposite the *bhathak*, was a garden. There was only one *bhathak* situated. This feature is unique. Right after you pass the narrow passage to the *bhathak*, you see a door, which is the inner entrance of the *haveli*. The inner entrance had Ganeshji on the niche. After you cross the inner entrance, you are in the *poli*. The *poli* leads you to the main

chowk. The *poli* in Mandawa had an entry to the main *chowk* on the right. The *poli* also had a window instead of a *jali*. In the *poli*, there was an indirect entrance which could take the person to the first floor directly. This was an indirect entrance which was used by women. It was also one of the secret passages that only the members of the family would know about, since in those days many emergency occurring situations would take place. The members of the family would use this indirect entrance to get out of their rooms and hide themselves in the passage, if any *daku* invaded their *haveli*.



Figure 14: Different tibari, in Choudhary Haveli, Mandawa.

Once you cross the *poli*, you are in the main *chowk*. The layout of the main *chowk*, is similar to the other *havelis*. There was no *bhaithak* inside the inner entrance. There were 4 *tibaris* around the *chowk*, 4 kitchens opposite each other, 2 water rooms. The doors of the kitchen and water rooms were different. They had a stairway on the left and right, that shows you the way to the 1st floor. The interior of the *havelis* was richly decorated with frescoes and Belgium glass. The *chowk* was used for ceremonies like

marriages and for festive occasions like diwali and *holi*. During the festival of *dushera*, the members of the family would light up the entire *haveli* with *diyas* and lanterns to beautify the *haveli* and they believed Lord Ram would visit their *haveli* on the very same night, after rescuing Sita (his wife) from the abductor Ravan.

The *havelis* had two floors, ground floor and the first floor. The rooms were on the first floor. The rooms were not divided into any sections. There were 5 rooms on in first floor and 2 rooms on the ground floor. The *havelis* in Mandawa did not have ‘*nohra*’ present. Since Mandawa was more of an industrial town than an agricultural based city, there was no separate quarter for animals in the *havelis*.



FIGURE 15: DOUBLE CHOKHANI HAVELI, MANDAWA.

One of the Marwari *havelis* we saw in Mandawa, was huge. Looking from the outside, one could guess it was shelter for a large number of people. It was called ‘Double Chokhani *haveli*.’ As the name suggests, double chokhani *haveli* was like any other Marwari *haveli*, besides the fact that there were 2 Marwari *havelis* joined together.

The main entrance, the inner entrance, the *poli*, the *jali*, the layout of the main *chowk*, the number of kitchens and rooms was the same as the other Marwari *havelis* in Shekhawati.

Once you enter from the main gate, you have flight of stairs leading you to the inner entrance of one of the *havelis*. If you go right from the entrance, there is a garden in which *tulsi mata* is planted in the centre. Once you walk further, you reach another flight of stairs that takes you to the inner entrance of the other Marwari *haveli* which is located within the same compound wall. These 2 *havelis* are joined to one another in centre. The interiors and the layout of both the *havelis* however are no different from other *havelis* in this town.

The paintings in this town have a different visual image on one's mind. There are paintings of fruits like grapes, because the British were very fond of wine. Other fruits like tomatoes, pomegranate, apple and oranges. There were frescoes which had vegetables like brinjols, carrots, and cucumbers. There were floral designs painted on the inner walls on the entrance. The colours mostly used in Mandawa were blue, red and green. The use of green colour is very evident; The green colour was mostly used for floral designs and floral paintings. There were many white spaces left between the paintings. Amusingly, though these *havelis* had frescoes of edible substances it also had portraits of British rulers, kings and queens who ruled Rajasthan and mythological figures, mainly Krishna and *gopiyas* dancing around him. The *havelis* also showed architectural monuments in London and Venice like St. Marks square, the main river in Venice.



Figure 16: Frescos of chariot and horses, Murmuraria haveli, Mandawa.

3.5 Churi

Churi is a small town in the region of Shekhawati, where there is the least concentration of *havelis*. The *havelis* in Churi, were Marwari but most of the *havelis* are bought over by

muslim families. The muslim families have not renovated the *havelis* and the *havelis* are still untouched. There were many muslim families that migrated to Churi, which is a small town post independence in 1947.



Figure 17 :Nemani Haveli, Churi.

There is not much difference in the *havelis* of Churi. The only difference was, there were slopes at the main entrance. Above the main there is an idol of *Surya bhagvan*. The slopes would go all the way to the main entrance. The main entrance was a huge gate. These slopes were made for the elephants to drop the owner right at the doorstep of his *haveli*. In terms of architecture, the layout was similar to the *havelis* in Fatehpur.

There were 2 gates, a smaller inside the huge gate. The *bhaithak* was on either side. Above the inner entrance there was an idol of Lord Ganesha. The inner entrance is located on the left. The inner entrance in this town is located on the left, just after the *bhaithak*.. The *poli*, *jali*, *du-chatti*, the main *chowk*, and the kitchens, rooms and staircases around it was the same like the *havelis* in Fatehpur.

In terms of the paintings the *havelis* in Churi did have something different to offer to us. The frescoes mostly used red, blue, yellow. There were no white spaces left in the paintings. Every inch of the wall would be covered by natural dyes. The frescoes depicted Lord Krishna and Radha. There were birds on the walls of these *havelis*, like peacock, sparrow and hen. Surprisingly, even though these *havelis* were brought over by muslim families, they have not made any changes in the architectural elements of the *haveli* or the frescoes. The frescoes depict Hindu mythological figures and the architecture was worked upon the way it is because of the customs and traditions of the Marwari community. The muslim community does not follow the same set of beliefs and yet, no changes made.

The various architectural elements and their comparisons

3.6 Comparison

This sub-topic deals with the comparison of all the *havelis*, in all the above towns that were visited by us.

The Marwari community in Shekhawati, was a large community. Most of them were rich merchants, or financially well to do men involved in agricultural activities. This community got into business with the British, and carried trade on through the silk route. The Marwari community had many *havelis*, but all different from each other in either architectural terms or the paintings/frescoes.

Since there were so many differences, they are stated below thematically, from the entrance to the first floor.

3.6.1 The Entrance

The entrance gate, i.e. the main gate in all the regions architecturally was similar. What did differ were the carvings on the wooden gate and their designs. The main entrance in all the regions were 2 gates, a bigger gate and inside the big gate was a smaller gate. The gates in all the regions were made up of brass and iron. While, in some regions like Churi, the main gate always had a slope.

In Fatehpur, there were 2 balconies located on either side of the main gate. The balconies had grills of the face of Queen Victoria, which is a unique feature and have not been seen in other towns. Above, the main entrance in Fatehpur, Ramgarh there was an idol of Lord Ganesha while in Churi there was an idol of *Surya bhagvan*.

In Ramgarh, the main entrance would not be decorated with frescoes and paintings, but with a mosaic.

The small gate, which was located within the massive main gate, would always be decorated. Except in Mandawa, where the smaller gate bore no carvings or any other decoration.



Figure 18 : Wooden carvings on doors, Nemani haveli, Churi.

In Ramgarh, just above the main entrance, there were places to hang oil lanterns and places to keep *diyas*. This was not noticed in any other town. Only in Nawalgarh, there was a place kept especially for the caretakers of the *havelis* next to the main gate.

3.6.2 Baithak

The area, where the *baithak* is located, is different in each of these towns. In a few towns, the *baithak* was located on the right, while the other few had the *baithak* on the left, yet, where the *baithak* was situated on both the sides of the main entrance. In Mandawa and Churi the *baithak* was located on the left. In the Nawalgarh and Fatehpur, the *baithak* stood present on both the sides of the main gate. In Ramgarh, the *baithak* is on the right and its windows had Belgium glasses. In Mandawa, the *baithak* had *du-chatti*. In Nawalgarh, the *baithak* had floral designs which were carved and it rested on double pillars, unlike *havelis* of other towns which had single pillars. There were no frescoes in the *baithak*.



Figure 19 : Bhaithak in Nadine le Prince, Fatehpur.

3.6.3 Nohra

Nohra is a place in the *havelis*, either underground or on the same level as the main *chowk* where the animals like camels, horses, cows that belonged to the owner were kept. It was not an essential part of the architecture of *havelis*. Those who wanted it could make a separate provision for it. In towns like Nawalgarh, Fatehpur and Ramgarh the *nohra* is present while in towns like Churi and Mandawa, the *nohra* was absent. It is surprising to notice the patterns of the towns where the *nohra* is present. The people of these cities happen to be highly involved in agricultural related activities.

3.6.4 Inner Entrance

The inner entrance of the *havelis*, is the entrance that comes along the way to the main *chowk*. The inner entrance in some *havelis* is located on the right while in others it is on the left. In some towns, you can notice the inner entrance is in the centre. The gate of the inner entrance is made up of 7 columns as mentioned above. This number is said to be 'auspicious' for the family members residing in that *haveli*. The gate of the inner entrance stands common to all the towns. Even the types of carvings on these 7 columns are the same. In Fatehpur, Mandawa, Nawalgarh, Ramgarh the inner entrance is in the centre. In Churi, a flight of stairs that take you to the inner entrance located on the left.

3.6.5 Poli

Poli is the passage from the inner entrance to the main *chowk*. In Mandawa, Fatehpur and Churi the entry to the main *chowk*, through the *poli*, was on the right. The *poli* in Mandawa had a window and not a *jali*. The *poli* in Ramgarh and Fatehpur had no *du-chatti*. In Nawalgarh, the *poli* had *du-chatti* on both the sides and floral frescoes in it. This was the only town where we witnessed frescoes in the *poli*. One small window below the *jali* to donate food and drinks. This was not present in other towns.



Figure 20: Entrance of Nadine le Prince, Fatehpur.

3.6.6 Du-chatti

Du-chatti is the small store room located in the *poli*. The *du-chatti* does not necessarily have to be in the *poli*. It can be present in the *bhaithak*, or rooms or in any other are in the *haveli*. It is located in the *bhaithak* to store the accounting books and others files and documents which they use for their daily work. In the rooms it is located to store old clothes or something they need to discard or use rarely, like newspapers, utensils, toiletries. Etc. The *bhaithak* in Mandawa had *du-chatti*, while the rooms in Nawalgarh had *du-chatti*. The *poli* neither the *bhaithak* nor rooms in Ramgarh, Fatehpur and Churi, did not have any *du-chattis*.

3.6.8 Jharokhas

A *jharokhas* is a type of an enclosed window, used mostly in Indian architecture. The *havelis* in Fatehpur, had 2 types of *jharokhas*, one with grills and one without. The *jharokhas* in Fatehpur without grills was located above the balcony, besides the main entrance. The *jharokhas* without grills were located after the inner entrance on the left.

The *jharokhas* in Ramgarh, had floral designs carved on them. The *jharokhas* in Mandawa, Nawalgarh and Churi had designs carved on them, and outline done with brass. Above the *jharokhas* were painted borders with different colours.



Figure 21 : Singhania Haveli, Nawalgarh.

3.6.9 Tibaris and Chaubaris

Tibaris, are entrances divided into three different entries by 4 pillars. Similarly, *chaubaris*, are entrances that are divided into 4 smaller entries by 5 pillars.

The *tibaris* and *chaubaris* are mostly around the main *chowk*. The main *chowk* in most of the cities had 4 *tibaris* around it. Interestingly, this pattern is seen in all the Marwari *havelis*, of all the towns. *Chaubaris* are seen in Rajput *havelis*.



Figure 22 : Tibari in Kedia Haveli, Fatehpur.

3.6.10 Kitchens

The kitchens in all the *havelis*, in all the towns were around the main *chowk* opposite to each other. There were kitchens made on the any other floor other than the ground floor. They had a custom that none of the family members were allowed to sit on the table and eat their meal. Each and every member of the family would have to squat on the floor and have every meal, together. The number of kitchens in each *haveli* would depend on the size of the families. In Fatehpur, Ramgarh, Churi there were 2 kitchens. In Mandawa there were 4 kitchens around the main *chowk*.

3.6.11 Rooms

The rooms in *havelis*, would either be located on the ground floor or the first floor. There were smaller rooms which were used as guest rooms, in some *havelis*. The guest rooms were always on the ground floor, whereas the rooms for the family members were on the first floor and second floor. The rooms in Fatehpur, Churi are divided into sections, one section was used for the couple and the other section was used for their kids. The rooms in Ramgarh were interconnected to each other on the first floor. There was *du-chatti* in the rooms in Nawalgarh.

3.6.12 Carvings

The carvings of different designs on wooden doors and windows are a very evident feature in *havelis*. The carvings are floral and carvings of other style. The carvings on the 7 columns at the entrance of each *haveli* are the same in all the *havelies*. Each design is carved the same way and has the same style. The carvings on the water rooms and kitchen doors differ from one another. The water room is used to store water drawn from wells in *matkas*. The water room door's have holes in them. Mostly flowers with looped petals are found on these doors. The holed were carved out of these doors because during the summer the air flew in this room and made the water in the *matkas* cool.



Figure 23: Carvings on the doors of the rooms, Mohanlal Haveli, Churi.

3.7 Types of frescoes in Shekhawati.

Shekhawati is a colourful and painted town. There are a large number of frescoes in this region. Most of the *haveli* walls in this region are covered with these colourful paintings. There are 4 types of frescoes one can witness in this region. The paintings depict either mythological figures like the deities and other myths, or scenes from Ramayana and

Mahabharata. The other types of frescoes are the portrait frescoes. The portraits of British rulers, or freedom fighters of India , kings and queens who once ruled Rajasthan and this region. There are paintings in some towns of Shekhawati which depict animals and birds. The last type of frescoes in this region is floral designs.

3.7.2 Variation according to regions.

The subject matter of the frescoes in the towns of Shekhawati was different from one another. In Fatehpur, the exterior and the interior walls were covered with frescoes. The paintings depicted Radha Krishna, the kings and queens, Queen Victoria smoking a cigar, *Udaan dastri*, scenes from the 2 epic poems, a sage taking *agnee pariksha*, Shiva along with Parvati and Ganesh. There were frescoes of floral designs. The main colours used in this town were red, blue, and yellow.

In Ramgarh, there were no paintings on the walls of the *havelis*. In Churi. The main colours used were the same as Fatehpur. There was no use of white colour. The subject matter was Radha Krishna and birds like peacock, sparrow and hen. In Nawalgarh, the paintings were of Radha Krishna, Lord Ganesh and Lord Vishnu. There were paintings of the *swayamvar* of Ram and Sita, Shiva with Parvati and Ganesh shown standing on his shoulders. There were portraits of Queen Victoria, British rulers. The main *chowk* had floral designs, along with the painting of *Surya bhagvan* above it.



Figure 24 : Fresco of Radha and Krishna, Murmuraria Haveli, Mandawa

The paintings in Mandawa were the first and the last of its kind we witnessed in Shekhawati. Mandawa had paintings of fruits, freedom fighters, floral designs, vegetables architectural monuments in London and Venice like St. Marks square. The colours mostly used in this town were red, blue and green. Green was used for floral paintings. There were many white spaces left amidst one painting.



Figure 25: Fresco of Lord Krishna playing holi , Vivanna, Churi.

3.7.4 Techniques.

There are three major processes which are beating, burnishing and polishing which are necessary for fresco making. The artists making these paintings had to put together the different panels to join it as a plaster; they used gum, tempera and camel fat for this purpose. Tempera is a mixture of egg yolk and water or oil and egg yolk. It is used as a binding agent.

3.7.5 Natural dyes.

All these paintings on the walls of Shekhawati are hand painted and they all use natural dyes. The *chiteras* (mesons) who are the fresco painting artists and builders associate with the *kumhars* (pottery) caste, used *kajal* (lamp black) for black, *safeda* (lime) for white, *neel* (indigo) for blue, *geru* (red stone powder) for red, *kesar* (saffron) for orange, *pevri* (yellow clay) for yellow. Green was obtained by drying the tree leaves and making it into a paste with the help of water. The most fascinating thing was how they obtained yellow ochre from evaporating the urine of the cows²⁰. The materials used to paint these frescoes were thread, to make fine lines and feathers of birds or stem of the leaves as a brush. The main colours used in the frescoes were green, blue and red. There was a very minimum use of yellow, and hardly any use of saffron, black.

²⁰ Cooper, Ilay *Rajasthan: The Painted Towns of Shekhawati* Ahmedabad: 1994

CHAPTER 4

Havelis are an embodiment of our rich culture. They were built by our ancestors with such steadfastness that they have withstood the test of time, standing sturdy, even centuries later. However, they are losing their charm because of factors such as everyday weather conditions and natural calamities such as earthquakes. Though elements like the walls and pillars have stood strong, the frescoes on them, have suffered greatly. Produced from natural methods, these dyes were susceptible to fading due to the exposure to the sun and therefore, were not very durable. As such, efforts have to be taken to restore and maintain these havelis, in order to keep in tact this splendid treasure-house of the past.

Through our research, we discovered that the restoration of havelis is extremely important for the preservation of the culture of Rajasthan. However, majority of the owners of these havelis have moved away and rarely come back to stay in them. Also, the cost of restoring or renovating these havelis moreover maintaining them, is extremely high and it isn't in any way beneficial to the owners. However, the preservation of these havelis is extremely important.

Nadine Le Prince Haveli, Fatehpur

Nadine Le Prince, a well-known artist from Paris, France visited the little town of Fatehpur about 2 decades ago. Greatly enamoured by the splendour of the havelis, Le Prince bought a haveli for herself in 1997 from the Deoras and has since then made this haveli, now renamed the Nadine Le Prince Haveli, her second home.

Since then, she has restored all its frescoes, windows and doors to their original splendor by bringing in local painters, skilled in painting frescoes to repaint the exterior and the interior of the *haveli* as seen in the pictures below.



Figure 26: Walls, with frescoes, Goenka haveli, Fatehpur.

Frescoes

With regard to the frescoes, Nadine has made ample efforts in locating the few remaining local artists who still practiced this art and brought them in to repaint all frescoes of the haveli, on the exteriors of the wall as well and the interior. Frescoes which had previously faded and lost their lustre have now been restored to the former glory. The painters have been careful in using the same hues and shades of paint and even the same kind of dyes while repainting. This has prevented any kind of discrepancy in the colours of the frescoes, then and now. Below are two images depicting the repainted frescoes.



Figure 27 : Entrance of Saraf haveli, Fatehpur.

Furniture

In an attempt to redecorate the haveli, Le Prince has brought in pieces of both, antique and modern furniture, adding character to each of the forty-four rooms in the haveli.



Figure 28: Outer courtyard, Nadine Haveli, Fathepur.

As seen in Fig.28, Nadine has covered the once sandy outer courtyard with marble flooring. The presence of the marble statues of the two elephants and the water fountain, in the centre of the courtyard add a Mughal touch to the décor. Also, the water feature helps regulate the hot temperature in the daytime, a common feature of the Thar desert in which the region of Shekhawati is located.



Figure 29: Baithak 1, Nadine Haveli, Fatehpur.

One of the baithaks is shown here in Fig.29. Le Prince has added a couple of armchairs and a coffee table in one where as the other baithak in Fig.30 features a more traditional seating arrangement.

Walking through the *poli* into the second courtyard, peeks of a modern setting come into view, contributed to by the setting up of a modern environment, by the placing of a few rather contemporary sculptures, which Nadine purchased from a sculptor in Jaipur



Figure 30: Inner Courtyard, Nadine Le Prince, Fathehpur.

Rooms

The rooms have been fashioned in a similar order, having had furniture added to make them more functional. Out of a total of 44 rooms, about half have been converted into rooms for her students and her guests whereas the rest have been turned into studies, game rooms etc., as seen in Fig.31 and Fig.32.



Figure 31 : Rooms in Nadine, Fatehpur.

A place of her own!

Despite having a total of 44 rooms in the haveli, Nadine has built herself a large studio towards the back of the compound to accommodate her students and their work. This building is in stark contrast to any of the rooms of the adjoining haveli. The size of the studio is almost half the size of the haveli and instead of any painting or frescoes on the walls; its walls are a spotless white. The window of this studio occupies one whole wall, very contrary to the jharokhas of the past. Fig. 33 depicts the same.

The Journey

From the beginning of her stay here, she's had issues with the residents of Fatehpur as well as the local governmental authorities. Initially, the villagers mistook her intentions regarding the haveli and their inability to communicate did not help matters which led to some unnecessary misunderstandings. It has taken a long fifteen years to restore this *haveli* though constant renovation is still required.

Goenka Haveli, Dunlod

The Goenka *haveli* in Dunlod is another example of a restored *haveli*. This *haveli* was built in 1875 by Seth Arjun Das Goenka. It has an approximate of twenty rooms, big and small, in all. While this *haveli*'s layout was similar to that of other *havelis*, it had a garden adjacent to the *haveli* which was maintained to be as self-sufficient as possible, to provide flowers and seasonal vegetables. Also, there were sheds built for cows and for the storage of fodder. Bullocks for the carriages and camels for transport of goods were also present.

Not only did Seth Arjun Das want his *haveli* to be functionally efficient and also aesthetically appealing. He consulted an architect *havelis* and also did some research of his own by visiting some of the other towns like Nawalgarh, Bissau, Jhunjhunu, Churu and after much consultation, he awarded the building contract to one of the best architects in the profession, whose name, unfortunately, is not available.

The Kitchen & Office

The kitchens were provided with covered chimneys for the smoke to escape as the fuel used was mostly dry wood. He ordered for big copper urns for suitable storage of grains. A set of grinding stones were used by the ladies to grind various grains into the different kinds of flour, required for cooking. A corner was reserved for churning butter and making ghee. Also, the water storage rooms next to the 3 kitchens had their doors carved in jali to provide ventilation to the earthenware water holders. Fig. 31 shows the kitchen.



FIGURE 32 : Kitchen in Goenka haveli, Dunlod.



FIGURE 33 : Baithak, workplace, Goenka haveli, Dunlod.

Pankhas were installed in the wash rooms and the office. A small window was provided in the inner courtyard for the ladies to watch important guests and office activities. The design of the building had provision for water harvesting because ground water level in the region was quite low and the annual rainfall, a bare minimum. The zenana (ladies quarters) had special facilities for resting. Arjun Das saw to it that the roof had ample space for sleeping out on hot summer nights.

The finishing touches to the *haveli* demanded special attention. The best artists and craftsmen available were hired for their services. Dressed stone, terra-cotta bricks and lime mortar were used in construction. Stone pillars were carved in sand stone and used in both courtyards. Apart from their aesthetic appeal, they lend an air of temple-like sanctity. Floral and geometrical designs blended beautifully with the architecture.



FIGURE 34: Gold polished frescoes, in Goenka.

The most common motifs were scenes of Rajput bravery and chivalry. Thus, we see riders on elephants, horses and camels, alongside floral motifs painted on the front of this *haveli*.

The two street lights in front of the *Haveli* were the newest. The smooth white plaster finish seen on the walls in the office was achieved by laborious burnishing for several days using sea shells: it has withstood weathering for over a century and a quarter. Beautiful designs and patterns were adopted for various doors. The design of the main entrance to the inner courtyard is exquisite. The wood carvings have been done by hand and there is rich embellishment with hand-made appliques in steel, copper, brass and in some places even ivory. Incise work on metal on some doors invites special attention.

Seth Arjun Das breathed his last in Kolkata in August of the year 1899. The construction of the upper part of the *Haveli* was completed by his two young sons Subhkaran Das (1878-1939) and Anand Ram (1882-1946) according to the visions and plans of their departed father.

Due to the relatively young age of the haveli and the durable materials used in its construction, this haveli has stood the test of time. Today, it is a museum with life size figurines and other household items allowing all visitors to see and experience the lifestyle as it was back then and because of its effectiveness, it leaves little to the imagination.

Visiting these havelis and observing their deteriorating condition has really opened our eyes about the distressing state of these symbols of our rich and cultural past. It was heart-warming to see that some efforts have been made, albeit, by individuals to restore some of these havelis to their former palatial glory.

However, it did sadden us to hear, from a surprisingly large number of owners, that they were not willing to spend the money required to restore their havelis. In stark contrast and very thought-provoking is the case of Nadine Le Prince, a foreigner, who has very selflessly used her own resources and income in restoring the haveli and creating awareness for the importance to preserve and restore more of these havelis.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As we toured this remarkable region of Shekhawati, many of our misconceptions and stereotypes gave way to meaningful discoveries and knowledge which helped us acquire a deeper and better understanding of the lifestyle of the people of Rajasthan. A more personal reason behind our choice of topic and destination was a deeply embedded desire to discover more about our own culture, to go back to our roots, eight of us in the group being Marwaris, one being a Rajput and one being a Gujarati. We found an amusing commonality of having our descendants stem from the same state and along with discovering India, as this programme is called, we decided to discover a little more about ourselves.

Trudging along from haveli to haveli in the scorching heat and coming together to keep warm at night, we adapted to the lifestyle of the people there in a way we would never have been able to, living in our own city. Studying the havelis, speaking to the caretakers and owners, we explored and discovered, little knowing how effortless it became because of the new-found curiosity and the interest that started growing from within each one of us.

The havelis spoke to us through the sprawling frescoes on their enormous walls, the multi-coloured windows, the intricately carved and majestic doors. We learnt about the lifestyle of the people by examining the location and functions of each room, also about their traditions and customs, the societal moral and values that they adhered to. Investigating these havelis brought to life the whole working of families in that era, painting a comprehensive picture in our minds, allowing us to discover much more than we had thought possible.

While the deteriorating conditions of the majority of the havelis saddened us, the efforts some individuals initiated and carried out in the restoration of some of the other havelis like the Nadine Le Prince and the Goenka haveli, was heart-warming.

Examining the minute differences in the havelis of different towns and villages of the same region, the discovery was anything but insignificant. We toured the havelis, the renovated and restored ones, as well as the ones which hadn't been lived in, in decades but we realised that time had not been able to take away the grandeur of these majestic structures.

This trip gave us an experience of a lifetime and we are extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to travel through the sands of Rajasthan, the land of kings, in all its glory.

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GLOSSARY

Aangan – Open space in a house

Aath - Eight

Alagila -Frescoes

Bahikhata – Accounts record

Baithak – Sitting room

Bandanwar – A row of leaves tied with a thread placed on the door lintel at auspicious occasions

Baniya – A Hindu trader

Bari – Small opening in a wall

Bazzar - Market

Brahmin – Highest Hindu caste, responsible for conducting all religious activities

Chajja - Sunshade

Chat – Terrace/ Roof

Chaubara – Back room In *havelis*

Chaubari – 4 entrances

Chauki - Plinth

Chaukhat – Door frame

Chiteras- Masons

Choona – Lime plaster

Chowk – Courtyard in a dwelling

Chuna - Limestone

Darwaaza - Door

Dhabhai – Hindu sub caste

Diwali – Hindu festival of Goddess Lakshmi

Diwan-e-Aam – Space for receiving outsiders

Diwan-e-Khas – Space for entertaining special guests

du-chatti - the small store room in the *poli*

Durbar – Court

Gangaur – Rajasthani festival for newlywed and unwed females

Gara – Paste of lime and sand

Hathi - Elephant

Haveli – Mansion of a courtier

Haowala – Partition

Hawaleh- all round

Jali – Net or screen in a stone, wood, or other materials

Jharokha – Projected and screened windows

Jhoomar - chandeliers

Jina - Staircase

Khidki – Window

Kothadi – Store room

Kotri – Community water store

Kshatriya – Warrior caste in Hindus

Kul-devi – Clan-goddess

Maharaja - King

Maharani - Queen

Mandap – Square platform with covering erected for conducting Hindu marriages

Mardana – Male section

Marwaris – Hindu trader class originating from Marwar region

Matkas - Pot

Naal - Staircase

Nawabs – Affluent Muslim ministers

Niv - Foundation

Niwas - House

Nohra – Annexe area with *haveli*, used for services

Otta – Front platform in a dwelling

Palki/rath – Manual or horse carriage

Parinda – Water space

Pitar ji ki modh – Space for ancestral deity

Pol – Entrance gate

Poli – Lobby/ froyer

Purdah – Curtain veil observed by females

Purohit – Hindu priest

Rajpurohit – Royal priest

Rajput – Warrior clan of Rajasthan

Rasoda - Kitchen

Saath so gut -7 different columns of wooden carving

Sankranti – Kite flying festival

Seth – A wealthy merchant

Sidi - Stairs

Tibari – Three arched verandah

Toran – Ritual of tying an image of birds at the entrance gate of the dwelling at the time of the marriage. The groom touches the toran with a sword before entering the brides house

Tulsi – A basil plant, auspicious for Hindus

udan dastri – Flying Goddess

Vaishya – Hindu trader class

Vastu - Architecture

Zenana – Female section



TEAM – HAVELIS. 2012-2013

