

FAQs

1. Discuss briefly the architecture of Gujarat.

- Gujarat is the farthest western state of India, comprising of a major part of the Kutch region.
- Initially Jainism being the prevalent religion led to its architecture being predominantly of Jain nature
- It has since then , been invaded and ruled over by many kingdoms , hence sees a blend and variety of Hindu , Islamic , Jain and European influence in architecture
- Rural architecture was vernacular and basic , while the urban architecture of previous centuries have had complex styles and influences

2. Describe the design features of the Bhonga houses.

- These buildings are typically found in flat terrain.
- They do not share common walls with adjacent buildings. When separated from adjacent buildings, the typical distance from a neighboring building is 3.0 meters.
- Bhonga is circular in plan, with cylindrically shaped walls and topped with conical roof.
- The inner diameter of the Bhonga is typically between 3m to 6m.
- Traditional roof consists of light-weight conical roof, while some recent constructions have used heavy mangalore tiles on roofs

3. Elaborate on history of Bohrawads.

- The Dawoodi Bohras (or Vohras) are a Gujarati **trading community** which fanned out across India (and to East Africa) in the 19th and early 20th centuries

- Like several Indian trading communities who moved to other lands, they invested significantly in residential architecture in their native towns, building neighborhoods that have come to be known as “**Bohrawads**”
- The Bohrawads confirm that a **unique identity is not necessarily “pure”**. Like our grandfathers who Indianized European coats by wearing them over ‘dhotis’, the Bohrawads reveal we are always inventing our identity by negotiating with every influence around us.
- Essentially, a Bohrawad is a neighborhood **built around a street and its branches**. For defensive reasons, the street developed a gated entrance, not unlike the *pol* of Ahmedabad.
- In each Bohrawad, rows of narrow, deep houses—three to four storey’s—are packed along the main street, interrupted by cross-lanes at regular intervals.

4. Discuss the planning features of the Bohra houses.

- The closely packed houses, site constraints and absence of standardized building controls result in **an organic growth** and a relatively irregular street pattern.
- The meandering passageway with a pedestrian sense of scale creates **a series of vistas** as one walks down the street
- A traditional Bohra house, seen in its cultural and spatial context, creates **a sense of place** in a distinct domestic setting. The house can almost be considered a metaphor for the social system.
- The interiors were oriented in a way as to **reflect social values espoused by the community**. Men and women had their own designated space within homes. The kitchen, however, was accessible by both
- The main living floor is 4-5ft above street level, built over a basement. Small but comfortable windows or window seats open into the street. This slight height allows the seated person to keep a distance from the street while almost being part of the action

5. List and describe the external design features of the Bohra Muslim houses.

- The Bohras have adopted the regional tradition of Gujarat of making facades with **intricate details in wood**.
- They accommodated a whole range of styles, building materials and decorative treatments resulting in **attractive facades** (and streets) that have become the hallmark of their vernacular architecture.
- In contrast to Islamic philosophy, there is exterior display and frontal exposure as the **facades are rich in variety and aesthetic expression**.
- They create a sense of enclosure and a play of light and shadows by using of solids and voids