**Synopsis of the final design project - Udaipur Diaries**

Udaipur diaries is a graphic novel based on stories from Udaipur and the architecture that surrounds these stories. It consists of many fascinating stories such as; the story of Meera baai, Maharana Pratap and Chetak, the story of Jagmandir, history of photography in Mewar and India and the tale of Panna Daai.

The initial idea of the project was to research a lesser known palace of Udaipur called Sajjangarh palace. And to make a graphic novel based on the architecture and thus in turn spreading awareness about this palace that is surrounded by Aravali hills. But when we visited the palace, we found out that the palace couldn’t be visited as there was a strike going on for the better payment of the Indian forest department. Then with the help of my mentor, Dr. Sharmila Sinha, I could change the topic to City palace of Udaipur. After doing some primary research on the topic, I found out that the palace was built by different successive rulers of Merar/ Sisodia clan.

The story started when their family resided in Chittorgarh fort. When they were being attacked by a Mughal emperor, the females of Chittorgarh all did Jauhar to save themselves from ill treatment of Mughals, before which Queen of Chittor gave her child to Panna Dai, a maid who worked in her chambers. Later they retreated and Mewar was still under Sisodia rulers, Udaisingh the child being the ruler next in line was a mere toddler, thus his uncle looked after the kingdom. Balbir who was after the kingdom wanted to kill Udaisingh, went to the chambers when Udaisingh was asleep with the intention of killing him. Panna daai found out beforehand and swapped Udaisingh with her own son.

Later she left the palace with Udaisingh to Kumbhalgarh where they resided. He later established the city of Udaipur and the city palace.

A few generations before him the story of Meera bai took place in the fort of Chittorgarh. Meera was a devotee of lord Krishna since she was around the age of four and considers herself married to lord Krishna . She would get ecstatic with the worshiping. When she came of age, her father got her married to a prince of Mewar. Them being devoted to goddess Shakti they didn’t like her worshipping Krishna and would thus her family members would conspire against her and even tried to kill her but it is said that each time they tried Krishna saved her. Later she was made to test her loyalty to her husband by drowning in the lake nearby. While she was at it, she heard an ethereal voice that told her to go to Vrindavan. She spent rest of her life ther along with other Krishna worshippers.

City palace took 400 years to be built as each section of the palace is built by a different ruler and thus with time the architectural style also changed. Starting from the early Mewar phase to when Britishers came to India this palace tells a story in a unique way. When we visit the palace we learn that the events that took place here were truly intriguing, for instance when Col. Todd James visited Udaipur and brought camera obscura along with him to capture the pictures of the royal family, later even laymen got their hands on them and that’s how the art of photography began in India. We also learn about the sad story of Princess Krishna Kumari when we stroll around Bheem vilas where we see a Children’s play area and painting on the window. Krishna Kimari was merely a child when her father wanted her to wed a Mughal prince, then marrying a Mughal was frowned upon and was a big deal. To avoid this she drank poison and took her own life. This area is one of the most aesthetically pleasing sections of the palace and in remembrance of this young princess. Even though the palace was built in the olden times we see an elevator for the disabled king and his wheelchair.

Zenana Mahal is a ladies’ fortress, with jharokhas and colourful glass stained windows, along with marble finished floors and walls. This section has a unique story of how messages used to be sent there. Where male entry wasn’t allowed, they used to give the message to the doorman who would call a maid and pass on the message who would whisper “baaiyan ne bulao!” Meaning call the maid, then this maid would go and finally give the message to the royal lady.

Jagmandir is another architectural marvel, located in the middle of a lake. This piece of architecture narrates a story of relations between Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and Rajputs. This fortress has Mughal style of architecture because this was after Jodhabai had been married off to Akbar a Mughal emperor, their son Shah Jahan when had a dispute with his father was staying with his mothers family. They built this palace fortress for him to stay in during the reign of Maharna Jagat singh and this it is known as Jagmandir.

There is another story of Maharana Pratap at the battle of Haldigati along with his beloved horse Chetak. Maharana Pratap was the son of Maharana Udaisingh who founded the city of Udaipur. Udaisingh wanted his son from his favourite wife to be crowned king but older members of the council wanted Pratap to be the king as it was customary. Folklore has it that Pratap did not want to go against the wishes of his father but Rajput nobles convinced him that Jagmal was not fit

to rule ni the troubled times of the day; but it is quite possible that what occurred was a bitterly contested struggle for succession: something characteristic of most South Asian kingdoms of the age.

Pratap, the eldest son, to be their king as was customary. During the coronation ceremony, Jagmal was physically moved out of the palace by the Chundawat Chief and Tomar chief Ramshah and prevailed upon Pratap, who was crowned as the next Rana of Mewar.

Though the chief reasons for resentment between Pratap Singh and Akbar is unclear, it is now largely agreed that it had to do with disagreements over the status of Mewar within the Mughal Empire, where it did not at all accept Mughal suzerainty. The tensions were further characterised by the fact that Babur and Rana Sanga, grandfathers of Akbar and Pratap respectively, had earlier bitterly contested the control over the Gangetic plains and the Doab. It is evident that there had been some

measures of reconciliation, such as acceptance of ambassadors and representatives between the two courts. However, none of these could ever be taken to any logical end. Akbar sent a total of six diplomatic missions to Pratap, seeking to negotiate the same sort of peaceful alliance that he had concluded with the other Rajput chiefs. This is clearly evidential of the ends sought by each of the two rulers: for Akbar, having an independent

or semi independent kingdom, within his otherwise consolidated empire was politically unsound and militarily dangerous; for Pratap Singh, on the other hand, to accept vassalage with little in return was a political suicide, and a steep fall for Mewar in the region's power structure.

Thus, it wouldn’t be wrong to say that the architecture here tells a story and we don’t even know how many more stories that these walls of the city palace hold. When we visit the palace we watch the remains of these events and try to connect the dots of what might have happened. Fortunately they have a gallery with the stories to guide us. It genuinely fascinates and intrigues us.