

ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS FOR CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND TOURISM PROMOTION: A CASE STUDY OF THE SETHI HAVELI COMPLEXES IN PESHAWAR

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ABSTRACT

The historic buildings of a region are important cultural heritage for its future generations. At some places such buildings might be unable to serve their actual purposes for which they have been erected, due to various reasons such as bad state of preservation, illegal occupation, encroachment, and abandonment. In such cases, the concept of using the adaptive reuse can well protect them as cultural heritage. The adaptive reuse of historic buildings has become an approach worldwide, which extends its lifespan. At the same time, the reuse of such buildings will decrease further use of material for fresh and new construction, avoid unnecessary transportation, wastage of energy and resource and control air pollution for sustainable environment. The Sethi haveli complexes in Peshawar city is portraying the traditional style of domestic architecture of the elite trading community in the region, exhibiting the local taste in combination with central Asian. Built in the 18th/19th century, these haveli complexes are in deteriorating conditions that need to be preserved and reused. Further, recreational values should be generated by adaptive reuse, including self-growth, health benefits and social benefits. As the creation of activities is a big attraction for tourists in the field of heritage reuse, the natural environment can be used to organise and design heritage indoor/outdoor events. As observed with the evaluated Sethi haveli complexes, historic buildings that are re-functioned with the public use, for example cultural, educational, commercial and use, are more productive in contributing to the social development of the walled city of Peshawar. The adaptive reuse of abandoned Sethi haveli complexes in the walled city of Peshawar will subsidise the sustainability and liveability of the city. For the continuity of the historic buildings, social aspect should be deliberated with all-encompassing approach.

Keywords: Historic buildings, adaptive re-use, the Sethi *haveli* Complexes, social aspect.

INTRODUCTION

According to Douglas, the term ‘*Adaptive*’ is derived from two Latin terms, ‘*ad*’ means ‘to’ and ‘*aptare*’ means ‘fit’ (Douglas 2002:1). With the concept of adaptive reuse, the old structures can be reused with new adaptations for proper conservation and improvement. To conserve old buildings and utilized for new functions, activities, and purposes they undergo through the process of adaptive reuse, giving a new life to the old buildings. The process of adaptive reuse is associated to the concepts of conservation and heritage policies (Cleere 1996:227). By reusing the *haveli* complexes within a locality, the energy consumption to transform these places is reduced, and also the material waste that is formed because of demolishing timeworn buildings and reconstructing expending new resources.

Along the Grand Trunk Road travelled powerful conquering armies, as well as caravans of merchants, academics, craftsmen, and regular citizens over millennia. People transferred knowledge, languages customs, and visible and invisible culture in both ways when they worked together. Citizens of diverse origins and ethnicities, claiming different sects and creeds peacefully encountered one another at various gathering sites, both permanent and temporary. Due to its location on the Grand Trunk Road, Peshawar has long been a major stopping place for caravans travelling from India to

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Central Asia and likewise. The city has established a distinct material and visual culture that is reflected from its city layout and architecture (Elphinstone 1819:60; Das 1874:141; Gazetteer of Peshawar District 1897-98:44; Dani 1995:122).

Sethi *haveli* complexes

The Sethi *haveli* complexes in Peshawar City built between 1801-1900 are over 200 years old of the post-Mughal, Afghans, Sikh, Colonial periods (Sethi 2002:20; Zia 2008:66; Dani 1995:25). These *haveli* complexes are rich in the assortment of their embellishment of internal and external spaces implementing a range of motifs, designs and selection of artisan skills. It is worth appreciating that whether the artisans were local from Peshawar or were brought from other areas, they were masters in their field of arts and crafts (Qizalbash 1991:12).

During the investigation of Sethi *haveli* complexes the author has identified 15 craft treatments, whereas 13 various kind of wooden fretwork ceiling designs were identified. The historic buildings were enclosed in gated neighbourhood (Fig.1), the plan of the Sethi *haveli* complexes is quite different from other Indian indigenous houses. These are traditional multi-purpose buildings with family portion, guest house, trade offices and horse driven carriage garages. The exterior façade of the *havelis* is mostly designed with tri-arcade (*ti-bari*) highly ornamented with arabesque technique and tapering pilasters and the acanthus leaves frescoed on the borders of doors and the seating places built on both sides of the tri-arcade (Plate.1).

These grand mansions (*haveli* complexes) were planned and designed in a way that a wealthy man (*raees*) would aspire for himself and his family; a house that was environment and climate friendly provide relief in scorching hot summers and comfort in severe cold. The Sethi *haveli* complexes were constructed in various phases as is evident from their stylistic differences and design. With passage of time more rooms were added because of the children's marriages and further family's expansion to the original two storey planned residence. The ornamentation of the *haveli* complexes were carried out throughout the occupation of those phases by incorporating every beautiful element and feature. The Sethi historical records are evident that the craftsmen and architects (*mistri*) were usually hired for some years to construct the *haveli* complexes by also keeping their relatives and subordinates (Sethi 2002:7). The architects and the craftsmen while adding more rooms were to follow the overall design principles of balance, harmony, proportion and geometrical layouts. There is no doubt that this conceptualizing of space within an indigenous framework was sophisticated and well worked out.

The layout plan of these *haveli* complexes is a distinctive feature, having central courtyard in the form of a *mung*, which lets ventilation, and sunlight to some extent reduced in amount as it circulates around the arcaded rooms surrounded by courtyards the *haveli* complexes portrays the traditional living style of the Sethis. Peshawar region is being prone to earthquakes thus, the buildings are constructed with concern to resist seismic activity. The basements were used to provide cool, calm interior spaces in the hot summers of Peshawar, however the adorned living areas as luxurious inner spaces allowed family members to live as well as entertain their female or intimate male family members in luxurious splendour. The three or four storeys high *haveli* complexes are an example of structural and architectural achievement, as it engages the matchless construction technique of an arrangement of wood frame and brick panels (*dhajji dewari*). It offers a genuine method of construction with a daily chore used courtyard.

The Sethi *haveli* complexes portrays the well-off merchants of Peshawar during the 19th century, along with the inspirations from Central Asia, the Late Mughal and Sikh style of arched openings and the ornamental sorts extending from stucco work, fresco, *chini khana*, parquet ceilings, wooden lattice work, are outstanding features that indicates towards their exclusive and striking position surrounded by other house sorts of the region.

The Sethi *haveli* complexes has enormous basements. One of the *haveli* which belong to Ahmed Gul Sethi have two tiers the first storey basement has three halls, which are disconnected by foyers and can be utilized as three separate rooms for afternoon nap. The basements on lower floor of the *haveli* complexes are huge halls which can be used for many people at the same time for any purpose, could be socialising or taking rest in the hot afternoons. They are well ventilated by latticed shuttered openings towards the central courtyard. The upper storeys of the *haveli* complexes were utilized by family the sleeping chambers were usually placed on first floor highly embellished with encased niches and fresco and stucco work. In Ahmed Gul Sethi *haveli* along with the other rooms the first storey consists of the master bedroom, named the '*Shahnashin*' room (Plate.2), meaning residence of the Monarch (*Shah-*

nashin). The family sources explain that this room was used always by the newly married sons of the Ahmed Gul. From this room one can view the courtyard and the family *veranda* on the ground level. The *Shahnashin* room is highly ornamented and beautifully decorated room. This hall (*dalan*) has faded fresco painting (*naqqashi*), adorned encased niches, shuttered windows and painted wooden doors and parquet technique (*khatam-band*) ceiling. In the centre of the encased niches (*chini-khana*) is fixed a Russian clock in this embellished Mughal style hall (*dalan*), a souvenir carried back by Ahmad Gul from a tour to Moscow and fixed within the highly elaborately ornamented encased niches.

On the second storey level off the *haveli* complexes there are the utility areas of a kitchen, the toilets, the washroom and the well, arranged directly above the service area of ground and first floors. With the well opening, a bucket would suspend by a cable to take out water, there are also a hand basin fixed on the walls. In the *haveli* complexes mostly on south side of the courtyards there is a wooden bench which was used for sitting area for taking meals its size is approximately 8ft. x16ft, made precisely for eating food, which gives the idea that family eating food together was an important norm socially and culturally. The setting of the wooden bench in the courtyard opening is an indication that it performed double requirements along with the taking meals it would give shade to the courtyard and its connecting arcaded rooms from the scorching hot summer sun and the pouring rain.

The offices were initially built inside the *haveli* complexes as is evident from Ahmed Gul Sethi *haveli* complex (Plate.3). When the Sethi merchants got rich, their commercial activities also expanded and they started building separate structures, which were usually facing *Bazar-i-Kalan*. The rooms were small in size but the formation was almost the same. First and second floors were connected through a central courtyard. The offices were also connected to the *haveli* complexes. Both storeys have a *mung* which provides fresh air and daylight to circulate the trade offices.

Horse driven carriages were specially built near the guest houses for their own use as well as for visiting merchants or traders and sometimes their long-distance relatives. There were rooms for the horsemen and stable for horses as well.

Historical, Cultural and Archaeological Significance

The Sethis were originally from the Punjab region of Bhera who used to trade indigo (*neel*) to central Asia (Hanafi 2004:199). Mian Hafiz Ghulam Ahmad, the family's head, moved from Bhera to Chamkani, a town near Peshawar. The Sethis established an office in the *Qissa Khawani Bazar* to deal with merchants from Peshawar to Bukhara and Kabul (Rehman, 2008). They constructed their homes in Peshawar's walled city, which was a bustling economic centre at the time, but they also needed a place to start their businesses. They settled themselves at *muhallah Dhallan*, and eventually flourished in their enterprises, increasing their business operations in far off regions such as West Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia (Sethi 2002:36; Jaffer 1946:74). These enormous, ornate mansions provide insight into the owners' culture and way of life. The adoption and use of design elements from the Mughal to the British period demonstrates the hybridity of different civilizations.

The intellectual and cultural interactions that took place in society between the British and the Indians had an impact on the architectural environment. These many colonial architectural transactions gave rise to the Indo-Saracenic style, where an infusion including both architectural elements could be merged to create novel styles and blends. Making selections from the cultural materials available to them is one of the major benefits that people make statements about their identities. The Sethi *havelis* amalgamated and combined design elements that connected to and maintained specific coordination of activities and social values. The architectural pattern of threshold (*dehliz*), foyers (*deorhi*), courtyards (*sehn*), and roof top level (*kotha*) components created what Rapoport referred to as "systems of setting" that allowed the "systems of activities" to take place (Rapoport 1980:283).

Current Status of Preservation

The *havelis* are now being divided among the family members, thus it has different owners in various sections; some are being sold, some are being leased out, others are being inhabited by family members, and a few are lying vacant and are in desperate need of repair. The most of the Sethi *haveli* complexes are now utilised for residential and other combined purposes. Buildings that are inhabited by people such as the Adul Rahim Sethi and Abdul Jalil Sethi *haveli* complexes are considerably good in condition than those that have been vacant for many years. A few vacant *havelis* are decaying; their windows, glass panes, and doors are shattered, flooring are fractured, and shear splits had formed because of earthquakes and floods. The iron grills are rusted and roofs are in bad condition. Ahmed Gul Sethi and Fateh Gul Sethi *haveli* complexes at different places have damaged roofs, broken flooring, and rustic

iron fences (Plate.4). The most significant effort made to preserve in these ancient buildings has been to repaint them, in Abul Rahim Sethi *haveli* the ornamented encased niches and highly decorated rooms are covered and concealed with hard board sheets destroying the beauty of these family portion ground floor of the *haveli*. They are mainly leased out for both residential and business uses. Some have built additional extensions to these *havelis* to meet the requirements of the residents. Some extensions are made for household reasons, while others are made for commercial purposes. For example, Abdul Karim *haveli* is split into two sections, one of which is used for a maternity hospital and the other for a females' technical centre.

In terms of social value, Sethi *haveli* complexes are valuable resources. Abandonment causes permanent degeneration in a short period of time. The issue here is that their upkeep is very expensive. Adaptive reuse through privatisation and economic reuse of *haveli* complexes may provide suitable solutions to this problem. Modification focuses on preserving the quality of the historic city while also adapting the urban fabric and the activities that occur within it to current economic, cultural, and social perspectives. As a result, urban regeneration may be utilised to promote adaptive reuse of historic centres, improve their economic core, and react to local communities' socioeconomic demands. While the preservation of heritage - listed centres as static instances of old construction technologies is rejected, the same can be said for destructive interventions aimed only at generating monetary boost. In a systematic approach to resolving the extremely unique conditions of these *haveli* complexes, the community's aspirations, as well as its culture and social surroundings, should be taken into account. However, it's essential to remember that adaptive re-use must be regulated by appropriate rules and guidelines in order to protect them from detrimental interventions. These guidelines aim to preserve the historic environment with little modification in order to maintain the buildings' original character.

Participation in adaptive reuse initiatives is often misinterpreted, with governmental agencies marketing their conventional conservation goals via public relations campaigns. It is, on the other hand, a very important motivation to build working connections with stakeholders who have already established themselves inside them. Owners, users, investors, and politicians are all becoming more important participants in the preservation of built heritage. All of these groups need enticing chances to engage in the adaptive reuse process while preserving their legal rights and providing financial incentives for active participation. They may include tax-exempt status and floor area index transfers, all while keeping the stakeholders' budgetary limitations in mind.

Private market perspectives appropriate for increasing the economy of the *haveli* complexes must also be considered in adaptive reuse strategies. The desired outcome of involvement is for stakeholders to be encouraged to fund, execute, monitor, and assess conservation efforts in their own communities (Chan 2008:353). Of course, appropriate legislative and legal frameworks are essential for the organisation and administration of conservation activities.

Adaptive Reuse and the Sethi *Haveli* Complexes

Adaptive reuse a means of guarding against degradation and disintegration. It includes all procedures that extend the life of cultural and heritage, with the goal of preserving these structures for generations to come and all people taking an interest in culture heritage (Feilden 1994:10). Conservation is often used to describe the protection and repair of the built environments, culture, and aesthetic appeal from previous eras. Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is often used as a technique to improve historical sites in a number of ways (Kolo 2015:127).

The author has suggested reuses for the *haveli* complexes such as for office of the Fateh Gul Sethi, administration office and a help desk of the Sethi *haveli* complexes project to facilitate visitors (Plate.3D.1). The Ahmed Gul Sethi *haveli* should be utilized as entertainment and cultural activities etc (Plate.3D.2) the Sethis were successful merchants of their time they must have lived like monarchs to portray that Abdul Rahim Sethi *haveli* is suggested to be decorated according to the lifestyle of Sethi, with furnishers utensils, the way they used to spend their time in the *haveli* complexes and offices (Plate.3D.3). Karam Bukhsh Sethi *haveli* is suggested to be art and craft vocational school with the aim that all the ornamentation applied in the Sethi *haveli* complexes should be taught here to anyone interested in art and craft. The Abdur Raheem Sethi *haveli* complex located on *Bazar-i-Kalan* Road is already occupied by maternity hospital and the family portion and guest house is utilized by female vocational centre the author has thought to let it fulfil the reuses that are already implemented for the good causes (Plate.3D.4). The Abdul Jalil Sethi *haveli* complex have shops placed outside the *haveli* complex they are suggested to be reused as traditional commodities shops for tourist to buy traditional

stuff as souvenirs such as rugs and carpets, local sweets, apparels, and traditional jewellery (Plate.3D.5). The *haveli* is suggested to be reused as food court of traditional Peshawar food such as local, rice, Barbe-Que meat, desserts, and the famous *Kehwa* (tea) (Plate.3D.6). Thus, the whole Sethi *muhallah* will be revived and the significant buildings that once had beautified the area will again give the same ambiance and people visiting locals or from far places would gain knowledge about the architectural and social life styles of the merchants of 19th century.

If the Adaptive reuse project of Sethi *haveli* complexes is headed by private owners or stakeholders who are self-financiers for museums, hotels and restaurants, the different kinds of reuses produce fairly adequate funds for the repair and upkeep. The *haveli* complexes proposed for reuse as public spaces may not generate enough money for repair and maintenance, but they may greatly assist in establishing a public space for the community to engage in social activities. The original architectural design of *haveli* complexes should be well understood so that the architect may easily adapt the space to another purpose. Analysing blueprints of original architectural design method and material is critical in this regard.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Adaptive reuse is a new term used for conservation, preservation and restoration of old buildings specifically those buildings which are historically significant or either were well known for their architecture. The Sethi merchants built their *havelis* around (1800-1910) some 212 years old; once contained of more than a dozen *haveli* complexes. These *haveli* complexes were built in a form of cluster almost adjacent with each other and sometimes even opening into each other courts or back yards. Out of which now only seven houses are left. Once they would have fashioned spectacular facades while they were all existing, even now some parts of the *muhallah* are noteworthy in view of the rare street façades and porticoes, they have diverse features depending upon either they are facing on a public the *Bazar-i-Kalan* Road or towards Sethi *muhallah*.

They all form the organic morphology of a neighbourhood, the existing original Sethi *haveli* complexes have noteworthy group value. That's why in context of the uniqueness of the city spatial characteristics and exceptional architectural vocabulary should be treated as a national treasure and should be included in the National and International Heritage buildings list. In the walled city of Peshawar, the most of the building typology is historic buildings that are worth conserving for their cultural heritage. If these historic buildings shall undergo through re-adaptive reuse, a transformation of the city will begin. The local community will also take interest to invest in and renovate these buildings. The Sethi *haveli* complexes in the walled city of Peshawar are in need to be re-adapt and reused for new function since it has lost its function as residential means. The Sethi *haveli* complex with different purposes will offer several benefits and opportunities to the local community and tourists. Studies has shown that historic buildings that are re-used with the communal use, for example commercial, cultural, and educational purpose, are more fruitful in subsidising the social development of the city. The walled city of Peshawar is rich in context of built heritage; yet, it is evident that because of the lack of attentiveness in the conservation of heritage buildings and economic conditions, minimal number of historic buildings have been preserved and reused. The traditional life style should be passed on to future generations to ensure the socio-cultural sustainability. To restore the heritage architecture and transmit them to up-coming generations, adaptive reuse is unavoidable. The technique of adaptive reuse of vacated Ahmed Gul Sethi *haveli* complex will supportive to the continuity, socio-sustainability, and liveability of the city. For the endurance of the historic buildings, the physical, economic and socio-cultural aspects should be considered with a holistic approach. The maintenance and adaptive reuse of built heritage via social consciousness certifies social and cultural sustainability. The Sethi *haveli* complexes that have endured throughout the years is informative exhibit of the social and cultural life style of the societies. The strategies of adaptive reuse shall be developed to function heritage buildings with their original use or appropriate uses with the authenticity of the original use. Adaptive reuse shall be implemented without damaging the architectural identity of the *havelis*. In schemes of adaptive reuse, considering the user desires and user satisfaction is essential in terms of the endurance of the use. Principle and policies for increasing social awareness shall be generated.

There should be a rising understanding that residential built heritage is an important component of Peshawar's social resources, and that restoring the history of Sethi *haveli* complexes may offer economic, cultural, and social advantages to local community. The decision to repurpose these *haveli*

complexes is influenced by a number of factors, including the location, cultural, architectural legacy, and market trends. The purpose of building conservation has changed from restoration to inclusion in a dense city revitalization and sustainability strategy. This corresponds to the demand for improved liveability and long-term sustainability in an extremely competitive global economy (Boussaa 2010:305). In walled city of Peshawar an expanding urban, high-performing abilities and talent framework, good living circumstances are an essential incentive for communities to attract talented workers. A lively and interesting cultural scene in these *haveli* complexes is an essential element of appeal, especially for creative professionals who want an exciting and instructive atmosphere not just for their pleasure, but rather as inspiration and reward for the workforce.

Adaptive reuse of Sethi *haveli* complexes and architecture programmes could have a strong relationship, which means that students might learn how to deal with heritage, conservation processes, and how to design with an archaeology, cultural heritage, and values, learned trained architects who are accountable for the design to conserve, repurpose, reconstruct, and incorporate development activities. One of the most essential needs for learning conservation of Sethi *haveli* complexes will be to learn how to identify and analyse the significance of architectural history, which should be the basis of all conservation courses.

The *haveli* complexes conservation is a proactive approach to preventing the degradation and destruction of built heritage in the first place. However, it is well understood that this approach cannot be oversimplified by stopping at the physical fabric of them. In this respect, *haveli* complexes were environmentally friendly, particularly in terms of building materials and construction methods. However, it's worth noting that these constructions were put to good use in accordance with their physical structures as well as their socio-cultural and socio-economic settings (Wang 2010:1241). As a result, restricting responsive conservation to simply integrating environmental technology such as solar panels or solar systems in *haveli* complexes will be a distortion of these buildings' overall characteristics and their ability to react to a broad range of requirements and ambitions.

Thus, the paper concludes that adaptive reuse of built heritage shall be implemented by well learned and experienced organisations who are well aware of the process pros and cons such as ICOMOS, UNESCO. Implementing internationally acclaimed charters and conventions such as Burra charter, Athens, charter, Venice charter European convention etc. So that the authenticity and originality of the significant Sethi *haveli* complexes would sustain and will be protected and safeguarded to the future generations and for the benefits of local communities.

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Plates of the Sethi haveli complexes



Plate 1 Tri-arcade (*ti-bari*) Façade of Ahmed Gul Sethi *haveli* complex



Plate.2. Juxtaposed views of *Shahnashin* room, placed on the south side of first floor of Ahmad Gul Sethi *haveli* complex



Plate. 3. Interior view of guest rooms of main office located on second floor of Ahmad Gul Sethi haveli complex





Plate. 4. West side arcades first and second floor of Ahmad Gull Sethi haveli complex, the meal taking bench (*takht*) is lying covered in a cloth in the courtyard

Plate.3 D. 1. Fateh Gul Sethi Trade office suggested to be adapted and reused as administration/management office for Seth *haveli* complexes adaptive reuse project.



Plate. 3 D. 2. Ahmed Gul Sethi *haveli* complex suggested to be adapted reused as a venue for cultural activities



Plate. 3 D. 3. Abdul Raheem Sethi haveli complex suggested as Sethi lifestyle museum



Plate. 3 D.4. Abdul Karim Sethi *haveli* complex family quarters and guest room placed on first floor aerial view from west side, is currently reused as vocational school for girls.



Plate. 3D.5. Adaptive reuse of Abdul Jalil Sethi *haveli* complex shops the shop on the right is traditional jewellery and the left shop is traditional apparels.

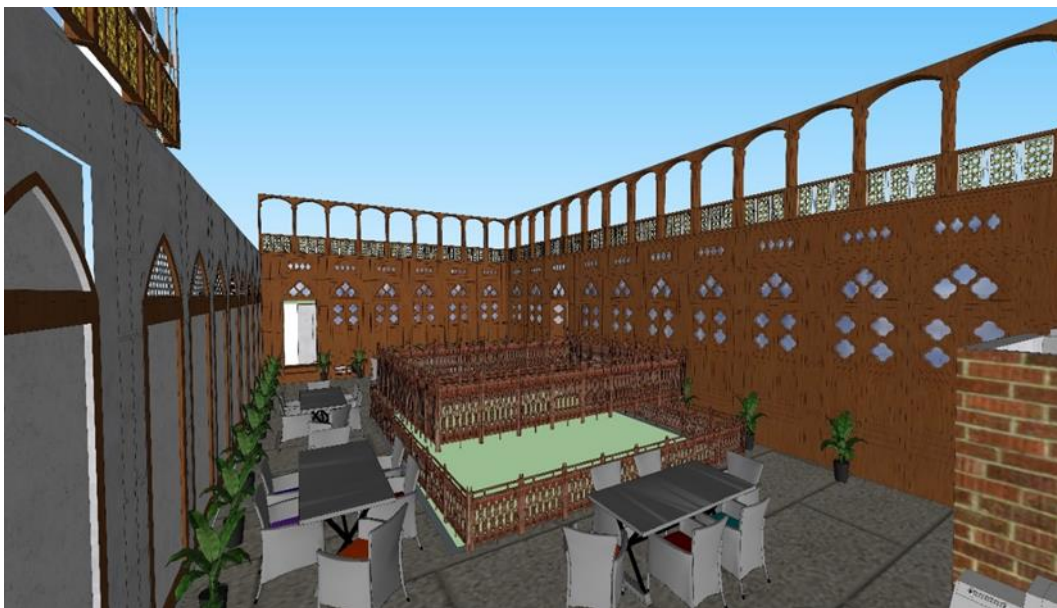


Plate. 3 D.6. Second floor roof top of Abdul Jalil Sethi *haveli* family quarters adapted reused as open roof Bar-Be-Que.