Dear Friends,

Ms. Yasmin Contractor
Convenor, INTACH
Gurgaon Chapter

I am delighted to extend warm greetings and share exciting updates from the Gurgaon Chapter of INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage). As the Convener of this esteemed chapter, I take great pleasure in connecting with you through these pages. Our journey in the new year has been filled with remarkable events and endeavors that highlight our unwavering commitment to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Gurgaon.

We have been fortunate to witness inspiring initiatives and collaborate with enthusiastic individuals who share our passion for heritage conservation. From participating in inter-school competitions like the "Khana Khazana" poster making competition to engaging in enlightening trips to Mewat (Nuh) to explore the region's heritage, our chapter has been actively fostering awareness and appreciation for our cultural diversity. We have also had the privilege of visiting the Urusvati Museum of folklore and joining hands with Ryan International School to celebrate "The World Heritage Day." These experiences have not only deepened our understanding but also allowed us to engage with the community and ignite a sense of pride in our heritage.

In our pursuit of knowledge and exploration, we recently organized our first walk in Gurgaon, accompanied by enthusiastic students from Delhi Public School, Sector-45 Gurugram. This inaugural event marked a significant milestone as we embarked on a journey to uncover the hidden gems and historical treasures that lie within our city.

Furthermore, we had the honor of hosting Ms. Swapna Liddle, who shared her insights and expertise on her book "Broken Script" during a captivating talk. The event brought together history enthusiasts, students, and members alike, fostering a sense of camaraderie and a shared love for our cultural heritage.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all our members, volunteers, and supporters who have contributed to the success of these initiatives. Your unwavering dedication and enthusiasm have been instrumental in propelling our endeavors forward.

As we move ahead, we remain committed to our mission of preserving, promoting, and celebrating the cultural heritage of Gurgaon. We will continue organizing engaging events, educational programs, and conservation projects to safeguard the legacy we have inherited for future generations.

On behalf of the entire Gurgaon Chapter of INTACH, I extend my warmest wishes to all our readers. May your journey through this magazine be filled with inspiration and appreciation for the rich tapestry of our heritage.

Best regards,

Yasmin Contractor
Convener, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter
The competition was held at the Suncity World School on 24th January 2023. It was truly rewarding for all of us. In the course of the event the participants explored the flavorsome Indian culinary world, which was the theme of the competition. The competition has rightly been called ‘Khana Khazana’ as the traditional Indian cuisine is truly exquisite.

The chief guest of the event was Ms. Salma Yusuf Husain, Food Historian, Author and Persian Scholar. She writes articles and column on food for popular journal and newspapers. Her book “The Emperors Table: the art of Mughal Cuisine”, received the National Tourism Award 2009 from the Vice-President of India, and Gourm and World cookbook Award for the “best in the world book for culinary history” in 2009 from Paris. She shared many interesting food stories with the participants.

It not only familiarized contestants with the traditional Indian cuisine, but also helped them to connect with their food heritage. Participants had to make a poster and write an essay on any one traditional Indian dish as a part of this competition.
Glimpses of the INTACH Khana Khazana Competition at the Suncity World School, Gurugram
Glimpses of the INTACH Khana Khazana Competition at the Suncity World School, Gurugram
INTACH Gurugram Chapter February 2023

INTACH Gurgaon chapter’s Ms. Yasmin Contractor (Convenor, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter), Ms. Anjali Saran (Co-Convenor, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter) and Tapasya Samal (Co-Convenor, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter) undertook a day trip to explore the sites and environs of Nuh, Kotila and Ghasera as a part of their expansion of activities and listing works in the district. This is an account of the state of affairs of the heritage sites in the area.

Whether it is heritage activism of active conservation of monuments and traditions, INTACH Gurugram has kept its promise through engaging, meaningful and impacting actions.

The region’s heritage buildings had previously been listed by the Gurgaon Chapter back in the year 2002 which included the Nalhar Shiv Mandir, Chuhimal ka Talaab and Chattri, Dargah Hazrat Sheikh Musa and the Tehsil at Nuh. In 2018, the Govt. of Haryana had declared addition of five monuments to the list of sites under State Archaeology’s protection including Ghasera Fort, Old Tehsil Building at Nuh, Kotla Mosque in Kotla village and Chhatris and Kuan at Meoli village. However, the list available on the website of the department does not feature any of these, and neither do the sites show a signage to that effect. It seems the future of these structures is bleak given there are no saviours rushing to their rescue!

Mewat has a hilly terrain, dotted with the Aravali mountains, with scenic locations, yet strategically placed plateaus for defense architecture.

Rough climate, brackish water and difficult travel routes made the inhabitants of the region resilient and also provided vantage for extorting from passersby. It is the middle ground between the entry from north (Delhi) and connection to west and central India (UP and Rajasthan).
The historical timeline of the region shows progression from last known fable of the Mahabharata, when this area was known to be part of the countryside where the Pandavas took refuge during their exile. A Shiva temple known as Nalhar Shiv Mandir houses an ancient deity of shiv Lingam in a fairly contemporary complex. The site marks the advent of a trail that leads up to a Kadam tree from which emanates a perennial stream of water, believed to mark the spot where Arjuna created a stream with his arrow when Yudhishthira was parched. The Kotila Mosque is recorded to have been built by Bahadur Nahar, the first of the Khanzadas who was a Maeo chief awarded the title of Bahadur and the jagir in Mewat by Firuz Shah Tughlaq for his valour during Taimur’s invasion at the end of 14th century. He went on to build a fort Kotla Bahadur Nahar now known as Kotila Fort at Kotla atop a hillock in Aravallis accessed today through a treacherous trek.

One of the popular monuments in Nuh is the Dargah Hazrat Sheikh Musa, located at the base of the hilly terrain of Aravallis happens to be the only State Protected1 structure in Nuh. The gateway built in local stone and lime including stunted vaults, cusped arches, bangaldaars, niches, etc. seems to have been restored recently. The original 14th century muqbara in marble and the well now stand amidst a relatively later construction of a triple arched wall, and a recent building housing a madarsa. Visitors are greeted with a single decayed and nearly illegible sign at the entrance that declares its protected status and provides a basic introduction to the monument.
Adjoining the Dargah complex is an elaborate complex with enclosure at the top of the adjoining hill, accessed only through a steep trek through the stone boulders and thorny bushes. This structure has small chambers, with perhaps two level, some remaining arched openings show addition over period of time and no remaining roof structures. This could have possible been a structure with internal courtyards and the local families refer to it as Saat Chowk ki Haveli, abandoned by its inhabitants years ago. The rustic structure needs immediate attention and perhaps a gentler physical approach to be created for enabling any possible visitors.
Ghasera Fort is believed to have been commissioned by Rao Bahadur Singh who ruled Ghasera in 17th century, later defeated by Suraj Mal of Bharatpur. Built in local stone in random rubble, lakhori bricks and lime, the complex is reduced now to only few walls and a gateway. A structure now used as the Panchayat building abuts the old fortification wall. In the absence of protection status or awareness among locals, the fort’s debris is now seen to be a part of many newer structures.

The salt farming through lake brine method carried out in the region during 17th century created a number of wealthy local merchants or seths who resided in the area, contributing to the area’s prosperity and adding excellent architecture. One such merchant Seth Chuhimal has left his imprint on the area through a number of structures. Chuhimal ka Talaab and Chattri is an excellent specimen of the philanthropic public structures of water reservoirs which are commonly found across Haryana. The talab has beautiful chattris built in lakhori bricks and lime and clad with carved red sandstone. The deep tank which acted as a reservoir for rain water throughout the year and was a popular local pond used by villagers including swimming, is now a stagnant pool of dark water, surrounded by decaying structures and the chattri lies at a distance from the edge of the pool.
Heavy silting and collection of solid waste as well as refuge water from nearby homes, has left the water unfit for touching. The chattri was perhaps recently restored, but unsympathetically with cement. The central tomb has been dug up and several details are damaged and missing. This is in dire need of attention and some general care to allow continuity.

Chuhimal ki Haveli is located deeper inside Nuh village, accessible up to a point in car, and then on foot. The building is in the most miserable state with advanced decay setting into its elements, regular dumping of garbage besides wear and tear.
INTACH Gurgaon chapter’s Ms. Yasmin Contractor (Convenor, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter), Ms. Rekha Banerjee (Secretary, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter) and Tapasya Samal (Co-Convenor, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter) undertook a day trip to follow-up on the cultural exploration of Nuh, as a part of their expansion of activities and listing works in the district. This is an account of the state of affairs of the local stakeholders, sites and practice of local crafts in the area. Continuing engagement with a rural or semi-rural community for exchange of ideas, preservation or propagation of culture can only be achieved through cooperation and active participation of the local stakeholders. In an endeavour to include Mewat into INTACH Gurgaon’s activities and expand the world view of the region’s tangible and intangible heritage, the chapter reached out to some members of the community who are actively conducting heritage walks for locals and also spreading information through social media about the area’s heritage.

Some of the local crafts are practiced in the area by members of the community as a part of their lifestyle. A number of samples of such crafts were explored during the visit with interactions with local ladies who welcomed the team into their homes. Gudri, a layered fabric blanket stitched by ladies in the household, including old and new fabric, patchwork, embroidery or running stitching in contrasting threads is a practical item of use as well as a typical craft of the area. There is also a difference in winter and summer use pieces created with different types of fabric layered in varying thicknesses. A number of common lifestyle items are created using neutral or coloured chaff of wheat or moonj grass including changeri a collection of utensils made by weaving the thread made out of plant fibres.
They are locally used for storing warm breads or other items of everyday use. Some other items like bijna (hand-fan) and indi (head gear for carrying pots) are also crafted using plant fibres, coloured thread. Traditionally these were made by women as a part of their dowry, but now the practice is diminishing with current generation not keen on such practices in their busy schedules, acquiring higher education or professional work. Newer items crafted out of wool (crochet) plastic or acrylic have become a part of local crafts, but they do not hold much promise or prospect for continuity.

Some of the local building crafts are fast disappearing out of practice replaced by bamboo, cement and other new materials added to the palate. Local houses often contained a large hall or room called bangla which was mainly occupied by unmarried men in the family, sometimes also used as meeting places for local men.

Fig 02: craft items created by menfolk mudda (stool with moonj reeds), charpai (cot with wooden frame)
This building built in mud, was provided with several punctures in windows, roofed using thatch and wooden truss. The flooring was rammed earth coated with lipai using cattle dung, water and mud. The mud walls are often covered in patterns created with hand impression in soft mud, like on the cattle dung storage units called batewada. Some batewadas also had openings in addition to thatch roof and mud structure in order to retrieve cattle dung cakes, used as fuel for cooking.

An interaction with a local family shed light on some of the cultural practices of the unique Meo community. Average family here has an agricultural or animal husbandry based livelihood. There is blend of Hindu and Islamic cultural practices observed, like Meos have family gotras (Hindu caste system), use Purohits for sending pili chithi (wedding invite), offer namaz, complete Haj and prefer marrying within their community in a different gotra. Food culture includes eating local millets like jao, bajra and rice. Use of milk and milk-based products like curd, buttermilk (chach) and ghee are common practice till date.
Wedding feasts include biryani, meat-based gravies, daliya and chach/milk. Garments worn on a daily basis have also evolved from ghagra, choli to salwar kameez, lehenga for wedding rituals and other contemporary attires are now included for festivals. During Partition of India, some of the Meo community members had migrated to Pakistan, and the reverse had happened. Much of the community stays in touch with their families across the border and make visits back and forth. The community also inhabits large portions of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan apart from Mewat in Haryana. Needless to say, there are area specific peculiarities in cultural practices of food, living and clothing. Among intangible heritage is a tradition of folk singing including Jogis and Mirasis. These folk artists are dwindling in number and the tradition of narrating folk tales through singing along with musical instrument playing is fading in the absence of newer generations training and practicing the craft. In literary history, these folk tales like Pandur ka kara were well documented in publications. Many such publications, now out of circulation and printing are available with some collectors. An effort needs to be made to either collect or document and copy such rare gems and make them available for access by interested individuals.

On a previous visit, the chapter had discovered that some of the structures listed by the Gurgaon Chapter back in the year 2002 were in dilapidated condition on the verge of extinction including Chuhimal ka Talaab and Chattri. Travelling through the region one stumbles upon several monuments, some apparent of their antiquity and yet others that require investigation in their past. The monuments declared for inclusion in state protected list in 2018 by Govt. of Haryana are also seen to be in poor state. Due to lack of protection and orientation among the local community regarding the historic value of the buildings, encroachments, alterations and neglect seem to be a major threat. One of the monuments, Kotila Mosque for example has been altered massively with the old grave of Bahadur Nahar has been paved over to make a courtyard for prayers and the material from the canopy has been used to create a gateway.
There are also several structures, remain of foundations and archaeological or architectural spots nestled in the hilly areas which need discovery and documentation under listing. This activity is proposed to be taken up soon in collaboration with local guides and frequent explorers of the terrain.

Among the future course of actions for the area proposed to be undertaken by INTACH Gurgaon Chapter, there is a plan to work closely with the local community for development of awareness and pride in their heritage, both tangible and intangible. In addition there will be extensive documentation to preserve some of the fading practices including listing, digitisation and publication. Among other aspects, capacity building in the form of skill development, self-reliant or entrepreneurship workshops, craft oriented marketing or exhibition activities to be planned as a part of the crusade to map the region on India’s heritage map!
Continued...

Fig 10: An unprotected archaeological mound near Malab, Fig 11: One of large size bricks from the mound

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VISIT TO
URUSVATI MUSEUM OF FOLKLORE
Sunday 26th February, 2023

Ms. Yasmin Contractor, Convener, INTACH Gurgaon Chapter thanking Ms. Komal Anand
INTACH members visiting the art gallery
Glimpses of Art Gallery at Urusvati Museum of folklore
WORLD HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATION
AT
RYAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS, GURUGRAM
18th April, 2023
Walk began at 7.45am with the students of Class XI, Delhi Public School, Sector-45, Gurugram.

Ms. Anjali Saran, Ms. Tulika Rana with walk leader Mr. Jeswin Joseph, teachers and students of DPS, Sector-45, Gurugam
Glimpses of Heritage Walk

GURUGRAM HERITAGE WALK | INTACH GURGAON CHAPTER| 11TH MAY 2023
The Broken Script | By Ms. Swapna Liddle

Event | Book Reading

Date: 20th May, Venue: Heritage City Community Centre

The following is the short description of the book written by Ms. Swapna Liddle:

The British East India Company captured Delhi in September 1803 and became its de facto ruler, while the Mughal emperor continued to occupy the Red Fort. Swapna Liddle’s book is a study of the half-century that followed—when the two regimes overlapped and Delhi was at the cusp of modernity, changing in profound ways. The Broken Script describes in rich detail the complex tussle between the last two Mughal emperors and the East India Company, one wielding considerable symbolic authority, and the other a fast-growing military and political power. It is also the story of the people of Delhi in this period: the cultural and intellectual elite, business magnates, the landed nobility and the exotic new ruling class—the British.
Delhi Public School, Sec 45, Gurgaon won the INTACH Best Heritage Club Award 2022-23.
Heartiest Congratulations!

Regional Winners
(Among 9000 entries from India)

- Nia Siddiquee, Class -8 for A Tripuri Dish
  Matri Kiran School Chakhwi, Gurugram

- Sanvi Upadhyaya, Class- 8 for Vada Pav
  Delhi Public School, Sec - 45, Gurugram
We extend a warm welcome to our New Members

- Ms. Akanksha Singh
- Ms. Gulnaz
- Ms. Shaila Naaz
- Ms. Manika Goel
- Ms. Mansha Samreen
- Ms. Neeru Gupta
- Mr. Nishant Arora
- Mr. Praveen Gupta
- Ms. Rupali Chaudhary
- Ms. Sweekriti Chaudhary
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