

INTACHER

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Newsletter of the INTACH Bengaluru Chapter

Read on to find out about upcoming events, member profiles, interviews, what the Bengaluru Chapter has been to lately, photographs, and more. We hope to make this a quarterly, maybe even a bimonthly. Give us your suggestions, feedback, contributions, photographs. We look forward to hearing from you!

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THE QUARTER THAT WAS

The Towns of our City

On May 22nd, we had our first screening of *Towns of the City: People, lives and stories in the old cantonment towns of Bengaluru*. The film grew out of our exhibition of the same name last year in Fraser Town, Richards Town and Cooke Town.

The film tells the story of these areas through the residents' stories, memories and anecdotes, supplemented with some archival

photos and information. We screened the film at Bungalow 7 in Richards Town, an old bungalow now used as an event space. The response was so overwhelming, we ended up having two screenings back-to-back!

After the screening, many people said they found the film heartwarming, and could connect with it. Many others said, "When are you making a film about

Malleswaram /Basaveshwarnagar / Jayamahal...!



All About Water for the City

June 24th saw a group of enthufolks setting off at an ungodly hour for Hessarghatta, where waterman Vishwanath S (also known as Zen Rainman) revealed the history of

the first major, modern technological interventions for bringing water to Bengaluru. He took us around the BWSSB facilities at Hessarghatta where we saw some fascinating instruments, machinery and other paraphernalia from over a century

ago. We played hide-and-seek with the brick aqueducts built to bring water to the plant from the reservoir. also visited the itself, reservoir and were all bowled over by the Ganesh Iyer siphons. All in all, an eyeopener of a trip!



THE QUARTER THAT WAS (continued...)

A Tree Walk

A cool, slightly overcast Sunday morning in July saw a group of around 15 participants gather in Indiranagar for a Tree Parichay. We started off under the shade of a massive Raintree, a native of



Central and South America. As Ganesh mentioned, with its

salubrious climate, Bengaluru provided a perfect place for many non-native tree species from across the world to take hold. This was intentional, to develop Bengaluru as a garden city. And 12th Main, Indiranagar was a very good example of this, with over 60 species to be observed along its length! Who'd have thought?!

In addition to looking at the trees, Ganesh also encouraged us to use our other senses such as touch and smell. So the early morning traffic witnessed the curious sight of a group of people touching trees and smelling leaves all along the busy road!



Finally, after about a couple of hours of thoroughly enjoyable walking, listening, talking, touching, smelling (not to mention eating!), we ended under an Indian Cork Tree. Many thanks to Ganesh and we look forward to more! - by Sanjay Varma, INTACH member

Fort High School - Open Day

Open Day on 11th August was organised to enable public interaction with the ongoing restoration project at the Fort High School. The motivation for such an event was to facilitate the growing public interest in Bangalore towards heritage and to enable engagement with this project.



The event that was open to all and we had participants from varied backgrounds ranging from students of architecture and design, heritage enthusiasts and heritage homeowners.

The INTACH team organised panels and maps that took participants on a guided tour around the school to



understand its features, structure, and the ongoing restoration. This also encouraged interaction with the masons, conservation experts, and architects about traditional materials, workmanship, and the design challenges involved in the restoration of a 111-year-old building. The response to the event was tremendous with over 150 attendees. The enthused participants understood more about the challenges and prospects of conservation. By far one of the most popular sections was where participants tried their hand at making and using lime plaster - children and adults alike enjoyed getting their hands dirty here! - by Sonali Dhanpal, conversation architect, formerly with INTACH

THE QUARTER THAT WAS (continued...)

The Bengaluru Inscription

We spoke in our last issue about the work on the Bengaluru Inscription in the Panchalingeswara temple in Begur. That work is finally complete. The Bengaluru Inscription now stands proud, mounted on a pedestal and highlighted by placing it in a pergola. We have also added signage so that visitors can understand the significance of this historical object. Along with it are three other inscriptions from

the same period, i.e., from the end of the 9th century CE. Do go and take a look!

Many thanks to *Shri SVS Gupta* and *Advaith Hyundai* for supporting this work.



THE QUARTER THAT WILL BE

A PIL for the Janatha Bazaar

September 11th, 1935. The Asiatic Building, now also called the Janatha Bazaar, was declared open. In the opening speeches, it was said that the building would be "a notable addition to the many splendid structures that contributed to the beauty of the picturesque city of Bangalore."

September 10th, 2018. There was a preliminary hearing in the High Court this morning on the PIL that INTACH Bangalore has filed for the preservation of the Janatha Bazaar building. Our lawyers have asked that no precipitative action be taken to bring down the building. The government plans to raze the building and construct a 14-storey complex there. The building, designed by GH Krumbiegel, is listed as a heritage building in the draft Revised Master Plan 2031.

The Court directed the government to respond in a few days.

Many thanks to the lawyers of Poovayya and Co who are working on this pro bono.

Earlier this year, we had asked you to write to the PWD asking it not to demolish the building. We do hope we can save Janatha Bazaar with your continued support.

INTACH in Schools

We have for some years now been engaging with some mainstream schools in the city, taking them out on heritage walks to the museum, temples, lakes, forts or palaces, or sometimes organising classroom interactions with some of them. But we have long felt the need to work with more schools, especially government schools.

After some meetings among members and volunteers,

Including Payoshini Saraf, Sreeja Nambiar, Basav Biradar, Pankaj Modi and Meera Iyer, we came up with a short module to get children interested in the city's history and heritage. Payoshni then put us in touch with Mantra4Change, an organisation that works with several government and low-fee schools in Bengaluru. Thanks to them, in August, we began a pilot project with a government Urdu-medium school in south Bangalore. Volunteer Pallavi Murthy, an architect and teacher, is anchoring the programme. A second pilot is scheduled for later this year. We hope to expand the programme to more schools soon.

If you'd like to volunteer in this project, please email us at: intach.blr@gmail.com.

Family Album

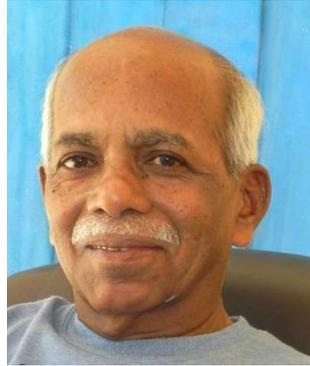
Where INTACH members introduce themselves



AJAY BHASKAR

After an early career in advertising working for large agencies in India and abroad, Ajay now runs his own design and photography studio, creating impactful communication for clients. He especially loves organising data into trends and patterns and dives deep into new technologies.

Ajay enjoys travelling and has a keen interest in history and craft. He has been an INTACH member since 2015. In the past, Ajay has worked on identifying and surveying old buildings in the Richmond Road / Langford Town areas. He has also designed posters for INTACH events.



ULHAS RANE

Architect Ulhas Rane is founder-director of Envirodesigners Pvt. Ltd. An INTACH member since 1987, his interest in heritage conservation began during his days in Sir JJ College of Architecture, Mumbai when he volunteered with the ASI to document monuments. He has worked on restoration of buildings in Mumbai, temples in Konkan and has prepared conservation proposals for Hill Forts in Maharashtra. His work on the conservation and adaptive reuse of Gulshan Mahal, a dilapidated building that now houses a Films Archives Museum in Mumbai, received an award from the Indian Heritage Society in 2001. He has authored several books on Maharashtra's heritage.

Your Take on Your City

Have an eye for photography? Send us your best shots of the city with a note about why took that photo and we'll feature it in these pages

Member *Olinda Timms* shot these pictures in Ulsoor. She says, "Here is a photograph of a beautiful building I discovered only recently in my neighbourhood. I wandered into this sylvan property just as the sun was setting and captured this serene treasure of Bangalore in the fading light. Most certainly worth a visit."

Sri Aurobindo Bhavan is a well-preserved, colonial styled building built in 1932 by the Royal family of Nepal for the sister of the King. It was gifted to Sri Aurobindo Trust in 1979. It is located on the south side of Ulsoor lake at 110, Gangadhar Chetty Road. The palatial building is surrounded by flowering gardens and woods that are carefully maintained and protected. The Library and Meditation centre are open to the public. The premises also contain the Auro Mirra International School.



VOX PRINCEPS

Where eminent Bengalureans speak about their work, motivations, life, heritage, and of course, the city

Architect PK Venkataraman is the founder of the renowned architectural firm Venkataraman Associates. He was also a member of the Bangalore Urban Arts Commission for a year or so. Today, at the age of 83, he says he leads a quiet, retired life. In reality, Venkataraman is as still actively involved in several things. For 9 years, he successfully ran a Residents' Initiative for Safe Environment (RISE), a project that involved garbage segregation before most people had heard the term. He also established the Senior Citizens Enrichment Programme, whose members have been meeting every single week for 15 years now, usually in his garden. INTACH Bengaluru spoke to Mr Venkataraman about architecture, INTACH and his early involvement with protecting the city's heritage. Excerpts from a chat with him.

What prompted you to join INTACH?

The moment the setting up of INTACH was announced by Rajiv Gandhi in 1984, I thought it was a great idea. People who were associated with it were all very well-informed people - art enthusiasts and aesthetes like Pupul Jayakar and Martand Singh. I was in Delhi then and I joined.

Can you tell us a little about your early involvement with INTACH here in Bangalore?

In the early 1980s, there were some news reports saying the Attara Kacheri was in a dangerous condition and had to be demolished and so on. Even the



Urban Arts Commission had okayed the plan. The moment I came to know about this, I wrote a letter in Deccan Herald saying this must be stopped. That was the first such letter. In those days, Deccan Herald was the only paper in Bangalore so everyone saw it. This was followed by a letter from M Bhaktavatsala, and then several others also wrote.

Then Bhaktavatsala called us all for a meeting in Bangalore Club. There is no other building like that in Bangalore so we were all very disturbed by the plan to demolish it. Naomi Meadows (the then INTACH Convenor in Bangalore) was very, very committed to the task. She said, "Let's fight this tooth and nail." She knew Sir Bernard Fielden (a world-renowned and well-respected

conservation architect from the UK), and she said we could invite him from England to tell us if the building could be restored. She also organised meetings with the Chief Justice, with the Urban Arts Commission, and others. I remember myself and other active INTACH members went to meet the then Chief Justice. We told him that the Attara Kacheri should not be demolished. He said, "The building is in a dangerous condition. It has to be demolished. *Ek achha imaat bana denge hum* (We will construct a nice building here). And anyway, where is the alternative site?" I suggested that we could construct a new building in the Central Jail site where there is space. "We send culprits there and you want to send judges there?" he asked!

In the meantime, I along with a few others who were technically qualified to evaluate the building, visited it. We found that all the rainwater outlets on the roof had been deliberately plugged so that water was stagnating on the roof! We asked for the plugs to be removed.

Anyway, we got Sir Bernard Fielden over and he inspected the whole building. Then we held a press conference in Bangalore Club where Fielden stated that the building only needed minor repairs and once that was done, the Attara Kacheri would last another 150-200 years!

At one point, there was a move to demolish the Seshadri Iyer library too, saying it was old. And of

VOX PRINCEPS (continued...)

course, PWD is always waiting with its tractors to demolish things! If we are not very watchful in these kinds of situations, it will go before we know it. We can make a little noise. If the noise can do something, like what we were able to do for the Attara Kacheri, that's all that can happen. Beyond that, it is very difficult. Bodies like the Urban Arts Commission being only regulatory, there have no teeth to bite.

On architects and activism

As practising architects, if we object to all this (the move to demolish Ballabrooie, for example), it turns back on us. If we become activists, it affects our profession. At the same time, we also can't let it go. We have to play a kind of middle role, a balancing act.

On open spaces and going vertical in Bengaluru

In the 1960s and 70s, they made a

green belt around Bengaluru. You could not build into the green belt. This was to make sure Bengaluru did not expand. This Green Belt theory was the idea of the BMP (as it was called then) then. Restrictions were imposed on building heights. But that led to the buildings spreading and all the trees were cut. If you allow people to build high, we get more open space. Look at Bombay. They have high-rises but they also have trees.

Tell us a little about coming to Bengaluru and your early career here.

I came here in 1957 and toured around Bengaluru. I found it so beautiful and I wished I could come and live here. Sometimes you get what you wish for! I moved to Bengaluru in 1966. At first, I worked for CnT (Chandavarkar and Thacker) Architects. In 1969, I started my own firm. At CnT, I had been working on something in Thumba and was dealing with

Vikram Sarabhai. When I started Venkataramanan Associates, I had to start from scratch, one bathroom here, one puja room there! Now of course we have more than 200 employees in Bengaluru and a branch in Pune. And we have clients like Wipro, GE etc. My son, Naresh, is involved in it now.

What is your favourite project in Bengaluru that you have worked on?

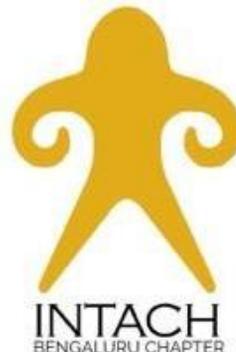
The library building in the Raman Research Institute was designed by me in the 1970s. I consider that my best work. The current director's house was originally a hostel building; it was converted into his residence. That too was done by me.

Executive Committee

Meera Iyer (Convenor)
Aravind C (Coordinator, Treasurer)
Pankaj Modi (Technical Coordinator)
Anup Naik
Sathyaprakash Varanashi

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