

INTACHER

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Newsletter of the INTACH Bengaluru Chapter

Alea Jacta Est! The die is cast! Presenting the first issue of our Chapter newsletter. Read on to find out about upcoming events, member profiles, interviews, what your 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. [This_is_your_newsletter!](#)

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The Quarter That Was

The first three months of this year have been quite packed. In January, we had a Tree and Nature Parichay in MN Krishna Rao Park, led by Ganeshram. Trees are so much a part of the heritage of Bengaluru; we need more people to (re)connect to them, and to see appreciate our natural heritage is not confined to Cubbon Park and Lalbagh alone. Those of you who have met Ganeshram on his previous walks for INTACH know how effective he is in helping people connect with trees through sight, touch, smell and sometimes even taste. Well, he certainly worked his usual magic here too.



In February, we had a Parichay with a difference: we had a storytelling session for children and adults at Tipu’s Armoury, led by the inimitable, talented and ever-entertaining Vikram Sridhar. Vikram held everyone’s attention with his amusing tales that ranged from stories about food to tales about heroes and heroines.

The Quarter That Was (...contd.)

How many of you have been to the armoury? Most of the people who came for the storytelling had never been to it before. That was partly the idea behind having this event at the armoury - to bring attention to a forgotten and neglected monument in the heart of Bengaluru. This armoury - British maps of the 1700s describe it as the Grand Magazine - is the only one remaining out of the five that once existed.

There was a definite buzz of excitement in the air as we walked through the pete one day before the full moon of the Hindu month of Chaitra. Temple rathas were getting decorated, the Dharmaraya temple was all decked up, speakers were being put in place. The pete was getting ready for the Karaga! This centuries-old festival is so 'Bengaluru', not least in the way it bridges and blurs boundaries between people, genders and communities. Suresh Jayaram, art historian, artist, and founder of the art space 1 Shanthi Road, conducted March's Parichay which was all about the *karaga*. Taking us through some of the principle stops of the *karaga* procession, sharing stories told to him by his grandmother and nuggets only an art historian could know, Suresh gave us an intimate, informed and informative look into the *karaga* that we were privileged to have.

On 10 March, we began a 10-week weekend course on Science in Archaeology, in collaboration with the National Institute for Advanced Studies. Dr Smriti Haricharan, Assistant Professor at NIAS is no stranger to INTACH having done introductory workshops on archaeology and megaliths for INTACH in the past. From breaking and assembling pots to field trips where students measuring megaliths and menhirs, If you're interested in delving deeper into architecture, art history or other aspects of our heritage, look out for more workshops and courses are planned for later this year. Are there other heritage-related workshops you wish could happen? Let us know!

April is the cruellest month, wrote the poet Tennyson. He might have been talking about heritage in Bengaluru for the first week brought an urgent call from Mr HC Kumaraswamy, a grandson of one of the Chief Engineers who worked on the building. Did we know the Janatha Bazaar was going to be demolished, he asked. INTACH volunteers immediately met the Chief Secretary, Ms Ratna Prabha, who was understanding of the issue. Calls to lawyers and other organisations interested in heritage followed. We decided to write to the authorities concerned to let them know of our concerns. Thank you, all of you who wrote to the PWD, started your own signature campaigns, and spread the word around to let the government know that we care about the city's heritage. The battle for the bazaar is nowhere near done but our journey to save it has begun well.

"In March, we began a 10-week weekend course on Science in Archaeology, in collaboration with the National Institute for Advanced Studies."



Fort High School: Restoring a 110-year-old school building

Not all was gloom and doom this month. World Heritage Day is celebrated worldwide every April 18th. But we in the Chapter celebrated a day late! We are sooper excited to inform you that on 19th April 2018, we began on the restoration work at Fort High School! The work was launched by the scion of the Wadiyar dynasty, His Highness Yaduveer Wadiyar, in whose great-grandfather's time the school was built.

We first got intimately acquainted with this school building back in 2011. We were saddened and quite shocked at its state. It was the usual story - lack of maintenance, peepal saplings growing on the roof, tiles broken - and as a result, there were rooms that were unusable, rooms that flooded every time it rained. We approached people in government, to no avail, and in parallel, other potential funders, agencies and people, and we despaired. Some more months passed and we got permission to restore but with a rider - we were not to ask government for money! Then along came Mr KC Venugopal, who read an article about the school in a newspaper and gallantly, selflessly came forward with a small donation towards restoration. Mr Venugopal was not an alumnus but had fond memories of playing football in the school field. And then, during our Then & Now exhibition at Cubbon Park in 2016, Fortune smiled at us once again and introduced to Mr Basant Poddar, Director at Mineral Enterprises Limited. We got talking, he expressed an interest in sponsoring some restoration, some more running around by our volunteers followed to get more getting permissions in place, and now, here we finally are!

Mr Poddar's company is the major donor of this project. The restoration, estimated to cost Rs 2.5 crores, will be finished (we hope) by June next year.



A shot of the magnificent internal courtyard at Fort High School



A view of the majestic exterior of the school



Another view of the school's exterior



Malgudi Days anyone?

The Bengaluru inscription

Anyone who has been in Bengaluru even a few weeks has probably heard of the story of the old woman who lived in a hut who served boiled beans to a tired (Hoysala) king who had been out hunting. And so our city was named after bendhe kalu.

A cute story but quite untrue because the name Bengaluru has been around long before Hoysala was a gleam in anyone's eye. And we know this because there is an inscription dating back to 890 CE or so that mentions a battle of Bengaluru. This historical object lies in the premises of the Panchalingeshvara temple in Begur. Unfortunately, despite several visits to the temple and conversations with people there, very often, we found the inscription distinctly neglected: we sometimes found it with cement blocks, dirty rags, firewood or tin sheets placed on it.

Some years ago, volunteers from the chapter began the treks to the offices of the department of both archaeology and endowments. Our initial attempts to get the departments to preserve the inscription were quite unsuccessful. We were given assurances. We were bounced about between the two departments. Finally, we decided to change tack. Just give us the permissions, we said, we will do what's required ourselves. "Of course. How can we refuse. You are doing such a good thing," they said.

Permissions in place, we went back to consult with the temple priests and committee. We also took the advice of Dr HM Siddhanagoudar, retired director of the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage, Govt of Karnataka, and epigraphist Dr HS Gopala Rao, secretary of the Karnataka Itihasa Academy.

Based on these consultations, we chose the location within the temple where the inscriptions could be placed safely and highlighted. Then followed another interminable wait: various donors had already paid to construct five new gopuras at the temple, three of which are already done. Someone was also paying to erect a new (and expanded) compound wall. But money seems to have run out in between because of which the wall came up two courses and then stopped. And we could do nothing until it was completed. Finally, work on the wall resumed and in March we were ready to begin our work.

Keep an eye out for the completion in the near future of this small project to preserve an important part of the city's history. You are all invited!

"We found the inscription distinctly neglected: we sometimes found it with cement blocks, dirty rags, firewood or tin sheets placed on it.



The Bengaluru inscription before INTACH's intervention



The current callous state of the hero-stone

The Towns of the City

People, lives and stories in the old cantonment towns of Bengaluru

Back in April 2017, for World Heritage Day, we had an exhibition called Towns of the City, which was about the history, heritage, culture and architecture of Fraser Town, Cooke Town and Richards Town. At that time, while talking to people, long-time residents primarily, one of the team mentioned that it might be a good idea to record what people were saying - oral history. So we started recording conversations when we met people in these towns - teachers, industrialists, housewives, cowherds, army folks and more - and suddenly, we had a film on our hands.

The documentary film, 'Towns of Our City - People, Stories and Life in the old cantonment towns of Bengaluru' has memories from residents of these areas, it has history and it has some revelations too. For example, residents talk about hurtling down Mosque Road on wagons (as kids), (for those of you not familiar with Mosque Road - you'd die if you tried this today) or making manja in the middle of the graveyard, etc. A couple of people told us about playing with paper boats in, and yes, retrieving them from, what we now call a nala but which not so very long ago was a beautiful stream. Today, you wouldn't even dream of going near this sewage-filled channel. Wouldn't it be nice if people could see this and be inspired enough to work towards regaining this? It's not all nostalgia. People have also shared what they think could be done to regain a sense of community, to reclaim their neighbourhoods, to work together.

The film was screened to a standing-room only audience on 20th May, at Bungalow 7, Hall Road, Richards Town. There were so many in attendance that we had to do an unplanned-for encore show!



A poster for the upcoming documentary film

“A couple of people told us about playing with paper boats in, and yes, retrieving them from, what we now call a *nala* but which not so very long ago was a beautiful stream.”

Family Album

Where INTACH members introduce themselves

Pankaj Modi

A conservation architect by training, Pankaj has dedicated experience in the field with specialisation in Wood Architecture from Norway. He has been involved in several restoration projects around the country with both government and private agencies. He co-authored a book Domes and Vaults in South India. He is visiting faculty in several architecture schools in Bangalore.

Pankaj has been involved with Intach activities in Karnataka and Bangalore for more than two decades. He has worked on projects ranging from creating heritage awareness, conducting heritage walks and led many conservation projects. “Working with Intach has given me immense opportunities to take heritage to people. At Intach, I look forward to seeing good standards of conservation practice and getting children sensitised and involved with heritage,” he says.



Francis Anthony

Oxford comma enthusiast. Yoga freak. Gym rat. Wannabe minimalist. Self-proclaimed culture-vulture. IT product marketer by day and armchair historian, sociologist, anthropologist, political scientist, and scholar of comparative religion by night. Human connection-oriented with an interest in all things at the confluence of people, culture, commerce, and high tech.

Started the INTACH Bengaluru Instagram account on March 1, 2018 with the express intent of world domination.



Your Take on Your City

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

Member Priyadarshini D. shot these pictures at Lalbagh. She says, "To me, these pictures sum up the two significant facets of Lal Bagh: its continuing and contemporary relevance as precious lung space and social node, and its fascinating history. Lal Bagh appeals to the amateur birder, the fitness freak, the history buff and the conservationist in me. We are very lucky to have it."

She adds: "These beautiful gardens spread over 240 acres in the heart of the city are both a serious lung space in this increasingly congested and polluted city and an important social node supporting recreation, health, science, livelihoods and a vibrant population of birds that birders from around the city flock to glimpse. The gardens are also steeped in history, indeed antiquity. The Lalbagh rock is a 3000 million-year-old geological formation called the peninsular gneiss rock, designated as a geological monument by the Geological Society of India!"



Lalbagh is for everyone, locals and visitors alike

"Lal Bagh appeals to the amateur birder, the fitness freak, the history buff and the conservationist in me."



The visually-stunning, always-inspiring Lal Bagh



Vox Princeps

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

M Bhaktavatsala is a man of many parts. A film producer, director, exhibitor and commentator; winner of the Dr Vishnuvardhan lifetime award for his contributions to the film industry; president of the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce for seven years; past President of the Bangalore Club; and longtime resident of Bengaluru, Mr Bhaktavatsala is also responsible for filing (along with others) a Public Interest Litigation to save the High Court building from demolition in the early 1980s. INTACH Bengaluru caught up with him in his studio offices. Excerpts from a chat with him about this seminal case and about films.

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### Can you tell us a little about the Attara Kacheri public interest litigation?

In the early 1980s, Chief Justice Mallimath had decided to demolish the Attara Kacheri. The state government had also agreed to it. Even the Urban Arts Commission agreed to the demolition, on condition that the new building that came up should be a replica of the original. Mr Narasimhamurthy was then the Advocate General. When Justice Mallimath asked him to vacate the eastern wing, where his offices were, and clear it of all furniture in preparation for its demolition, Narasimhamurthy told GP Shivaprakash, a lawyer who later became a judge, and asked him to inform me about this. Mr Shivaprakash offered to represent me and asked me to get others to join me in a petition. I managed to get the support of the banker BV Narayana Reddy of Mysore Bank, and some others. One of the finest things that I've heard was when Justice Venkatachalaiah started the judgement saying that the standing of the petitioners in society and their track record was beyond any doubt. That was a great compliment from him.

The petition was dismissed but we appealed to the Supreme Court which ordered the State Government to reconsider the order and to take into consideration

**“One of the finest things that I've heard was when Justice Venkatachalaiah started the judgement saying that the standing of the petitioners in society and their track record was beyond any doubt.”**

all material available, including the representation made by the petitioners, before arriving at a decision. Finally, in 1985, the Government reversed its decision to demolish.

All these people - Narasimhamurthy, Shivaprakash, Mallimath, Narayana Reddy - are no more with us.

### But how did you get involved in this issue?

When I came back from England after doing my MBA, I began working in HMT. That was when I got interested in cinema. I built up the entire organisation (around films) here. The Film Chamber was then just a small distribution office. I expanded that into production.



## Vox Princeps (...contd.)

In fact, I tried to apply management principles to films, one of the most impossible things to do. I helped start the National Film Development Corporation. I got involved in all those things. I was a public figure. People knew me.

In those days, I used to make a lot of noise, write regularly in the newspapers and so on. So Narasimhamurthy said, "Inform Bhakta. He is the only one who can do something."

At that time, it was a sensational case, this Public Interest Litigation! All those lawyers sitting there, they'd be spitting at me, saying, "Why do you want to save this building? The building is crumbling." We were Enemy No. 1!

### Tell us a little about your involvement with cinema.

My interest in cinema began very early, even when I was a child. My uncle started one of the earliest studios in the south, Vahini Studios, back in the 1930s. So even as a child, I used to interact with films. My father had invested in production too, so I always had a good contact and intimate connection with cinema.

When I was just 18, I began working as a general manager in Deccan Herald. But then I realised if I stayed there, I would be fixed in that place. I would have to sit there and listen to my elders! So I ran away and went to do my MBA in Manchester and also Public Administration in London School of Economics. I came back and joined HMT as a Departmental Manager in 1959. I used to be out of the house in a car at 7 in the morning and come back only at 11 at night. I used to think HMT, eat HMT, sleep HMT. There was no life outside HMT!

**"My uncle started one of the earliest studios in the south, Vahini Studios, back in the 1930s. So even as a child, I used to interact with films."**

Then one day I said, No, this is not for me. I walked out and walked right into films, a completely and totally different thing!

### How did you then get interested in architecture, aesthetics and heritage?

I don't know. I think I was a multifaceted personality. At one point of time I was very keen on architecture and town planning. I would interact with friends who were dreamers...

### What would you say is the effect of your work?

Residually, I'd say whatever I've done, some 3-4 per cent has had an effect. I think it triggered other people to think on those lines, people like Hiremath, for example (an anti-corruption activist who fought against irregularities in mining in Bellary).

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

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