



INTACHER

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Quarterly newsletter of INTACH, Bengaluru Chapter

Inside This Issue: The Quarter That Was | The Quarter That Will Be | Vox Princelps | Family Album | Your Take on the City

THE QUARTER THAT WAS

The Library at INTACH, Bengaluru Chapter

You all already know our chapter has a new office now in 3rd Block, Jayanagar. Drop by sometime if you'd like to know more about what we do, or if you'd like to chitchat about Bengaluru or heritage! Drop by also if you're researching Bengaluru and/or heritage. We have a small but fast-growing library in our office. We started with about 90 books three months ago and now have more than 480 and counting. Many, many thanks to Almitra Patel, Sandhya Harendra, Anil Gokak, Malini White and others who have generously donated books to the library. We continue to add to the collection by sourcing good books from various sources. Besides books on Bengaluru, we also have titles on art, architecture, archaeology, history, conservation, urban heritage, dance, sculpture, music, natural heritage and more. We will shortly put up our catalogue online.



Books, books, books - on Bengaluru, history, architecture, trees and more!

Learning about the local

Starting in late June, INTACH started a programme to teach local history in a few government and low-fee private or aided schools. This programme, made possible thanks to funding from salesforce.org, tells the stories of the origins of the city and builds an understanding of its other dimensions like city planning, natural heritage, cultural heritage and local traditions. Aimed at 7th and 8th grade students, the sessions are conducted once a week for 2 hours, over 6 weeks. There is also a field trip to the Bengaluru fort and Tipu's Palace.

The objective is to become acquainted with the history of Bengaluru, some important milestones in its growth, some of its historic landmarks and its natural heritage and cultural landscape. We hope that 'knowing more' about the city will instil a better sense of identity and a more empathic association with the city.

Our group of resource people and volunteers has put together an interesting set of classes, designed to include some fun activities along with lecture time and we hope these activities will help students to have easy recall of facts and information.



At the RMES school in Goripalya.

Many thanks to Rafi and Surabhi, from Mantra4Change and Makkala Jagriti respectively, who have helped us to collaborate with schools where they have been working closely for years now.

Our group of resource people and volunteers: Pallavi Murthy, Prathima Dayanidhi, Bhuvni Cheboli, R Bindushree, Prajwal KA, Pankaj Modi, Aravind C and Meera Iyer.

- *Pallavi Murthy, programme anchor, architect and volunteer at INTACH*

A talk by Vasant Shinde

Bengalureans packed the NGMA Auditorium in the evening of 27th April-- some of us sitting on the window ledges, on the stairs and on the floor-- to listen Prof. Vasant Shinde of Deccan College, Pune, one of the foremost Harappan archaeologists. The talk was co-organised by INTACH Bengaluru Chapter and NGMA. With a general summary of a century of research on the Harappan sites, Prof. Shinde focussed on the sites of Harappa, Lothal, Dholavira and Rakhigarhi. He discussed various emerging insights from recent multi-disciplinary studies ranging from traditional archaeological methods of excavations, site comparisons, studying artefacts to satellite imagery and geological events to cutting edge DNA analysis from skeletal remains. Particularly fascinating were his discussions and slides on the theories on Dholavira, its people and possible purpose, the studies of the Rakhigarhi cemetery and the emerging DNA data from the skeletons found there, and the many challenges that remain, including the yet undeciphered script. The talk was followed by an extensive round of discussions with audience, which continued during the tea and snacks afterwards.

- *Aditya Sengupta, biochemist, dog-lover, history buff and member, INTACH*

The Last Windows of Bangalore

Vikramajit Ram, a designer, author and history enthusiast baptised the new INTACH office's series of talks with his erudite presentation titled 'The Last Windows of Bangalore'. In his own words "Looked at, into, and out from, the windows in this album are from a selection of period façades in Bangalore. Their buildings date from the early-1800s to the late-1940s."



His began with an introduction to the Civil and Military Station that the British developed in Bangalore. He then continued with a slide presentation of windows of some splendid buildings which he had photographed between 1995 and 1996 - churches, educational and public institutions, a library, railway stations, shops, clubs, hotels, palaces, bungalows and many more. "Their styles predominantly express local interpretations of neo classicism and the Victorian gothic-revival. These and other European imports in turn flowered Bangalore's home-grown hybrid of the early-1900s: the Monkey Tops" of which the West End Hotel still remains one of the best examples. Many of these buildings have been demolished over a period of time. Thus, Vikramajit's album is an important record of architectural details of buildings belonging to an era which is rapidly vanishing. It is a window into the past.

- *Sandhya Harendra, tour guide, history buff and member, INTACH*

Gender Dynamics in Indian Dance

‘What is art?’ So began the talk on gender dynamics in Indian dance, by dancer Ramaa Venugopalan. And from that beginning, she took us through a brief history of classical dance in India, its origins in myth and history, and its evolution, before circling back to the question: why engage in performing arts at all? She spoke about gender equations in performing arts communities in pre-colonial India, about how they were often women-centric, with males playing subservient roles. That all changed when the anti-nautch movement began and when the system of devadasis was abolished, she explained. Ramaa also spoke about the other changes that accompanied this: institutions were established to teach dance, for example. With that, came specialisation. Whereas earlier the dancer learnt music, singing and poetry in addition to dance, now there were specialists for everything including textile design. Dance moved from temples and sabhas to the proscenium. And males were no longer in secondary roles. She also touched upon the contributions made by some famous devadasis including Bangalore Nagarathamma.



All in all, a very interesting talk on a fascinating topic that generated a lot of discussions among the audience, many of whom were dancers themselves. We had some people who had come all the way from Hebbal and HSR Road to attend the talk, because, as dancer Matangi said, there are few places where such topics [around dance] are being discussed.

A Water Story

Cubbon Park has been a green oasis for all of us. It is one of the few places in Bangalore for people of all ages. This elaborately planned garden has indigenous and exotic botanical species, which today are about 68 genera and 96 species with a total of around 6000 plants and trees. Water is essential in developing and maintaining a park of this magnitude. On 29th July, we had a Water Parichay in Cubbon Park, led by S Viswanath, founder, Rainwater Club, member of the Biome Environmental Trust and a ceaseless worker for the past 32 years for Bengaluru’s water; and Ramakrishna, a well-digger.

Wells were the main source of water for old Bengaluru, according to Viswanath. As Ramakrishna said, in the old days, the first step to building a house was to dig a well. Vishwanath with the help of the traditional well diggers, hopes we can revive and rejuvenate this subsoil water-table throughout the city. Applying this theory, we saw the successful rejuvenation of seven wells in Cubbon Park, the rejuvenation of two ponds and the creation of several recharge wells in the park.



It was so heartening to see the high level of the water in these 7 wells now.

The sustainable idea is to go back to the basics and use traditional knowledge for sustainable water management. Ramakrishna is from Bhovipalaya, a village of well diggers. For generations, people from his village have dug wells in Bengaluru and maintained them. His enthusiasm and knowledge was so infectious and positive. Vishwanath believes that this traditional knowledge, combined with scientific knowledge of hydrology and hydrogeology can revive and maintain the ground water in Bangalore.

After the traditional, we also saw the modern. A state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant was set up in Cubbon Park 11 years ago. This sewage mining plant uses a Reverse Membrane filtration process to purify sewage to the extent that it can be used as drinking water. BWSSB maintains this facility to provide water to Cubbon Park. Together with the rejuvenation of the existing wells and lakes, this has made the park self-sufficient in water. The water story at Cubbon Park is a beacon of hope and reassurance to the Bengaluru water situation.

- by Biju Cherayath, artist, nature lover and friend of INTACH.

THE QUARTER THAT WILL BE

In addition to our usual monthly Parichays, here's a sneak preview of what you can look forward to from INTACH Bengaluru Chapter over the next few months.

BYOB: Bring your own Book!

Jaya Jha and Abhaya Agarwal at pothi.com, an e-book publishing firm, have an agenda - get people to read books! Over the last couple of years, they have been organising BYOB: Bring your own Book parties at various places around the city. INTACH Bengaluru Chapter will host one such in August. Have you read a book that you are dying to tell someone about? Have a got favourite book that you think everyone would love, if only they knew about it? Here's your chance: bring along a book that you are reading or that you have read and tell everyone about it. This is a good chance to have stimulating conversations that go beyond Bollywood, traffic, and the weather. Jaya and Abhaya intentionally keep the genre entirely open but since this event will be held in INTACH Bengaluru, those who bring a book related to Bengaluru or to heritage (of any kind) will get a special something!

BYOB will be held at the INTACH Bengaluru office in Jayanagar on Saturday, 10th August in the late afternoon/evening. More details soon! The event is free but for logistical reasons, please do let us know if you will be attending.

VOX PRINCEPS

Where eminent Bengalureans speak about their work, motivations, life, heritage, conservation, and the city.

Who has not heard of Vidyarthi Bhavan? The iconic eatery in Gandhi Bazaar turned 75 last year. We spoke to Arun Adiga and his father Ramakrishna Adiga. Both spoke eloquently about dosa, emotional connections and why Vidyarthi Bhavan is such a favourite with all Bengalureans! Excerpts from the chat:

About the beginnings of the restaurant

ARUN ADIGA: The restaurant was started in 1943 by two brothers Venkataramana and Parameshwara Uraal. Initially, they took this place on rent. There was a small canteen that ran from the house even before Vidyarthi Bhavan started. The rent was Rs 35! In 1970, my father Ramakrishna Adiga bought over the business.

My father came from Shankaranarayana (a village near Kundapur) to Bengaluru in 1962, after his SSLC, in search of a job. My grandfather was a priest in the Shankaranarayana temple. My father's brothers were all studious but my father was a little different, a little mischievous. My grandfather felt it would be better to send him to Bengaluru to get a job. And so, through some contacts, my father began working in Lakshmi Bhavan near Coles Park. It was run by a Shankaranarayana Bhat. His elder brother ran Sujatha hotel in Gandhinagar and my father worked there also for a while. It was under him that he learned all the different aspects of the hotel business. My father later married Shankaranarayana Bhat's daughter. So my mother's father was like a godfather, a mentor to my father.

About how his father took over the restaurant

ARUN ADIGA: Parameshwara Uraal's sons were not interested in running the business, so Mr Uraal decided to sell the restaurant. Meanwhile, after my father got married, he began scouting around for a new business to set up. There were 2-3 options he looked at but initially, he did not like this place very much. It was an old, small building, with tiles and sheets placed haphazardly. He wondered whether it was worth investing in this old place.

RAMAKRISHNA ADIGA: My father-in-law was convinced that it was a good place, and he persuaded me to take it. After we bought it, he used to come here every day for six months. He advised me on how and what to do here. He was the one who trained me.



ARUN ADIGA: It was a smooth transition. The earlier owners ran it till Thursday, cleaned the place and did a puja here on Friday, handed over the keys, and my father opened it on Saturday! Same name, same employees, people hardly knew there had been a change in the management.

On his joining business

ARUN ADIGA: When my father turned 60, he felt a bit of a mental block, he felt he had reached retirement age. (Now he is 15 years past that age and still very active!) He felt that if none of his sons were in the business, why should he continue in it? My brother had been living in the US for the last 20 years. I was an engineer too. So my father began considering options like demolishing this building and constructing a commercial complex so that he could retire and get some rent without having to deal with the hassles of running a business.

We discussed all this at home for about two years. I was married then and in the telecom industry where I had opportunities to go abroad. I was in a dilemma. One of the people who really helped me decide was Mr Narayanamurthy. You see, Mr K Jairaj [former Additional Chief Secretary] is very close to our family. One day, he came here with Mr Narayanamurthy and asked him to advise me. So I explained everything and he listened. I was working in Reliance at the time, in the broadband project that was being rolled out. I said that I could work for another one or two years until the

broadband project was done and then leave. Mr Narayanamurthy said, 'See, you think you are the only person running the show there. If you quit that job, there are 1000 other engineers who are ready to fill that vacant post. But if you don't come here, this seat, apart from you, no one else can fill this seat.' That was really hard-hitting. It helped me decide. So I resigned and joined the business here in 2005.

On the changes he made

ARUN ADIGA: Once I joined, I immediately wanted to change this, change that! My father said, 'You first work for one year, don't open your mouth, just watch and learn.' And let me be honest, I did not know anything about the business. Now I can talk about it like a story but it was very difficult. I was the owner's son but you have to learn and gain their respect over a period of time. It takes time for people to accept you. There were times when I literally went home and cried, and wished I had not quit my job. It was difficult!

So, for one year, I said nothing but I learned the business. After one year, I did make some changes to how the business was done. For example, my father was still writing his accounts by hand in a book. I said, 'You are all in the Stone Age!' I computerised the process. In 2006, I wanted to register the trademark to protect the name Vidyarthi Bhavan. People said I was crazy, my father said it was a waste of time, [his father grins!]. The whole process took two years but finally we were able to build a case and register a trademark.

On emotional connections and what makes Vidyarthi Bhavan so popular

You know, a lot of people come here with their children and grandchildren, saying, 'I used to come here when I was a student in National High School.' I had heard all that and earlier, I felt, 'Sure, it looks the same, fine, okay.'

It only impacted me much later. When I was in BMS Engineering College, there used to be a place called SLV just opposite. BMS did not have a canteen in those days so we spent most of our time in SLV rather than in BMS. That was our hangout place. After we finished engineering and joined the workforce, whenever we friends got together, we always met at SLV. We used to meet there not for

the idli or coffee, it was an emotional connect for us to gather there and have a discussion and come back. One fine day, SLV closed down. And we felt that vacuum. 'Where do we meet? There's no SLV. There is no place to meet!' That is when I realised the value of this place.

When people come here with their grandchildren and say we used to hangout here, that's an emotional connect you have with this place. If you come here after 30 or 40 years and the place is still there, you feel emotional about it. You feel so proud, you feel you are the owner! That's when I realised that we should not touch this building.

It's not just for the dosa that people come. It's no rocket science, this dosa. Lots of people make similar dosas. But let me claim this: nobody can make this emotional connect that Vidyarthi Bhavan has. You can replicate the dosa or the idli vada, but nobody can replicate the emotional attachment. That is our USP. So that is why we felt we should not touch the building.

We could very well demolish and construct a 2-storey building, with staff quarters, party hall, bigger kitchen, an A/C hall etc. But if we did that, it would be like any other new building. Why should people come back? There would be no emotional connect, why would they come here? You know when Dwarka Hotel moved from their rented place on Bull Temple Road to their own premises in NR Colony, people grumbled, 'It's not like before.' It was the same team, the same owners, the same dose! But when the place changed, the ambience changed and people felt that. So I really claim: It's not the dosa, it is the emotional bonding with this place. That is why I thought we should retain the structure.

So when we wanted to make a few changes, we consulted lots of architects and other people, then we used our own contractor and my father and I stood here and got the work done. We made some minor changes here, to make it more convenient. We removed the old asbestos and tin sheets that were haphazardly placed. And we brought in stepped tiles to improve air circulation.

On Bengaluru in the 1960s

RAMAKRISHNA ADIGA: There were hardly any buildings. From Indian Express to Victoria Hospital, it was all khali khali (empty, empty), there were hardly any buildings. Likewise, from Town Hall to JC Road, and near Minerva Circle, there were hardly any buildings at all, maybe ten at the most, just empty grounds, trees. Bharat Talkies was there, and Shivaji talkies.

This area was all residential, except near the circle here where there were some shops. Everywhere else, all along the road, there were small, tiled houses that used to open onto the road. There was also a firewood depot nearby, from where we used to get firewood for our restaurant too.

On Circle Lunch Home and Vidyarthi Bhavan

RAMAKRISHNA ADIGA: Circle Lunch Home was also quite popular. They used to allow smoking, whereas our place was non-smoking. So Masti Venkatesh Iyengar (and others) used to eat dosa here, then go across there to have a coffee and a smoke!

FAMILY ALBUM

Where INTACH members introduce themselves



Anup Naik is an architect, urban designer and the Founder-Director of UrbanFrame (SpaceMatrix Architects and Planners). He is presently pursuing his PhD in Architecture with the VTU. His research focuses on creating a sustainable passive design toolkit, connecting Indian vernacular architecture and various Green rating systems.

Over 25 years, Anup's work experience has spanned countries like Morocco, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Kenya, Vietnam and of course India. He is inspired by the seamless incorporation of sustainable elements in ancient buildings and believes the challenge for modern architecture is to understand and use these techniques in today's context. He is passionate about a holistic approach to green architecture, zero energy developments, Master planning and Urban Design.

Anup has received numerous awards for his contributions including the A+D Award, International Property Award, Archidesign Award, Asia Pacific Property Award, CoreNet Global Innovator Award, (Arizona USA), Bruce Russel's Sustainable Leadership Award for Sustainable Development, and others.

As a member of the Executive Committee of INTACH Bengaluru Chapter, Anup guides and advises the chapter on various matters. He is also a member of the Project Advisory Committee for INTACH's conservation and restoration work at Fort High School.

YOUR TAKE ON YOUR CITY

Pankaj Modi, long-time member and Coordinator of Architectural Projects at INTACH Bengaluru Chapter, sent us this lovely picture of the Seshadri Iyer Memorial hall.



Pankaj says, "Every time I visit the building, it gives me a different experience. It just amazes me - its setting, its approach, the volume of the central hall, its unique plan. There are not many buildings I know which as you move around, it shows itself differently."

We hope that gets you to visit this lovely building in Cubbon Park which houses the State Central Library.



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.

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