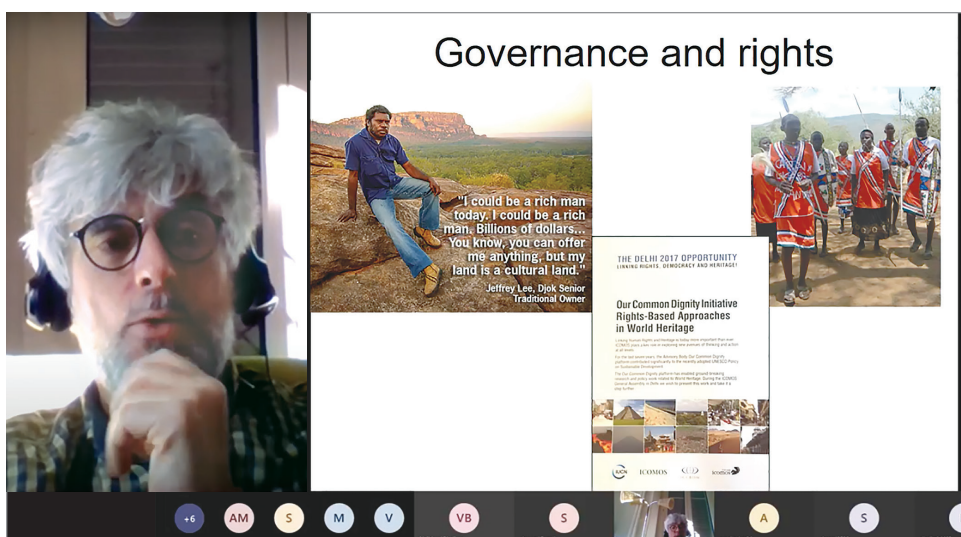


We are delighted to present Volume 5, Issue 2, 2024 of the INTACH Journal of Heritage Studies (IJHS). This issue is based on the theme ‘Heritage and Ecology’ wherein ‘heritage’ encompasses architectural, intangible cultural and natural resources of significance and ‘ecology’ is seen as the relationship of living beings and their physical as well as socio-cultural environment. In trying to situate these relationships between heritage and its environment, two areas emerged as having received the spotlight in the global discourse, over the recent decades, namely heritage and climate change, and nature-culture linkages. Both of these find intersections with each other, as the nature-culture linkages manifested in the form of cultural landscapes or through the traditional knowledge systems, sacred sites and rituals are affected by climate change, leading to altered landscapes and ecosystems, disruption of traditional activities, rituals and cultural practices, loss of biodiversity and increase in environmental pressure. On the other hand, traditional knowledge systems are also being acknowledged as means for mitigating climate change. From a cultural perspective, it is significantly important to understand how this climate change is altering and affecting the relationship with humans and their environment, in order to work towards building resilience and preserving this intricate connection.

In considering the global discourse on nature-culture linkages, attention is drawn to the year 1972, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the ‘Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage’ that links together the concept of nature conservation and preservation of cultural properties. The Convention talks about preserving the balance between nature and culture and the way in which people interact with nature (UNESCO 1972). Further, the year 1992 stands out as the year when cultural landscapes were introduced as a part of the Convention. It is important to note that these constructs became a part of the global discourse only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but existed as a world-view from the beginning of human habitation on Earth. In fact, there were many traditions and countries where the world was never divided into nature and culture in the first place (Larsen & Wijesuriya 2017). Nature-culture linkages in India are deeply embedded in the country’s diverse cultural heritage and traditional knowledge systems. The religious beliefs that have existed over time have shaped the environment and the interrelated connections with the community. The sacred landscapes of India like the Himalayas and the Western Ghats and sacred rivers such as Ganga and Yamuna are the sites of religious

interactions. Along with these sites, the cultural beliefs, social norms, rituals and festivals have a close relationship with nature. Rituals and festivals in India like Baisakhi, Onam, Makar Sankranti and many others are related to the seasonal cycles, agricultural activities and natural phenomena.

Through this issue of IJHS, we present some ways of looking at the linkages between communities and heritage, where nature and culture come across as inseparable. The issue begins with Tim Badman (2024) positioning the role of communities in nature conservation, as he discusses the global paradigm shift towards a more inclusive approach and highlights the need to ‘embrace linguistic diversity’. In an attempt to represent voices that go beyond English



Tim Badman, Director, IUCN World Heritage Programme, emphasising on importance of active participation of local communities in conservation in his lecture on overview and importance of nature-culture linkage as part of the INTACH Post Graduate Diploma in Heritage Studies 2020-21



Ganga Ghat in Varanasi documented as a part of Cultural Documentation of River Ganga from Gaumukh to Ganga Sagar Project  
Source: ICH-INTACH

and Hindi literature, we chose to include a review of the book ‘Mahanadi: The Tale of a River’ published in 2021 to the issue. Written in Bengali in 2015, the book by Anita Agnihotri was translated to English and brings out the relationship of the River with the lives of people through myths, legends and archaeological anecdotes through a fictional narrative. Rivers are considered sacred in India and the landscapes around these have been a testimony to the evolution of civilisations, rituals, festivals, miracles, life and livelihoods of people who settled around during the course of time. The photo essay on cultural documentation of Ganga carried out by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Division of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) builds a visual narrative of present-day social and cultural associations of the most sacred river of India.

Another study included in the issue is by Sreekumar (2024), a young architect, who explores the intertwined belief systems of temple sacred groves in Kerala, focussing on their socio-economic dimension. She applies existing methodologies of assessing socio-economic values that the communities associate with the sacred groves to come up with inferences that represent the view of the local stakeholders and identify challenges in the present context. The attempt at dissolving disciplinary boundaries in the work may be seen as a reflection of the idea of breaking down binary divisions, a hallmark of 21<sup>st</sup> century global discourse. An extension of this dissolution is seen in the study of Sumesh Dudani (2024), a botanist, who documents the biodegradation of heritage structures in Delhi due to climate change, urbanisation and natural factors, through the case of Hasthsal Minar, located amidst one of Delhi’s densely populated urban residential areas and structures in Mehrauli Archaeological Park, located in a fairly isolated natural environment.

In recent times, climate change has been seen as one of the most critical global challenges. The attempts to address it are evident on global platforms

Brochure of INTACH Scholarships Programme 2020 on the theme ‘Climate Change and Heritage’

From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale (IPCC, 1992). It may be argued that changes in global climate patterns have been occurring over millennia, and it is not a new phenomenon. However, it is indeed a matter of concern that needs immediate and urgent attention.

In the past few decades scientists have assembled a growing body of evidence exposing the extent of change of the earth's climate and that human activities play an important role in this change (COMOS 2007). The World Heritage Committee recognized climate change as an emerging threat and at its 29th session assessed the impacts of climate change on World Heritage. These serious threats have a great impact on conservation of the heritage sites, remains, buildings, historic and vernacular settlements, urban, natural and cultural landscapes, movable objects and the living traditions in various regions of the world (Vilnius, 2004) (UNESCO, 2002).

**INTACH Research Scholarships theme for the year 2019-20 is 'Climate Change and Heritage'.** In the wake of recent calamities in the country and the constant impact they have on our heritage, INTACH Heritage Academy is offering Scholarships and Capacity Building Support to undertake research, studies and documentation on this subject. The general areas for research may include concerns and risks for:

- Natural environments
- Historic built environments
- Urban Built Areas - Smart cities and Nature
- Cultural and Sacred Landscapes
- Vernacular settlements
- Urban heritage in severe climate zones
- Archaeological sites
- Geological Formations
- Water and Sacred Sites
- Farms and Sacred Groves
- Sustainable traditional agricultural practices
- Archipelagos

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change  
COMOS - Committee for Monitoring and Operational Support  
Vilnius 2004 - The 29th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Vilnius, Lithuania, 2004  
UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**About INTACH**

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of India's natural, cultural, living, tangible and intangible heritage. In 1984, INTACH was founded and registered as a Charity under the Registration of Societies Act, 1860. Over these past decades, INTACH has established a network of over 200 regional and local Chapters in different parts of the country.

**About Charles Wallace**

Charles Wallace was born in Calcutta in 1855. He lived, worked and flourished there, founding the Shaw Wallace Company (though there are no connections now between Charles Wallace India Trust and Shaw Wallace). He died in 1916, bequeathing his fortune for the benefit of promoting culture and heritage in India. The legacy of this bequest is being implemented in the form of research scholarships in the field of heritage conservation by INTACH.


**Application Requirements**

- The application deadline is 30th November 2019.
- Application form must be duly filled and signed.
- They must include written references from two referees.
- This scholarship is offered annually and must be completed within that time.

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Char. Regn. No. 12/Charitable/Trust (P) (Gen) (N) Sec. 80G (12) 2019, 18/01/2020  
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**CLIMATE CHANGE and HERITAGE**

**INTACH Scholarships**



**INTACH**  
INTACH HERITAGE ACADEMY  
TRAINING • RESEARCH • CAPACITY BUILDING

**(UK) Scholarships**  
(upto INR 5.0 Lakh)

**Research Scholarships**  
(upto INR 3.0 Lakh)

**Capacity Building Support**  
(upto INR 1.0 Lakh)




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**Chalonnee (Saucer shaped sieve)**  
Winter (December-February)

**Small Fishes**


**Beels, Ponds with water hyacinth**

**Fishing**  
Techniques/ Tools - Types of Water bodies



Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2A\\_UJWwNZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2A_UJWwNZA) 18/11/2020

Climate Change and Learnings from Traditional Land-Water Practices of Majuli Island, Assam, India  
by Minal Sagare Architect | Urban Designer | INTACH Research Scholar 2020. Presented at Nature-Culture Linkage | PG Diploma in Heritage Studies 2020-21 | INTACH Heritage Academy. 18/11/2020.



Session on climate change and learnings from the traditional land water practices of Majuli Island, Assam by Minal Sagare, INTACH Research Scholar 2020

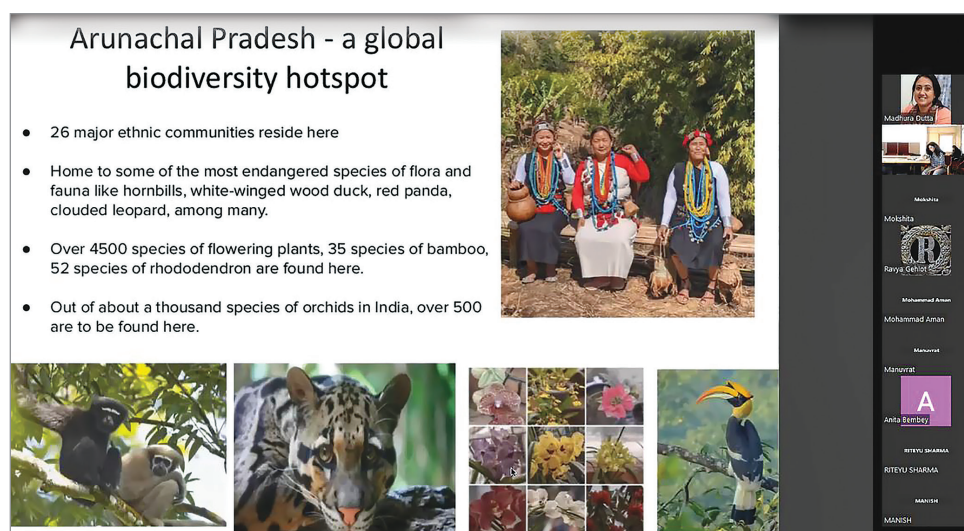
created to study the impacts and find adaptation and mitigation strategies and influence policy at the international level. In alignment with global discourse, the National Action Plan on Climate Change was launched in 2008 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. The formation of Climate Heritage Network (CHN) in 2019 with the common goal of safeguarding the cultural heritage, while addressing the climate change issue is one such initiative that brings heritage and climate change together. INTACH is a Steering Committee Member of CHN. Recognising the urgency of the rising issue of climate change, INTACH announced the theme of its annual research scholarship programme for 2020 as 'Climate Change and Heritage', resulting in the selection of 10 proposals to be supported through the programme. The work produced through the programme further plugged into the global dialogue around heritage and climate change. One such instance is the presentation on traditional land-water practices of Majuli Island in Assam, India by INTACH Scholar 2020, Minal Sagare as a part of the webinar 'Valuing Traditional Knowledge in Climate Action' hosted by Historic England in partnership with CHN on 20 November 2020.

While research on climate change has typically been dominated by researchers from the sciences, the scholarship programme drew out Indian architects and conservation architects to step into the domain. This remains as a developing field in India that requires formalisation of methodologies that researchers in the domain of heritage can work with. Two of the studies yielded through the 2020 scholarship cycle that are part of this issue of IJHS demonstrate a linkage between heritage and climate. The first one is by Sreeja KG (2024) who comes from an educational background in agriculture and focuses on charting the traditional experiential and practice-based knowledge of the fishers along the Malabar Coast. As a part of her study, the impacts of climate change are seen directly on aquatic life and in turn, the livelihood of the fishing communities.

Shweta Wagh, Associate  
Professor, KRVI Mumbai,  
invited by INTACH  
Heritage Academy to  
speak on agricultural and  
productive landscapes  
and their relationship  
with communities



Dr. Madhura Dutta, Culture & Development Specialist, presenting linkage between ethnic communities and biodiversity of Arunachal Pradesh for students of INTACH Heritage Academy



She points towards the potential of the evolving traditional knowledge in informing our resource management systems, disaster preparedness measures and climate change response and risk reduction strategies. The second study is on Kodagu District in Karnataka in the Western Ghats that emphasises the importance of continuing cultural identity amidst environmental threats. TN and Chatterjee (2024) discuss the impact of changing landforms on the cultural landscape, recommending sustainable practices to mitigate further degeneration. It is important to note that the link between climate change and heritage has been addressed here through the lens of nature-culture linkages and traditional knowledge.

A better acknowledgement of nature-culture linkages and traditional knowledge systems can facilitate an inclusive approach at the policy as well as strategy level. Indigenous cultures have always honoured and protected the natural environment and the cultural practices have often served towards

preserving biodiversity and maintaining the ecological balance. As a result of the dominant disciplinary approaches that evolved in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the interconnections lost emphasis in the eyes of the experts as well as mainstream populations of countries like India that were building a new nation. The initiatives towards aligning policy and action with traditional knowledge systems and understanding of nature-culture linkages also find extensions in the form of projects as well as educational and capacity-building programmes by global agencies such as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property and International Union for Conservation of Nature and national ones such as Wildlife Institute of India and INTACH Heritage Academy.

At present, we are at an intersection where environmental degradation and climate change is leaving a detrimental impact on the heritage and ecology. Our actions are a threat to both cultural heritage and ecological integrity. It is critical to recognise and respect the need for sustainable heritage management and environmental sustainability, in order to safeguard the relationship between nature, culture and heritage. We hope that this issue helps to build a more informed and multidisciplinary understanding of some aspects of heritage and ecology and serves as an intellectual resource, encouraging a holistic approach towards heritage conservation and ecological sustainability, for the present and future generations.

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