

**INTACH CHARTER, 2004**  
**(REVISED ON 27/9/2004)**

**Charter for the Conservation of  
Unprotected Architectural Heritage of India**

**Drawing** upon the experience of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) in conserving the unprotected architectural heritage of India within an institutional framework for two decades;

**Respecting** the invaluable contributions of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and State Departments of Archaeology (SDA) in preserving the finest monuments of India;

**Valuing** ASI's pioneering role in promoting scientific methods of practice and establishing highest standards of professionalism in preserving monuments;

**Acknowledging** the importance and relevance of principles enunciated in the various international Charters adopted by UNESCO, ICOMOS, *et al*;

**Conscious**, however, that a majority of architectural heritage properties and sites in India still remains unidentified, unclassified, and unprotected, thereby subject to attrition on account of neglect, vandalism and insensitive development;

**Recognising** the unique resource of the 'living' heritage of Master Builders/*Sthapatis/ Sompuras/ Raj Mistris* who continue to build and care for buildings following traditions of their ancestors;

**Recognising**, too, the concept of *jeernodharan*, the symbiotic relationship binding the tangible and intangible architectural heritage of India;

**Noting** the growing role of a trained cadre of conservation architects in India who are re-defining the meaning and boundaries of contemporary conservation practices;

**Emphasising** that it is necessary to take into account the specificity of India's architectural heritage and bring all architectural heritage under the ambit of appropriate conservation guidelines and practices;

We, members of INTACH, gathered here in New Delhi in the 4<sup>th</sup> day of November 2004, adopt the following **Charter for Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage in India**.

**ARTICLE 1 - WHY CONSERVE?**

- 1.1 The majority of India's architectural heritages is unprotected. Together with the monuments protected by ASI/SDA, they constitute a unique civilisational legacy. Insensitive modernization and urbanization, and the fact that it does not command the same respect as the protected monuments, however, are wiping out the unprotected legacy. Much of this legacy is still in use, and the manner in which it continues to be kept in use represents the 'living' heritage of India. This heritage is manifest both in tangible and intangible forms, which together define the composite culture of the country. Conserving it will root the present in the past, and become a source of inspiration for the future. This 'living' heritage defines the 'Indian-ness' of India in a more intrinsic manner than the iconic monuments protected by ASI/ SDA. Its continued relevance in

- contemporary society is a unique cultural characteristic that is as worthy of conservation as the protected monuments.
- 1.2 This cultural characteristic is not legally protected. The buildings and sites, which constitute it, are subject to demolition or unsympathetic interventions. The knowledge of traditional building skills is also in danger in the absence of patronage and official recognition. Nevertheless, unlike other societies, there is still a significant amount of 'living' heritage in India and it highlights the great potential to conserve both traditional buildings and traditional ways of building. This potential is a civilisational marker, which must be conserved not only because there are few other such examples elsewhere in the world, but also because in the process it provides alternative, often more appropriate, models for modernizing the built environment.
  - 1.3 Conserving traditional skills and knowledge systems associated with the architectural heritage ensures the survival of the living culture in a globalizing environment on a sustainable basis. It offers the opportunity to not only to conserve the past, but define the future. It provides alternate avenues for employment and a parallel market for local building materials and technologies, which needs to be prioritised when resources for development are severely constrained
  - 1.4 This 'living' heritage also has symbiotic relationships with natural environments within which it originally evolved. Understanding this interdependent ecological network and conserving it can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the environment.

## **ARTICLE 2 - WHAT TO CONSERVE?**

- 2.1 The objective of conservation is the significance of the architectural heritage. Significance is constituted in both the tangible and intangible forms. The process of Listing (Article 7) must determine its form and expression.
- 2.2 The tangible heritage includes historic buildings of all periods and their setting in the historic precincts of cities, and its relationship to the natural environment. The intangible heritage includes the still extant culture of traditional building skills and knowledge, rites and rituals, social life and lifestyles of the inhabitants, which together constitute the 'living' heritage. Both, particularly the link between them, should be conserved. This should be determined through dialogue between stakeholders and experts.
- 2.3 Conservation of architectural heritage must retain meaning for the society in which it exists. This meaning may change over time, but taking it into consideration ensures that conservation will at all times have a contemporary logic underpinning its practice.
- 2.4 Where the evidence of the tangible or intangible architectural heritage exists in isolation or independent of each other, in whole or in fragments, it is necessary to conserve them, even in part, as evidence of the historic past it represents. Such conservation must invariably be undertaken *in-situ*, but if this is not possible, then it could be relocated where it would be safe for continued contemplation.