₹ 900.00 | ISSN 0975-0177

71
2022

इकहत्तर

SINCE 2001

LANDSCAPE







EDITORIAL

In recent years, a diverse set of creative endeavors have been conceptualized, that have expanded the boundaries of understanding the meaning and value of the discipline of landscape architecture in the country. They have brought to the forefront its multidisciplinary character, ever imbibing from various environmental, cultural, and aesthetic influences around. Understanding the core principles and values of the discipline through these endeavors blurs many boundaries, of specializations, geographies, of cultures, thus making it an all-inclusive spatial design discipline working on multiple scales – making sense to the person on the street, and at the same time, playing an important role in maintaining the natural health of the planet.

This special issue of the Journal is curated around some of these ideas. It features the winning essays of a fiction writing competition organized by ISOLA Mumbai, based on the theme of deciphering the hidden links between landscapes and well-being. Vaidehi Bhagwat [*LEAF,* Ahmedabad] shares her journey of conceptualizing an idea competition exploring the value, meaning and perception of the typology of "garden", beyond its conventional understanding. Nikhil Dhar reviews the book *Conserving the spirit of a Historic Garden* which looks at Indian historic gardens through the framework of Florence Charter. Akshay Kaul's practice, since its inception has attempted to push boundaries in directions closer to mitigating and minimizing ecological disturbances with a belief in cultural continuities—working with local communities, using vernacular idioms including use of native plants, local techniques and materials —to name a few. In the profile feature, Akshay shares his experiences and ideology.

Urban public spaces are the new exciting canvas for the work of spatial design professionals. For the last few years, *iamgurgaon,* an NGO based in Gurugram, has been doing exemplary work in the area of restoring degraded parcels of land on a large scale. Its co-founder Latika Thukral talks about the challenges of managing such an organization, working with local authorities, and the possibilities of replicating the model in other similar contexts. While its initial projects [including Aravali Biodiversity Park, featured in LA-49, 2016] were restored mainly by planting native vegetation, its recent works have active involvement of landscape architects who are contributing to the process with their expertise and skills in conceptualizing experiential spaces. Badshahpur Forest Corridor, showcased in the issue, is one of such recent projects in the sub city. Noida Biodiversity Park, is another large-scale public project conceptualized in Delhi NCR. Strongly based on the idea of natural and cultural identity, it showcases different eco-zones of the region while educating the visitors about the Indian astronomy tradition and its associated plant species.

These ideas, philosophy and works inform and enrich the practice, so as to make it more environmentally conscious and responsible along with being culturally contextual and robust. These are exciting times for the profession.

—Editors

CONTACT | **lajournalindia@gmail.com**

COVER & OPPOSITE PAGE | ***Graphic based on poster by Prachi Nadkarni for Flash Fiction Competition organized by ISOLA Mumbai Chapter in 2020, and illustrations by Juhi Prasad Singh in The Collector's Garden, and Srusti Shah in Nidhivan — both from Within the Gardens We Walk, LEAF Publication, 2022***

DELTA® System

DELTA® protects property. Saves energy. Creates comfort.

DÖRKEN

Drainage membranes

for roof gardens and horizontal application

DELTA®-FLORAXX TOP

Water reservoir for Green Roofs.

Storage & Drainage for all kinds of Green Roofs.
High Compressive strength and storage capacity of 7 litres/m² is a boon for plants.

Octagonal dimples for high compressive strength.

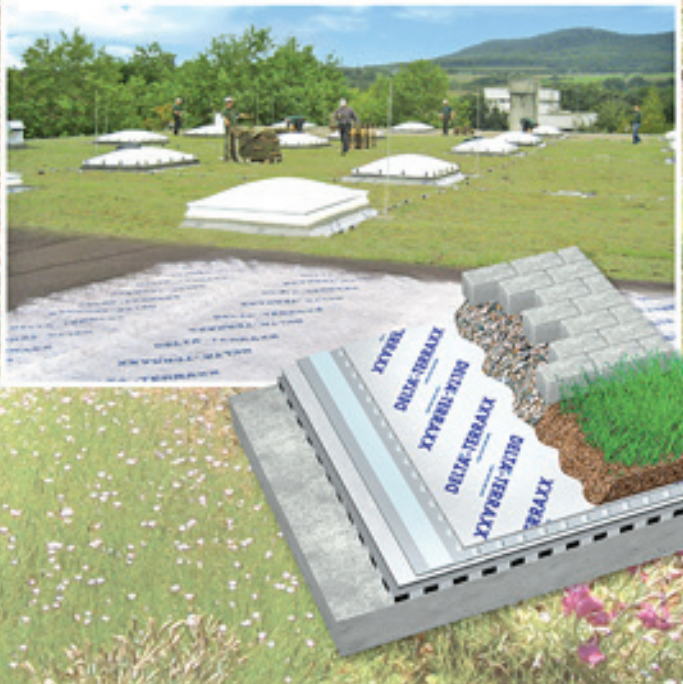




DELTA®-TERRAXX

Universal product for all horizontal applications.

All-round protection and high-performance compressive strength & drainage for Flat Green Roof Systems for Garden, Terraces, Walkways & Parking decks.
A world-wide recognised quality product !



PREMIUM QUALITY

Dörken GmbH & Co. KG · Wetterstraße 58 · D-58313 Herdecke
Tel: +49 23 30/63-0 · Fax: +49 23 30/63-355 · www.dorken.com/bvf-en
A company of the Dörken Group

SMARK INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTIONS
306 Ready Money Terraces · Dr Annie Besant Road · Worli · Mumbai 400018
Tel: +91 98203-33318 · Email: info@smarkinfrastructure.com

LANDSCAPE 21 YEARS SINCE 2001

71
2022

nature in the city

11
RECLAIMING DEGRADED PUBLIC SPACE
IN CONVERSATION WITH **LATIKA THUKRAL**

19
WEAVING GREEN CONNECTIONS
ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES | BADSHAHPUR FOREST CORRIDOR | GURUGRAM
TVARA SHARMA

30
DESIGN, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT
NOIDA BIODIVERSITY PARK | NOIDA
SACHIN JAIN

about sustainability

39
BRIDGING THE GAP
AKSHAY KAUL

46
RETHINKING THE LANDSCAPE OF LAWNS
UMA SEKAR

heritage and conservation

57
ADDRESSING PARADOXES
HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA | APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES
Review by **A.G.K. MENON**

63
VALUES, AUTHENTICITY AND MEANING
CONSERVING THE SPIRIT OF A HISTORIC GARDEN
Review by **NIKHIL DHAR**

rural discourse

69
PARABLES OF AN UNADDRESSED AGENDA
EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD DROUGHT | STORIES FROM INDIA'S POOREST DISTRICTS
Review by
SRIGANESH RAJENDRAN

seeing the unseen

75
THE GARDEN STORIES
VAIDEHI BHAGWAT

84
DECIPHERING THE HIDDEN LINKS BETWEEN LANDSCAPE & WELL-BEING
FLASH FICTION COMPETITION
ISOLA MUMBAI CHAPTER

with nature

97
TO BELONG
TALIESIN WEST, ARIZONA
AJIT NAGPURKAR

REGISTRATION NUMBER: 75500 | PRINT DURATION: Quarterly, 4 issues per year
EDITORIAL AND SUBSCRIPTION OFFICE: C-589, Vikas Puri, New Delhi 110 018 INDIA
[T]: +91-11-41584375, 9810252661 | [E]: lajournalindia@gmail.com
[W]: lajournal.in | ISSN 0975-0177 | D1x1 2022.09.17 | S1x200 2022.09.21
OWNED, PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY Brijender S. Dua, C-589, Vikas Puri, New Delhi 110 018 INDIA
PRINTED AT Paramount Printographics, Darya Ganj, New Delhi 110 002 INDIA

Views expressed in the Journal are that of the Authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editors or the Publisher. While every effort is made to trace copyright holders and obtain permission where required, it has not been possible in all the cases. Any clarification in this regard, if brought to notice, would be remedied in future issues. No part of the journal may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical or by any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the Editors.

EDITORS
Brijender S Dua *Architect | New Delhi*
Geeta Wahi Dua *Landscape Architect | New Delhi*

ADVISORY BOARD
Savita Punde *Landscape Architect | Delhi NCR*
Rohit Marol *Landscape Architect | Bengaluru*
Sujata Kohli *Landscape Architect | New Delhi*

DESIGN+LAYOUT
M Shah Alam+*grafiniti*

PRINTING ADVISOR
Atul Naahar *Paramount Printographics*

D.K. Z.G.H

SUBSCRIPTION
1-YEAR [4 ISSUES: PRINTED HARD COPIES] RS. 3,000.00
1-YEAR [4 DIGITAL ISSUES: PDF FORMAT] RS. 1,000.00
SUBSCRIPTION+PAYMENT DETAILS ON: www.lajournal.in

magzter.com/IN/LA,Journal-of-Landscape-Architecture/Journal-of-Landscape-Architecture/Architecture/

@lajournalindia

facebook.com/pages/Landscape-Journal



PAVING STONES

Finest range of colour blended modular paving stones, cobbles and grass pavers.

Why VYARA?
- Reliability since 1968
- Definite enhancement of spaces
- Proper solutions rather than just products









VYARA®



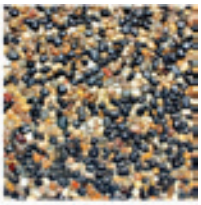


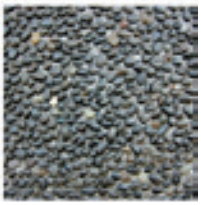
KERBSTONES

With widest range of vacuum pressed kerbs and accessories, you get solutions for most details required for your project.









PEBBLINO

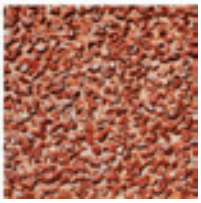
Exposed pebble tiles of most refined quality



STONECRETE

In-situ concrete rendition for walls and floors





www.vyaratiles.in

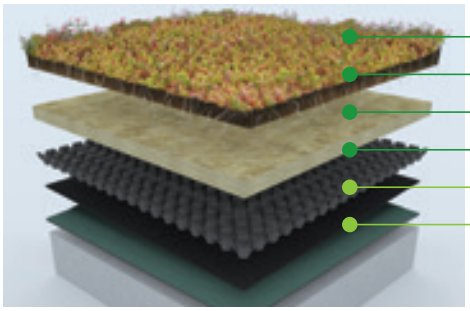
HO Surat Office: Vyara Tiles Pvt. Ltd., S-1, Shankheshwar Complex, Sagrampura, Surat Ph: 0261-2472444, 9327447469 Email: info@vyaratiles.in
Ahmedabad Office: 9374034284 Mumbai Office: 9322285672 Bharuch Office: 9375568855 Vadodara Office: 9376979755 Vapi: 9377575856
Dealers: Ahmedabad: Surfaces Plus- 079-26853312 Delhi: Keramos Tile- 011-41665102 Pune: Sai Enterprises- 8983000056 Rajkot: Jagnath Sanitaries- 9824854001

Paving Blocks | Flagstones | Cobbles | Kerbstones | Grass Pavers | Landscaping Tiles | Terrazzo



Urbanscape®
Green Roof System

A complete, lightweight and easy to install system with high water retention capacity designed for green roofs on residential, non-residential and industrial buildings in urban areas.



Benefits

- Complete solution
- Lightness
- High water absorption
- Efficient installation
- Sustainability

Green roofs: providing solutions designed to reduce urban heat island effect and manage storm water effectively and efficiently!

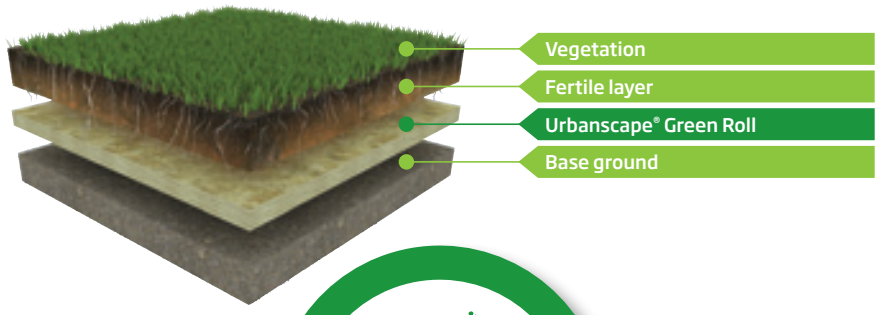
KNAUF INSULATION

www.urbanscape-architecture.com



Urbanscape®
Landscaping System

An innovative and easy to install system that boasts superior water absorption and **high water retention** capacity designed for various landscaping applications: residential gardens, sports fields, commercial spaces, cemeteries, public parks and more.



The most versatile solution for growing plants in highly demanding environments!

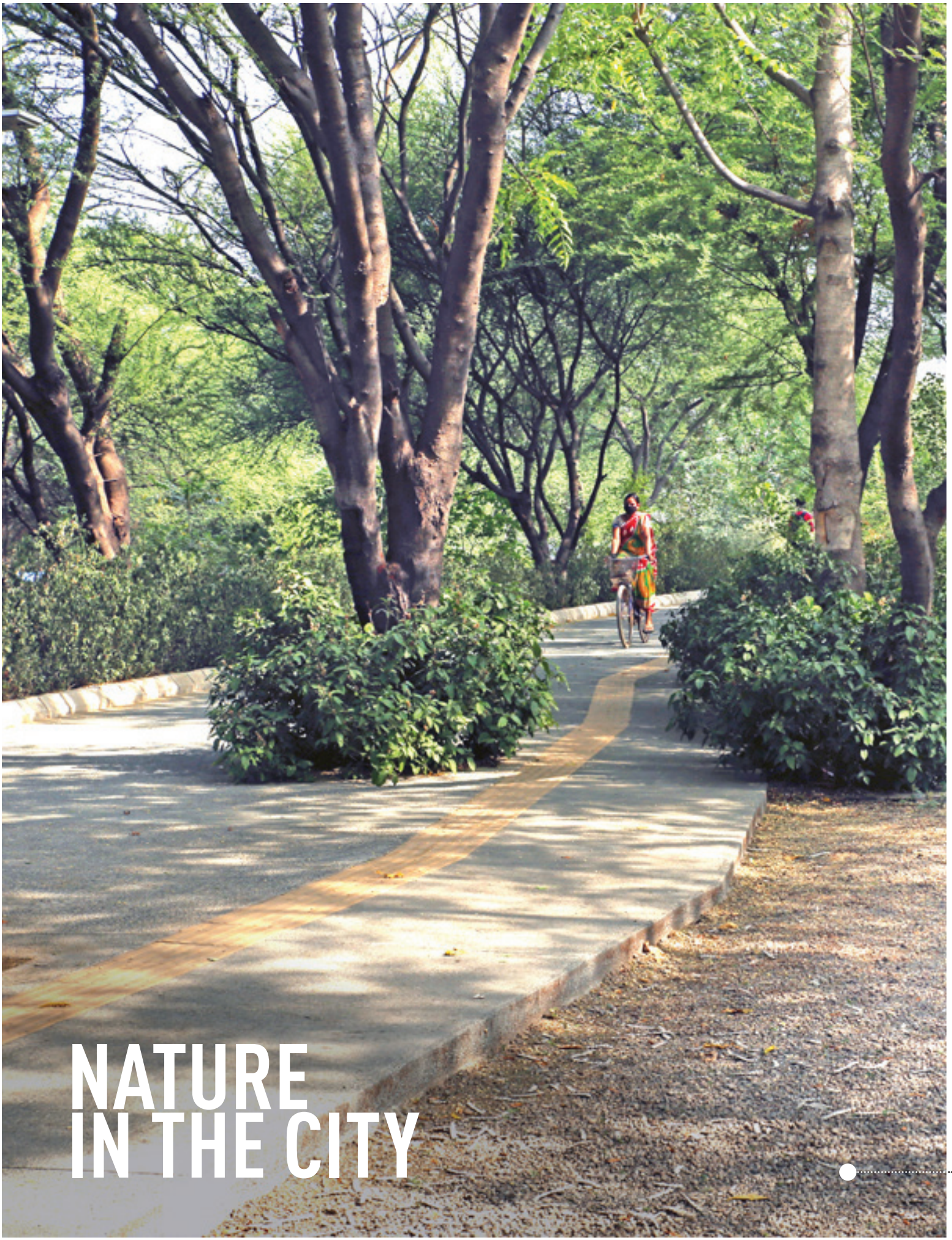
Benefits

- Significant water conservation
- Storm water management
- Less frequent irrigation
- Improved root growth
- Stronger plants

urbanscape®

Knauf Insulation d.o.o.
E-mail: urbanscape@knaufinsulation.com

Partners in India:
Smark Infrastructure Solutions
306 Ready Money Terraces, Dr Annie Besant Road
Worli, Mumbai 400018
Tel: +91 98203-33318 | Email: info@smarkinfrastructure.com



NATURE IN THE CITY

RECLAIMING DEGRADED PUBLIC SPACE

IN CONVERSATION WITH **LATIKA THUKRAL**



iamgurgaon is a unique collaborative initiative between government, professionals, and corporate, conceptualized to improve neglected urban areas of the sub-city of Gurugram. Many landmarks work to its credit - the restoration of the degraded quarry site, redevelopment of circulation corridors and development of physical linkages, and afforestation drives, the organization has established new benchmarks in the areas of spreading awareness about the local ecology, planting of native species and creating experiential public spaces with the involvement of landscape consultants in large scale public works.

In conversation with ***Latika Thukral,*** co-founder of the organization about the potentials and challenges of the drive.

iamgurgaon, A Citizens' Initiative

I moved to Gurugram in 1995, and have witnessed the transformation and haphazard growth of a city. New Gurugram was coming up. We wanted to move into a world-class city [unfortunately we have missed out] and there was hope and wanted to get involved. People like us from the corporate world were not too many in the social sector. Three of us – Swanzal Kapoor, Ambika Agarwal and I got together to start *iamgurgaon*. We felt the need to intervene to make a difference in the city. Initially, when we started, we thought it will be a kind of half-day involvement and will support the government agencies with our time. But very soon we realized that it is full-time work. This was a new world for us - dealing with the government agencies and persistent follow-ups. We did not realize when this became more than 24 hours a day. *iamgurgaon* is a citizen movement and has many people who play an active role and have committed time to the city. *iamgurgaon's* core group consists of 9 of us, who work voluntarily. In the last 15 years, the strength comes from supporting each other. We had no background in this field but common sense and the right attitude helped. We have learned everything while working on the ground, dirtying our hands – whether it's planting local species, cleaning *nallah,* creating water bodies, etc.

OPPOSITE PAGE |
Chakkarpur Wazirabad Bund, Gurugram
PHOTO COURTESY: ***Latika Thukral | iamgurgaon***

For us, it's a citizens' movement but has to be called an NGO, as that's how the funding works. We started by getting involved with small initiatives like cleaning up a market, planting in roundabouts, and so on. While this was going on, the team felt that it needs to take up something which will make an impact and involve more people in the city. Atal Kapoor came up with the idea of taking up this forest area which was also a mining site till 1992. We knew no better and started to look at it as creating a park [we have kicked ourselves so many times for calling it a park].

Aravali Biodiversity Park

When we suggested working on the Aravali Biodiversity park, it took a long time for the Commissioner to understand the motive that we were only interested in making a public space for the city and had no interest in grabbing the land or anyway be wanting to own it. We just want to collaborate with the government agencies to help them create these spaces. Honestly, did not know what next. At that stage, our understanding was limited and we were imagining the site as a large park. The infrastructure design of boundary wall, to walking paths, has been done by Atal Kapoor. Municipal Corporation of Gurugram [MCG] executed it on the ground. I am so glad that our journey of moving towards the making of this forest came at the right time of the first plantation and we followed the vision created then of planting native species.

We wanted to plant a million trees in a day and identified about 40 areas across the city for the plantation. Mind you, none of us knew what local species planting meant. We were seeking help from landscape architects but then most of them also had limited knowledge of Aravali's native species. We were fortunate to meet up with Pradip Krishen who directed us to Vijay Dhasmana and the rest is history now. He helped us with the vision of planting local species and has been a partner in creating many forest spaces in the city.

Coming back to million trees, when we reached out to them, Municipal Commissioner suggested we start by planting in the Aravali Biodiversity park – raise funds and plant. We involved friends and corporations who funded us to start planting. Year after year, we judiciously planted local species, set up our nursery, and added over 200 species in the forest to today be called as making of one of the finest Aravali forests in the country. For local species, we looked at the British Gazetteers for the list of species planted in this area. The issue was that list was very exhaustive of 250 species but where do you get these? The most 25 species we could find were in the Jodhpur forest nursery and Gurugram had only two species.





[1] [2]

[1] & [2]
ARAVALI BIODIVERSITY PARK
Once an abandoned quarry site, the land [around 390 acres] has been resorted with plantation of more than 200 species of native plants belonging to Northern Aravali region.
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Vijay Dhasmana***

Our journey of setting up the nursery which was funded by Coca-Cola gave us a head start and we could accelerate the creation of local species. The whole credit goes to the corporates and initial personal cheques of friends and relatives. We can take the credit for starting the initiative but this could not have moved without money. We have come a long way, we used to sell coupons for the planting of trees and raise funds in every possible way. There is huge gratitude for the support we got from people in this city.

The first year of our plantation did have its share of issues. A large number of plants did not survive. We had not necessarily planted local species. We had just set up a nursery with very few species and the saplings were small. We always say that it was a reverse grabbing of the area. A large part of the area was not fenced out so new plants were grazed by animals. Gradually, all boundaries were fenced. We were involving local communities, and school children to participate in this journey. We were learning each day, facing bureaucracy and media trials. We asked this question very often - Will we see this forest grow in our lifetime? This was our first real project and nervousness about how will it pan out. We had to fight at every stage to keep the vision alive, and we could prevail with constant disagreements.





[3] [4]

Chakkarpur Wazirabad Bundh

Later, American Express bank approached us and was ready to spend a large amount. Conservator of Forest suggested that we take up the restoration of the *bundh* and I had just come from New York and seen the High Line park which came out of wasted space. We put together a presentation and were liked by both the bureaucrats and the corporate. Swanzal who is an architect by profession helped to get a vision of the site. We hired VSPB Consultants to take up this project with us. The eco-restoration of Chakkarpur Wazirabad *bundh* is a 5.2 km mobility corridor that connects parts of the city. The stormwater drain which was a filthy *nallah* of 20 years of plastic dumping has got a new lease of life with rain water flowing during the monsoon and saving the city from flooding. The project has been appreciated and awarded at both local and international levels.

This whole process was not easy, the issue is that the city planning is so poor and on top of it, the mapping of the areas is haphazard. There is private land on a *nallah,* how is that possible? The rich people encroach more than poor people. The area next to their house somehow becomes their personal property, the locals believe any open space is their personal space. We had to fight all these people right through and slowly managed to get all this together.

[3] & [4]
CHAKKARPUR WAZIRABAD BUNDH
Once deemed as a derelict, unusable area, the garbage dumping site is developed as a rejuvenated bundh, with an eco-mobility corridor, connecting various urban areas.





[5] [6]

[5] & [6]
BADSHAHPUR FOREST CORRIDOR
The linear corridor has been developed as an ecologically rich community resource connecting and serving various neighbouring communities of corporates, urban villages and gated communities of housings.
PHOTOS CREDIT: ***bsd | grafiniti***

The entire area was a dumping ground, a few hundred trucks of garbage came out of the area. We can easily say that we have created this with corporate support but the support of the government agencies is equally important. All this is out of the ordinary, this is their leap of faith in us and we have delivered with their support. It's truly a partnership and we are fortunate to be able to play this part. I still remember, that after 1.5 km was done, we had no sponsor for the rest of the areas. Deep Kalra, who is our team member sent a personal cheque to keep the work going, The funds eventually come with good work and we did complete with Indigo taking up more than half of the area besides other corporates.

Today filthy *nallahs* and wasted spaces are an opportunity. I think now the struggle that we are facing on any of these projects is, that we are creating assets but who will maintain them, and how long will corporates be maintaining them? People of the city have to come up, we have to save these assets that have been created.

Badshahpur Forest Corridor

MCG Commissioner reached out to us for the Badshapur *nallah* site and agreed to help with funds from IndusInd Bank. Nidhi Madan [Beyond Built, New Delhi] took up this project as a landscape architect. We have thoroughly enjoyed working on this project with the use of waste materials. We cleaned up the stores of MCG for old, broken materials like metal tree guards, tiles, stone, construction debris, etc. We are fortunate to partner with architects who are happy to allow their creativity to flow.

Some Ground Rules

I give a lot of credit for the success of these projects to my background of working with Citibank, where I learned to think big and out of the box. This was like running a business and control is in your hands. Our labor cost was increasing as watering in the forest area is tough, we thought of trying drip irrigation, never been done in a forest area before with initial hiccups, we have managed to make this our model for the plantation sites. We use only sewage-treated water and our tankers pick up water and put it in the water tanks which work on gravity. We had only one rule, the survey plan which showed government land had to be taken under our control, we behaved the same way with the rich and poor. We were very clear that we are going to follow the rule book of sustainability, nothing to prove to anyone, and do the right thing. Nothing succeeds like success - today we can say that our experiment worked but could have gone the other way too. Aravali Biodiversity Park has brought together the people of the city in one place. We were fortunate to interact with erstwhile locals of Gurugram, we all became part of this space and each other's lives. We are invited to their family events and we all got to know each other.

A Balancing Act - Working with Government, Consultants and Corporates

Our role is very tough at times, we have to balance the design part with the architect with the funds available. We are always trying to save corporate money to do more. We have to ensure that we keep the government's vision in mind, We are just very grateful for the non-interference of corporates and the government agencies in designing.

We have been very fortunate to work with like-minded consultants, architects, and a team of *malis* and supervisors. Everything is not always perfect – we do have personality clashes with architects, and sometimes it does not work and you move on. To think, that 8 women working together for the last so many years has to do with their commitment to the cause.

One of the reasons our system has worked out well is that the decision on hiring the architect is taken by *iamgurgaon* team. We have been given full freedom on the design with almost no interference. I think there is now trust between us. The tough part is to work on the cost sheet as once an amount is agreed upon, you can't ask for more. It's tough to work on these numbers in a landscape, unknown territory but you can be creative with your design, that kind of flexibility is not possible with government projects.





[7] [8]

[7] & [8]
SIKANDERPUR
Sikanderpur pond [presently a cess pool] and watershed is being developed as a wetland and biodiversity hotspot, with clean water and forestation to create a green lung for the sub city while providing a public space in a natural environment for urban use.

The government is not giving us any money but all freedom to create public spaces. It will supervise your work but because you work with them for so long they have so much trust in you, and they feel that you are a conscious keeper of the space. We have our contractors, hired and paid by us. We have managed to do more projects due to our mutual good experience. The scale of Gurugram's works is large. The trust between the parties has helped to continue working on the ground.

Design and Maintenance

Each public space needs a different kind of intervention. We do work a lot on the reuse of waste and believe in the circular economy. The Eagle Owl at the entry of Gurugram on MG road and a Tau sculpture by Gopalnam Joshi are some examples. There is no end to how much one can do but it is always a bandwidth issue. The thing about public spaces is that there is no right or wrong but a design that you have worked on with your team and executed on the ground. Most of these are *iamgurgaon* initiatives, and we have an internal team who agrees and we move forward with the execution. The part of designing is that there will always be views. The design has to follow a process and is not necessarily liked by everyone, one learns to take criticism in your stride as well as appreciation. We have some rules which we follow and our plantation is always of native Aravali species.

Like I said, creating assets is easy, keeping them maintained is very difficult. We continue to maintain Chakkarpur *bundh* while the Badhshpur forest corridor is still in making with the support of corporates like IndusInd Bank and others. Largely in our country, there is no respect for public spaces, educated, and uneducated alike. Why would people walk their dogs without a leash? Why will you take your dogs for poop in a public place? Why is it that we don't have respect for others? Why would you not look for a bin to drop your trash? Why would you break bins and benches? With years of learning, and vandalism as part of public space, our designs also cater to that fact.

We don't take care of the Biodiversity Park any longer. It has a corporate sponsor and is not maintained by MCG. So, we have to work on a model where maintenance of the projects finds a way of funding. I am not sure the government agencies can maintain, however, an option of a corporate sponsor works. We have continued to manage these projects more out of moral responsibility. Maintenance is a very tough job.

At this point, we are doing a couple of projects. We have been working on Sikandarpur *pahadi* which is 80 acres of forest. We hope to open it to the public this year. Again it has been a great experience working with the Kavita Jain and Radhakrishnan Raghavan [JRA Design] who have used materials from the site so effectively. It has been made possible with the support of many corporates like Indigo, Midland capital, etc. Making of Aravali Oxyvan, another 180 acres of forest, and restoration of Ghata *bundh* are a few more one can take up. The creation of these public spaces is an addictive process. We feel happy that people in the city are walking in these areas with a sense of pride. When you see people using them, you realize that all hard work is worth it. We keep going.

Way Forward

The intent and solutions go hand in hand. There is no perfect situation, you have to make it work. Persistence and patience are key to continuing as you are in a hurry and others are not. You learn when you get on the ground. Designing in the office does not work for public spaces. I have learned so much from the architects, spending time on the ground and I can say with conviction that I do understand a lot about public spaces without any degree. The other point we all must keep in our mind, once you have come up with a vision, don't change it because an officer wants you to do it, just do the right thing for the city. We are always eager to find the right solutions for the city – *iamgurgaon* has worked on mobility with Raahgiri to seek help from TERI University to help the city from flooding. We appointed them for a study so that the decisions taken by the government agencies are in the right direction.

All photographs courtesy *iamgurgaon*, unless credited otherwise.

iamgurgaon can be reached at: [E]: **info@iamgurgaon.org**
[W]: **https://iamgurgaon.org/**

Tvara Sharma, Landscape Architect
| tvara.sharma@gmail.com

WEAVING GREEN CONNECTIONS

ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND TOPOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES

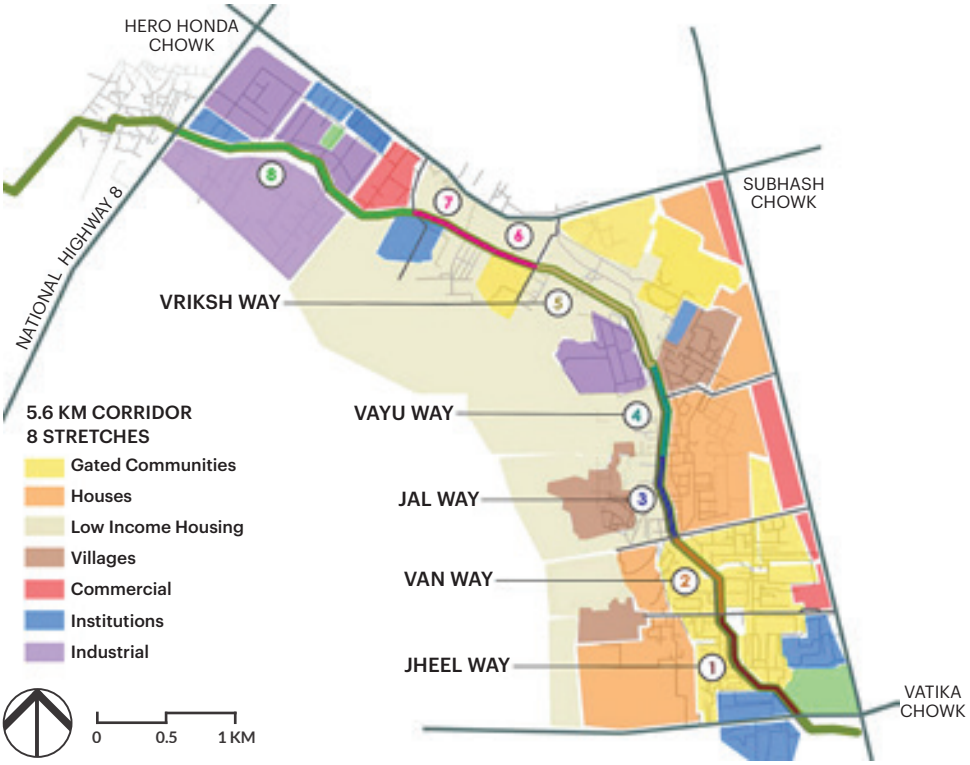
BADSHAHPUR FOREST CORRIDOR | GURUGRAM



PHOTO CREDIT: ***Tvara Sharma***



With its landscape design based on the reinvention of waste materials and social inclusion, the Badshahpur Forest Corridor is a people-centric community open space and a successful eco-restoration initiative in an extremely challenging location.



[1]

At a time when significant infrastructure projects are displacing the majority of our forest acreage and green spaces, rewilding an erstwhile waterway and an abandoned wasteland could seem like a pipe dream. However, this 44-acre stretch of linear green space in the city offers people much more than just a place to walk, jog, bike, and exercise; it also offers a haven from the city's severely polluted air for leisurely activities, outdoor play, and much more. It is not only inclusive and accessible to the diverse neighbourhood that surrounds it, which includes gated communities, low-income housing groups, migrant camps, and four urban villages, but it also serves as an ideal illustration of hands-on site-specific landscape interventions through creative waste reuse, restoration of native plant species and biodiversity habitat along with comprehensive nature-based stormwater management.

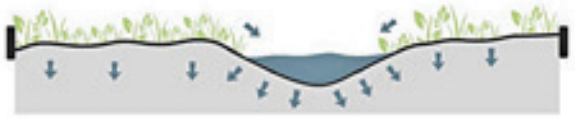
The Millennium City - Gurugram, encounters a slew of issues as a result of rapid urbanization. High levels of pollution, inadequate waste management, an ineffective dependence on structured drainage systems that have led to a rapidly declining groundwater table and forests are just a few of the issues confronting the city. A metropolis of gated communities, home to more than 1.5 million people, Gurugram also lacks city-level public open spaces. As a result of the city's expanding development footprint on land and historic waterways, drainage systems constantly collapse with each rain, and waste and construction debris continue to pile up. As a designed public open space, the Badshahpur Forest Corridor project responds to the pressing demands of this developing city and makes a modest attempt to acknowledge "the story of Gurgaon, the circle of waste and the journey of water."

[1] **SITE CONTEXT**
Master Plan illustrates the eight stretches that the site is divided into

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[2] ***Diagrammatic sections depicting the positive project impact on site post the design interventions***

DRAWINGS CREDIT: ***Beyond Built***

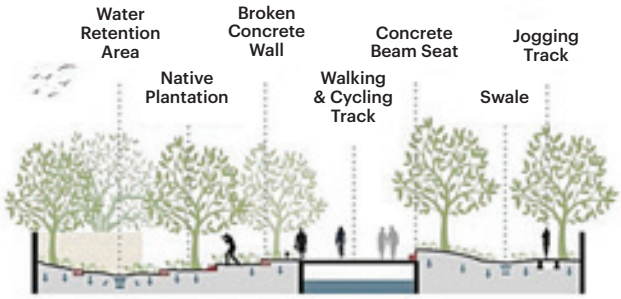
HISTORICALLY
The Badshahpur corridor was once a wide natural water channel



BEFORE INTERVENTION
A concrete storm drain bifucated the site, resulting in it becoming a dumping ground for construction debris & household waste



AFTER INTERVENTION
The 5.6 km forest corridor connects recreation, rest and congregation areas through a network of walking, jogging and cycling tracks

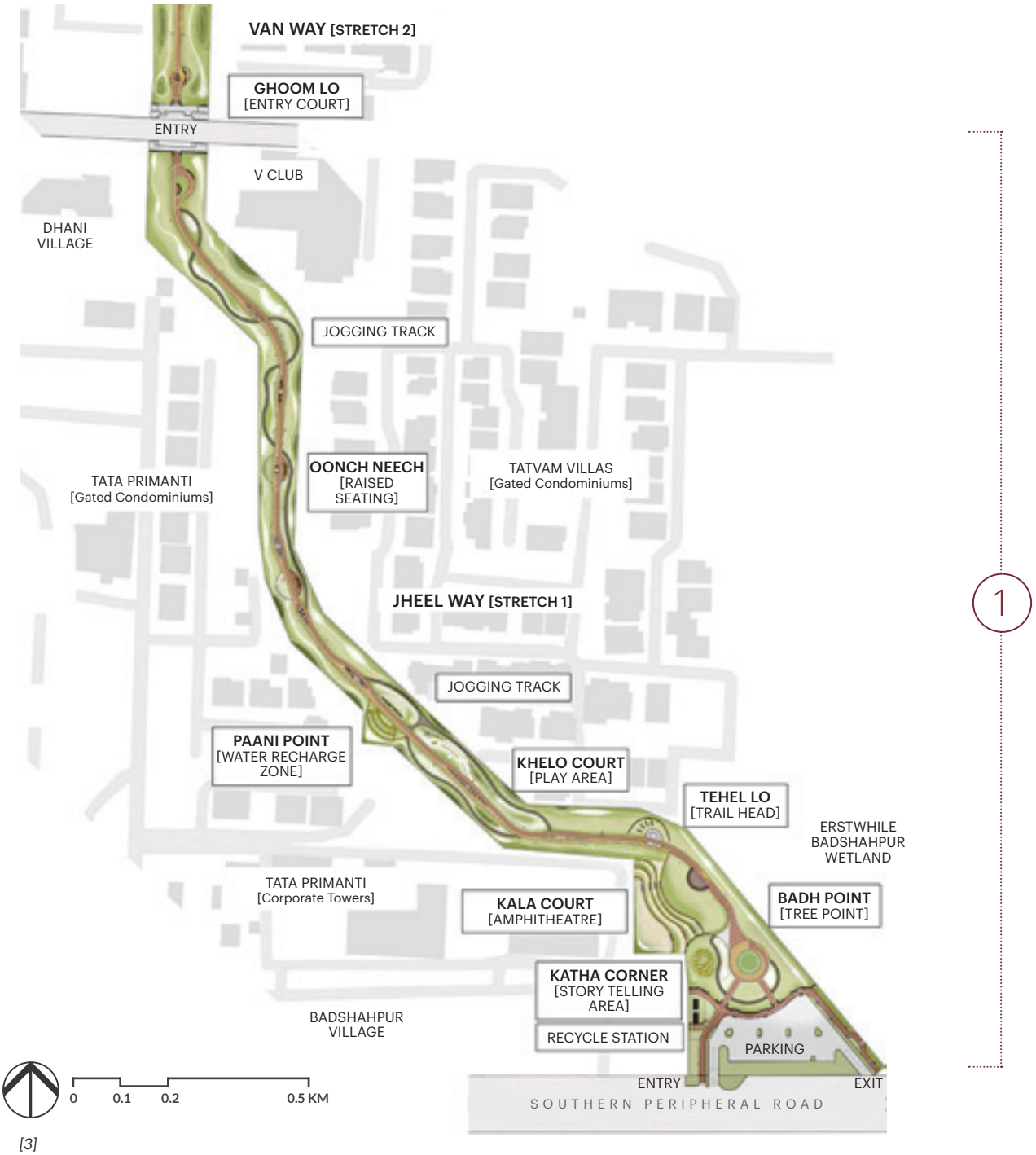


[2]



After navigating Gurugram's sluggish traffic, which grew worse after rain, I finally arrived at the destination, had my shoes on, and was prepared to walk the 5.6 km long stretch of this green corridor with curious anticipation. From the moment I entered, I could see that the fundamental concept of the design had been faithfully carried out, with the majority of the construction components being produced from recycled materials, construction debris and demolition waste gathered from across Gurugram. What I did not expect was how pleasant, comfortable, and enjoyable the walk would get. It was a reviving, breathable area in the city with rich foliage spanning the length from both edges. The vivid flowers in bloom, a large variety of birds that can be seen and heard, children having fun on the slides and swings on a light rainy day and so much of the unique contextual response give this designed space vitality and quality that goes beyond its restoration work.

The Badshahpur forest corridor is split into eight stretches. Out of the 5.6 km stretch, 4.0 km is complete and in active use, with the rest scheduled for completion in 2023. The 44-acre forest corridor has been implemented in 8 short unequal stretches of 450 m–2.0 km lengths each with distinct contextual challenges. The design strategy undertaken for this impacted site focused on groundwater recharge. With practically all of the paving and civil construction focused on the concrete drain, it has made the most of the natural ground space available for planting and water recharge. The interconnected natural swales and water channels receive and very well manage all excess runoff from the concrete drain and walkways at the site.



[3]

With the planting strategy focused on rewilding of forest, a downside was the landscape architect had limited role in planting design, thereby making the space lack a bit of structure and discipline for a designed space. This landscape project attempted to re-wild the city – with a palette of the plantation that is best suited to the land such as resilient, low-maintenance, and sustainable native species which was also a great way to address climate change and rising temperatures locally. Over 20,000 trees, shrubs, and grasses have been planted so far with a palette native to this region to achieve a mature tree canopy in some parts, and structured large, understory and low planting in others.

[3] **SITE PLAN**
The first stretch of the Badshahpur Forest Corridor – "JHEEL WAY"
DRAWINGS CREDIT: ***Beyond Built***

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[4] Set of images from before [●] and after [●] design intervention depict a clear comparison of the site's complete transformation
PHOTOS CREDITS: ***Beyond Built,*** *and* ***iamgurgaon***



[4]



[5]

[5] ***"Bada Hauz" on the second stretch of the corridor during monsoon. While resting here, you would enjoy the vast open area in front, the sky above, and the chirping of birds all around***
PHOTO COURTESY: ***Neighbourhood Resident***

[6] ***The forest corridor is now home to a variety of flowering species***
PHOTOS CREDIT: ***Tvara Sharma***

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[7] ***The entrance to the first of eight stretches. The pedestrian and cycle entrance gate restricts the entry of motorized vehicles while being accessible to the differently-abled and people with strollers/ canes/ wheel barrows.***

[8] ***"Badh Point", the entrance court***

[9] & [10] ***The walking stretches create a diversity of experiences with plantation, spatial compositions and varied materials***
PHOTOS [7], [8] & [10] CREDIT: ***bsd | grafiniti***
PHOTO [9] CREDIT: ***iamgurgaon***

While walking down the forest trail, I couldn't help but think enthusiastically about the serene experience I will have here in the future once the trees have grown to their full potential and I am unable to see the built infrastructure that surrounds the site. To create a diversity of experiences within the corridor, four zones cater to a multitude of functions — arrival and parking, followed by an entrance and amphitheatre/ congregation areas for larger community, groups corridor trails, and periodic clearing areas for play and recreation. There is a seamless movement within the corridors as they have well-defined walkways and activity areas. There are various sizes of gathering places for the community, and both the names and the design are fascinating and inclusive of the neighbourhood. From the spacious *Kala Court* with an amphitheatre, seating and a feature gabion wall to the intimate *Katha Corner* with closely placed waste concrete block seats in dense grass; to rest and unwind at *Kissa Court* and *Ghoom Lo* with wide pathways, to interestingly composed *Ooch Neech* seating islands or to play at *Khelo Court* with swings and slides, and many more such spots that are all connected via cycling and walking tracks. Each space has been named to identify with a landscape typology, native tree, or familiar traditional space, and perhaps more crucially, draw attention to it. By giving places names that are relevant to the locals, the location truly becomes their own. Nevertheless, I wouldn't mind a few public restrooms for convenience along such a lengthy stretch; perhaps subletting some spaces to *"Sulabh Sauchalaya"* could facilitate this.



[6]



[7]



[8]



[9]



[10]



[11]



[12]



[13]

The importance of having open spaces for people's health and well-being has been highlighted by the current Covid pandemic. The local population already appears to find the corridor to be very appealing. Women from the villages now have access to a public area where their kids can play while they enjoy recreational activities. They socialize, make connections, stroll, or retreat here. The open mobility corridor, which is accessible 24/7, has fostered a sense of belonging among the neighbourhood's many residents. It is a welcoming public area for individuals from all walks of life. With growing forest cover, the city's residents will benefit from a more pleasant microclimate, a space with less pollution, and a habitat with greater biodiversity.

The most significant thing, in my opinion, is that I believe this comprehensive landscape design provides a good illustration of how one can use design strategies to not only overcome the significant challenges that today's urban cities face, but also to exhibit how those difficulties can be turned into fortitude and used to the design advantage. Additionally, it demonstrates some of the best management practices that can be replicated for the city, other projects, and the general public specifically in the areas of waste management and reuse, native plantation, stormwater management, nature-based solutions for climate change and urbanization issues and socio-economic factors; all of which are crucial in the present times. Few potential future modifications could include adding the few public facilities that are currently missing for such a sizeable portion of a landscaped area, taking care of some maintenance-related practical issues that, inevitably, after revocation of 2- 5 years of maintenance contract will start surfacing, but with good planning and strategy can be easily dealt with, and encouraging greater participation of the various stakeholders, particularly the local community that is deeply linked to the project site during the design stage. Predominantly, the Badshahpur Forest Corridor serves as a constructive development model which is replicable and low cost with low impact nature-based interventions to facilitate circular practices [economic], and re-purpose waste/ water.

"The ongoing challenge of such projects is that they are used, abused, and encroached continuously. They belong to everyone, yet no one takes on responsibility for its ownership. More facilities require more services, more integration and greater need for maintenance and coordination. Design idealism meets the harsh realities of life-cycle maintenance and management required for such public spaces to endure. Unfortunately, community involvement tends to skew disproportionately towards those with political/ economic clout, and the transitory nature of migrant residents limit their role. Government agencies, meanwhile, have limited capacity and therefore prioritize immediate crises or critical issues only. In Gurugram, collaborative projects between government, well-meaning citizen groups, corporates, designers and experts have shown some promise in this regard. Expanding this engagement to also include expertise for policy, capacity building and comprehensive landscape design and management is needed as well."

— Nidhi Madan, Beyond Built

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[11] & [12] ***Grit finished walking and cycling tracks with free flowing pattern, and curved seats with discarded broken tiles and waster stone in the flooring***
PHOTOS CREDIT: ***bsd | grafiniti***

[13] ***On a light rainy day when the greens are as vibrant as they can be after a fresh wash, marvel at how efficiently the water systems are designed when you notice your shoes aren't caked in muck after a long, leisurely walk***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Tvara Sharma***

[14], [15] & [16] ***With tons of materials repurposed, this project is believed to have resulted in a 40% cost savings making it cost-effective and sustainable. Interesting seats, spaces and sculptures are made out of construction debris in the intersections.***
PHOTOS COURTESY: ***Beyond Built***

LIST OF MATERIALS

List of materials used on site and their location. Over 60,000 cu.m. of construction debris and waste used to demonstrate creative reuse that is scalable.

Site Feature	Waste Reused/ Recycled/ Repurposed
Earthwork and Filling	Construction debris
Parking	Broken/ Discarded concrete pavers
Walking and Cycling Tracks	Grit finish
Highlight Paving Bands	Broken tile/ Broken stone bands
Steps	Waste brick/ Concrete waste
Jogging Track	Compacted earth/ Construction debris base
Jogging Track Edging	Concrete cube test waste samples, Broken concrete Discarded brick
Pavement Kerbs	Reused kerbstones/ Broken concrete
Foundations	Waste concrete/ Discarded brick
Edging, Earthwork	Waste bricks
Seating Slabs	Broken concrete slabs
Seatwall	Waste concrete beams [waste reinforced concrete] Reused Aravali stone Waste concrete block [waste concrete, not reinforced] Broken or waste kerb stones and/ or pavers [waste concrete]
Amphitheatre/ Seating	Concrete debris walls Sandwich of pieces of broken stone for coping
Coping, Paving, Seats	Broken stone pieces/ blocks/ slabs Discarded quartzite/ granite/ limestones/ marbles Waste tiles
Gabion Walls	Old tree guards [scrap steel] Discarded metal pipes, rods, angles, mesh [steel and iron, waste treatment] Discarded Steel-pipes/ bars/ flats/ posts/ sheets Discarded metal sheets/ rods/ knobs/ mesh/ frames Wire/ wire frames [reuse of wires or leftovers]
Masonry Walls	Concrete debris walls
Sculptures/ Art installation	Waste concrete pieces/ concrete pipes
Rainwater recharge area	Discarded concrete pipes [waste concrete]
Play Areas	Discarded play equipment Play equipment from waste metal Waste Rubber Tires – full/ half [waste rubber] Gravel [waste concrete gravel] Any other non-degradable, non-toxic construction material







[14], [15] & [16]

In addition to the 20,000 native plants that have already been planted, 10,000 more will be planted this year. Interestingly, on the entire site, there were perhaps a dozen existing trees at most at the start.

LIST OF PLANTS

Trees

Acacia leucophloea, Acacia nilotica, Albizia odoratissima, Borassus flabelliffer, Butea monosperma, Cassia fistula, Crateva religiosa, Delonix regia, Diospyros montana, Ficus bengalensis, Ficus palmata, Ficus racemosa, Ficus religiosa, Gmelina arborea, Holoptelea integrifolia, Mitragyna parvifolia, Moringa concanensis, Phoenix sylvestris, Phyllanthus emblica, Salvadora oleoides, Syzygium cumini, Wrightia arborea

Shrubs

Adhatoda vasica, Barleria prionitis var. dicantha, Carissa carandas, Clerodendrum phlomidis, Cordia gharaf, Dichrostachys cinerea, Grewia flavescens, Grewia tenax, Helicteres isora, Nyctanthes arbor-tristes, Plumbago zeylanica, Securinega leucopyrus, Senna auriculata, Vitex negundo

Climbers

Combritum indicum, Vallaris heynei

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

PROJECT NAME
Badshahpur Forest corridor

SITE AREA: **5.6 km | 44 acres**

PROJECT DURATION: **2018–Ongoing**

COST ESTIMATE: **16.7 Crores**

TEAM

The initiative was made possible in 2018 through a collaboration between the government and an NGO, with funding provided by corporates, design led by landscape architects, and the native species by rewilding expert.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
Nidhi Madan & Nupur Prothi Khanna
Design Team: **Beyond Built Pvt. Ltd.**
Rewilding Expert: **Vijay Dhasmana**
Client: **iamgurgaon**
Led by: **Latika Thukral**
Land Ownership: **GMDA [Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority], MCG [Municipal Corporation of Gurugram]**
Site Supervisor: **Uday Singh**

CONTRACTORS
Ram Kishan & Team
Arjun Ahirwar & Team
Grit Work: **Pappu Lal Mahavar**
Welders: **Govind Chand Mandal, Salim & Rizwan**

[17] ***To raise awareness about waste management in the city, a waste segregation facility—'Samadhan' hub made out of waste—has been set up immediately outside the entrance to the first stretch of the Badshahpur forest corridor.***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Tvara Sharma***

THIS+OPPOSITE PAGE |
[18] ***Children from the adjoining localities and villages, and beyond the immediate neighbourhoods frequent the play facilities inside the corridor daily.***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***iamgurgaon***



[17]



[18]



Along with other sources, the article is informed by various discussions with Nidhi Madan [Beyond Built, New Delhi]

Sachin Jain, Landscape Architect
| sjaconsultants@gmail.com

DESIGN, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT



NOIDA BIODIVERSITY PARK | NOIDA

Envisaged to play an important role in imparting nature education to students and researchers, Noida Biodiversity Park attempts to be an ecological resource for the sub city and the larger region.

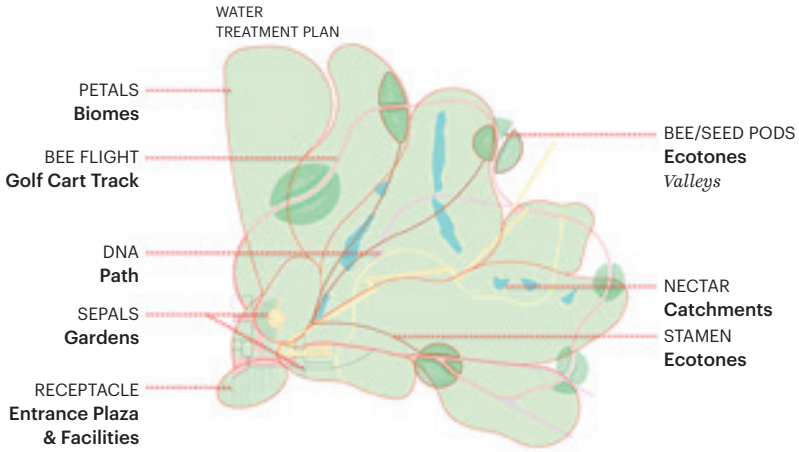
The site [75 acres] for the Biodiversity Park, Noida is contiguous with a 35 acre greenbelt, making it an extended 110 acres of green afforested area. It is envisaged as an exposition of the biodiversity that may exist in the various biomes that could be suitably recreated in the natural conditions [soil and climate] of Delhi NCR region, particularly in the four natural divisions [*Kohi, Bangar, Khadar* and *Dabar*]. Besides these, there are grasslands, wetlands and other subsidiary plantations like groves of culturally-significant plants and trees, fruit-bearing tree orchards, bambusetum and medicinal and herbal plants belonging to the region. The park with its proposed eco-zones is envisaged to provide an opportunity to learn about prominent species of plants and animals, seed germination, bioremediation, ecosystem redevelopment, food webs, and life history strategies.

Zoning

The park is designed as two major zones — **Visitor Zone** [Park Administration, Interpretation Centre [Hall&Amphitheatre], Visitor Facilities and Parking], and **Nature Reserve Zone** consisting of six biomes and four subsidiary planting zones – *Kohi* or hilly tracts; *Bangar* or level main land; *Khadar* or sandy riverain of the Yamuna; *Dabar* or low-lying land subject to seasonal flooding; *The Alluvial Ridge* or sandy alluvium piled with deep soil, and *Savannah* or sub-tropical grassland ecosystem. Four subsidiary plantation areas are groves of culturally significant plants and trees, fruit-bearing tree orchards, bambusetum, and medicinal and herbal plants.



[1] ***Entrance Plaza***



Inspiration

Parts of *Butea monosperma* [palash] flower are taken as an Inspiration for conceptualizing the layout. Native to the region, it is a culturally significant tree. It is associated with spring season and with the festival of Holi, especially through the poems and songs. Its bright orange flame-like flowers are likened to fire. The beauty of dry deciduous forests of palash in this arid region reach their zenith when most of the other trees shed their leaves.





[2] LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. Entrance Plaza 1
2. Entrance Plaza 2 [Near Sector-137 Metro]
3. Interpretation Centre and Administration
4. Facilities
5. Amphitheatre & Outdoor display
6. Stepped water body [*ghat*]
7. Natural depression [seasonal water body]
8. Mounds [Ecotones]

BIOMES

9. Biome 1 | KOHI or hilly tracts
10. Biome 2 | BANGAR or level main land
11. Biome 3 | KHADAR or sandy riverine of the Yamuna
12. Biome 4 | DABAR or low-lying land subject to seasonal flooding
13. Biome 5 | THE ALLUVIAL RIDGE or sandy alluvium piled with deep soil
14. Biome 6 | SAVANNAH or sub-tropical grassland ecosystem

SUBSIDIARY PLANTATION

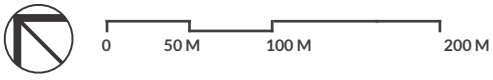
15. Groves of culturally-significant plants and trees
16. Fruit-bearing tree orchards
17. Bambusetum
18. Medicinal and herbal plants

SPECIAL GARDENS

19. 'Navgraha Vatika' [Garden of the 9 Planets]
20. 'Celestial Garden' [Zodiac Gardens]
21. 'Nakshatra Vatika' [Garden of the 27 Nakshatras]
22. Children's play area
23. Food court
24. Parking

PATHS [CIRCULATION]

25. Cycling track
26. Golf cart track [for specially-abled & VIPs]
27. Walking / jogging path
28. Linear paths connecting the two entries
29. Resting places [pavilions]



Planting of Native Vegetation

Over 80 species of native and naturalized tree species and over 120 species of shrubs, herbs and other plants are proposed to be planted including:

1. **KOHI:** Dhau, Hingot, Khair, Dhak, Phulai, Kareel, Kala Siris, Pisangan
2. **BANGAR:** Ber, Jhand, Peelu, Kanju, Bistendu, Babool, Ronjh
3. **KHADAR:** Sal, Shisham, Mahua, Jamun, Khair, Babool
4. **DABAR:** Peelu, Jhau, Khajoor, Babool
5. **ALLUVIAL RIDGE:** Jhand, Kareel, Bistendu, Babool, Sheesham, Kumatiyo, Bui, Kair, Thhor, Dabi, Googal
6. **SAVANNAH:** *Alangium salvifolium, Dalbergia latifolia, Anogeissus – Boswellia, Sterculia urens,* Dhak dominated communities, and Barua, Kans, Kush grasses
7. **CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PLANTS AND TREES:** Kadamb, Peepal, Bargad, Amaltas, Kusum, Kachnar, Mahua, Bakain, Maulsiri
8. **ORCHARDS:** Mango, Jackfruit, Kamrakh, Guava, Cheeku, Lauqat, Falsa, Khirni, Jamun, Imli etc.
9. **BAMBUSETUM:** Ochlandra [the climbing variety], Arudinaria [shrub like], *Bambusa vulgaris* [the pole like golden bamboo], *Bambusa ventricosa* [the belly shaped Buddha-belly bamboo]
10. **MEDICINAL & HERBAL PLANTS:** Amla, Ashwagandha, Baheda, Bael, Harde, Chitrak, Mulaithi, Methi, Tulsi

[3] ***Biome 1 | KOHI** or hilly tracts*

[4] ***Biome 2 | BANGAR** or level main land*

[5] ***Biome 3 | KHADAR** along with the Seasonal channel*

[6] ***Biome 4 | DABAR** or low-lying land subject to seasonal flooding*

[7] ***Biome 5 | THE ALLUVIAL RIDGE** or sandy alluvium piled with deep soil*

[8] ***Biome 6 | SAVANNAH** or sub-tropical grassland ecosystem*

*Reference: **'Trees of Delhi: A Field Guide' by Pradip Krishen. Penguin India, 2006***

[3]



[4]



[5]





[6]



[7]



[8]

NAVGRAHA VATIKA
[9] Garden of the 27 Asterisms
[10] & [11] Celestial Garden: Garden of the 9 Planets

In addition, three special gardens are also planned, **Navgraha Vatika** [Garden of the 9 Planets], **Celestial Garden** [Zodiac Gardens], and **Nakshatra Vatika** [Garden of the 27 Nakshatras] to generate awareness about the Indian astronomy tradition and its associated plant species.



[9]



[10]



[11]



[12] [13]









[14] [15]

Afforestation of the total site includes the proposal to plant over 8000 large trees, 1,00,000 shrubs and 4.5 lakh ground covers. Other areas include two entrance plazas [one being adjacent to Metro station] connected by pathways, multipurpose hall [for interpretation], parking, amphitheatre, open exhibition areas, nursery of native plants, 3 kilometres long golf-cart track for aged and differently-abled, 7 kilometres long cycle path and jogging/ walking path passing through various biomes and seasonal ponds for rainwater harvesting.

[12] & [13] ***Interpretation Hall, Outdoor Display, Amphitheatre and Exhibition Verandah***

[14] ***Arbour and Machaan***

[15] ***View of the promenade***

[16] & [17] ***Subsidiary Plantation: Groves of culturally-significant plants and trees, and fruit-bearing tree orchards in 2017***



[16]



[17]

Environmental Improvement

1. The above zones will help in creating a rich repository of Native and naturalized flora along with a rich wetland ecosystem proposed as a part of the natural water-bodies designed in the natural depressions. This will create a unique ecosystem comprising of plants, small animals, insects, birds and butterflies.
2. There will be an enormous amount of Carbon sequestration and generation of oxygen along with biomass production with the amount of planting and afforestation proposed to be done. There will also be huge increase in the amount of evapo-transpiration taking place.
3. Planting of native and naturalized species of plants will reduce the water consumption in irrigation by more than 50% from the base level. It is anticipated that after six years there will be no need for applied irrigation.
4. The source of irrigation water is adjacent STP. With 85% of proposed forested green area, the park will also help to mitigate water scarcity by achieving 100% ground water recharge. All the water falling on the site is also proposed to be retained within it
5. The project is proposed to achieve UNDP Sustainable Development Goal 6 [Clean water], Goal 15 [Life on land].

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

PROJECT NAME
Noida Biodiversity Park, Sector-91, Noida

OWNER: **Noida Authority**

SITE AREA: **75 acres** [Total 110 acres along with the contiguous green belt]

COST ESTIMATE: **53.00 Crores**

LANDSCAPE & ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN TEAM
Mohammad Shaheer & Yogesh Kapoor
[Shaheer Associates, New Delhi]

Sachin Jain & Saket Jain
[S.J.A. Consultants, New Delhi]

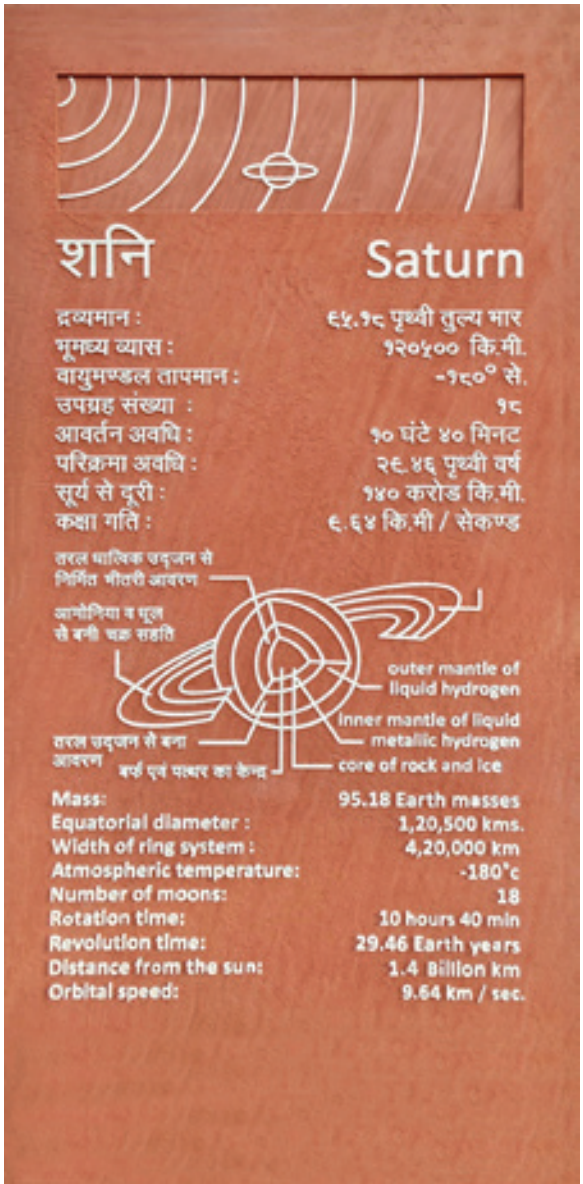
STRUCTURAL CONSULTANTS
Naresh Matia [Group Genesis]
Nadeem Onais [Onais Associates]

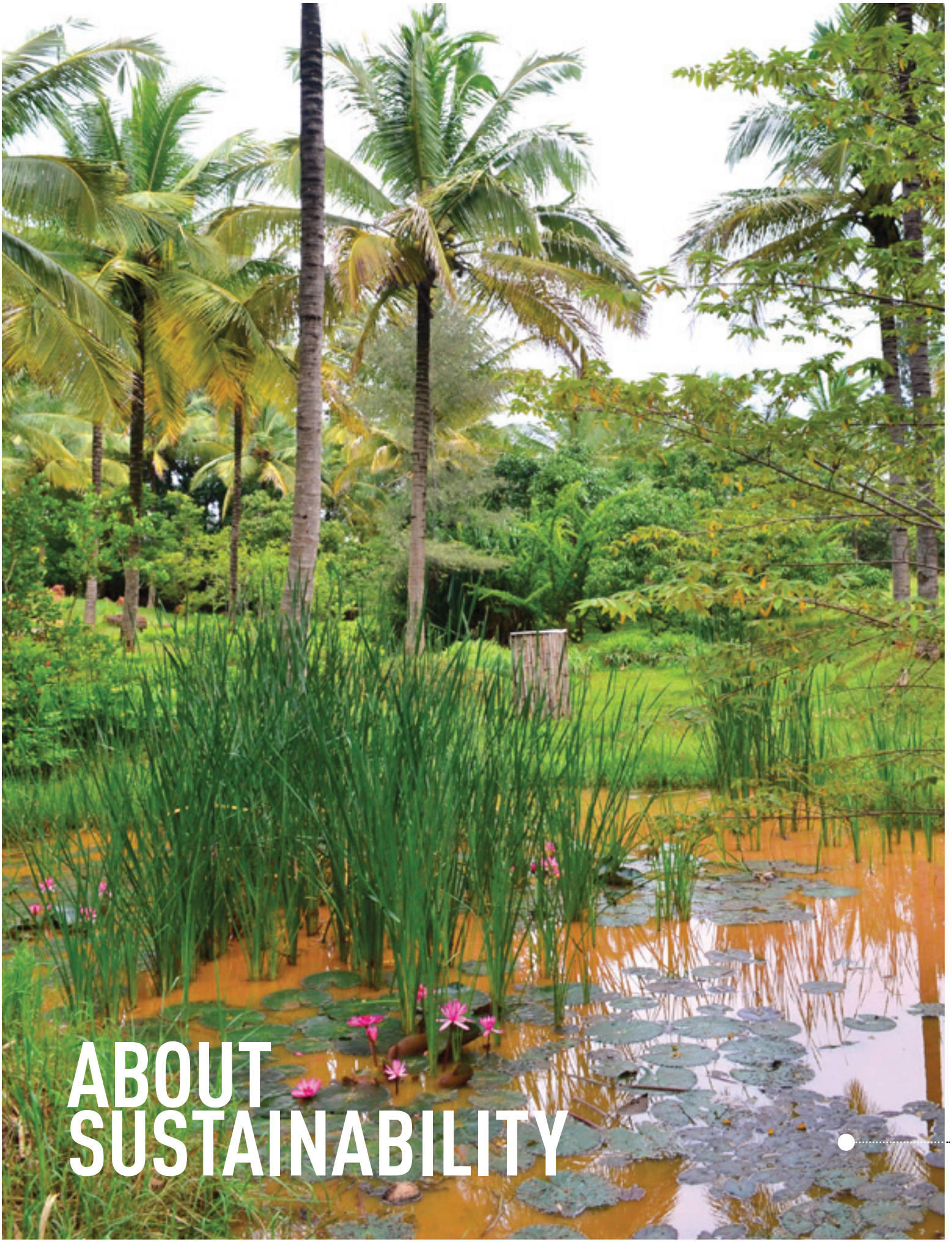
IRRIGATION CONSULTANT
Rishabh Jain [Integrated Flowtech P. Ltd.]

ELECTRICAL CONSULTANTS
Gyan Prakash Gupta [Engineering Consultants]

PLUMBING
Praveen Soni [Soni Consultants]

All drawings and photographs courtesy the Author





ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

BRIDGING THE GAP



Based in New Delhi, ***Akshay Kaul,*** established his practice in mid 90s. Along with it, he has remained closely associated with many landscape architecture programs in the country, as a studio guide, thesis mentor and as jury member. In this special feature, Akshay shares his journey, his inspirations from his formative years and later life and his work philosophy.

As a person, I feel my work reflects the subtle impact of partaking in nature while growing up in different geographies and ecologies in India and abroad. Three separate places have had the most influence on me. My schooling in Chhattisgarh; an undergraduate in Manipal, Karnataka; and graduate studies and work in Upstate New York and the Bay Area, California.

Everyday nature as a child meant cycling to school on a road through the forest and watching the seasonal stream from the classroom and playfields. We ran to the *nallah* behind our house whenever it rained to play with the tadpoles and fishes or to feel the current of the stream move the sand beneath our feet. Cycling into the nearby forests or playing cricket under the large Mahua tree on off days now seem like stories from Ruskin Bond or Malgudy Days.

Living in remote Chhattisgarh provided a unique opportunity to observe Adivasis and their culture up close and develop respect, empathy, and compassion for them. Every week, streams of Adivasis would carry their produce from the small fields or the flood plains to the weekly *haat* and pass behind our house. As children, we grew up in Chhattisgarh hearing different languages, partaking in regional cuisine, seeing people clothed in different textiles and fabrics, and valuing these cultural differences and diversity.

OPPOSITE PAGE | ***Shreyas Retreat, Bangalore***
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: ***Akshay Kaul Associates***

When it was summer, it was time to run off to the valley – Kashmir. Driving through the scenic highways, first from Pathankot, then from Jammu, and later by air, meant being surrounded by mists, mountains, meadows, and forests from the much-coveted window seat. Though I never grew up there, spending the early morning by the river Jhelum, bathing on the *ghats,* going to the temples, and staying in houses of mud, timber, and stone sensitized me to nature in subtle ways. My uncles worked in various parts of the valley and visiting them during the summers meant walking by the small cold streams that came gushing down the mountains through the small settlements of Tral, Gund, or Pahalgam, or the temple town of Anantnag. I was drawn to these water streams and would often run into them and have been saved from drowning a few times.

At the age of 10, I remember strolling into the factory township nursery in Chhattisgarh where the supervisor introduced us to the world of plants. We would often buy creepers, shrubs, and fruit trees from this nursery and plant them in our house, which had a garden on all four sides. The front was the formal driveway and a lawn with a hedge of *inermi*, and the rear was the kitchen garden that changed its character each of the six years we lived there. The guava, papaya, and banana trees were permanent parts of the kitchen garden while the vegetable patches kept changing. Seeing the vegetables grow fascinated me from early childhood and helping take out ground nuts and potatoes are some of my vivid experiences from then. I designed and created my first agrarian landscape more than 20 years ago at Shreyas Bangalore from a wasteland. The boundaries were left porous to allow water to come in and be redirected through swale into large ponds. The periphery had been planted with agave and *karonda* to keep the stray animals away. This five-acre farm garden is a unique place in the yoga resort for the guests to walk, rest, or take part in various agrarian activities. In our first collaborative project at Shillim, Maharashtra, we set up a native plant nursery on the backwaters of Pawna Dam. Since then, in almost all projects we have created a nursery and often an agrarian garden.

In school, I remember enjoying drawing, colouring, and watercolours very vividly. Most of the 'on-the-spot' painting competitions that I won had idyllic nature as a theme. When it was time to study maths and physics, I was happier sketching Tagore and Gandhi in grade XII or drawing up *Sri Yantra*, and hence I ended up studying architecture and not engineering unlike the rest of my Kashmiri clan.

The new found experience of traveling 56 hours by train across the country for undergraduate studies is unthinkable now. Standing at the train doors or sitting on the steps of the moving train and watching the landscape is something that I still indulge in. Taking part in NASA competitions each year offered the opportunity to work with an incredibly talented pool of seniors who now have one of the foremost architectural practices in India. I think my appreciation for art and Indian crafts got a fillip through the study and documentation of vernacular rural houses and temple architecture of South Kannada. Now, in our practice, we explore ways in which we can bring crafts to the landscape and support our craftspeople to keep these skills alive.

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[1] **SHILLIM ECO RESORT**
MAHARASHTRA | 2002
In this international collaborative project, our role was to create a sustainable development manual for a 2500-acre landscape. The manual was done more than 20 years ago and formed the guidelines for landscape planning and design, as well as sustainable development. The manual and demonstration techniques were ground-breaking at that time. These included water conservation through contour trenches, gully plugs, earth dams, native plant palettes, the creation of an onsite nursery and protecting the wildlife corridor.
COLLABORATORS:
Landscape Architects: Margie Ruddick, USA
Architects: Steven Harris, USA



[1]

I think after my second year of undergraduate studies and brief training with Upal Ghosh Associates in Delhi, I too had made up my mind to study in the US, albeit in landscape architecture. I interned and later worked with Ashish Ganju and Mark Warner, Delhi, coincidentally, on gardens for two housing projects. Ashish helped me strengthen my fundamentals and bring more clarity to my thinking and Mark helped me develop a keen eye for detail.

My apartment in Upstate New York, where I went for graduate studies in Landscape, was by a large old cemetery with huge trees. When it was October, I first saw what fall colours meant. It was as if the whole cemetery was on fire. And then it was Thanksgiving. The first snowfall, I distinctly remember, fell on the ground, and everything was white. Over the three years of my graduate studies, I understood why spring was so welcome with the first bulbs showing up in late April and why the warm summers were a celebration and not something to shy away from.

Upstate New York was radically different from Berkeley and San Francisco, where I did four summer internships before eventually getting my first job as a landscape architect. My first internship in the US was with historic preservationist Randolph Langenbach in the summer of 1990 and the office of William Coburn, with whom I did garden design. They were both Harvard graduates and Indophiles. At college, ours was one of the few programs that trained me in LandCADD and ecological planning and design. This prepared me for my first job at Singer and Hodges and later with the much-acclaimed office of Peter Walker and Partners. The projects that I worked on with them were path-breaking in many ways. The first was a highway landscape with native plants, the second was a seafront park in a tough neighbourhood, and the third was a wetland restoration office park for the headquarters of Boeing Corporation in Renton, Seattle. Those were the early 1990s when ecology was beginning to make inroads into landscape education and the profession, and I was fortunate to be part of it.

During those five years of graduate studies, internships, and work, I took a lot of time to travel across the US to see the natural and cultural landscape, meet landscape architects, attend their talks, visit their built works, and partake in the culture. The excellent and diverse faculty at The State University of New York [SUNY] with a specialization in forestry, historic landscape preservation, urban design, community development, and human behavior and research, prepared, empowered, and encouraged me to set up my practice on my return to India. I eventually returned at the end of 1994 after taking two months of layover in Europe to travel and see the historic and contemporary gardens and landscapes in the UK, France, Italy, and Spain.

[2] **KRISHNA ARUP RESIDENCE**
NEW DELHI | 2005
We did three residential projects for the client and his extended family. Rainwater harvesting and storm water management were the guiding principles for landscape planning and design. Each drop that falls from the roof and in the gardens eventually finds its way into a detention pond filled with aquatics as part of a designed landscape experience. In this garden we brought in for the first time in our Northern Indian climate plants that find mention in "Ayurveda".
COLLABORATORS: ***Architects: DFI, New Delhi***

[2]





[3]

[3] **SIKANDERPUR PARK**
GURUGRAM | 2021
The project came to us after the planting was done. However, given these limitations, we created a system of swales and ponds to restore and recharge water in this public landscape. Water from the streets and within the wilderness urban landscape directed to recharge the ground and mitigate flooding. Compacted mud pathways were designed to experience the wilderness, and waste material and debris from the site and outside were used as subbase and for landscape elements for the project.
COLLABORATORS: ***iamgurgaon, Vijay Dhasmana***

Over the years, all my diverse childhood experiences, graduate studies, and work experience abroad have found expression in unique ways in my work and various pedagogical assignments in India. I've come to value sharing my knowledge of nature and bridging the gap between nature and culture, the environment, and society. Mine has been a small practice, though projects are spread all over the country. My background encourages me to seek deeper meanings and values through work and pedagogy and constantly challenge the meaning of landscape and the role of a landscape architect.

Our work is strongly based on intense research and fieldwork. In most of our projects, we prefer to work with smaller contractors, hoping that economic benefits would penetrate deep into our society. We experiment and innovate in each project, bringing new processes and learning into the realm of the landscape and imparting new techniques and skills to people on the ground to empower them. In the year 2000, we did the first *Paani Yatra*, visiting the arid landscape of Rajasthan with the Centre for Science and Environment. We saw the revival of the Aravari river by Magsaysay award winner Rajendra Singh. In the very next project of 22 acres, Shreyas resort in Bangalore, we brought these principles of stormwater management into the landscape and reconnected fragmented *nallah* through our site. On this field trip with CSE, we had seen the work of the BAIF research foundation in rural India; composting; biogas; and agro-horticulture. At Shreyas, Bangalore, we introduced and integrated these concepts as part of landscape planning and design. We enhanced the landscape experience by introducing native trees, shrubs, and grasses in a mono-culture landscape of coconut trees. Since then, it has been an ongoing journey of taking up challenges and pushing the boundaries and definition of the landscape.

We often work in the Western Himalayas and see erosion, landslides, and destruction each time a road or building is built on its slopes. My childhood memories conjure up the misty and forested mountains, and it is disturbing to see the indifference and apathy. As landscape architects, we have collaborated and introduced bio-engineering processes and techniques to mitigate and minimize erosion, stabilize steep slopes, and reverse deforestation. Our firm is one of the first and few that strives hard to mitigate and minimize ecological disturbances at scales varying from city planning to small lots in the Plains and Himalayas. On this journey, we have inspired, sensitized, and trained a large pool of people in my office, clients, architects, students, labourers, supervisors, even contractors, and others whom we may never know.

[4] **DEVANYA HILLS**
UTTARAKHAND | 2018–ONGOING
Devanya is an 88-acre site located at an altitude of about 6,800 ft. The landscape planning is designed to conserve the water, restore the eroded slopes, especially along the roads, and where buildings are constructed, use innovative 'living green walls' of predominantly native vegetation to reforest them. Hundreds of gully plugs slow down the water and recharge and bring perennial water downstream in the first phase. As the houses and hotels come, the proposed landscape is designed to celebrate the region's seasonality and the wilderness.
COLLABORATORS: ***Studio Lotus, Team Devanya***



[4]



[5]

Over the last 27 years, we have been fortunate to work across varying geographies and terrains in India with leading and sensitive architects. Now, clients or architects come to us because they feel that we offer an innovative and environmentally grounded response. We have transformed through this journey. The learning and growth, continue every day, and we have been sharing our journey and experience through various platforms. 199 b talks is a platform where we invite young people to share their unique experiences. Design with Nature is a series of ongoing online workshops that more than a few thousand participants have attended. I have been teaching in various universities and have recently been part of the new curriculum in the graduate studies in the landscape at Manipal University Jaipur that focuses on environmental stewardship, leadership, and community engagement, with a focus on landscape architects as change makers. The aim is to capacity build the youth of the country to empower them to live and design closely with nature.

[5] **CENTRE FOR HUMAN GENETICS**
BANGALORE | 2018
CHG is engaged in advanced research, education and specialized training in human genetics and genomics. We first created an edible landscape in the courtyard, however, as the director changed the landscape was changed into a garden where the guests could come down from the rooms and be part of it or look down into the garden from the corridors. Like in all projects the experience and ecological issues are integrated as part of the experiential landscape.
COLLABORATORS: ***ABRD Architects, New Delhi***



[6]

[6] **RAAS JODHPUR**
JODHPUR | 2009
Raas is a luxury boutique hotel with 18th century structures that have been restored using traditional crafts and materials. The master plan and landscape design are both modern yet authentic to the place. Without aping the past, local craftsmanship is adopted and expressed in a contemporary language and the selected plant palette is for the predominant winter tourist. Each drop of water is recharged by integrating it in landscape and wastewater is used for irrigation.
COLLABORATORS: ***Lotus Praxis Initiative, New Delhi – Bangalore***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Andre J. Fanthome***

My journey is an ongoing process where each day I am bridging the gap a little more and with each new project, we bring in a more sensitive and informed way of planning and designing with nature. I feel our work is an expression of my inward journey and an ongoing transformation where my relationship with nature has become clearer. I feel more oneness with everything and everyone around me than before. As this practice of non-duality continues, of seeing the same one in everyone and everything, the true meaning and purpose of life are gradually being revealed and unfolding; the landscape is simply a medium through which to serve the people and the planet and hopefully someday in the process attain THAT.

All photographs courtesy Akshay Kaul Associates, unless credited otherwise
Akshay can be reached at: [E]: **aklandscape@gmail.com**
[W]: **https://akshaykaul.in/**

Uma Sekar, Landscape Architect
| ussekar@gmail.com

RETHINKING THE LANDSCAPE OF LAWNS

The article explores various perceptions about lawns in designed landscapes, along with the socio-cultural and environmental implications, citing examples from different geographical locations. It calls for a need to define the ecological and aesthetic values associated with lawns, which have become one of the most popular landscape elements in any new development.

Ask anyone to think of a park, and the same image pops in their head: an area of lawn dotted with trees, no matter where in the world one may be. As urbanization proceeds at an unprecedented scale, wiping out existing landscapes, the new landscape of choice that has accompanied this phenomenon is the innocuous-looking lawn. Lawns currently cover 50%-70% of urban green areas. How has a design element that is only a few hundred years old taken over so much of our land area, and what are the consequences to local ecosystems? To answer these questions, we first need to examine the many qualities we have assigned to lawns and the reasons why.

Lawns as civilized

Influenced by the local meadows, Medieval gardens in Europe were the first to have small lawns. These were grasses mixed with flowers and bore little resemblance to today's green carpets. The popularity behind today's expansive lawns can be traced to 18th century England with the gardens of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, which presented an idealized image of the countryside, with their undulating lawns and groves of trees. These gardens, fitting to the mild temperatures, high rainfall, and soils of England, became the quintessentially English landscape and the yardstick against which all other landscapes were measured, no matter where they were located.



[1]

*[1] **Nehru Park, New Delhi [Hot semi-arid climate as per Koppen-Geiger classification]***

OPPOSITE PAGE |
*[2] **A garden lawn in Budapest, Hungary with sculpture by Hungarian artist Ervin Lóránt Hervéin***

[2]



[3] [4]









[5] [6]

The lawn landscape followed English settlers to regions as diverse as North America and Australia. When confronted with the extreme heat and frequent droughts of Australia, settlers sought to replicate the same landscape, valued not only because it reminded them of their idealized home, but also indicated progress, asserting the superiority of the white settlers over the indigenous Aboriginal dwellers. In the United States, early lawns were a symbol of status and wealth, but have since become the defining feature of American suburbs. Houses are sprinkled on expanses of lawn, whether in water-rich cities of the northeast or desert cities of the southwest.

[3] ***Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, UK***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Wikimedia commons***

[4] ***Burghley House, Lincolnshire, UK***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Wikimedia Commons***
ATTRIBUTED TO: ***P.J. Marriott***

[5] ***Park in Quebec City, Canada [Warm humid continental climate as per Koppen-Geiger classification]***

[6] ***Suburban development in Massachusetts, USA***

[7] [8]









[9] [10]

[7] ***Historic photograph of the Taj Mahal gardens, circa 1900***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Wikimedia Commons***

[8] ***Historic photograph of the Taj Mahal with the gardens in the foreground, photograph by Felice Beato, circa 1858***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Wikimedia Commons***

[9], [10] ***Current gardens of the Taj Mahal***
PHOTO [9] CREDIT: ***Vivian Wong on Unsplash***
PHOTO [10] CREDIT: ***Wikimedia Commons***

When Lord Curzon [Viceroy of India, 1898-1905] first set sight on the Taj Mahal in 1887, the gardens were heavily planted and almost obscured the mausoleum. These gardens enchanted visitors with not only their pure geometric forms, waterways, and fountains, but also orchards, flowers, and rows of cypress trees flanking the waterways. By the late 19th century, once Lord Curzon had restored the area, those fragrant gardens had been replaced with extensive lawns and trees only along their edges. That densely shaded landscape, so desirable in the dry heat of Agra, had been "refined" to suit English sensibilities. From being a private and intimate garden to be enjoyed from within, with a mausoleum that revealed itself gradually as one moved through the space, it is now an open public landscape with endless vistas: a landscape to be viewed, instead of one to be experienced.

Even in countries not exposed to Colonialism, there is the preconceived notion that Westernization = modernization/ progress. In China, lawns are a recent phenomenon, absent in traditional gardens. Now,the lawn area in China is growing at a dramatic pace, promoted by politicians and park managers alike as a Western, and therefore, desirable landscape prototype.





[11] [12]

All over the world, lawns are not only the most prolific urban landscape, but they have also become the most urbane.

[11] ***Typical planting and inward nature of traditional garden, Shanghai, China***

[12] ***Recent development in China***

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[13] ***The "simple and natural" landscape of lawn and trees***

Lawns as green/ ecological

We are inclined to think that anything that looks green, must be green, and provide unquestionable ecological benefits. Lawns do allow rainwater infiltration, trap atmospheric carbon dioxide, improve soil structure and reduce the heat island effect when compared to pavement. However, with urbanization,lawns are replacing not pavement but rather forests, wetlands, and farmland. We should therefore judge lawns against existing landscapes.

Lawn grasses not only allow infiltration at a lower rate than native grasses but also fail to bind sediments. One of the reasons is their shorter roots, often only 1"-2" long [also why lawns need frequent watering]. Native prairie grasses in the mid-western United States such as Buffalo grass and Prairie Drop seed have roots that go over 6' deep into the soil. Deeper roots increase the ability of the soil to absorb and retain water, bind pollutants, and prevent runoff far better than the shallow roots of commercial lawn grasses.

As mono cultures, lawns also lag from a biodiversity perspective. A study in Singapore compared the diversity of birds in three urban environments: gardens, vacant lots, and planted parking lots. Gardens had a minimum of 25% of their area planted [not lawn] and some hardscape; parking lots had bays split up with shrubs and large trees, and vacant plots were tidy areas of the lawn with a few trees. In astonishing results, gardens



[13]

and parking lots had a higher bird species richness, while in vacant plots/ lawns it was less — almost half as much. The reason provided by the researchers was the vertical complexity of vegetation [i.e. multiple layers of shrubs and tree canopy] in both the parking lots and gardens. It appears that even a well-planted parking lot can act as a better habitat for birds than a maintained lawn. By repeatedly comparing lawns to the pavement, rather than other landscape types, we reinforce the myth of lawns as a valid part of sustainable green infrastructure.

Lawns as natural

Often, landscape architects either desire or are asked to create a landscape that is "simple and natural": one that is inevitably translated as a grassy parkland sprinkled with trees. This description is a paradox: one, nature is not simple: it consists of complex organisms and processes that we are only starting to recognize, let alone understand. Two, the lawn is not natural.

To keep the emerald green look, we rely on irrigation, fertilization, frequent mowing, and herbicide applications. Lawn grasses are typically mono cultures of exotic plant species. Even in Western Europe, where lawns originated, the hybrid species/ mono cultures used have no equivalents within the natural environment and contribute little too urban diversity. Most lawns consist of four European species in temperate climates, and five in warm climates. We are destroying our biodiversity and replacing it worldwide with nine species of plants. As Doug Tallamy mentions in his book, *Nature's Best Hope,* "every square foot dedicated to a lawn is a square foot that is degrading local ecosystems."





[14] [15]

Lawns as neutral

If lawns are green enough to appear natural, they are also bland enough to appear neutral. The very supposed neutrality of lawn has led it to be indiscriminately used, with no regard to context. The step well Rani ki Vav, built in Patan, Gujarat in the 11th century, was silted over due to repeated flooding of the Saraswati river and hidden from view for over 700 years. Meticulously restored by the Archaeological Society of India, it represents unique architecture belonging to a unique place. There is however nothing unique about the restored surroundings: the stepwell now sits in a park-like setting. Irrigated lawn with a sprinkling of trees has replaced the scrub vegetation that would have characterized this region a thousand years ago.

From temples in wet Bangkok to step-wells in arid Patan to temples on the seashores of Mahabalipuram, the lawn has become the default landscape of historic architecture. Lawns have become such a part of our collective consciousness, so neutral, that we accept them blindly even in locations where their usage is incongruous. Architecture that arose because of water scarcity is now surrounded by the most water-guzzling landscape known: lawn.

Lawns as a setting

Lawns are popular because they are considered ideal foils for more "interesting" architecture. A design idea endlessly self-propagated by designers, it caters to the notion that the landscape needs to be subservient to the architecture, existing merely to provide a setting: a green carpet on which a building can be carefully displayed. This use of lawn relies on the artifice of lawn and presents a simplified nature that is as man-made as the building which it displays.

[14] ***The meticulously restored Rani-ki-Vav, Patan, Gujarat***

[15] ***The park-like setting for the Rani-ki-Vav, Patan, Gujarat***

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[16] ***Temple in Bangkok, Thailand***

[17] ***Lawn as setting for architecture, Singapore***





[16] [17]

Moving forward

If worldwide we have accepted lawns as an ideal, natural landscape, how can the design community change its approach? Where can we start and what kind of changes do we need to make to tackle the lawn-ization of cities?

Start small

While there cannot be a single alternative to the lawn that is applicable worldwide, two changes that we can all embrace are:
[1] reduce the area of lawn
[2] introduce regionally-appropriate understory vegetation.

The reduction of lawn area should be based on an evaluation of how people use exterior spaces. In several Asian and African cultures, people do not use lawns actively, and lawns are often off-limits. In these places, parks are better served with paths amid planted gardens,with hardscape zones/ open lawns provided only to accommodate active uses.

As the Singapore study showed, covering at least 25% of the site with native understory vegetation can have a significant impact on supporting urban biodiversity. Public parks could have demonstration sites that display alternatives to lawns, or some parts of the park could be less actively managed, allowing for natural successional processes. Together, these could help inform and influence public opinion, which is the next step.



[18]

Educate users

Studies show that an appreciation for biodiversity is linked with exposure to nature and that people who are unexposed to nature may subsequently develop a fear of it. If 70% of the nature that a city-dweller observes is lawn, then lawns become the lens through which all nature is perceived and the yardstick through which all of nature is measured. Nature becomes desirable the more it resembles lawn and the less desirable the more it deviates from that norm.

[18] ***Actively used lawn area in a park in Stockholm, Sweden***

A semi-wild area may be interpreted as untidy or unappealing. It becomes important not only to have natural areas in cities but to put up signs that highlight local biodiversity to gain acceptance from the public.

If signage is required to justify non-lawn habitats, then perhaps, we can go a step further and say that signage should also accompany all lawn areas. Few park users recognize the resources and energy that go into lawn maintenance. The signage could explain exactly lawn area requirements in terms of irrigation, chemical input, mowing manhours, energy expenditure, etc., in language that is easy to understand. For example, in an arid region, there could be signage that says, "Just one acre of this lawn consumes 27,138 gallons of water on one summer day, that's enough water drinking water for you for the next 148 days."

Embrace a more integrated approach to land design, driven by ecological and cultural identities

This seems a fashionably appropriate thing to say. However, hidden within this statement is the uncomfortable notion that designers may need to confront and question their aesthetic norms and values, and require them to think not only about individual projects but of the community as a whole.

As landscape architects, we need to constantly question our use and placement of lawns.

- What functions does this lawn cater to?
- How can this piece of land serve a better ecological purpose?
- How can this piece of land serve a better social purpose?
- How can we create a better "sense of place" that is rooted in the ecology of the place and the cultural needs of its people?

To combat shrinking biodiversity in our cities, we need to think of land as more than just space left-over after constructing a building, and plants as more than just a mean to fill that space. Reversing the current lawn-ization of the urban landscape does not require a mere refinement of design approaches, it calls for redefining our values: the importance [or lack thereof] that we place on our environment will determine the quality of life that we will enjoy in our cities many years from now.



All photographs courtesy the Author, unless credited otherwise

References

Aguilera, G., Ekross, J., Persson, A. S., Pettterson, L. B., & Ockinger, E. [2019]. Intensive management reduces butterfly diversity over time in urban green spaces. *Urban Ecosystems Vol. 22*

Belcher, R. N., Sadanandan, K. R., Goh, E. R., Chan, J. Y., Menz, S., & Schroepfer, T. [2019]. Vegetation on and around large-scale buildings positively influences native tropical bird abundance and species richness. *Urban Ecosystems Vol. 22*

Campbell-Arvai, V. [2019]. Engaging urban nature: improving our understanding of public perceptions of the role of biodiversity in cities. *Urban Ecosystems Vol. 22*

Herbert, E. W. [2011]. *Flora's Empire: British Gardens in India*. New Delhi: Penguin Books

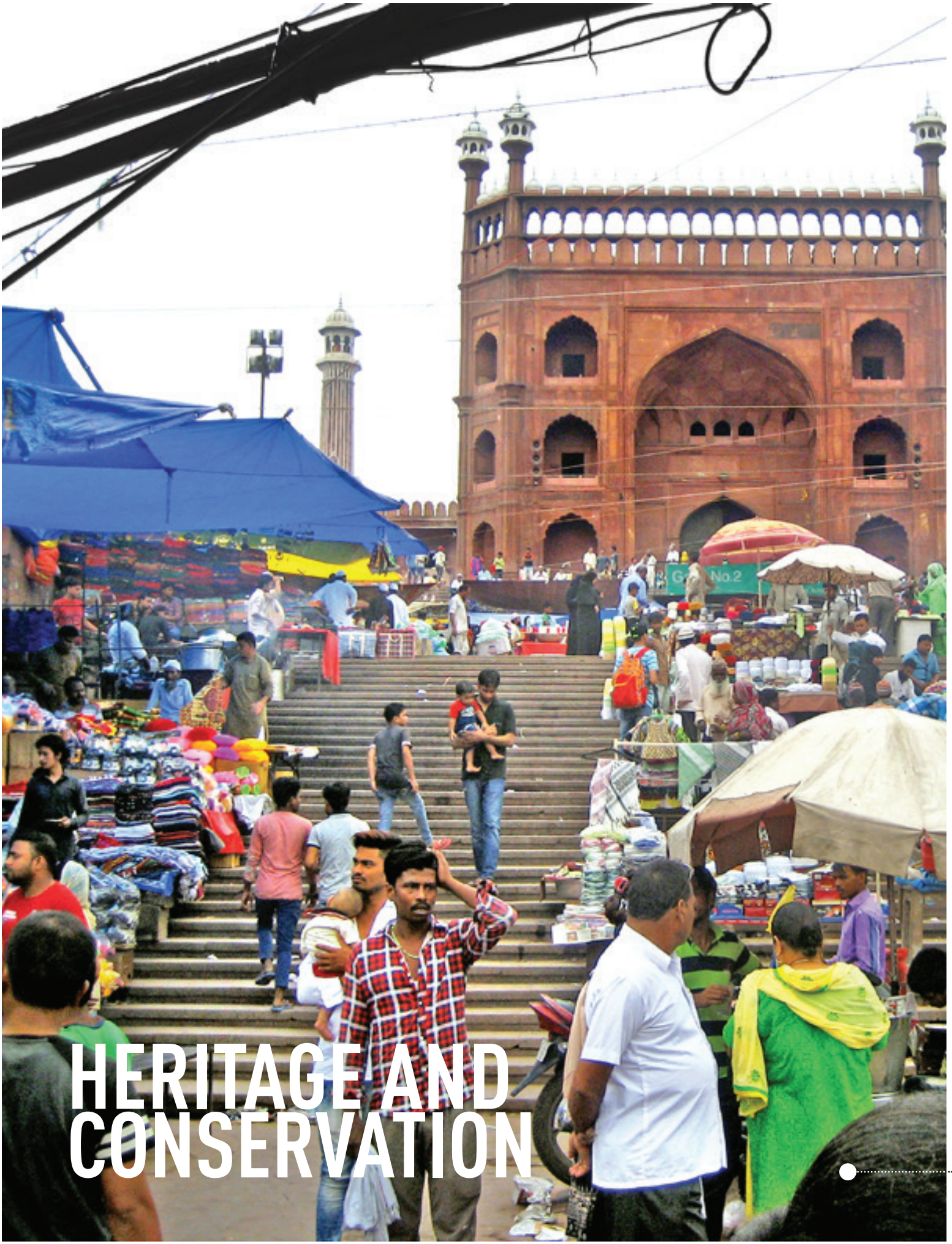
Ignatieva, M., Haase, D., Dushkova, D., & Haase, A. [2020]. Lawns in cities: from a globalized urban green space phenomenon to sustainable nature-based solutions. *Land 9*

Selbig, W. R., & Balster, N. [2013]. Evaluation of Turf-Grass and Prairie-Vegetated Rain Gardens in a Clay and Sandy Soil. *2013 International Low Impact Development Symposium*. Saint Paul, Minnesota

Tallamy, D. W. [2019]. *Nature's Best Hope*. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press

Wheeler, M. M., Neill, C., Groffman, P. M., Avolio, M., Bettez, N., Cavender-Bares, J., Trammell, T. L. [2017]. Continental-scale homogenization of residential plant communities. *Landscape and Urban Planning 165*

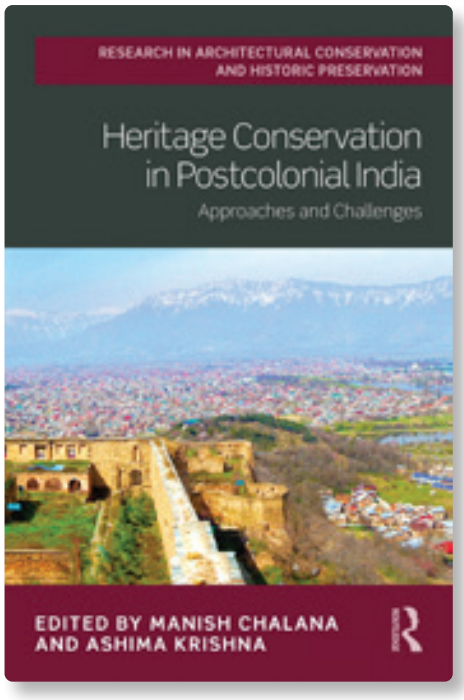
Yang, F., Ignatieva, M., Larsson, A., Zhang, S., & Ni, N. [2019]. Public perceptions and preferences regarding lawns and their alternatives in China: A case study of Xi'an. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening 46*



HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION

Review by A.G.K. Menon, Conservation Architect
| agkrishnamenon@gmail.com

ADDRESSING PARADOXES



HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA | APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES
Edited by Manish Chalana and Ashima Krishna
Published by Routledge, London New York, 2021
Size: 158 mm x 241mm x 19 mm
308 Pages, Hardcover
ISBN: 978-0367619947

The book brings to forefront many challenges of the field of architecture and heritage conservation, which explores complex position in these contexts, of adopting a visionary spirit that respects the past and at the same time is responsive towards the needs of contemporary times.

One of the paradoxes of our society's engagement with its cultural heritage is that, while in the abstract, we proudly identify with it as evidence of our civilizational achievements, in pragmatic terms, this attachment is not translated into effective policies or practices to conserve it for future generations. Arguably, this may even have contributed significantly to its steady attrition. For example, we routinely eulogize the antiquity and sophistication of 'living' historic cities – Varanasi, Ujjain, Madurai, and the hundreds of original cores of modern cities – but the imperatives to conserve them is a notable blind spot in modern urban planning. As a consequence, for decades historic precincts have borne the brunt of uncontrolled urbanization and unplanned development, which have reduced them to the decrepit state they are in today. Typically, the Master Plan of Delhi identified the pre eminent Mughal city of Shahjahanabad as a slum to be razed and redeveloped.

This ambivalence under girds the quotidian spatial imagination of our postcolonial society, but it has not been critically examined. Thus, on the one hand, we continue to rue the attrition of the historic cultural landscape,but on the other, we purpose fully aspire to modernize our habitats by mimicking global models, unable to link the strong causal relationship between the two. It was only with the initiation of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission in 2005 [JNNURM] that alternate strategies of urban development emerged.

OPPOSITE PAGE |
Jama Masjid, Delhi
PHOTO CREDIT: ***bsd | grafiniti***



JNNURM marked a radical departure from the indifference that had marked the earlier policies and priorities of the government towards urban development. This transformation was not however triggered by any ideological epiphany experienced by urban planners, but by the political image of the woeful state of cities and the extravagant promises of neo-liberal economics. Huge budgets were committed coupled with integrated and visionary management strategies and objectives to upgrade cities. The Mission strategies, as they were initially drafted,reflected the ambivalence towards the significance of historic settlements, but this lacuna was foregrounded by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage [INTACH]. INTACH, a non-government institution was established in 1984 to conserve the unprotected cultural heritage of the country and, *inter alia*, they had conducted pioneering studies on development oriented conservation of historic cities, which enabled them to credibly advocate a course correction to accommodate the imperatives of heritage conservation in the implementation of JNNURM projects. This resulted in the government appending a special tool-kit to the Mission guidelines to link the imperatives of heritage conservation with the objectives of urban renewal.

Since then the objectives of urban conservation have evolved both in academic programmes and civic governance. The government has initiated a plethora of targeted schemes and Missions to upgrade and modernize different aspects of the habitat, including HRIDAY [National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojna], which specifically focuses on upgrading historic settlements.

But deep-rooted ideological ambivalence continues to haunt many urban renewal projects, as can be seen at Varanasi, a flag-ship HRIDAY project of the government, where large swathes of the historic fabric have been egregiously razed to create a 'world-class' plaza to link the Vishwanath Temple to the banks of the river Ganga. Sadly,

Deep-rooted ideological ambivalence continues to haunt many urban renewal projects, as can be seen at Varanasi, a flag-ship HRIDAY project of the government, where large swathes of the historic fabric have been egregiously razed to create a 'world-class' plaza to link the Vishwanath Temple to the banks of the river Ganga.



6 Manish Chalana and Achinna Krishna

Untangling heritage conservation... 7

Figure 0.1 Khaki Masjid, an ASI-protected monument is now engulfed by a much transformed Khaki Village. It went through some basic restoration work in preparation for the Commonwealth Games that Delhi hosted in 2010, which the ASI eventually suspended as pressure to execute the restoration work by INTACH and other groups mounted. Source: Manish Chalana.

of publications within each set of literature. This is by no means comprehensive, as the literature in each category is extensive, and covering it fully is beyond the scope of this work. Our goal is to familiarize readers with a range of topics in each category and to situate our work within the existing body of literature.

ASI publications

The Archaeological Survey of India's main output comprises books and reports showcasing their sites and approaches, with a focus on excavations and cataloguing. The agency publishes annual reports that track the work and expenses on projects, among other routine record keeping. These reports were initiated in 1862 by Cunningham, the first Director General of the ASI. Additionally, there are numerous books focusing on ASI excavations through the decades on a variety of sites. Examples provide a sense of the specificity found in these books; one covers details on excavation work

carried out from 1985–91 on a large Buddhist complex in Lalitagiri, Odisha (Patnaik 2016), while another details excavations in Udayagiri, Andhra Pradesh (Bandyopadhyay 2007). Another reports on the 20 rock-cut caves from the 5th century CE near Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh (Bandyopadhyay 2004). Publications cataloguing artefacts from various ASI excavation sites include examples such as the thousands of terracotta figurines of humans and animals from archaeological mounds in Rajghat, north of Varanasi near Sarnath, which were accidentally discovered during colonial times (Mani 2012).

During James Burgess's tenure as the second ASI Director General (after Cunningham), the ASI began publishing an annual journal with the thoroughly Victorian name *The Indian Antiquary: A Journal of Oriental Research in Archaeology, History, Literature, Languages, Philosophy, Religion, Folklore, &c. &c.* The *Indian Antiquary* started publication in 1872, with a break from 1933–1937, and was then republished until 1947 under the name *The New Indian Antiquary*, then revived one final time from 1964–1971. The journal was meant for sharing ideas and disseminating information on a broad range of topics (including conservation) between scholars and practitioners within India and abroad (Archaeological Survey of India 1872). A scan of journal issues reveals details on various historic and archaeological sites; for example, excavations in Udayagiri are discussed in the 1884 issue; inscriptions in Devanagari script on pillars in one cave from the 11th century are described in great detail (*The Indian Antiquary*, v.13, 1884).

Academic and public scholars have also researched the ASI, from its early years (Keay 2011), through to a more recent retrospective on the agency's 150 years of operation (G. Sengupta, Lambah, and Archaeological Survey of India 2012). Pant's detailed archival account of the efforts of the English East India Company and the British Crown is a more recent and comprehensive historical understanding of how heritage conservation was (or not) carried out in the period between 1784 and 1904. He describes efforts prior to the formation of the ASI, and then focuses on the formation and activities of the agency, specifically through the leadership of Alexander Cunningham, H.H. Cole, James Burgess, and John Marshall (Pant 2012). While presenting a rich tapestry of detailed historical information, this work falls short of any analysis or critique of the activities that took place in the pre-independence period.

Similarly, much of the prevalent literature remains uncritical of the ASI's effectiveness as the largest and most important stakeholder in historic preservation in India, with a major impact on practice. There are some notable counterexamples, however, especially more recently. These include Johnson-Roehr's investigation of how the legacies of colonial-era ASI continue to colour postcolonial practices, particularly in privileging Hindu holy sites and perpetuating violent disagreement between Hindus and Muslims, as with Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (Johnson-Roehr 2008). Krishna's work highlights

The book examines the diversity of challenges that confront the discipline of heritage conservation in postcolonial India. Appending 'postcolonial' to qualify the Indian context, quite rightly signals the need to examine the epistemic nature of the challenges confronting the profession.

such tendentious and inappropriate strategies of urban renewal continues to define the ground realities of urban conservation in postcolonial India providing evidence that the ambivalence towards the contemporary significance of heritage continues to dictate praxis.

Arguably the persistence of the ambivalence highlights the inadequacy of critical studies on the strategies adopted for urban development. While the culture of urban design and urban conservation has taken root, and there is considerable documentation both on urban renewal projects and urban conservation, the links between the two remains critically unexplored by scholars and professionals. For example, K. C. Sivaramakrishnan has exhaustively examined JNNURM in *Re-visioning Indian Cities, The Urban Renewal Mission* [Sage, New Delhi, 2011], and, ICOMOS India and CEPT University have undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of HRIDAY for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India in 2017, which is available as a limited circulation monograph titled, *Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojna*,neither, however,attempts to look beyond the disciplinary silo within which their respective objectives are framed. This blinkered approach to study the habitat has had profound influence on how the built environment in India is being transformed.

The book being reviewed is therefore of interest because it attempts to remove the blinkers. It examines the diversity of challenges that confront the discipline of heritage conservation in postcolonial India. Appending 'postcolonial' to qualify the Indian context, quite rightly signals the need to examine the epistemic nature of the challenges confronting the profession. Its aim, the editors of this book assert, is to "spur a new round of scholarship providing further critical assessment of the field of heritage conservation in the Indian context".

The editors, Manish Chalana and Ashima Krishna, both academics in United States with close professional association with the Indian context, have put together the views of a diverse group of seventeen professionals and scholars who engage with the different facets of heritage conservation, including urban renewal. They have split the multiplicity of views into four sections, to cover important agents and themes that mediated how the profession has evolved, and is practiced, in India: the institutions and programmes;the critical challenges; the emerging trends; and the sustainable approaches to heritage conservation.

The book also contains two valuable overarching commentaries by the editors, which could be read gainfully as independent texts. The first,is a scholarly Introduction, titled, *Untangling heritage conservation in postcolonial India: From colonial to global time;* it provides a succinct overview of the formal profession of heritage conservation; I emphasize the formal, because the variety of robust traditional practices that are extant in the contemporary heritage conservation scene, is conspicuous by its absence. The second, their concluding remarks, is a provocative thesis, the eponymous "Approaches and Challenges", titled, *Past forward: Preparing heritage conservation in India for the 21st century*.

There are many valuable insights that emerge from the eclectic contents of this book, including a perceptive Foreword by Jeffrey M. Chusid, that throws light on the many intrinsic paradoxes that bedevil conservation practice world-wide, but also the particular issues confronting the profession in India. Conservation outcomes, Chusid explains, are dependent on a variety of factors, such as the community will, government regulations and the consensus around local narratives and identities, which are difficult enough when a culturally and ethnically homogeneous community is debating its heritage, but it is even more fraught when multiple communities co-exist in the same area, who 'read' the sites in different ways as in India, because "The sites that densely dot the landscape come from different civilizations, most of which are known, but many of which remain unknown. Their significance, the narratives constructed around them, are dramatically different depending on which community is telling the story." In a diverse country like India it is, of course, difficult to do justice to all who tell the story, but this book cannot be faulted for not being alert to the inadequacies of the colonial epistemology of the discipline in India that provides fertile grounds to align with the evolving global canons of the discipline.

Conservation outcomes, Chusid explains, are dependent on a variety of factors, such as the community will, government regulations and the consensus around local narratives and identities, which are difficult enough when a culturally and ethnically homogeneous community is debating its heritage, but it is even more fraught when multiple communities co-exist in the same area, who 'read' the sites in different ways as in India...

The book has been divided into four parts. Part 1, covers the institutional framework and has five contributors. Saptarshi Sanyal, draws upon his experience working for the Archaeological Survey of India [ASI] to offer a positive narrative of this venerable institution. He counters the negative rhetoric about the agency by making the important point that their work is not delimited by 'scope' or 'consultancy fee', thus transcending a major constraint of contracted professional services that have come to dominate professional practice outside the ASI. Divay Gupta, who heads the Architectural Heritage Division of INTACH, explains the role of a non-governmental and advocacy institution and their objective to promote an "India-centric approach to conservation, which draws from international approaches,

but takes into consideration indigenous ways of conservation". Shikha Jain, showcases the role of national and international governments and institutions through the case studies of the historic cities of Jaipur [which was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2019] and Ajmer [where her organization DRONAH was the professional anchor for envisioning and implementing the HRIDAY plan]. Ashima Krishna, the co-editor of this volume, brings to bear her academic interest and experience the management of historic urban landscapes to discuss the role of various forms of heritage advocacy, particularly Public Interest Litigation, to protect the heritage of Lucknow. And in the fifth article, Michael A. Tomlan, focuses on the role of education by making a case for increasing the amount of time and effort dedicated to examining and interpreting heritage by supplementing the elementary education system.

Part II, covers the critical challenges in heritage conservation and has four contributions. The first, Gurmeet Rai and Churnjeet Mahn describes the challenges in preserving Amritsar's diverse heritage and the decade-long struggle to conserve the Rambagh Gardens and its gates. The next, Swapna Kothari, focuses on the illicit trade of Indian art and artefacts, and places it within the current antiquities policy framework. The third, Priya Jain, makes the case for conserving modern architecture, particularly those created by Indian modernists. And the fourth, Manish Chalana and Sakriti Vishwakarma, highlights the vernacular cultural resources of Chamba and the need to integrate heritage conservation and hazard mitigation for formulating conservation strategies for historic towns in the Himalayas.

Part III, covers emerging trends in heritage conservation. Aishwarya Tipnis draws on her professional work in the former colonial ports of Chinsurah and Chandernagore, and the *havelis* of Old Delhi, to describe sustainable solutions by integrating digital technologies with heritage conservation. Kamalika Bose focuses on Kolkata's China Town to discusses the role of grass root efforts to generate a cultural survey and architectural documentation as critical tools to safeguard this socially much maligned historic precinct. Patricia Tusa Fels discusses the challenges of conserving the vernacular mosques and homes in Cochin and Kozhikode in Kerala for local residents. Yaaminey Mubayi highlights the transforming context and the continuing relevance of the complex range of traditional knowledge systems of the metal smithing craft of the That her as of Jandiala Guru in Punjab, which was inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2014.

...because "the sites that densely dot the landscape come from different civilizations, most of which are known, but many of which remain unknown. Their significance, the narratives constructed around them, are dramatically different depending on which community is telling the story."

Part IV, covers four diverse perspectives on the subject of sustainable approaches to heritage conservation. Amita Sinha examines the complex landscape of the ghats of Varanasi through an architectural, spatial, and cultural lens to identify sustainable approaches to resolving contemporary issues of development, flooding, tourism, and impacts of rituals and practices, using renewable energy sources to create flexible and portable infrastructure for pilgrims and visitors. James Wescoat emphasizes the strategic benefits of drawing conservation implications from historical ideas and evidence about water experience by using the Nagaur Fort as

a case study. Priyaleen Singh illustrates the many ways that historic gardens can once again be brought to life and their meanings and messages recovered in order to connect with communities that experience them. Ananya Bhattacharya presents a community-led effort at promoting sustainable tourism integrated with cultural heritage in several rural communities in West Bengal through programmes that empowers communities to revive traditional arts and crafts.

On account of the sheer diversity and complexity of the cultural landscape of postcolonial India, Chusid in his Foreword points out that heritage conservation in India is difficult subject to describe as a straightforward or compelling narrative, but in this diverse and eclectic collection of articles, the editors have covered a lot of ground to present an adumbrated narrative of the "Approaches and Challenges" in heritage conservation in postcolonial India. It is not possible in this brief review to do justice to each of the articles contained in this book, but suffice it to say that the editors achieve their objective to "familiarize readers with a range of topics in each category and situate our work within the existing body of literature".

But to "spur a new round of scholarship" as the editors intend, the book should be subjected to critical scrutiny. It is important to know who is telling the story and for whose benefit. The book's pedigree alerts us to the fact that the intended audience is the global interlocutor accommodating and compartmentalizing the phenomenon of modernizing India. But such a structure of dialogue is familiar, and in the routine, because modernizing India is deeply complicit with the objectives of the global interlocutor. Much of the ambivalence I referred to earlier is contingent on the reality of this affinity.

Therefore, there are compelling reasons why the new round of scholarship needs to begin by questioning this affinity. For one, there are several extant narratives of conservation practices, often pursuing contrary objectives, to evaluate: the millennia old practices based on different traditional knowledge systems; the formal profession of heritage conservation established under the British Raj in the second half of the nineteenth century with the creation of the ASI; and the many hybrid contingent practices of restoration, rebuilding and adaptive reuse of historic buildings to serve contemporary needs of a modernizing society; each relying on their respective readings of the significance of heritage to meet societal needs. For another, desperate economic needs and powerful social aspirations invariably outweigh the imperatives of the formal conservation policies and practices to protect the cultural legacy in a democratic polity. It puts to question, for uniquely credible reasons, the canons of conservation that we reflexively profess. Together, the answers that emerge by questioning the formal practice of conservation, constitute the proverbial elephant in the room that the new round of scholarship should confront.

There are compelling reasons why the new round of scholarship needs to begin by questioning this affinity. It puts to question, for uniquely credible reasons, the canons of conservation that we reflexively profess. Together, the answers that emerge by questioning the formal practice of conservation, constitute the proverbial elephant in the room that the new round of scholarship should confront.

Review by Nikhil Dhar, Landscape Architect
| artemisia.nikhil@gmail.com



VALUES, AUTHENTICITY AND MEANING

While adopting Florence Charter on principles and guidelines for the preservation of historic gardens, the book tries to list the meaning, role and value of a diverse set of such "culturally responsive landscape designs", spread across the country. It calls for keeping alive the spirit of such sites while respecting their tangible and intangible aspects, and integrating them with contemporary development in meaningful and relevant ways.

CONSERVING THE SPIRIT OF A HISTORIC GARDEN
THE FLORENCE CHARTER ON HISTORIC GARDENS INTERPRETED, EXPANDED, ADAPTED AND ILLUSTRATED IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT
Author: Priyaleen Singh
Published by Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage INTACH, 2021
Size: 215 mm x 279 mm x 17 mm
252 Pages, Paperback
ISBN: 978-81-954731-1-3

Threats and challenges to historic gardens

Historic precincts and buildings are an integral part of the culture and ethos of a country. They are living testimony to the civilizations and cultures that have inhabited the land, creating a palimpsest of meanings and memories. Among other things, they tell us what we have been and where we have been, in the journey of our society and civilizations.

With growth, historic buildings and precincts have been affected by various pressures for many years. The effects of these pressures have greatly increased over the past few decades and nowhere have these effects been more extreme than in our own country. The expansion of urban areas due to rural migration and population growth is well documented and has affected almost every single one of our towns and cities. Areas that were once on the fringes of cities now find themselves within dense urban fabrics. Physical settings around historic precincts have been transformed, in many cases beyond recognition, and this has led to a loss of the context and original meanings of these places.

These changes have also resulted in the fragmentation of garden precincts, many of which now exist as generic green spaces of no particular significance. This has led in many cases to drastic changes in the use of these spaces, including inappropriate uses and over-use. Neglect and vandalism have also taken heavy toll of such spaces. To complicate matters, in some historic precincts, transformations can span decades and even centuries. Often, where sincere efforts have been made to repair and maintain these spaces, a lack of understanding on the part of decision-makers and a lack of specialist and expert consultation has often compromised their quality and authenticity.

These and other issues have been studied and analyzed, specifically through the lens of the Florence Charter of 1981, in the book ***Conserving the Spirit of a Historic Garden | The Florence Charter on Historic Gardens interpreted, expanded, adapted and illustrated in the Indian context*** authored by Priyaleen Singh and published by INTACH.

Why are these threats significant?

Apart from often being outstanding aesthetic achievements in themselves, historic precincts and gardens *"are repositories of culture…[that] inform us about the patterns of living"* [i] and cultures of various periods. They can teach us much about *"design [and the human relationship] with nature"* [ii] and contain knowledge of ecology and ecosystems of the past, in addition to harboring biodiversity in the present.

In many cases, since they are now green spaces in dense built fabrics, they are deeply important as spaces to breathe for the inhabitants of these areas. In addition, historic gardens often contain valuable lessons for us to learn from, for example, innovations in water management and planting techniques.

In the words of the author, historic gardens in the present day need to be made *"as important to present day life as …they once were in their original state…"* [iii] and must be *"integrated with contemporary living in a meaningful way"* [iv].

The Charters

The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments was drafted in 1931. It included seven main resolutions, related to administrative and legislative measures, restoration and aesthetic enhancement of monuments, the need to involve specialists and experts, techniques of conservation and restoration, the need for documentation and education, and the protection of not only historic sites, but also their surrounding areas.

The International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites [the Venice Charter] was drafted in 1964 and was an important step towards the creation of the Florence Charter. The scope of the Athens Charter of 1931 was enlarged to include sites and precincts along with historical buildings.



***[i], [ii], [iii] & [iv] Conserving the Spirit of a Historic Garden** | The Florence Charter on Historic Gardens interpreted, expanded, adapted and illustrated in the Indian context*





[1] [2]

[1] **Jagniwas, Udaipur**
Maharana Jagat Singh II bathing with his ladies at Jagniwas, Udaipur c. 1746-51 by Jai Ram. Gouache on paper
CREDIT: ***Private collection [unknown]***

[2] **Shalimar Bagh, Delhi**
The Mughal Shalimar gardens north of Delhi. Watercolour by Sita Ram c. 1815.
CREDIT: ***© The British Library Board Add. Or 4807***

Sixteen more specific and detailed passages, called Articles, were organized under six headings, related to Definitions that included the settings in addition to monuments; Conservation and the concept of compatible adaptive re-use; Restoration being recognized as a highly specialized operation; Historic sites and the precise documentation that they require; Excavations and Publication.

The Florence Charter of 1981was specific to the protection of historic gardens and included facets vitally intrinsic to gardens, such as topography, vegetation, water and built features. As one particularly poetic article from the charter states: *"As the expression of the direct affinity between civilisation and nature, and as a place of enjoyment suited to meditation or repose, the garden thus acquires the cosmic significance of an idealised image of the world, a 'paradise' in the etymological sense of the term, and yet a testimony to a culture, a style, an age, and often to the originality of a creative artist."* [v] This is language that sings to a landscape architect's soul!



The 25 Articles of this Charter are organized under six headings related to Definitions and Objectives; Maintenance, Conservation, Restoration, Reconstruction; Use and Legal and Administrative Protection. This charter was a hugely significant step in its explicit acknowledgment of historic gardens as a category of great importance that needed its own set of conservation and management guidelines. Though of great significance in the protection, restoration and maintenance of historic gardens, the Charter has faced its share of criticism. There have been recent calls for a new Florence Charter, which has been criticized as failing to recognize *"cultural specificities"* [vi] as well as specific types of monuments. This has led to the creation of other charters, such as the Australian Burra Charter and the Indian INTACH Charter.

[v] The Florence Charter 1981
[vi] Do We Need a New Florence Charter?



[3]



[4]

Book structure

As the author explains, the book is a manual that, focusing as it does on the Indian context, is *"both an explanation, an expansion and a critique of the Florence Charter..."* [vii] which *"..uses the Articles of the Charter only as a frame of reference to further expand on the various themes, that are often very briefly introduced in the Charter"* [viii].

The book adheres to the sequence of the Florence Charter. The Articles form the beginning of each chapter; the chapter headings themselves are explanatory, setting the context in which the articles can be understood easily. The article is then placed with a brief commentary, in the context of its 'heading' as well as the adjacent articles, to form a connected narrative.

Each article is then explained in terms of specific historic gardens, which helps to convey the intent of the article, as well as the ways in which it needs to be interpreted in the Indian situation. The 'Living Aspect of Historic gardens' for instance, connects to Article 2 of the Florence Charter and uses the examples of Badi Mahal [Udaipur], Sheesh Mahal [Patiala], Ram Bagh [Amritsar] and the Red Fort [Delhi]. This chapter discusses in detail, with the support of photographs, plans and paintings, how challenging it is to decide on an appropriate point in time to set the restoration of a garden. It goes on to explain how the Article serves as a starting point to guide planting work on historic gardens. Such expanded explanations, descriptions and interpretations help to make the book truly user-friendly and will be of great value to students and professionals in the field.

[3] **I'timād-ud-Daulah's Tomb Garden, Agra**
Char bagh woven in the Persian garden carpet, Jaipur museum

[4] **Chokhelao Bagh Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur**
Plantation Plan

LEGEND
1. Mehrangarh Fort
2. Chokhelao Palace
3. Mehtab bagh/ Moonlit garden with chandni/ kamini with banana edging
4. Citrus plantation for fragrance
5. Lotus pond
6. Fruit trees orchard
7. Seasonals for colour and detail interest in quartered beds
8. Seating area
9. Well
10. Nursery

[vii] & [viii] Conserving the Spirit of a Historic Garden | *The Florence Charter on Historic Gardens interpreted, expanded, adapted and illustrated in the Indian context*



[5] **Mehtab Bagh and Taj, Agra**
View of Taj from Mehtab Bagh

The brief descriptions and plans, drawings and photographs of historic gardens are taken from the author's own conservation projects, as well as her academic studies. The sources include material from gardens in Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Italy and Thailand. The author's depth of experience and scholarship are evident, her clarity, breadth of understanding and knowledge of the subject obvious in every chapter of the book. The text is much more than a set of generic platitudes on what should be done; it tells us how and why certain things should be done in our specific contexts, as well as describing what should not be done.

As befits a book published by INTACH and composed by *Grafiniti*, the manual is graphically extremely attractive. The manual comfortably straddles description, explanation and inquiry, interspersed and illustrated through beautiful historical art, evocative plans and stunning photographs of historic gardens.

I have always felt that true experts often make complex concepts and ideas understandable to laypersons. Priyaleen's ability to do this, her breadth of knowledge and her stature as one of our foremost scholar-academician-practitioners show through distinctly in this book. I can foresee the manual becoming an essential reference volume for landscape architects of all kinds, in addition of course, to conservation architects, both professional and students, who deal with these most magical of creations: historic gardens. Perhaps even more important, I can see it becoming an inspiration for future conservation architects and landscape architects. It deals with its subject with both an obvious affection and a deep respect.

I can think of no better way of concluding than to use, once again, two of the author's own quotes from the book:

"The rationale for their conservation has to build upon the strengths of meanings and messages of the past…that are universal and timeless and thus of significance in today's world too."

"True success in conserving historic gardens lies in keeping alive the spirit of the garden…"





References

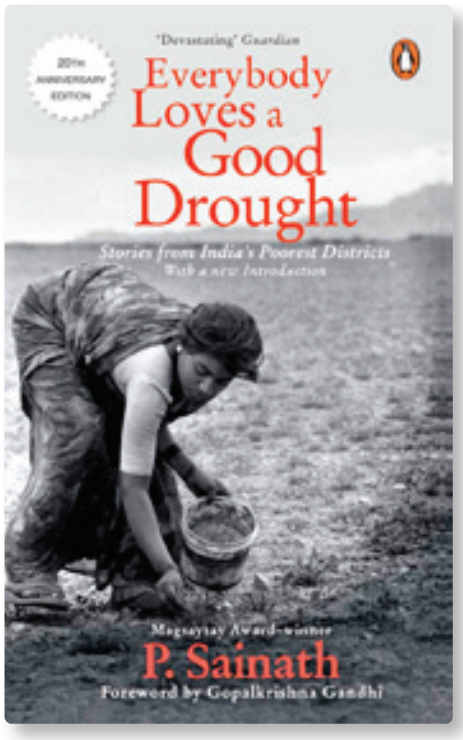
1. *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments – 1931*
2. *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites [The Venice Charter 1964]*
3. *Historic Gardens [The Florence Charter 1981]*
4. *Do We Need a New Florence Charter? Marzanna Jagiello [Sustainability Journal, 2021, MDPI Basel]*
5. *Threats to Historic Parks and Gardens [The Gardens Trust training film]*



RURAL DISCOURSE

CLASSICS

Review by Sriganesh Rajendran, Landscape Architect
| landspace@gmail.com



PARABLES OF AN UNADDRESSED AGENDA

The universality of the discourse regarding various issues and concerns of the larger part of the country, rural India, across geographies, cultures, and timelines makes the compilation one of the most erudite ones about the subject.

EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD DROUGHT
STORIES FROM INDIA'S POOREST DISTRICTS
Author P. Sainath
Published by Penguin Books India, 1996, Reprint 2017
Size: 139 mm x 215mm x 33 mm
470 Pages, Paperback
ISBN: 9780140259841

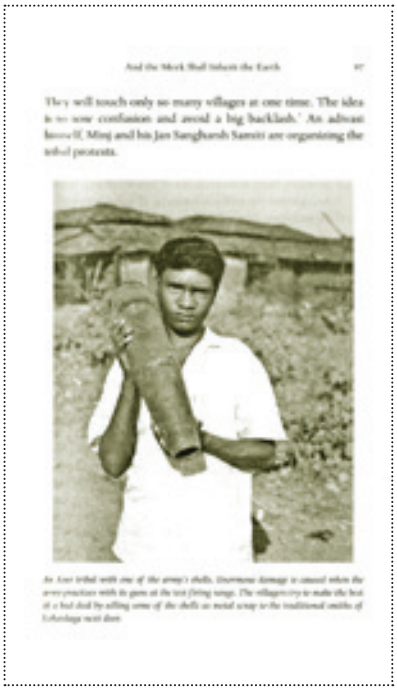
Between the years 1993-1995, the Times of India newspaper featured dispatches on rural issues from the poorest districts of the country. These were written under a Times Fellowship by the journalist P. Sainath. Their compilation resulted in a book — *Everybody Loves a Good drought - Stories from India's Poorest Districts*.

Such reportage in the nineties would seem off-kilter and an affront to readers and policymakers preoccupied with neo-liberalization. In this regard, Sainath credits his editors and the Fellowship for their support and for enabling such antipodal views to appear in print. He also minces no words about the misplaced moral core of the media of which he is a part "*...we focused on how wonderful we were...instead of signaling the weaknesses in our society...*"

OPPOSITE PAGE |
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Arun Sharma on Unsplash***



Pradhan and Chandyam Bhitria of the NGO Jagrut Shramik Sanghatan are planning a project to revive the Khariar buff. That is, if they can obtain Khariar studs elsewhere and locate them in strategic villages. They also aim to educate people on the subject. Educating the authorities will be no less important. Why? Because, as Pudku Tandi told me: "The officer came from Bhubaneswar and announced the closure of Samanwita after three years. He said, 'Now we have to go and do the same thing somewhere else.'"



They will touch only so many villages at one time. The idea is to save confusion and avoid a big backlash.' An adivasi leader, Minj and his Jan Sangharsh Samiti are organising the tribal protests.

Contents

Knowing Rural India

Still Crazy after All These Years
A brief introduction to the absurd

The Trickle Up & Down Theory
Or, health for the millions

This is the Way We Go to School
Getting educated in rural India

And the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth
Until a project comes along

Beyond the Margin
Survival strategies of the poor

Lenders, Losers, Crooks & Credit
Usury, debt and the rural Indian

Crime & No Punishment
Targeting the poor

Despots, Distillers, Poets & Artists
Characters of the countryside

Everybody Loves a Good Drought
Water problems, real and rigged

With Their Own Weapons
When the poor fight back

Poverty, Development and the Press

Appendix 1: The official poverty line

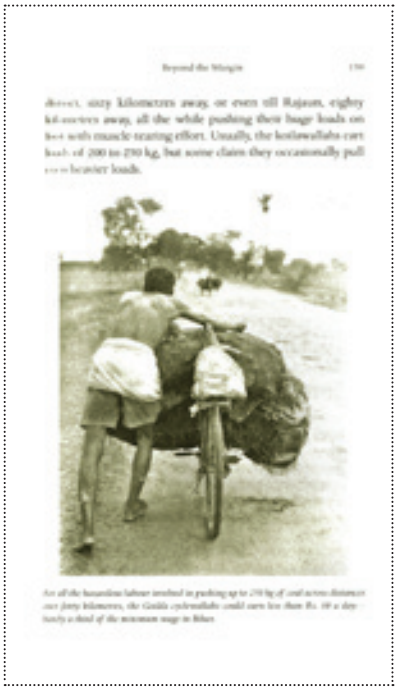
Appendix 2: The districts: A few indicators

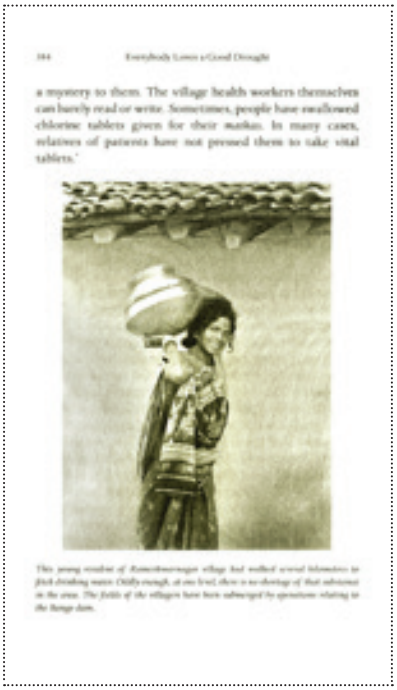
District-wise index of stories

It is a truism that writing about society especially its poverty faces an acceptance bias but contains more than a kernel for corrective action. Works like *Das Kapital* [Karl Marx, 1867] How the Other *Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* [Jacob Riis, 1890], to name just two, speak of social injustice and the impact of capitalism. The works of Charles Dickens and George Orwell, for example, weave pertinent social observations and commentary through characterization, staying true to situations of their time. Indian writing in different modes and genres such as *Palli-Prakrti* [Rabindranath Tagore, 1924], *Bara* [U.R. Ananthamurthy, 1965], and *The Remembered Village* [M.N. Srinivas, 1978] introduce readers to nuances and biases that confront everyday life in the Indian rural. The thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi about rural India in the image of the Nation are well known. There are more that have stirred the proverbial hornet's nest time and again.

P. Sainath has not written this book as a one-time effort. He tackles acceptance bias through a title that becomes a hook in snaring the reader while ensuring the text keeps the reader reeled in. In the introduction, a villager Ramji Lakhan alludes to the money intended for the poor farmers that get pocketed by landlords and corrupt officials as a third harvest or *Teesri Fasl*. This is the name of the book's Hindi edition. Drought relief is seen as a good business by the corrupt and that is why *everybody loves a good drought*.

Seventy stories, from eight of India's poorest districts identified by Sainath, occur in a back-and-forth sequence at places sequentially visited and re-visited by him. The stories collectively point to the fundamental absence of understanding of the basis and causes of rural poverty and its many crises. They weave cultural and social values, historic injustices, policy lacunae, implementation oversight, and greed, and their impact on this tier of society. Some are prefaced with a broader overview while others jump right into the thick of the story and tie it back to a larger picture.





As the pages turn, the stories add to the theatre of the absurd. Peppered with exasperations and irony, the writing elicits a chuckle. Backed by field visits and data scrutiny it is careful to not shoot from the hip while pointing to the futility of searching for any silver bullet. For any aspiring writer, the book carries lessons about how to write between the covers.

Everybody Loves a Good Drought begins with its ear to the ground and becomes rather encompassing in its scope... wide in the spectrum, vividly portrayed, dramatic in effect, and yet brevity in narration, time, and space. The writing is at once the eye-witness and the affected voice. It is simultaneously about people, places, development, and milieu. Such composition and conceptualization imbues the writing with a lilt and is akin to a telescope that zooms in and out. There are analogies to the cinematic equivalent of a non-linear, spliced edit and narration.

Some stories speak of how a species of the bull was rendered virtually extinct while attempting to preserve its genetic purity or one on paying loans for cattle in terrain and way of life that has no use for. Another talks about the shortfall of nurses in a country obsessed with doctoral education and the resultant absence of primary caregivers during epidemics. Stories about disconnectedness include the schooling system that is not designed to retain students; the denial of access to forest produce that forms essential living for forest dwellers; the forced displacement of tribes without knowledge of their social fabric and ties to the land they have been inhabiting for ages. The ones about the road that goes nowhere ...or the dam that refuses to get completed despite budget allocations every year foreground sheer wastefulness at the policy level.

As the pages turn, they add to the theatre of the absurd. Peppered with exasperations and irony, the writing elicits a chuckle. Backed by field visits and data scrutiny it is careful to not shoot from the hip while pointing to the futility of searching for any silver bullet. For any aspiring writer, the book carries lessons about how to write between the covers.

The chapters stay clear of typical brackets like socio-cultural factors, public health, rural education, infrastructure, rural credit, water, livelihood, and gender. Instead, the characterization points to the obvious yet invisible relatedness of these aspects, especially in rural and tribal societies. The writing is neither interrupted by footnotes nor citations, thus preserving its freshness and purpose- connecting with the reader rather than trying to impress them. This is another essential takeaway for those who wish to see their groundwork and research published.

A chapter-wise set of references, a compilation of statistics, a glossary, and abbreviations comply with standard requirements for such texts. This is where the reader is likely to recall the actual and the conferred names for individuals and organizations by the people affected by them. Humour is perhaps the only recourse left when the B.D.O [Block Development Officer] has become 'Block the Development Officer' in the minds and speech of those affected. It reminds us that we are a country with a penchant for abbreviations and witty takes on them. The district-wise index of stories at the end of the book perhaps has a role in making readers dive back into the book.

In one sense, the book is a searing exposé and indictment of systems that shamelessly exploit the have-nots through misplaced common-sense, political and administrative whim, fashionable and myopic agenda, not to mention the copy-pasted reference models that are in complete divergence with the truths on the ground.

In one sense, the book is a searing exposé and indictment of systems that shamelessly exploit the have-nots through misplaced common-sense, political and administrative whim, fashionable and myopic agenda, not to mention the copy-pasted reference models that are in complete divergence with the truths on the ground.

Now, twenty-five years after its publication, the book goads us to look closely at the link between socio-ecological and economic disenfranchisement aggravated by blinkered thinking. As a publication it is finite, but like all great books, it hasn't finished what it has to say.

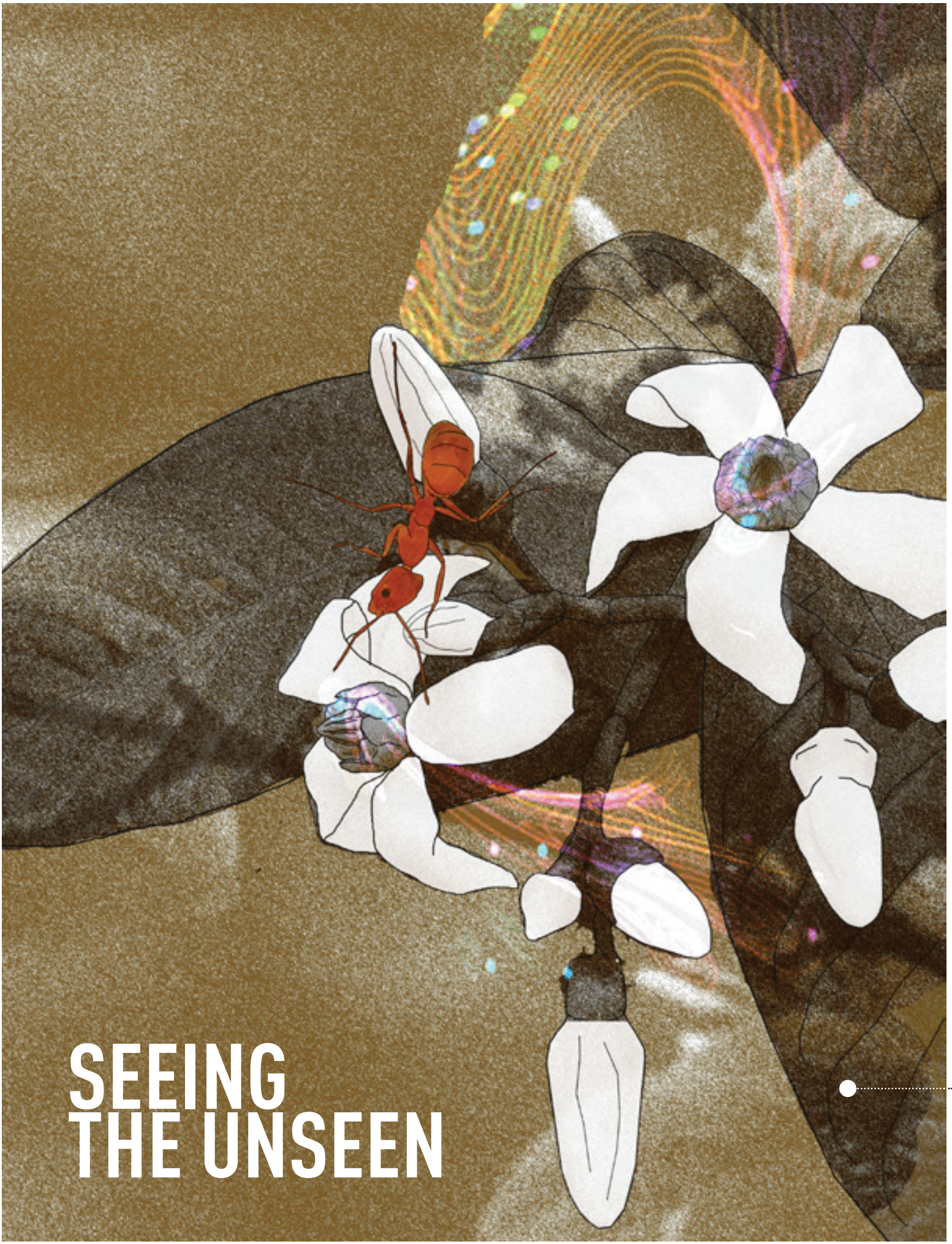
Seen another way, the book is a wistful discussion of the human condition and aligns with one of the central concerns of philosophy, literature, and anthropology.

Upon a full read, one would concur with Professor Madhu Dandavate's prescient comment around the time of the book's release. Comparing the sweep of this book to Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India,* he suggested re-christening the next edition as the *Discovery of Poor India*. Since the time of its release, the book has stayed a recommended text regarding development studies, poverty, and rural India. It is considered a classic and continues to elicit praise, deep reading, and critical review.

Now, twenty-five years after its publication, the book goads us to look closely at the link between socio-ecological and economic disenfranchisement aggravated by blinkered thinking. As a publication it is finite, but like all great books, it hasn't finished what it has to say.



It has also evolved into The People's Archive of Rural India [PARI] [www.ruralindiaonline.org] – a volunteer-driven site that urges us to stay connected, informed and generous.



SEEING THE UNSEEN

Vaidehi Bhagwat, Anthropologist
| info@leaf-india.org

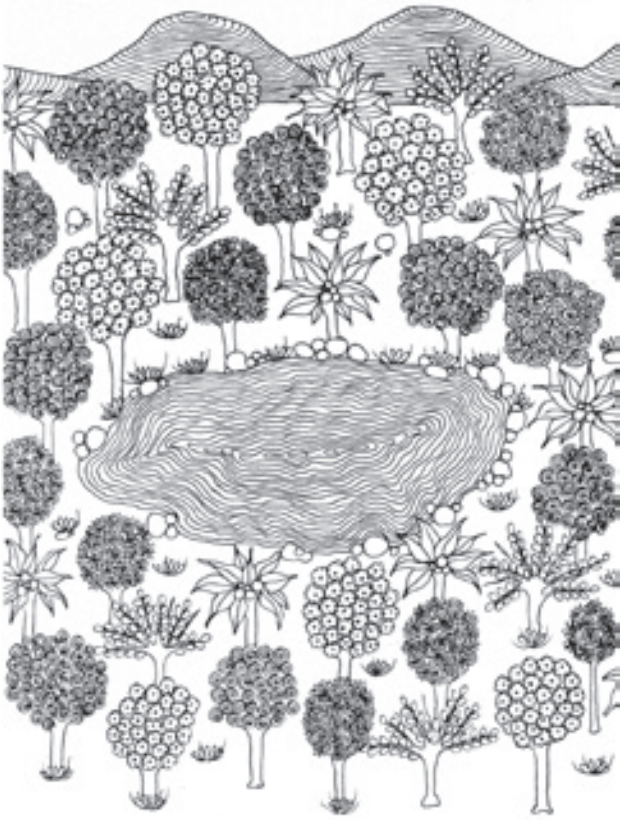
THE GARDEN STORIES

The Indian Garden?

Ancient literature – the Ramayana, for example – represents the garden as a '*van*' or a woodland. And then, of course, there are gardens that are attached to temples and palaces, *wadis,* the public gardens, zoological and botanical gardens, and private gardens. Rajput patrons expressed the form with rectilinear and curving flower beds, or floating pavilions, water features, and incorporated with spaces resembling sacred groves. And then, as time passed, the idea of the 'garden' in India – for the longest time – came to be associated with Islamic and Persian traditions, where the Garden was akin to Paradise. The conversation was later extended to the formal English gardens introduced to India by the British.

All this to say that the idea of the Indian garden is infinite!

OPPOSITE PAGE |
REFUGE TO ONENESS
Tricks and tactics to lure or survive
SKETCH CREDIT: ***Aishwarya Goel***
from 'Within The Gardens We Walk' | LEAF



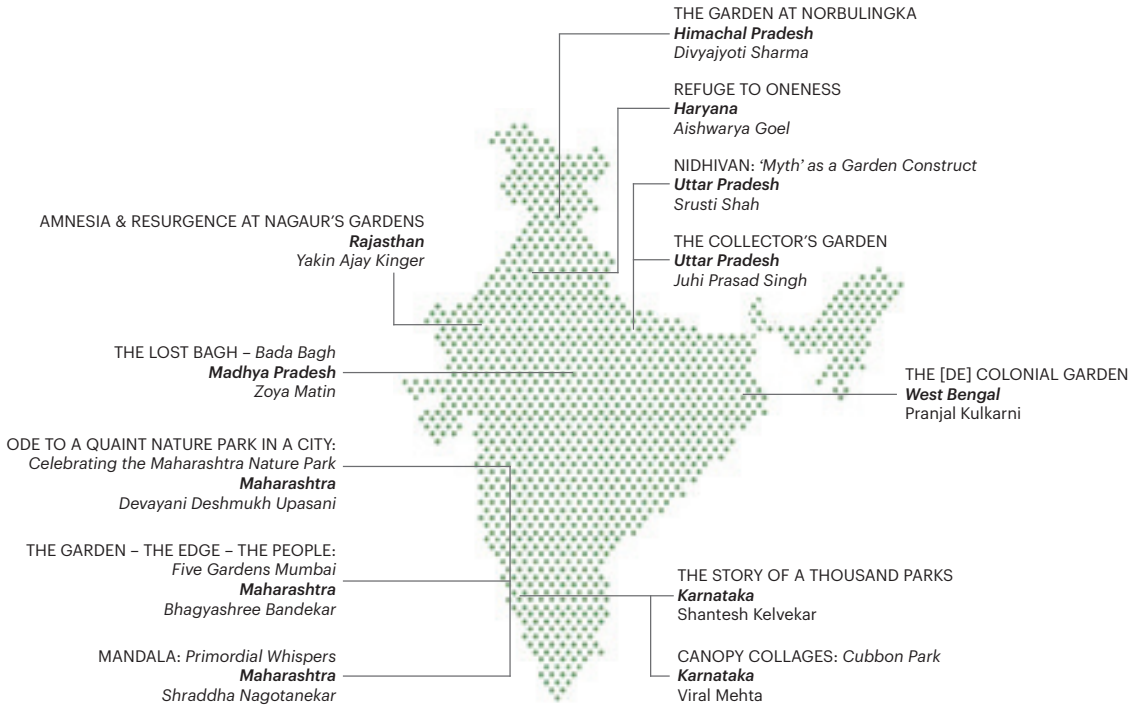
On We Go

In 2013, we, under LEAF, began our investigation of this form, when we sent out a call to friends and colleagues to send us what they considered to be fair representations of gardens in their city. This led to perhaps one of the most comprehensive documents for Indian Gardens – *Million Gardens*. It referenced the fact that, sprawled across the country, are an infinite number of gardens – big and small – waiting to be found.

This search led to us defining the space as such, "A garden was a space that had a circumscribed territory, its limits notional or clearly marked but at all times discernible and finite; the very marking of this territory could happen by an act of active making or even claiming one already marked and within this would exist a certain prescribed ritual that allowed the many ideas of nature to be experienced in an articulate manner."

Consequently, the compilation led to an exhibition and monograph titled *Tracing Narratives* that mapped the various expressions and lenses through which landscape design in the country could be understood. The monograph – while providing a historical narrative pertaining to the Indian Garden – provided lenses by which to undertake conversations on the idea of Landscape Design in India – including Reading, Perceiving, Recording, Nurturing, Practicing, Anchoring, Writing, and Revisiting. These independent sections attempted to highlight the many ideas that strengthen this profession.

It was in 2007 that Prof. Prabhakar B. Bhagwat founded LEAF – Landscape Environment Advancement Foundation – as the research arm for M/s Prabhakar B. Bhagwat. The design studio has entered its 50th year this year. The Foundation, itself, has been built on the premise that design cannot be undertaken in silos; it must be informed by research, and context. And so, the work that it undertakes runs parallelly to the work that the Design Studio undertakes. The underlying tenants of the Foundation's efforts include ensuring accessibility, on-ground impact, and collaboration, and in so doing establishing interdisciplinary connections. Exploring the idea of Indian garden is one of the endeavours of the Foundation.

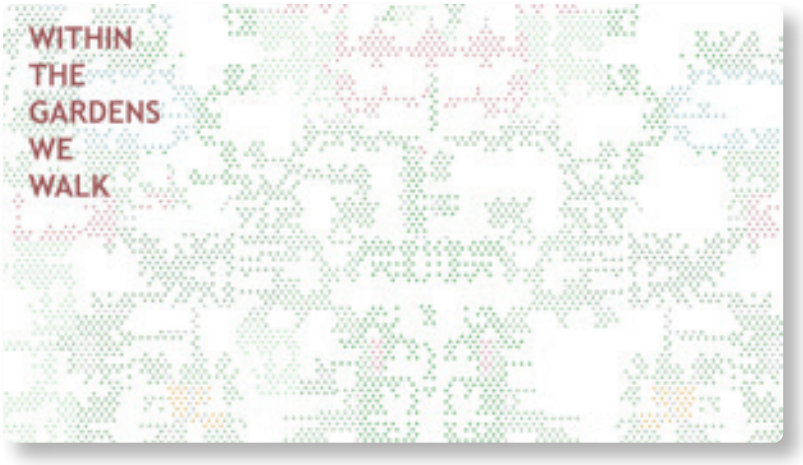


The Design Fractal

Last year, this quest to understand the Indian garden continued when, in May 2021, we put out a call for proposals as part of a Narrative Compendium – *The Design Fractal*. The purpose was simple: for the author to demonstrate to us the experientiality and context of a garden that they had visited in the past, rather than conveying to us its physicality. It encouraged the author to imagine the decisions, and ideas of conception – that have become a part of how the garden expressed itself in the past; and continues to express itself. It allowed the authors the leeway to express their narrative in any form of their choosing.

Over duration of a month, we received 75 entries from across the country. Out of these, 30 were invited to submit complete narratives, and then from these, 12 were shortlisted. These entries served as a medium by which to expand what one may define as the Garden.

Srusti Shah's narrative *Nidhivan - Myth as a Garden Construct* brought together myth and reality in understanding and developing the idea of the garden; Pranjal Kulkarni's narrative – *The [De]Colonial Garden,* and Zoya Matin's narrative – *The Lost Bagh: Bada Bagh* – navigated ideas of history, time, and context, creating the idea of the garden through these lenses.



Shantesh Kelvekar's *The Story of a 1000 Parks* proposed systemic changes in our approach to public spaces; allowing them to become more accessible, and user-friendly. In some cases, the gardens became representations of nostalgia, memory, and extremely personal experiences – much like the narratives proposed by Shraddha Nagotanekar – *Mandala - Primordial Whispers,* or Juhi Prasad Singh – *The Collector's Garden*.

No matter the scale or location of the garden, however, each entry told a story of geography, of history, of social context, of processes of urban development, and of experientiality. It reinforced the idea that the garden – more than being a form – is a tool, a lens by which we are able to govern ourselves, assess our surroundings, and allow for a sense of continuity, and history. It seamlessly makes the journey from a 'form' to the representation of ideas and values.

Process for Guidance

All the entries that the Foundation received underwent a thorough review process.

The jury included Riyaz Tayyibji, partner at *Anthill Design* [Ahmedabad] and actively involved in design, documentation, and research; Dhara Mittal landscape architect, and co-founder of *Studio 23N | 72 E* [Ahmedabad]; and Shalini Prakash – a graduate of the R. V. College of Architecture, and former colleague at M/s Prabhakar B. Bhagwat, with a keen interest in research and academia; and the author of this article – Vaidehi Bhagwat, an anthropologist, and who anchors various undertakings of LEAF.

The jury, at all times, remained cognisant of the fact that these authors – for the most part – were doing something of this sort for the first time. And so, this process evolved to be one that found its leanings in mentorship and guidance, first and foremost; charging the members with a responsibility that went beyond being just reviewers. It was designed to be a process that allowed for engagement at all junctures. Conversations were intended to assist in the process of building the narrative; asking questions that allowed the authors to examine further the scope of their work.

The book – *Within The Gardens We Walk* – seems to act as a meeting point that negotiates the boundaries between readings, research, and practice.

"What struck me most, or what was endearing in the entries we received for this compendium, was how personal gardens were showcased. Delightful representations of small family tended gardens, carefully laid out; all heart."

Dhara Mittal | Juror

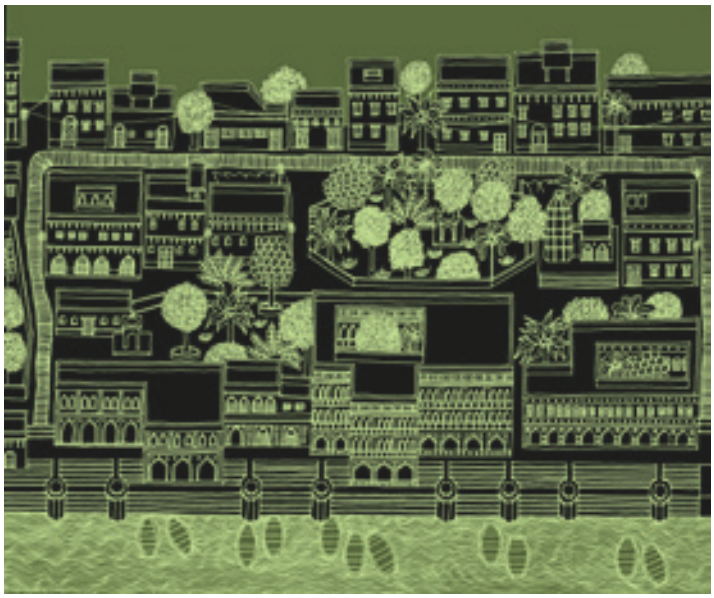
"All the best essays were able to make this connection between the particularities of place, and larger patterns of continuity, whether natural/horticultural, cultural and societal, historic or mythic, through the narrative of personal experience and connection."

Riyaz Tayyibji | Juror

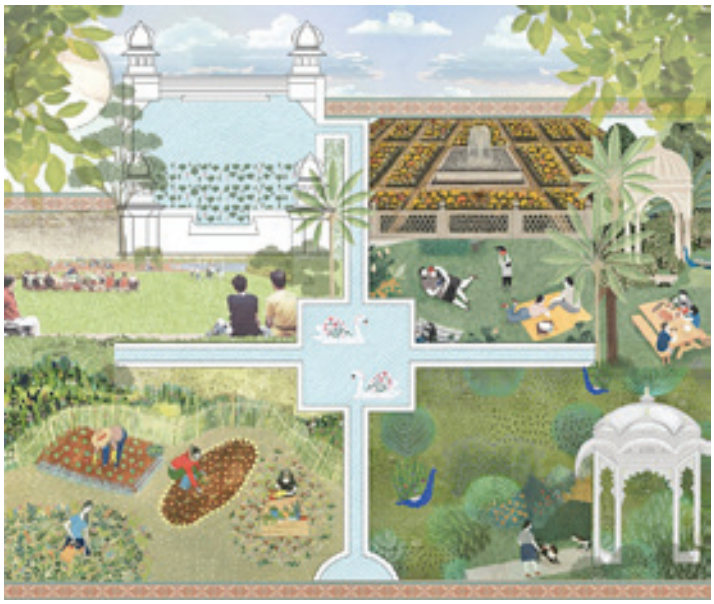
"While all the submissions revealed the extent of theories stimulated by the competition brief, they also were a collective of many appealing formats of submission…"

Shalini Prakash | Juror

[1]



[2]



[3]



[1] **NIDHIVAN**
| 'Myth' as a Garden Construct
Bringing together folklore and reality
CREDIT: ***Srusti Shah***

[2] **THE LOST BAGH** | Bada Bagh
Making clear the history of the garden, and the changes it has undergone as a result of evolving usage
CREDIT: ***Zoya Matin***

[3] **THE [DE]COLONIAL GARDEN**
Reconciling how one experiences a place not necessarily intended for us
CREDIT: ***Pranjal Kulkarni***



[4]



[5]



[6]

[4] **THE GARDEN AT NORBULINGKA**
Detailing the experience of a place that is highly linked with the idea of spirituality
CREDIT: ***Divyajyoti Sharma***

[5] **AMNESIA & RESURGENCE AT NAGAUR'S GARDENS**
Through the gardens at the Nagaur Fort, looking at relationships with the past, the present and the future
CREDIT: ***Yakin Ajay Kinger***

[6] **REFUGE TO ONENESS**
Demonstrating an understanding of unity, continuity, and belongingness as the fundamental principles for a landscape
CREDIT: ***Aishwarya Goel***



[7]



[8]



[9]

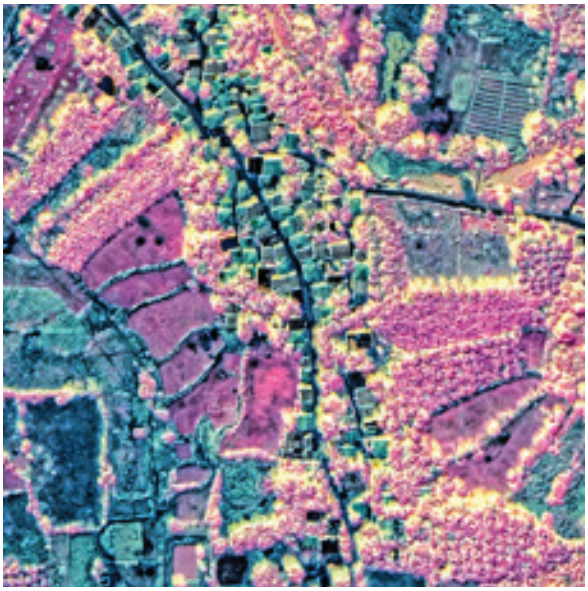
[7] **ODE TO A QUAINT NATURE PARK IN A CITY**
| Celebrating the Maharashtra Nature Park
Narrating the melancholic state of a park as a result of urbanization and development
CREDIT: ***Devayani Deshmukh Upasani***

[8] **THE GARDEN – THE EDGE – THE PEOPLE**
| Five Gardens, Mumbai
Negotiating the many experiences of an Urban Maidan
CREDIT: ***Bhagyashree Bandekar***

[9] **THE STORY OF A THOUSAND PARKS**
Setting the foundation for the redesign of public parks in The Garden City
CREDIT: ***Shantesh Kelvekar***



[10]



[11]



[12]

[10] **CANOPY COLLAGES**
| Cubbon Park
Decoding the experience of a garden through crown shyness, density, and the canopies the trees create
CREDIT: ***Viral Mehta***

[11] **MANDALA**
| Primordial Whispers
A story about a private garden, and its elements; creating an intimate narrative
CREDIT: ***Shraddha Nagotanekar***

[12] **THE COLLECTOR'S GARDEN**
Demonstrating a love for the ritual of gardening that spans across generations
CREDIT: ***Juhi Prasad Singh***

Process of Discourse

Not very long ago, a whole group of us was sitting at the discussion table talking about the idea of design; about the matrix that each person must devise for oneself, and then the collective consensus or understanding that we need to arrive at to establish the parameters by which we must judge design. This consensus, of course, must come from discourse. It allows our conversations to be referenced; put in perspective continuously.

What has stood out about this compendium is not just the narratives that it has led to, but rather the ease with which one is able to set up dynamic processes that allow for these conversations.

Such processes, to whatever scale they are enacted, must hold within them the ability for greater engagement, a broader sense of discourse. They must become tools to make inquiries about technique, intent, pedagogy, and even the very establishment of processes. Time and again, the Foundation has set up similar processes for discourse and conversations that aim to build bridges between research, academia, and practice; take, for example, *Saturday Sojourns* – a webinar series that we undertook last year over a period of six consecutive Saturdays. Or even the various manners in which the research undertaken by the Foundation informs the work that the practice does.

The book is a consequence of this belief in discourse; in creating processes that are impactful; and then over time, perhaps, it will be able to bridge the gap between abstractions, narratives, and practice! It has been vested with the ability to decode this ever-evolving, and significant form - the garden - for readers who are not in regular conversation with this form, and provide them with tools to reflect on an idea that they are confronted with on a regular basis, but have been unable to engage with.

And when these twelve narratives, by twelve authors come together – when one begins to look at these layers as a singular collective – perhaps the sense of the garden will begin to emerge!



For ordering the book, write to: **info@leaf-india.org**
Website: **http://leaf-india.org/research.php**



DECIPHERING THE HIDDEN LINKS BETWEEN LANDSCAPE & WELL-BEING

FLASH FICTION COMPETITION
ORGANIZED BY **ISOLA MUMBAI CHAPTER**
OCTOBER 2020

ISOLA

With an idea to encourage people to sense and acknowledge the role of nature in rejuvenating the physical and mental well being of human beings, especially in context of Covid pandemic, a flash fiction, creative writing competition was organized by ISOLA Mumbai Chapter. The special feature showcases the first five winning entries of the competition.

The theme ***"Deciphering the hidden links between Landscape & Well-being"*** is not necessarily to be used as a title or a phrase in the story. Which has to be imaginary any genre, from science fiction to fantasy and can be about anything which investigates or describes or narrates the relationship between humans, nature and landscapes from the perspective of well being, health happiness. We are keen to explore the links between the two, seemingly distinct areas of study, one falling more in the psychology realm and the other in the landscape studies realm We are interested in bringing forth the very idea of overlap between the two and what could be the possible learnings from these overlaps.

—Competition Brief

"Writings celebrate colours and hues of nature in its different forms and roles – its presence in every day living, its empathetic power to nurture and heal, as a living and growing medium and reflecting life and temporal continuum. The medium to convey these ideas is an evocative language, painting a mental imagery, while describing tangible physical aspects and intangible experiential aspects, reaching depths of understanding and imaginations. The writings are structured, lucidly written with clarity of thoughts, with imaginative use of metaphors to enhance philosophical ideas, which are relatable to many of our personal experiences."

Geeta Wahi Dua | Juror

THE JURY

Edmond Fernandes
[MBBS, MD, PGD-PHSM]

Gauri Raje
[Anthropologist, Story-Teller]

Geeta Wahi Dua
[Landscape Architect]

Margie Sastry
[Writer, Editor, Story-Teller]

Sridevi Rao
[Landscape Architect, Editor, Author]

Urmila Rajadhyaksha
[Landscape Architect, Educator]

Vinayak Bharne
[Urban Designer, City Planner, Educator]

THE WINNERS



FIRST PRIZE
Indole
Nandini Bhosle



SECOND PRIZE
Gangu's Grove
Asmita Patwardhan



THIRD PRIZE
The Blue Unicorns
Anjana Jay



SPECIAL MENTION
This is an Oak Tree
Divyansha Arora



SPECIAL MENTION
One Blue Rose
Ahmed Hasan & Abayazeed

OPPOSITE PAGE |
Competition poster graphic by Prachi Nadkarni

FIRST PRIZE

Indole

Nandini Bhosle

The shower faucet in A-1902, 19th floor of Atlantis CHS had been continually on for more than two hours. An inanimate Radha stood frozen, too frantic to move out of the balmy embrace of warm shower water coursing down her. It's 2020. Amorous relationships these days come packed with acute incertitude. Time has caused these humans to become rudderless slaves of instant gratification, novelty and velocity. Coupledom becomes an arduous task to pull off. Radha, 28, emotionally utterly ransacked, was recovering from her 5th breakup in 3 years. Discussion calls with parents [unable to grasp the intergenerational psyche difference] mostly ended up with moral outrage shot in her direction. Friends weren't of much help either. Radha, the battle-worn, broken romantic couldn't bear the chaos that unrequited love brings. Singledom was too unbearable for her. The thought of solitary existence in this pitch dark cosmos is not something that many can entertain without setting the heart heavily pounding in angst. Plaintive cries like why give? why love? why even exist? were pushing her toward a cold, closed depressive state. I had to intervene. I had to at least try.

I?

I am Grey Pansy, silently sitting a top Radha's favourite shampoo bottle, unbeknownst to her. Relax, no ghosts in this story. Grey Pansy is a butterfly species common in Mumbai. Covid-struck residents of Atlantis CHS conveniently classified the gardener's job as 'non-essential'. The flowering bushes in the garden are half dead and here I am taking 19-floor flights for a few whiffs of Indole.

Indole?

Ahh… the fragrant bliss that a Jasmine flower infuses in the air, thank the organic chemical compound Indole for it.

Sadly, the only Indole familiar to Radha is the one in the synthetic flavoured shampoo bottles. A bright Chemical Engineer by profession, she has painstakingly remembered the chemical structure of Indole C8H7N. Six-membered benzene ring fused to a five-membered pyrole ring. Hexagons, angles, rectangles, slices, classifications, nomenclature,



boxes, buildings, warp, weft, dry excel sheets... You humans are pro at dividing and intellectualising stuff but such noobs at 'engaging' with the actual 'Stuff'. The' Stuff of life' that's juicy, that flows, that heals, that fulfils. Despite being an aroma that she loved, never once did Radha slow down to stop by a Jasmine flower to 'experience' the glorified indole she studied so much about. Busy building high-rises further away from your mother soil, you guys never realised when the tender umbilical cord snapped.

Just as Radha was about to reach for the shampoo bottle, I gave it a little push and down it fell in the garden. She dressed up, came down in garden looking for shampoo bottle. The 'W's... Why give? Why love? Why even exist? were still ringing in her wet, cold, numb head. As she walked, slanting rays of the post-noon sunlight that sieved through netted canopy of tree leaves above warmed her chest. Her heavily pounding heart gradually slackened to soak in the warmth. Whether under the elemental warm water showers in your bathroom or under grace of warm sunlight, you humans, we all, are essentially living 'scoops of earth' with beating hearts. Radha, human, a scoop of this earth, bruised from this separation from the nurturing elements, yearned for intimacy with the elements. It is the only intelligent, safe refuge for our bodies that we have borrowed from the earth.

Even though the body was relaxed, the mind was still blasting with Why give? Why love? Why even exist? She kept walking and reached the shampoo bottle. But grown besides it was a tiny Jasmine plant with a glorious, pearly white Jasmine flower. The silky grace of the olfactory rush calmed the thought horses running wild in her mind. The encounter felt like engaging with a friend you have always known but never met in flesh. She looked at it. One glorious creation of nature, alone but so flamboyant. A 'complete life in itself'. It didn't care whether the bees or the butterflies returned its favours. Giving, loving, regardless. It wasn't transactional. It knew its function as clearly as it knew the favours the soil and the air and the sun was doing for it. It held its place in the cosmos. It was the axis. The Axis.

Her wobbly faith grew a spine. At least for that little moment it did. It turned into an unbroken series of moments where she herself tended to the garden, almost everyday, consciously. Indole was never seen as just C8H7N.

SECOND PRIZE

Gangu's Grove

Asmita Patwardhan

In the summer of 1918, Gangu was swinging on the *parmbyaa* of the great Banyan next to her house when she saw an affluent family descend upon their home. She was hurriedly hauled and led by her grandma to the don [reservoir] outside, her face was washed and in the *majghar* [ladies chamber] fresh *kaajal* was applied in her eyes to beautify her. Furiously patting the pleats of her *parkaar* down, she was taken to the *padvi* [veranda] where the men were seated. She demonstrated her ability to walk and thread a needle and thus was the allegiance, between Gangu and Gajanan, fixed. At the time, Gajanan's age was sixteen and Gangu's ten! Gajanan suffered from epilepsy, a fact kept secret from her family and in two years he died of ill-health. When her in-law's decided to shave her hair off and bestow a *bal vidhwa* status upon her, she was brought back home by her mortified brother.

Gangu's brother lived with his family in Mumbai in a very tiny room so she began to live in the village with her grandmother in the very home where she was born. The village was so far flung from humanity that even aspiration rarely visited the place. Days on end went by and Gangu continued her life without purpose or desire, without hope or agenda. Her life now revolved in tending to the farm, cattle and plantation. A childless widow was a soft target and hence Gangu hardened into a feisty woman with a sharp tongue, spewing acerbic words. The village kids and ground staff were terrified of her. She found solace only in her non human companions. She knew exactly how stifled the crooked jackfruit tree felt as it hankered for sunlight; she wept at the sight of the twisted uprooted *peepal,* deracinated by a ruthless hurricane and christened every tree with a special endearing nickname.



Gangu was thirty five when she lost her brother. The one support that the family had was gone leaving behind two kids Prabhakar and Vaman and a wife. The chronic asthmatic wife Sakhu, decide to go stay with Gangu as her health issues made city life difficult for her. Gangu's aimless yet secure existence was threatened by the advent of the lawful owners of the house and property. She had no legal stake in her maternal home for it was Sakhu's! She was resentful and belligerent towards them. Sakhu was a patient and loving human being who understood the trauma the Gangu experienced. Slowly she won her confidence with love and compassion. Suddenly everything became very rushed and busy and Gangu's static life was thrown into a spinner. The emptiness inside her that she had no knowledge of started gradually healing. Being part of a human family altered her life for until then her life revolved only around her green family.

Often when she had a spat, with a disgruntled villager she was called infertile, as in childless, comparing her with a barren hillock their family owned. Gangu was hurt and enraged and confided in Sakhu, that she wished to convert it into a mango grove. Although they had coconut and cashews plantations, Gangu dreamt of a mango grove that would yield the finest mango that South Konkan could boast off. Sakhu questioned the feasibility as there was no water available on the hill. Yet Sakhu wanted Gangu's dream fulfilled. So began an arduous, monumental ordeal of planting a grove, laboriously taking pots of water upon their heads and hips to water the tiny saplings. Seasons came and went but the fully grown mango grove never bloomed. The aging ladies expressed their concerns to Prabhakar about the plantation's future after them. He reassured them that the brothers would take care of things. By October 1983 Gangu's health was failing and she died one night peacefully in her sleep. Her ashes were strewn in the mango orchard. Her last wish was to be close to her beloved grove. In the summer of 1984 the trees bore fruit for the very first time. It was the finest variety of *hapus* [Alphonso] mango. When Prabhakar harvested the fruit he kept one mango in front of God as an offering and he took the next one and placed it in the mango grove. It was not a traditional *shraadh* [last rite] but as the crows pecked at the fruit in no time, Prabhakar's eyes welled up for he knew Gangu's soul was finally resting in peace.

THIRD PRIZE

The Blue Unicorns

Anjana Jay

"Are we going to die mom?", Jon asked his mother, running his pale fingers over the faded colours of an old book, hardly visible in the waning light of the dropping fire. "Are we?" he repeated, faintly inhaling air from a cylinder. "No honey, this is just a difficult time. This too shall pass.", Laura responded after a moment's thought, trying to comfort him. She pressed her sickly child to her breasts as if trying to shield him from the crumbling world.

Laura then gazed into the far distance, at the great expanse of fire and smoke soaring up through the thick, foggy, poisoned air. The wild fires ran miles, and the ocean glaciers ran deeper. The air smelled of burned trees and rotting flesh. The planet was broken beyond repair. She could never muster the courage to tell her five-year old son that it was time. She could never tell him, death, that was devouring the entire planet, will soon come for them too. She could never tell him that he was born a diseased child, like many, because his parents and grandparents failed at preserving the world for him. To them, this day was only a faraway reality. She felt sorry, and guilty, that her child could never see the beautiful colours of the world, that only old books and stories could show him.

Of all the stories she told him, the ones with unicorns fascinated him the most. He liked them blue, the colour of the sky, the colour that he hardly perceived in real life. He prayed every night for purple flowers, clear skies, green grass and blue unicorns. He believed that if a boy prayed hard, Mother Nature would fulfill all his wishes.

Laura eyed on the last unit of oxygen left for her sick child. His weak lungs could stand no chance against the dreadful toxicity. She held him closer under a layer of blanket beneath a tattered sheet of shelter that she had grabbed from their burnt-down house, along with a few cylinders of oxygen and canned food that they had managed to stock up. Days of nomading through the charred ruins had made them weary. "Go to sleep my child", said Laura, planting a kiss on his forehead, and passionately stroking his hair. "The blue unicorns are going to play with you in your sleep." Though she wished to spare her child another day of misery, she



could never imagine losing him. The very thought of it hit her like a wave. She bit her lips and fought back tears. Jon looked up at his mother and gently brushed a drop of tear off her cheek that failed to bide. Laura was torn. She once again kissed her boy farewell, buried her face into his hair and wept softly, as he snuggled up against the warmth of her chest.

Jon slowly slipped into deep sleep that felt like plummeting down an abyss of nothing but void, while still feeling the dampness of his mother's tears run down his hair. The fall gradually felt peaceful and unburdening. He was no longer falling, but floating with a strange sense of bliss.

Moments later the floating stopped, yet the tranquility remained. He then heard sounds, sounds that were strange to him, yet amusing. He felt warmth on his face, and something bright shone right into his eyes. Jon squirmed to evade the light. It felt like waking up from years of hibernation.

As he opened his eyes, what he saw before him was as surreal as a dream; a whole new world dipped in myriad colours. He knew no words to describe his state of awe. The bright sun, clear skies, green trees, birds, purple flowers, blue waters and the sweet scents were all so fascinatingly alien to him. As he sat there lost in the miracle, he heard the sound of hooves behind him. He turned around to see a beautiful blue unicorn gracefully appearing from the woods, with its shiny blue mane, golden horns and dreamy eyes. Everything that he saw was just as his mother had described, just as he had prayed for.

This moment of his innocent reverence was snipped by a drop of water that trickled down his face. Startled, he looked up and saw beads of water drizzling down the bright blue sky. He knew it was her. He smiled and basked in the joyful tears of the Mother.

SPECIAL MENTION

This is an Oak tree

Divyansha Arora

"This is an Oak tree. Repeat after me."
"This is an Oak tree," I mumbled.
"Come on now, read further," my multitasking mother instructed.
"Oak is an ever-een tree."
"Ever-GREEN."
"Ever-GREEN," I repeated not knowing what that is.
"Trees that are green throughout the year. They don't all go bald at once," she explained.

While she was unriddling the evergreens, I was following her fingers working her dry and dull hair with the new oil that Vidya Balan uses on TV when we all watch it at night. She is hopeful of the oil as well as the green-coloured face-pack that she believes will cut her some anxiety of losing her youth. She is 35.

"Okay? Now come on keep reading further," my multitasking mother instructed me again while she called papa to nudge him to take his multivitamins. The doctor says these will make him energetic again. He is tired all the time, my 32-year-old papa who audits for companies.

I go back to my Science book "The Banj oak is amongst the most useful trees of the Himalaya. The leaves are extensively used as cattle fodder. Leaf litter is rich in Nitrogen and makes an excellent compost fertilizer."

I was expecting an explanation of these difficult lines when our doorbell rang.

"Come in. *Aajao,*" she uttered as if knowing exactly who was on the door.

"*Ram-Ram didi,*" a slender woman greeted my mother. I noticed her sweater slipping off her left shoulder as if someone had pulled it forcefully. I was not wrong. Half hidden behind the woman was a girl roughly my age in a yellow frock and red and white striped woollen sweater. She was our new domestic help's daughter. As my mother and the new aunty went around the house, I had a good glance at the yellow frocked girl as she leaned on the wall, looking carefully at me but with a little hostility in her stare. She sunk her chin under her woollens, hands in her pockets, and gave me a short, silly, almost an embarrassed smile.

"We are here in Delhi for three months for some extra money," aunty said while making her long but messy hair into a bun as she got ready to do the first load of dishes at our house. The teasing lady was met with an envious glance by my mother who remarked "yes Delhi has good work."



I began reading my Science book again. I wanted to tell the yellow- frocked girl who had pinned her eyes on me that class third was not easy. I took this chance to show off that I could read sentences now.

"This is an Oak tree. It is an evergreen tree," I paused and through the corner of my eye made sure that the yellow- frocked girl was still taking note of my aptitude. She had come from a village and could not probably read about the Oaks and the other evergreens for that matter and neither could her mother explain it to her.

Do you know what an Oak is?" I investigated. "It is found in [I sneaked a look at the word] … in the Himalayas. It's an ever-een. No! Evergreen."

She did not respond so maybe she did not know. And so, on my iPad, I typed O-A-K T-R-E-E and she came and sat somewhat closer to me. She peeped a bit to see what I was blabbing about all this while and then put her hand in her striped sweater, struggled for a while in there, and took out a leaf. A leathery, and dark green leaf which was glabrous above and densely white and grey pubescent beneath. I gently picked up the leaf from her hand that said she had climbed many such trees and looked at the serrated acuminate souvenir from her village in the Himalayas. She had shared the acorns of the tree with the wild, langurs, squirrels, pigeons, and deers. Her mother had collected the tree's fallen leaves as fodder and together under the tree they had played hide and seek with the resplendent sun. I could smell the woody bark from her skin and see in her smile the many tiny friends she had – caterpillars, lichens, wasps, ants, and the beetles. Her hair housed a sort of air, sacredly gifted to her by the Oak trees.

SPECIAL MENTION

One Blue Rose

Ahmed Hasan & Abayazeed

'Idiots! They are destroying the city!' I shouted while I was standing like a fool in front of the big sign covering a large part of the park wall. It was saying in an extreme provocation that a fancy investment project will be constructed in place of the park. I read it again and again. Maybe I got it wrong. Every time I reread, I felt as if someone was planting a knife in my chest. Puta, next to me, was calming me down.

***

I fell in love with Deepali, may God have mercy on her, more than 40 years ago. The park was a witness to our love story. I still remember the hug she gave me when we entered it together for the first time. She insisted on choosing our marital home to be close to this park. We fell in love with the house because the park's trees are seen from its main terrace. We would often go to the park after marriage in our spare time. We had a memory in each corner. We usually used to sit on our favourite seat under the big oak in the middle of the park. We used to dream together and plan for our life there after sunset. When she was pregnant with Puta, we chose her name while walking by the pond. When Puta came to the world and learned to walk a little, she used to chase the green parrots there. Sometimes, I would give her small pieces of bread to feed the geese in the small pond.

Now, after the years passed, the geese disappeared. The pond is empty except for the dirty stagnant water. The plants were no longer looked after. But the garden still retained some of its beauty remains! After my retirement, Deepali and I used to walk in the park every morning talking, ruminating our memories, and laughing from our hearts. When the illness set her down, I used to pick up one of her favorite blue roses every day from the park and put it in the white porcelain vase next to her bed.

After Deepali's death, Puta and my beloved curios granddaughter Mahi stayed with me for a while. I had not visited the park since then for more than a month. Because of Puta's insistence, I went to the park with her to be shocked by seeing the dismal sign.

***

'This project will turn the neglected park into one of the largest investments in the country.' The governor said on one of the local TV channels while carrying a large, colourful picture of high-rise, shiny buildings.



'Will you still love me when I get old?' She said while holding a dry leaf.
I held her hand as I looked at the oak that shades us.
'The oldest tree in the park is the most beautiful one,' I replied.

***

'Grandpa, I am not sure if this is related to what you are looking for. I kept searching for the company as you asked me. I found that one of the board members is the governor's son! Yes, I am sure... I knew that from his Facebook account... what is Facebook? No, it is a long story, grandpa. He is his son. Is that useful? ... Why do you look ecstatic?'

'Kiran, what are you saying, old man?! Which park? Do you think you are a member of the Chipco movement?! Do you think this would work?! Are you crazy?!' Kamal, my best friend, said on my terrace while moving his Pachisi piece.
I replied, 'Lower your voice. Puta will hear you.'

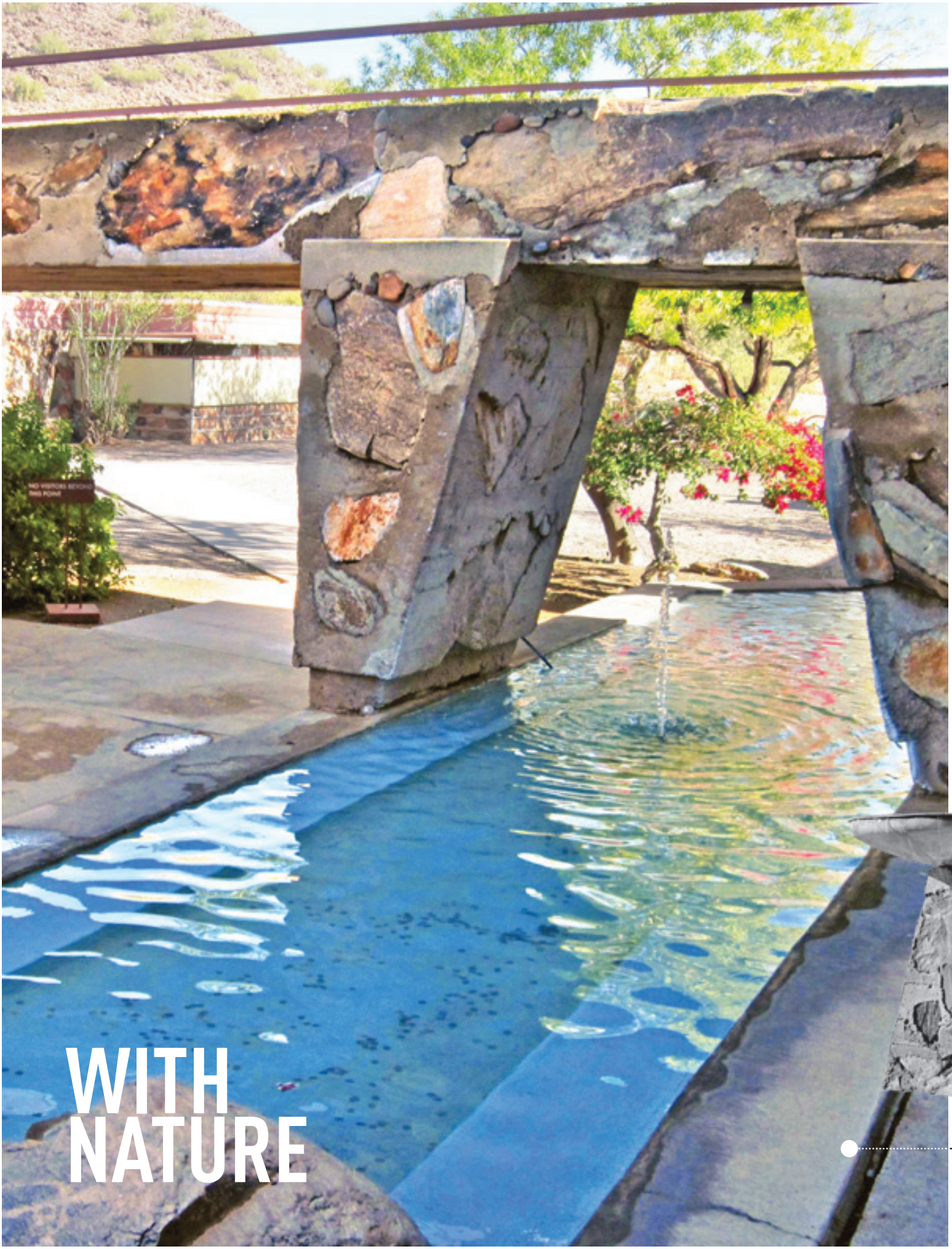
***

'The Governor is busy. I want you to rest assured that I will deliver your envelope. Be confident, Mr. Kiran, that His Excellency will receive it.'

***

I came home, I found Puta waiting for me. Mahi was there playing with her magical smartphone.
'Where have you been, Dad?' She asked looking at the blue rose in my hand.
'In the park,' I said
She clasped her arms and asked with a mix of childish anger and doubt, 'Did you know that the project has been canceled, and the governorate has decided to develop the park!?'
'Yes, I knew. I'm happy about that,' I replied carelessly, avoiding looking at her eyes.
I asked Mahi to put the blue rose in Deepali's room. Puta kept looking with suspicion at both of us. I was sure that she noticed our smiles.

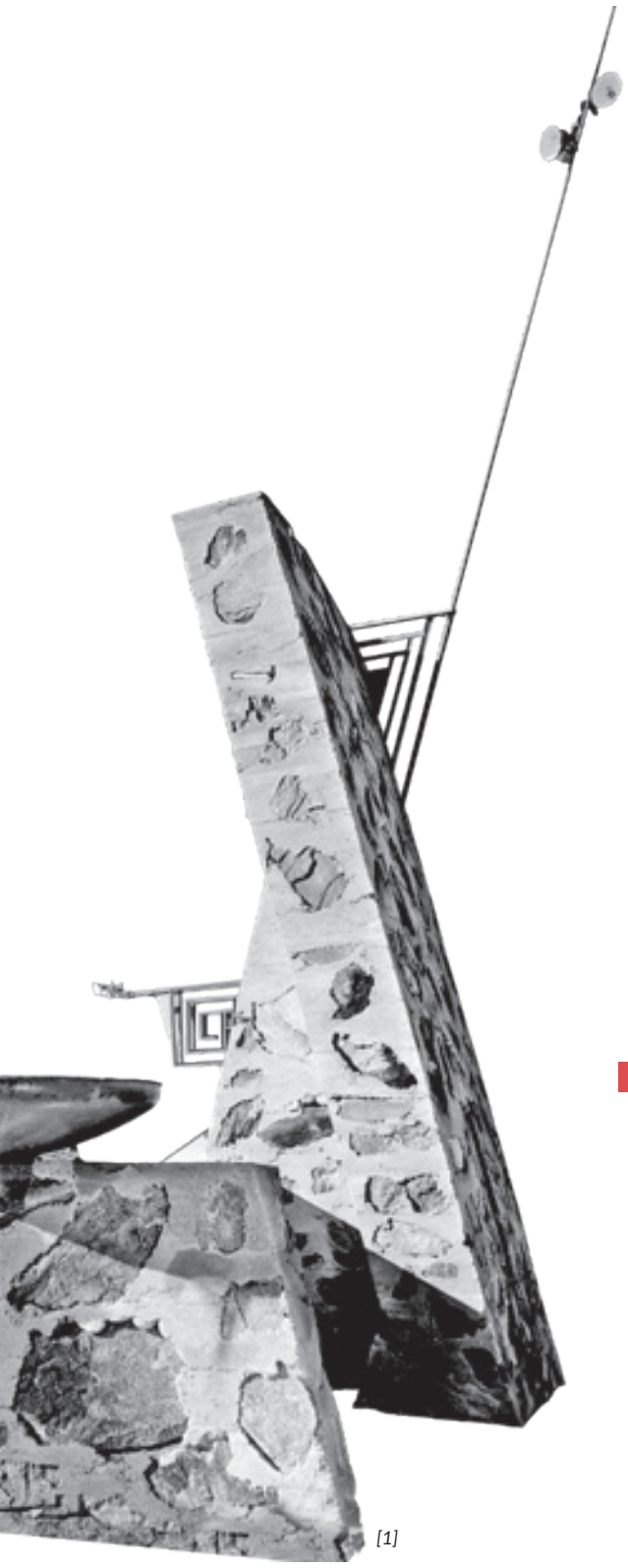




WITH NATURE

Ajit Nagpurkar, Management Consultant
| ajitnagpurkar7@gmail.com

TO BELONG TALIESIN WEST ARIZONA



[1]

SOME OF THE MANY ELEMENTS OF THE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICED BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT [1867-1959] ARE CREATIVE IMAGINATION OF BUILT FORM AS EXPERIENTIAL VOLUMES AND SPACES, FINISHED BY EARTHY COLOURS AND RICH TEXTURES OF LOCAL MATERIALS. THUS IN THE RESULTING HUMANE ENVIRONMENT, THE STRUCTURES HARMONIOUSLY BLEND WITH THE SURROUNDING, IN SYNCHRONIZATION WITH NATURE. AJIT NAGPURKAR SHARES HIS EXPERIENCE OF VISITING ONE SUCH PLACE.

The famous French painter Claude Monet was painting a landscape of the poplar trees on the banks of river Tepte near Giverny in Paris in 1891. Interestingly, he was painting the landscape from his floating studio on the boat capturing his dream view. But from here, the story takes a different turn as he comes to know that those trees, he was painting, had grown to a stage where they were ready for sale as timber. Those very trees would be cut and would not be available anymore. Monet instantly decided and partnered with a timber merchant and bought those trees in auction officially. Thus, he ensured that he did not lose the trees before his painting was completed. His love for painting landscapes and brilliant steps to ensure that his view would not be disturbed amounts to only fulfilling his wish to complete his vision. This, of course, is his passion for aesthetics, the craze for finishing the desired visual, and not necessarily his being an environmentalist. It is an exceptional story of a landscape artist.

TALIESIN WEST

OPPOSITE PAGE PHOTO CREDIT: ***Don McClintock on Pixabay***

[1] THIS PAGE ORIGINAL PHOTO SOURCE: ***www.atlasofplaces.com***



[2]

This reminded me of the architects and landscape architects, who are artists and vice versa, and those who engage in interdisciplinary principles irrespective of the forms of creation they are engrossed in. It is interesting to see multiple dimensions of their design thinking in terms of arts, crafts, sociology, engineering, material techniques, etc. in building the environments. A most perfect example of this is Taliesin West [located in the dry state of Arizona, USA]—one of the creations of Frank Lloyd Wright, the iconic architect of the 19th-20th century, whose design philosophy and works have left an indelible mark on the discipline. Built in 1937, Taliesin West [a site spanning over 600 acres, and a designated World Heritage Site] was Wright's winter home and studio in the desert region till his death in 1959 at the age of 91.

I had an opportunity to visit it recently and believe me, I felt all the smell of cactus in the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright used to come to Taliesin and would immediately start working on the various aspects of the projects—changing, modifying, improving, adding—at times using the hammer and chisel himself. It may be constructing walls of some terrace near the fountain or fixing unusual stones for window or theatre walls. His mind, a drawing board, was constantly busy thinking ahead and making design ideas. His passion for the use of local material was always at the top of his mind, as he used to be always either at the site or in local forests or hills searching for them. He would come across different stones or plants, shrubs or branches, barks or naturally shaped, textured, or coloured forms in the surrounding nature. The creators of aesthetics indeed get their ideas either from the material they have on hand or they find such forms in the available material. Inside at Taliesin West—a series of spaces that are connected terraces, gardens, and pools—one will find such a blending of desert nature with design.

"A LOOK OVER THE RIM OF THE WORLD"

—FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT ON TALIESIN WEST

[2] ***Aerial view of the Taliesin West campus site***
SOURCE: ***Google Maps. 05.09.22***

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP |
[3] ***Entrance to the campus with live water fountain***



[3]

The Entrance Gate

As soon as one reaches the complex, one comes across the serene environment at the entrance itself. Wright has combined his wall and a fall of water fountain as constant factors with that of plants and shrubs and the light of the day as ever-changing dynamics. This makes the entrance as an installation beautiful, welcoming, and yet responding to the natural animation effect. The scenic entrance in desert masonry— locally available rocks, stacked within wood forms, and filled with concrete is a manifestation of his sensibilities as a nature designer.

The main entrance is actually in the rear of Wright's original plans, as he had to shift it to the rear due to overhead power cables laid down by the local government in the 40s. He fought legally and tried to push his purpose, but failed. He then shifted the entrance to the rear of the main building. The entrance to the visitor's centre has a tall, tapering stone wall, and a round base metal dish placed on another stone wall with a live water fountain that runs continuously. It is a structure that stands with both sides open – in and out entrances. One gets spellbound as one stumbles upon this first pleasant surprise. The colours are cool, the forms rise up from the earth and the entire setup blends within the natural setting — from the gate to the entire complex.





[4]

The Front View

The exterior of the campus and its built structures that blend seamlessly into the ground seem to rise up gently from the desert landscape. Wright was fond of water and was bold in using it as an element even in the desert setting of the campus. He built a fountain outside and alongside the terrace with a roof to get a reflection of those creations constantly blending with changing skies and lighting. He treated the specific colours, forms, and while embedding them made a frame of reflection of roof lines and ever-changing clouds and skies in the water. The steps near the water and the wall beside the pool are adorned with chosen stones having exceptional cross sections. Here one sees the way he designed on this hilly terrain with stones such colours as amber, brown, orange, and such matching shades to the surroundings. The angles of stones are placed brilliantly to produce a living landscape. That turns the site of this fountain in front of the boulevard into an extraordinary space. The water bed provides a cool beginning to the linings of the whole complex making the terrace, building, angular frames coming out of the drawing office, and the conical roof structure. There are seven water pools—including the stunning triangular-shaped reflecting pool at the front of the main building—on the campus, water for which is provided comes from a well that had to be dug almost 500 feet into the ground!

This initial experience at the entry promises a play of stunning designs of the other halls, rooms, auditoriums, and drawing offices including his writing chamber, clients' meeting room, unexpected passages, and neighbouring open-air sculpture garden/gallery.

[4] ***Front view of Taliesin West entrance while approaching the main block***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Christophe Krief, 2019***
SOURCE: ***www.commons.wikimedia.org***

OPPOSITE PAGE |
[5] ***The "missing corner" in the main hall***

[6] ***A 1956 bronze bust of Frank Lloyd Wright by the artist Heloise Crista on display in the Garden Room***



[5]

The Missing Corner

In the main building, the main hall is a huge rectangle with an angled roof for permitting natural daylight. Two walls meet each other at different levels and angles through glass panes, windows, and hanging roof glasses in such a way that there is no corner, though the hall is not circular. That's Wright magic. What other reproduction of the natural environment is possible inside the hall! There is Wright's bust in bronze, probably made by one of his students. It is installed on natural stone and sits within the background of natural stones that are found in the nearby region of the Grand Canyon.

Taliesin West is one of eight Frank Lloyd Wright's works inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019. The eight projects—collectively referred as "the 20th-Century Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright"—span 50 years of Wright's professional career, and are of "outstanding universal value". The inscription is a first modern architecture designation on the UNESCO World Heritage List in the USA.

Taliesin West is now the headquarters of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.



[6]



[7]

The Nestling Drawing/ Drafting Studios

In the nestling drawing/ drafting rooms, pitched roofs—with beams and translucent panels—angle upward, and there are sloping windows facing north looking out on panoramic, constantly changing views outside. Outside, the roofs hang way beyond the walls and protect from the heat of the unwanted sun. Inside is a constant negotiation – designing and drawing work, discussions or zeroing down of the ideas, of material, shape, size, form, colour, and permutations and combinations. The design allows a seamless composition of indoors and outdoors, with skies peeping in, the continuation of the local stone with its texture and colour, and the tapering planes going in perspective meeting the ground. What immediately strike is the openness of the space and the flow of soft, natural light. At its end, is a designed fountain.

The Writing Chamber

The way Wright blended nature into his built-up environment, he wrote thousands of pages on nature, landscapes, environment, and architectural styles. His favourite writing chamber had a table and chair where he wrote several pages on what he searched, thought and experienced in the landscapes outside, the nature, and the world around him as he saw, built, and made it one.



[8]

*[7] **The exterior of the drafting hall with its inclined roof consisting of a series of C-shaped redwood beams that extend outside the walls***

*[8] **Frank Lloyd Wright's writing chamber***



[9] ***Bronze sculptures at the sculpture garden outside pavilion***



Open Air Gallery | The Sculpture Garden

Wright had many sculptures—gifted to him, and purchased or commissioned by him—in stone, metal, and various other materials. An open air gallery, and sculptures across the campus are impressive with each artwork standing on individual installation at different levels. Some metallic sculptures are mobile and they provide an additional layer to the setting as they are see-through and would not miss the surrounding nature at the same time.

I believe that architectural buildings and landscapes should be organic, ever-evolving and borne out of ground, befitting the land. Architecture—like Taliesin West—that reveres and belongs to the land where it stands gently. Nothing should ever be *on* a hill; it should be *of* the hill – *belonging to it.*

REFERENCES

https://franklloydwright.org/taliesin-west/

https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1496/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliesin_West

https://www.atlasofplaces.com/architecture/taliesin-west/

https://www.tripadvisor.in/Attraction_Review-g31350-d142235 -Reviews-Taliesin_West-Scottsdale_Arizona.html

https://www.phgmag.com/the-drafting-studio-at-taliesin-west-continues-to-inspire/

https://en.wikiarquitectura.com/building/taliesin-west/

https://www.flickr.com/photos/sminor/320698748/in/photostream/

All photographs courtesy the Author, unless credited otherwise

[10] THIS SPREAD | ***Taliesin West entrance with the triangular water pool in its foreground***
PHOTO CREDIT: ***Don McClintock | Netdesignate on Pixabay***

[11] FACING PAGE TOP | ***Mansinh M. Rana [standing extreme right] and other apprentices with Frank Lloyd Wright. Around 1948.***
PHOTO COURTESY: ***MMR Collection | Kshitij Rana***

[10]





"Organic, always evolving, never copying the past or present, yet drawing from both to interpret an indigenous future, this, in a design based, ideas-oriented thinking, in a learning-by-doing, each-one-teach-one atmosphere, in learning architecture—and life—with such grammar, vocabulary and instincts... At Frank Lloyd Wright Fellowship at the Taliesin West, we were all "apprentices" – *shishyas*, to listen and learn from the *guru*. Wright would explain contours, contour planning, environmental ingredients and nature' of the land and materials. I spent over four absorbing and exciting years at the Fellowship that provided direction to my thinking on architecture and landscape design – evolved out of the site to truly blend with the nature of the site. Wright believed and practiced architecture- landscape-environment design as one homogenous composition. All of his projects – small and big seem to grow out of the site celebrating being part of the landscape like all growing things."

As the Sushant School of Art & Architecture [SSAA] celebrates the birth centenary of its Founder-Dean & Mentor Mansinh M. Rana—apprentice at Frank Lloyd Wright Fellowship under Wright at the Taliesin West from 1947 to 1951—his above words about Taliesin West, and about SSAA that he established in 1989 perfectly reflect his thinking and approach shaped under Wright towards architecture, landscape, environment and Nature and its varied manifestations.

— Brijender S. Dua | Batch of '89 | SSAA

NATURE IN THE CITY

Maps of historic Indian cities explore the relationship of nature with the city as seen through their histories. They also identify and list environmentally and culturally-important sites, and related concerns. The maps are available in English and respective regional languages.

কলকাতা

জলাভূমি, নাবাল জমি এবং একটি নদী

এই ম্যাপটি ইংরেজিতে পাওয়া যায়

Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden

One of the few important sites on the western riverbank [the other being Howrah Railway Station], these gardens were founded in the late eighteenth century by Colonel Robert Kyd, an army officer of the British East India Company, primarily for the purpose of identifying new plants of commercial value, such as teak, and for growing spices for trade. It is amongst Southeast Asia's largest and oldest Botanical gardens with the Royal Gardens of Kew as its contemporary. Established on an area of more than 300 acres, over the years it became an experimental ground in the field of botany with different types of plants that have been cultivated for scientific observation. Eminent botanist William Roxburgh's [often regarded as the father of Indian botany] association with the garden is marked with many noteworthy works- a catalogue of about 3500 species of plants under cultivation in Calcutta Botanic Garden with illustrations made by Indian artists and accompanied by taxonomic descriptions of a large number of plant species. Roxburgh brought in plants from all over India and developed an extensive herbarium. This collection of dried plant specimens eventually became the Central National Herbarium of the Botanical Survey of India, which comprises 2.5 million items. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Botanical Survey of India was constituted for exploring, identifying and documenting rich plant resources of the country.



Vidyasagar Setu



Howrah Bridge



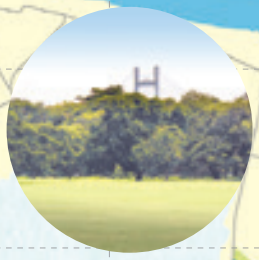
Prinsep Ghat

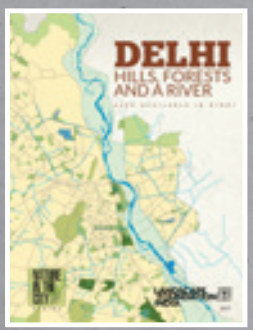


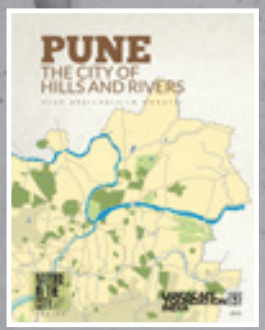
Western River Edge



The over 250 year old Great Banyan tree at the Botanical Garden











Research collaboration with Landscape Foundation India
DELHI: HILLS FORESTS AND RIVER | 2017
PUNE: THE CITY OF HILLS AND RIVERS | 2018 | RAVI & VARSHA GAVANDI, PUNE
BENGALURU: THE CITY OF TANKS AND LAKES | 2019 | THE LANDSCAPE COMPANY, BENGALURU
KOLKATA: WETLANDS, MARSHES AND A RIVER | 2019
MAPS OPEN SIZE 29" x 23" | FOLDED SIZE 5.8" x 7.67"

Flipkart

Delhi, Bengaluru and Kolkata maps [English] also available on Flipkart



Durga Pujo
Photo Credit: **Anjan Mitra**

Charulata
[Poster of the movie by Satyajit Ray]

Stork-billed kingfisher

Blue tiger

Peacock pansy

Blue-throated barbet

Tailed Jay

COMMON BIRDS
Bengal Bushlark, Black-hooded Oriole, Blue-throated Barbet, Bronze-winged Jacana, Brown Shrike, Chestnut-tailed Starling, Richard's Pipit, Stork-billed Kingfisher and Woodpecker

COMMON BUTTERFLIES
Blue Tiger, Common Grass Yellow, Common Gull, Common Jay, Common Mormon, Peacock Pansy, Psyche and Tailed Jay

SOME OF THE MAIN TREES IN GARDENS
Albizia richardiana [hatiamiuki], Bauhinia purpurea [orchid], Brya ebenus [jamaican rain tree], Haematoxylon campechianum [blackwood tree], Holarrhena antidysenterica [kurchi], Jacaranda filcifolia [fern tree], Millingtonia hortensis [jasmine], Hibiscus populneus [indian tulip tree] and Peltophorum inerme [yellow flame]

CITY TREES
Pongamia pinnata [saptaparni], Diospyros peregrina [gaub], Enterolobium saman [rain tree], Mimusops elengi [maulsari], Pongamia pinnata [pongam tree], Sterculia foetida [java olive], Swietenia mahogani [west indian mahogany], Tamarindus indica [imli] and Terminalia catappa [indian almond]

BANKS OF HOOGHLY
Barringtonia acutangula [hidjal], Excoecaria agallocha [gengwa], Hibiscu`s tiliaceus [bola], Leucaena glauca, Morinda citrofolia [Ach] and Pongamia pinnata [karanja]

Kolkata Maidan

Trees at Rabindra Sarobar

East Kolkata Wetlands
Photo Credit: Late Dhrubajyoti Ghosh

JAI PUR
jaipur

LUCK NOW
lucknow

RAL EIGH
raleigh
usa

upcoming maps

[E]: lajournalindia@gmail.com
[W]: http://lajournal.in/maps.asp

lajournal.in/maps.asp

REGISTRATION NUMBER 75500

Building Beauty India

A GREHA Program at CDSA, Pune, India

Ecologic Design and Construction Process

To learn to connect activities that make life and beauty in the built world

One Year Postgraduate Diploma in Building Beauty

The program invites students from diverse walks of life

The learning process is based on *The Nature of Order* by Christopher Alexander and *The Discovery of Architecture* by MN Ashish Ganju and Narendra Dengle

Starts January 2023

www.greha.org | www.buildingbeauty.org | www.cdsaindia.org

buildingbeautyindia@gmail.com



The Himalayan Rilung Foundation Building, Bhuria, Himachal Pradesh, India by Rilu-Ngapnon Varuni

Affiliated to BUILDING BEAUTY, Sant'Anna Institute, Sorrento, Italy

www.buildingbeauty.org