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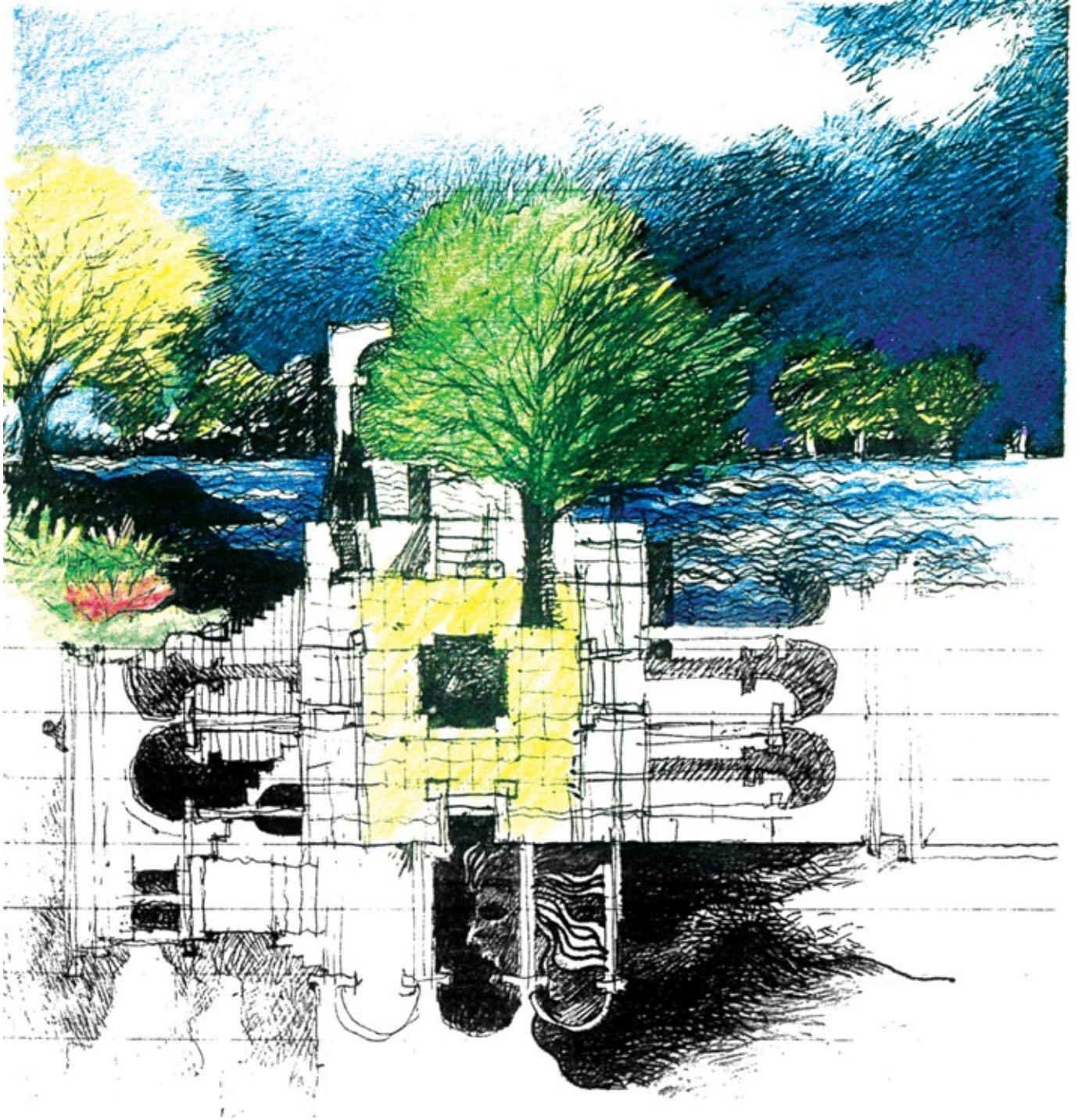
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This February [2021], LA Journal celebrates the completion of two decades of its journey.

At this moment, we remember dear friend Adit Pal and our mentor Mohammad Shaheer. We would like to profusely thank all our readers over the years, whose unrelenting support has kept us going through all circumstances. A special thanks to our contributors—authors, practitioners, writers, and others—who have shown faith in us and whose contribution has given a sense of meaning and value to the Journal. Thanks to the Landscape Industry, without whose continuous support this journey of 20 years may not have been possible.

Wishing you all exciting, happy and healthy times ahead.



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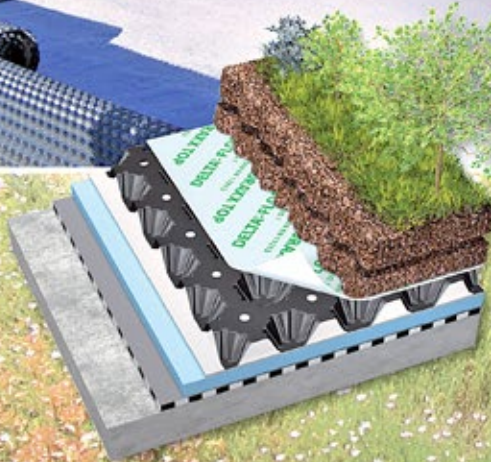
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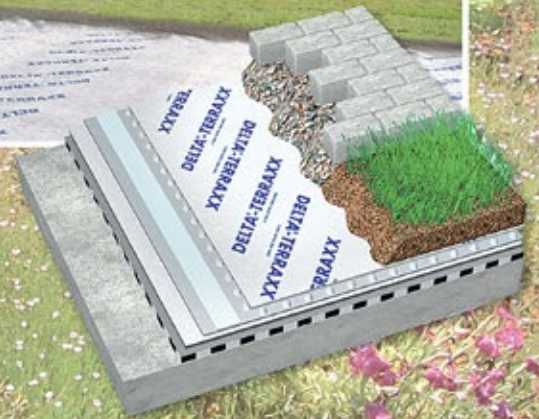
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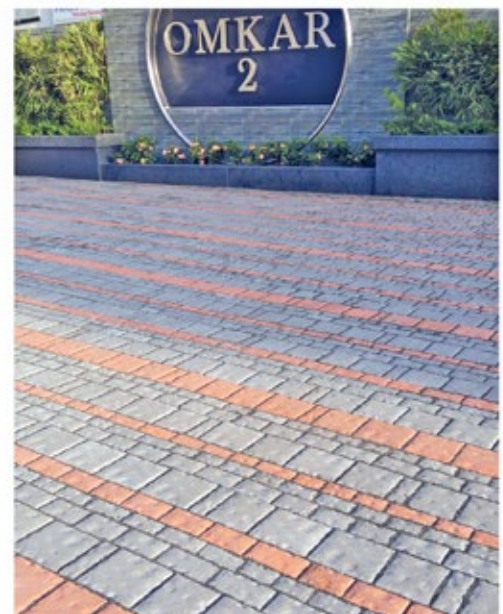


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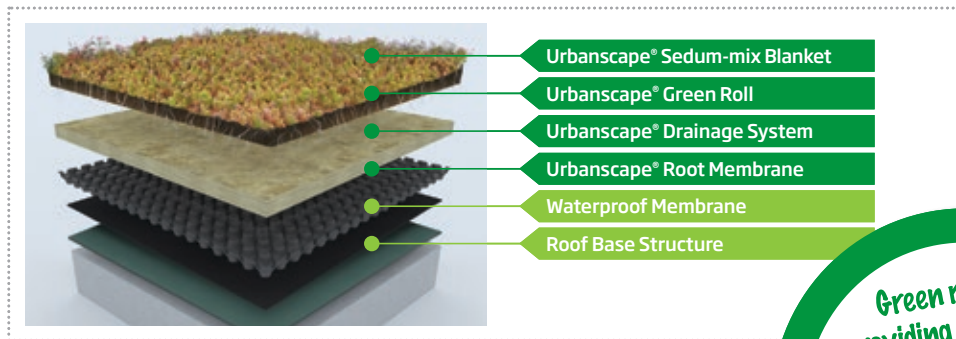


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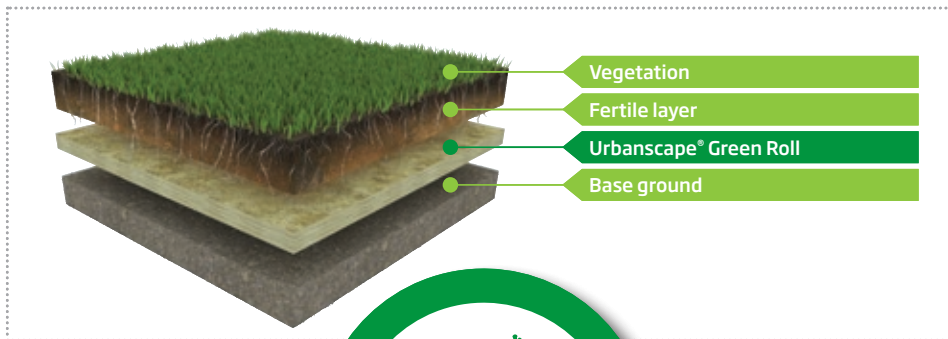
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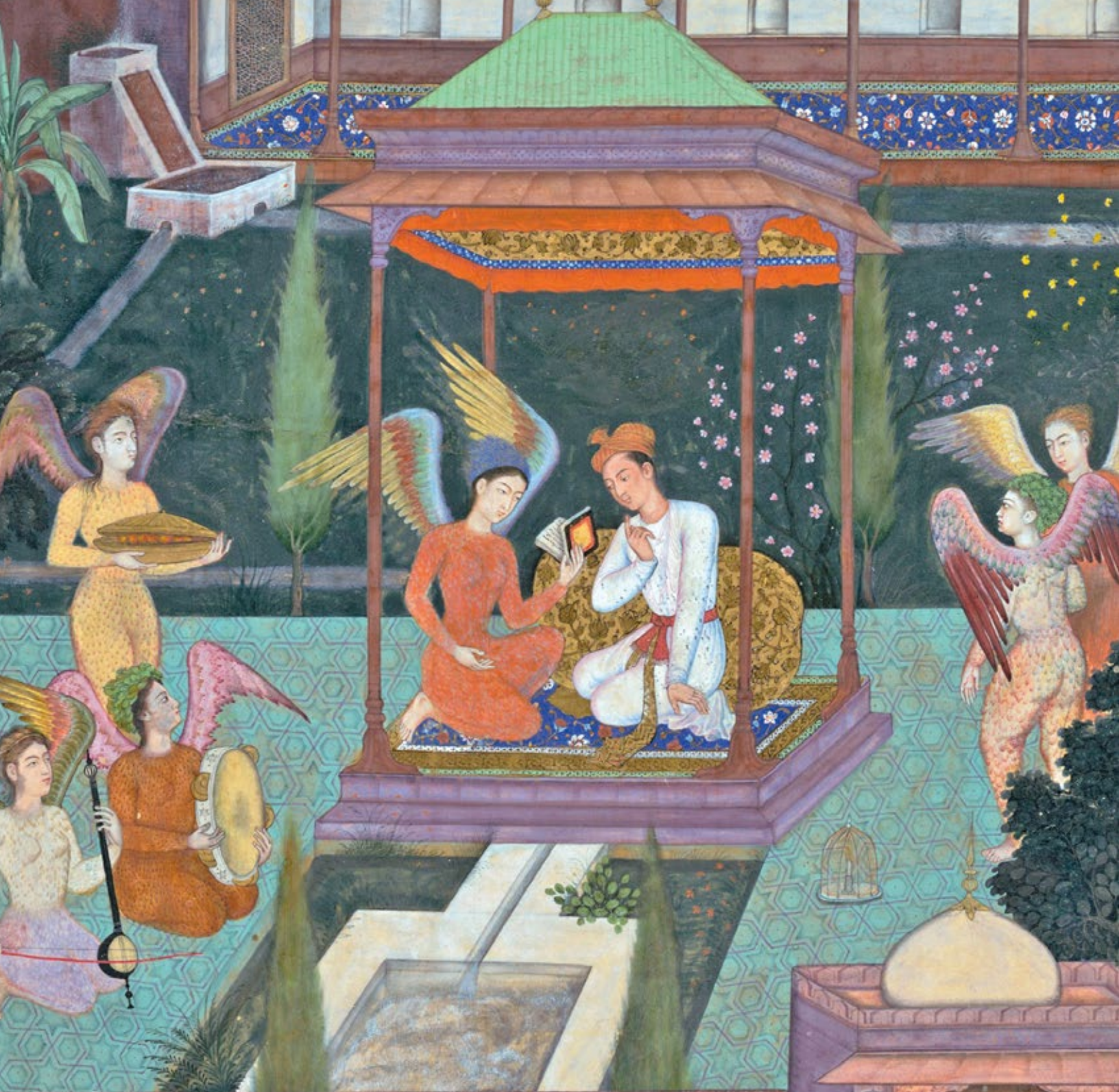


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THE AESTHETICS OF PLANTINGS IN EARLY MUGHAL GARDEN PAINTINGS IV: MEANING

This article explores the aesthetic meaning of garden plantings in early Mughal paintings inspired by Persianate literature, including a translated Sanskrit work. We begin with a conceptual framework on the *aesthetics of meaning* in garden paintings. We then proceed to a few prominent allegorical texts copied and illustrated by Mughal calligraphers and painters toward the end of Akbar's reign [d. 1605 CE]:

- The *Haft Paykar* [Seven Beauties], which was one of five romance poems in the *Khamsa* of Nizami Ganjavi [d. 1209 CE in Azerbaijan].
- The *Hasht Bihisht* [Eight Paradises], written by Amir Khusrau [d. 1325 in Delhi] in emulation of Nizami.
- The *Nuh Sipihr* [Nine Heavens], written by Amir Khusrau [d. 1325 in Delhi].
- The *Yoga Vasishtha*, a medieval Sanskrit philosophical and allegorical text translated into Persian [commissioned by Akbar d. 1605 and Jahangir d. 1627].



KITAB KARKHANA

Kitab karkhana with rich vegetal details on walls, niches, ewers, and carpets. Final colophon of the *Khamsa* of Nizami. Courtesy: British Library BL Or. MS 12208, f. 325v



FACING PAGE

PRINCESS OF THE BLUE PAVILION

Detail from *The Story of the Princess of the Blue Pavilion: The Youth of Rum is Entertained in a Garden by a Fairy and her Maidens*, *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi. Manohar. 1597–98. Courtesy, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913, accession number 13.228.33

These allegorical works have multiple levels of meaning that range from number symbolism [7, 8, and 9] to the meanings of colors, regions, climates, planets, and gender dynamics, often situated within a garden setting! Among plants, the cypress, rose, and beautiful flowers figure prominently. They had transcultural meanings that developed over centuries. For example, Nizami extolled the heroics of pre-Islamic Persian and Alexandrian kingship in gardens and landscapes [Meisami, 1985]. Amir Khusrau transformed these Persian stories into more Indian and Sufi contexts. Early Mughal rulers Akbar and Jahangir commissioned copies of these texts and translations of major Sanskrit texts into Persian, and had them all illustrated with coherent visual imagery that included plants and gardens. What did the garden plantings in these stories mean?

Conceptual Framework

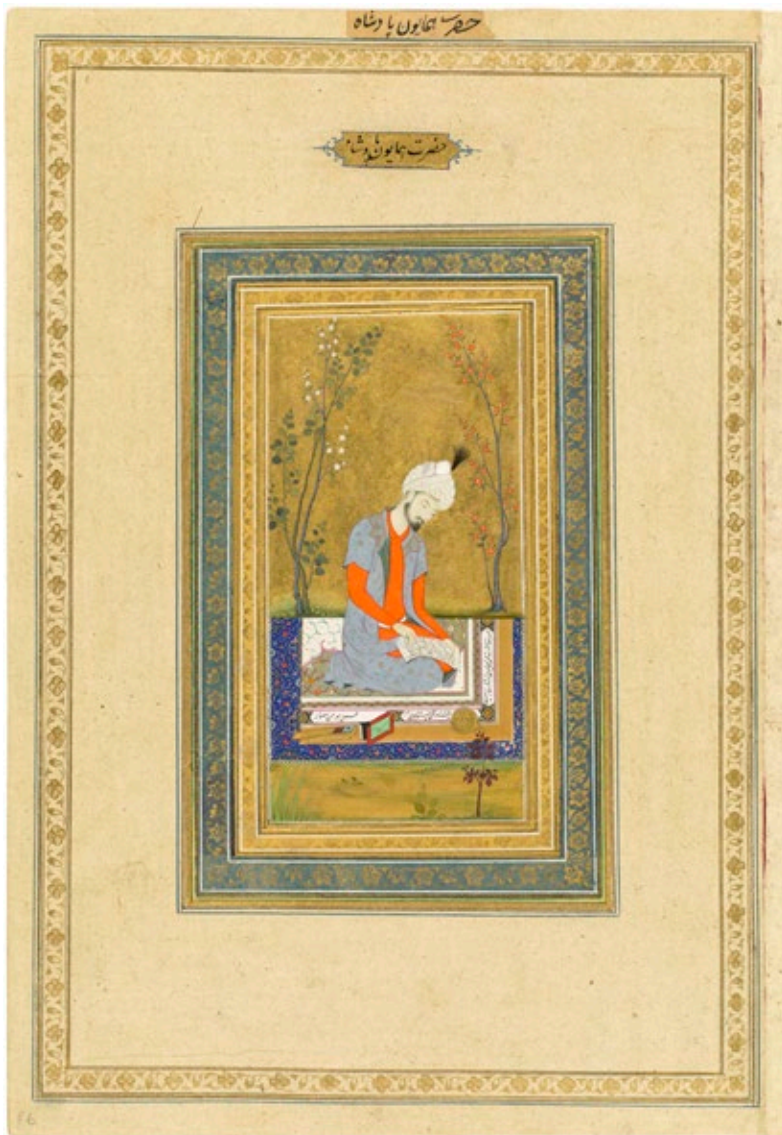
The aesthetics of meaning is an elusive topic, even in allegorical works where it is a central purpose [Koch 2010]. Modern philosophers distinguish two theoretical approaches to meaning, semantic approaches based on the language of symbols, and foundational approaches based on psychological or social facts [Speaks, 2019]. Persianate poetry, painting, and social thought combined these two approaches, and while that is deemed a problem in modern philosophy, it appears to have been deemed a virtue in Persianate cultures, as exemplified in the illustrated allegorical poems considered here.

The *Haft Paykar* and *Hasht Bihisht* have multiple levels of symbolism. They featured seven beautiful princesses housed in individually colored pavilions associated with the seven days of the week, the seven habitable climates of this world, and the eight paradises of the next.

CLIMATE [HP]	DAY	COLOR	REGION	PLANET [HP]	PARADISE [HB]
<i>Introduction to Bahram Gur's Seven Pavilions with Seven Princesses</i>					1
1	Saturday	Black	India	Saturn	2
2	Sunday	Yellow	Greece [HP] Nimruz [HB]	Sun	3
3	Monday	Green	Sclavonia	Moon	4
4	Tuesday	Red	Tatar	Mars	5
5	Wednesday	Blue	Rum	Mercury	6
6	Thursday	Brown	Arabia	Jupiter	7
7	Friday	White	Khwarzm	Venus	8



TABLE-1
CATEGORIES
 Major categories in the *Haft Paykar* [HP] and *Hasht Bihisht* [HB]



HUMAYUN

Portrait of Hazrat Humayun Padishah.
c. 1603 in Allahabad. Mohan.
RCIN 1005038.f
Courtesy, Royal Collection Trust/
© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019



Amir Khusrau’s *Nuh Sipih* [Nine Heavens] went a step further, with a nine-fold logic, each *sipih* of which had a distinct topic, poetic structure, and meter. The *Nuh Sipih*’s significance for our purposes lies in its third *sipih*, which is the chapter extolling the superior qualities of India, rendering Indian virtues into Persian verse [Nath and Faiyaz, 1981; Mirza, 2012]. Although Amir Khusrau’s poems were inspired by his Sufi affiliation with the Chishti saint Nizamuddin Awliya, it should be noted that Sufi treatises like the 11th century *Kashfal Mahjub* [“Unveiling of the Veiled”] do not mention plants, gardens, and similarly worldly distractions from God [Hujwiri 1982]. Likewise, the *mal’uzat* [sayings] of Khusrau’s Sufi *pir* Nizamuddin Awliya [1992, 195] has only one reference to gardens, and it is negative, asking, “What have I to do with gardens and fields and land?”... “None of our forefathers and none of our spiritual masters has engaged in such activity.” However, many of Nizamuddin’s followers, including Amir Khusrau, and their sultanate rulers envisioned spiritual lessons in garden domains, as well as in the *dargah*.

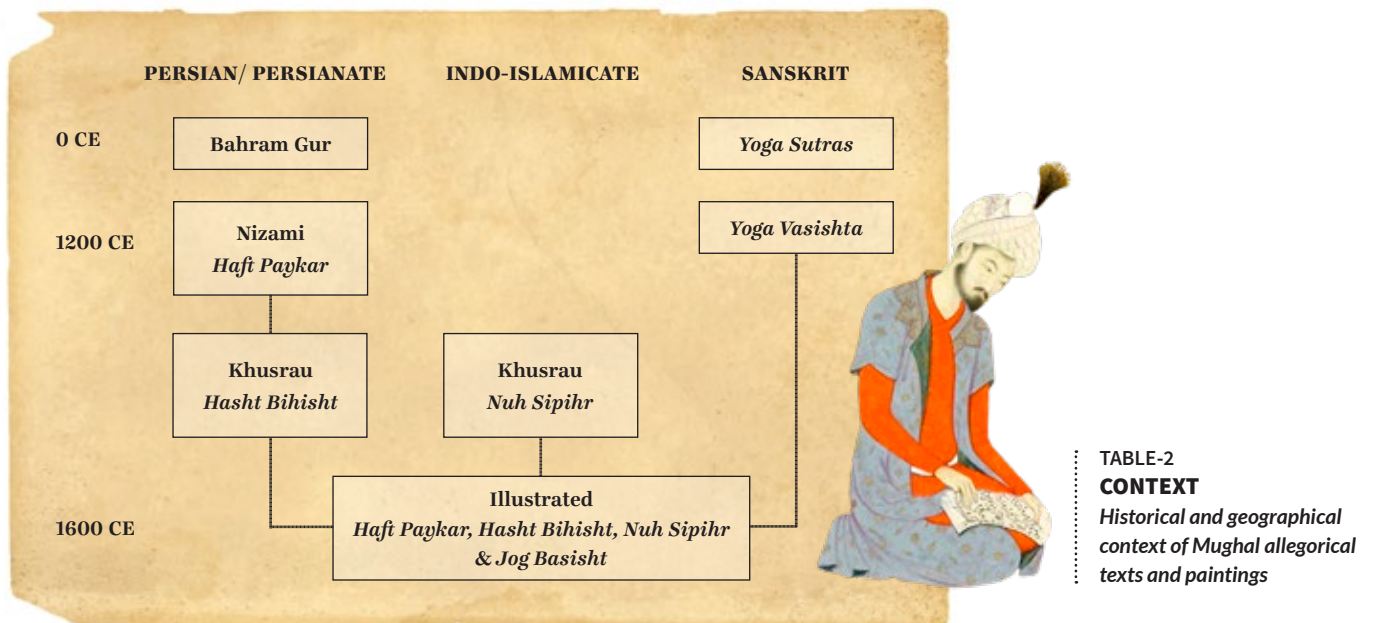
The symbolic associations in *Table-1* also remind us of the second Mughal ruler Humayun’s experiments in governance, where he declared that specific colors should be worn on associated days of the week, as influenced by their respective planets and constellations [Wescoat 1990; Khwandamir, 1940, 24-36]. These sym-

bolic associations were widely known, as were the symbols of specific garden plants, e.g., the rose, iris, lily, tulip, cypress, etc. [Schimmel, 1996; Thackston, 1996]. In *Portrait of Hazrat Humayun Padishah*, a portrait of Humayun kneeling on a garden carpet flanked by two elegant flowering trees, with a single red stem in the foreground, painted in Allahabad at the end of Akbar’s reign, invites us to consider Humayun’s predecessor [Babur], successor [Akbar], and crown prince [Jahangir] who probably commissioned the painting. In the painting, Humayun reads a cautionary verse from Sadi’s *Bustan* about the risk of wasting one’s legacy. Humayun’s tumultuous rule reminds us that history is structured, but not determined, by the logic of symbols. Allegorical Persian poetry likewise engages in complex word play, double-entendres, and irony that envelop many nuances of meaning in a moral lesson.

Sanskrit texts like the *Yoga Vasishtha* similarly embody complex combinations of literal and figurative, descriptive and normative, meanings [Keating, 2020; Nair 2020]. The *Yoga Vasishtha* includes allegorical stories of late medieval Kashmiri and Himalayan origin. In the arts of yoga, the human body figures prominently, especially in sculpture but also medical and cosmological paintings [Diamond, 2013; Ernst, 2016]. Diagrammatic paintings depict the many levels of body-to-garden-to-cosmos symbolism in theory and practice [Diamond, 2008; Parikh, 2015].

Although the *Yoga Vasishtha* has a different structure than the Persian epics, they share a concern for the character development and ethos of just rulers, Bahram Gur and Rama respectively. They thus had strong appeal for Mughal rulers, from Akbar onwards. Mughal paintings recorded visits by rulers to various yogis and ascetics in their huts and caves, often shaded by a single large gnarled tree with a forest backdrop and a well or cooking fire in the foreground. These paintings, produced decades or centuries after the texts they illustrated, added layers of visual meaning to the text. For all of their richness, however, allegorical poems rarely described groupings of plants within gardens, beyond common associations like the cypress and vine. Paintings are thus invaluable for imagining the presence of garden plantings and their associated aesthetic and symbolic meaning.

Table-2 helps visualize these historical and geographical relationships. The third Mughal ruler Akbar initiated the copying and illustration of Persian and Sanskrit texts, which was followed by his successors. These projects bridged the Persian and Sanskrit realms, creating a Persianate and Indo-Islamicate culture. Several of these illustrated stories included significant plant and garden images and symbols, a few examples of which are described below.



***Haft Paykar* – Seven Beauties**

In this poem the ancient Persian king Bahram Gur assembles seven princesses in palaces with seven domed pavilions, each with its own color and associated symbols and gardens. On each night of the week one of the princesses offers an allegorical love story that leads toward self-knowledge and wisdom [Nizami Ganjavi, 2015]. A garden figures prominently in the story of the first night in the Black Pavilion with an Indian princess who recounts the story of a king curious about a city where everyone dresses in black. To learn more, the king goes up a tall tower in a basket where he is carried off by a Simurgh-like bird who takes him to a magical garden, where he falls in love with a queen, but pursues it too quickly, and is returned unfulfilled, dressed in black like all the others. Within the garden, there are hyacinths, pinks, jasmine, roses, and redbud trees. Cypress symbolism stands out, the free cypress [*sarv-i azad*] with the king and the twining cypress-and-rose with the queen [van Ruymbeke, 2007, 57-62]. The Mughal painting of this scene features the huge bird and king clinging to its legs flying high above, not the garden but instead, a beautifully productive landscape of farmers, herders, wells, woodlands – and city dwellers, all dressed in black [Brend, 1995; Natif, 2018].

A painting of the fourth night in the Red Pavilion shows the princess dressed in red trousers painting a beautiful self-portrait that attracts would-be lovers, to their peril. Absent from the painting are the bloody machines that thwarted these lovers. Instead, it features a rectangular garden and plantings. A pair of exotic banana trees, perhaps referencing India, mark the front two corners, the tall one above the princess, with a pink-flowering tree in between [van Ruymbeke, 2007, 113-4]. More significantly, given the hero and heroine's association with the cypress in the poem, two pairs of cypresses mark its back two corners with a tall red-flowering plant between them.

***Hasht Bihisht* – Eight Paradises**

Amir Khusrau's *Hasht Bihisht* emulated Nizami's *Haft Paykar*, and went a step further by adding a section to allude to the eight-fold symbolism of paradise. But before that poem, he began his *Khamsa* with the *Matla' al-Anwar* ["Rising of Luminaries"] that includes the story of an old Sufi pursuing a young man within a richly planted garden. The old Sufi is cast in an unflattering light, but he gives a prescient warning that the young man, like the garden, will fade with time. The garden painting has a strong rectilinear layout defined by walks, water channels, and pools. The resulting planting beds are more complex than those of a simple *chahar bagh*. Plantings flow through these spaces [Brend, 2002; Seyller, 2000]. They feature youthful specimen plants like



PRINCESS OF THE RED PAVILION
The Princess of the Red Pavilion paints a self-portrait, with a garden behind.
Courtesy, British Library. Nizami, *Khamsa*. Or. 12208, f. 206r

the banana and screw pine and young men in the foreground, followed by cypress and twining flower trees cultivated by a mature gardener in the middle ground, and tall dark woodlands and accent palms on the horizon. Youth, maturity and old age feature among plants as well as people.

Bahrum Gur and the Circle of Princesses

When the *Hasht Bihisht* story begins, the Persian king Bahram Gur calls the seven princesses, who assemble around his octagonal pavilion. Cross-axial water channels and a central pool define the simple four-fold garden, which direct the viewer's eye toward the king. The gate on the bottom right leads toward the arc of princesses, and indirectly to the alignment of water channels. Plantings in the foreground are simple, roughly balanced around the water channel, with a tall mango[?] and delicate deciduous tree on the bottom left and a smaller dark foliaged tree on the right. In an increasingly common pattern in this period, small plants punctuate each corner of the central pool. In this case they are light blue-green forbs that subtly enrich the yellow and green hues of the ground plane. In other paintings they are thin cypresses that mark the waters of life in the central pool. An arc of deep green forest trees continues the circle of attendants, again with tall fan palms and a flight of birds in the clouds.



Red Pavilion

I am not aware of an extant Mughal painting of the Red Pavilion and its Russian princess, but it is interesting to note that in Amir Khusrau's version, the hero seeking the Russian princess is aided by four companions who include a brilliant gardener [Sharma, 2005, 99-126]. The young gardener and an old flower-seller help win the princess's heart by arranging magnificent bouquets of flowers, including one with her name spelled out in the flowers!

LAMENT

An old Sufi laments his lost youth when a male beauty in a garden rebuffs his amorous advances. *Matla' al-Anwar*.

Courtesy, Walters Art Museum [W.624], folio 35a



Blue Pavilion

Perhaps the most evocative *Hasht Bihisht* garden painting depicts the story of the Blue Pavilion of the fifth night and sixth paradise, Wednesday. In it the young hero hears of a place where half the population who have visited a magical garden and escaped alive wear violet blue clothing but cannot speak [Brend, 2003; Seyller, 2000]. He finds this enchanted place where he wanders without food or drink and ultimately comes to a garden filled with flowers and shrubs along streams and trees laden with fruit [paraphrased from Sharma 2021, pers. comm.]. After sleeping he wanders further to find a place with fragrant gardens everywhere, including a rose garden with 100,000 pictures. There were no people during the day, but at night beautiful female fairies and their queen attend upon him, as depicted in figure 6. The starry night scene is illuminated by bright flowers against the dark green garden surface. In what is becoming an increasingly common Mughal garden motif in this period, an elaborate water system runs from a Persian wheel that lifts water to supply an elevated tank, cascade, and water channel that flows beneath the throne pavilion into a white marble lined pool. Four cypresses frame this foreground scene, with a lone banana near the cascade. This planting arrangement reverses that of the *Haft Paykar* Red Pavilion and *Matla` al-Anwar* paintings. The youth again goes too far in seeking the favors of the queen and accepting the forbidden violets and is expelled. After many wayward adventures he escapes, only to be mute and wearing violet blue clothes.



PRINCESSES OF THE SEVEN PAVILIONS

The princesses of the seven pavilions bow in homage to Bahram. Courtesy, Walters Art Museum (W624), folio 182b





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سازگار

White Pavilion

The *Hasht Bihisht* concludes with the White or Camphor Pavilion with an Khwarzmi princess that further develops the ethos of love, both faithful and unfaithful [Sharma, 2007, 131-156]. In this case, gardens were associated with both types of love. One of the unfaithful wives in the White Pavilion was housed in a garden by a stream, again painted with cypresses and bananas like the others we have studied, and she is brought to a scene of a swimming pool surrounded by a variation of the plantings encountered thus far. The faithful wife, by contrast, was housed above a tavern and endured many rejections before being recognized as a pious queen, after which she and Bahram Gur only wore pure white [on Khusrau's gender dynamics see Gabbay 2009]. The arrangement and meaning of plant and garden symbols thus operated differently in the allegorical contexts of the *Hasht Bihisht*, which Amir Khusrau concludes where Nizamuddin started, "*He who wishes for heaven should make himself dust under the feet of Nizam-ul-Din*" [Brend, 2003, 34].

Yoga Vasishtha

The final manuscript painting in this article links plant and garden symbols of Persianate and Sanskrit India. The *Laghu Yoga Vasistha* or *Jog Basisht*, as it was transliterated into Persian, has six major sections illustrated with allegorical stories to instruct prince Rama, who has become disillusioned with the world and his role in it [Nair, 2020, 31]. It lies beyond the scope of this paper to compare his disillusionment with that of Bahram Gur, or to compare the allegorical texts addressing their conditions, but these possibilities are intriguing. The translations commissioned by Akbar, Jahangir, Dara Shikoh, and others reflect a deep level of engagement among Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian intellectual traditions [Nair, 2020]. Jahangir wrote a note on his copy stating, "*Whenever somebody hears it with the ear of understanding, and if he considers only one percent of it, it is surely to be hoped that he will make the bā-tin ["what is beyond this world"] his destination by the instrument of the zāhir ["what belongs to this apparent world"]*" [Franke, 2011, 362].

Paintings commissioned by Jahangir added a further level of imaginative engagement with the text [Beach, 1987, 134], which include significant garden images. One painting depicts the wise king Janaka listening to Nath ascetics in his garden [Diamond, pers. comm., 2021]. From initial despair at hearing their chants of non-attachment and undivided enlightenment, he found a path of pure detachment while fulfilling royal duties [an ideal that would have appealed to Mughal rulers]. The garden has cross-axial walkways that lead to the slightly raised circular platform gate for the ash-smearing king and ascetics who have found these truths. Instead of being central, the worldly Persianate attendants and gardener hover around the periphery.



FACING PAGE

PRINCESS OF THE BLUE PAVILION

Detail from *The Story of the Princess of the Blue Pavilion: The Youth of Rum is Entertained in a Garden by a Fairy and her Maidens*, *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi. Manohar. 1597–98. Courtesy, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913, accession number 13.228.33

A Persian-wheel irrigates simple green foliage and flowers along the walkways culminating in the delicate flowering shrubs that grow among but do not distract the ascetics. A forest clump stands in the background perhaps as a reminder of the more familiar habitat of ascetics. In other paintings ascetics sit near ponds with sacred lotus plants.

Conclusion

We arrive at a juncture among Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persianate cultural traditions in Mughal India, in which gardens figured prominently. Persian allegorical texts reached back to the lore and lessons of pre-Islamic kingship. Amir Khusrau brought those lessons into Indian landscapes shaped by creative tensions between Sufi *dargahs* and Sultanate courts. Early Mughal rulers from Babur to Akbar and prince Salim commissioned garden paintings and were garden builders. In their evolving cultural context, the symbolic meanings of gardens and plantings were conventional on one level, but open to continuing reflection on another, including accounts that linked beauty and detachment. These meanings traveled among texts, paintings, and gardens themselves. For it seems likely that the *hasht bihisht* plan of Humayun's tomb and garden in Delhi may have taken some of its inspiration from Amir Khusrau's *Hasht Bihisht* explorations of love and kingship [Parodi, 2009]. Khusrau's grave lies just across the street in the dargah of his *pir* Nizamuddin Awliya, shaded by a single neem tree [Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2013; Hossain, 2014].



KING JANAKA

King Janaka listens to ascetics in his garden. Jog Basisht.
Courtesy Chester Beatty Library, folio 128v



Supplemental and Cited References [to the longer list in LA 62–64]

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Acknowledgments

This series of articles is dedicated to Milo and Robin Beach. I am grateful to Sunil Sharma for his insights and translation of Khusrau's *Blue Pavilion* story. Debra Diamond shared her valuable insights on the Jog Basisht image. I have also benefitted greatly over the years from conversations about Amir Khusrau and Nizamuddin Awliya with Shakeel Hossain, Ebba Koch, Laura Parodi, Ratish Nanda, the late Annemarie Schimmel, and friends in the Nizamuddin community. And again, I thank Geeta and Brij for their encouragement.



All images provided by the Author

Compartment S4, Ahmedabad
| compartments4.com

लकड़ी LAKDI की काठी KI KATHI



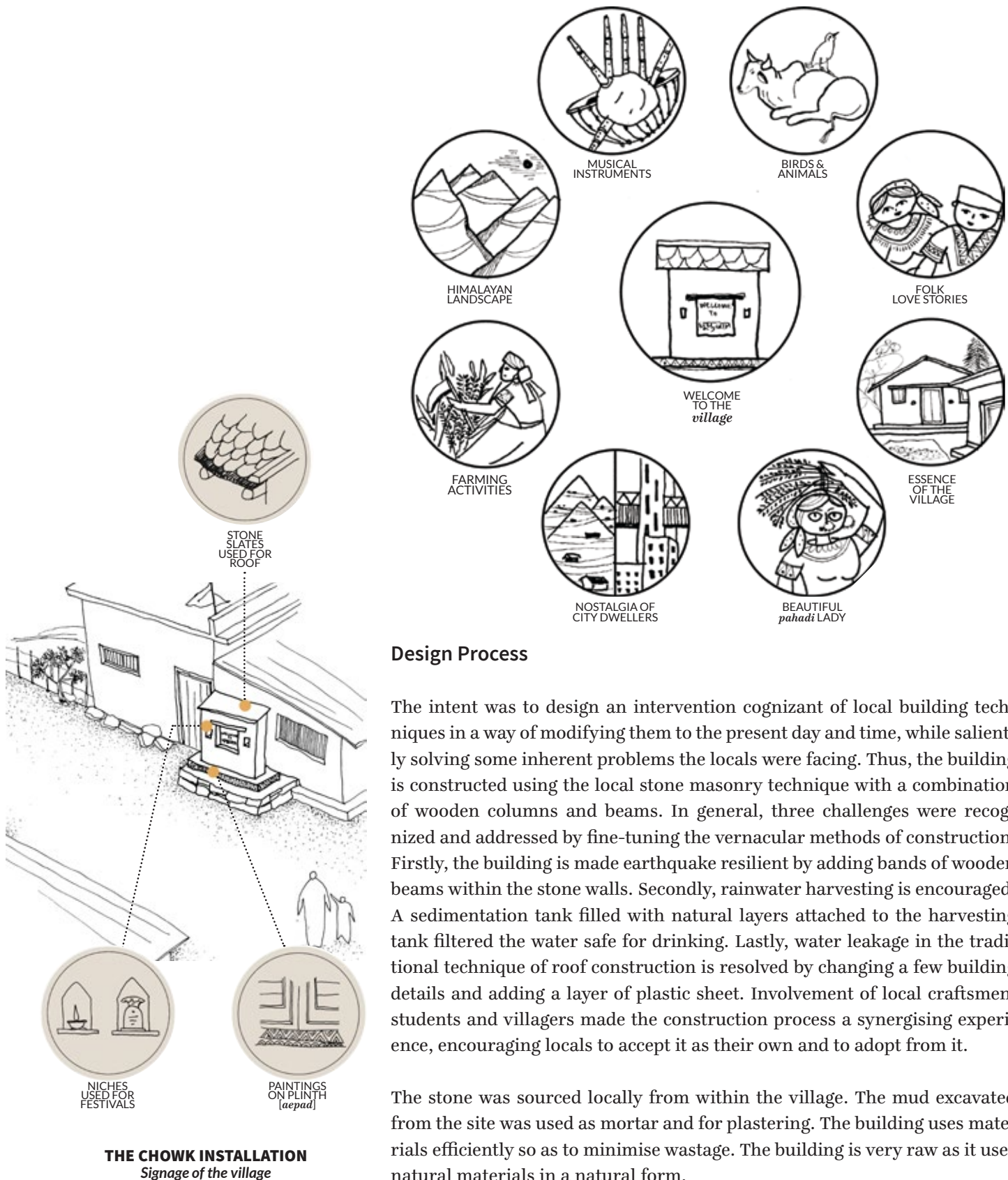
A small project of extension of a school building in a fragile region, while promoting climatically contextual architecture, adopts many sustainable practices like conservation of natural resource of water, resilience towards earth quake, use of local building materials and techniques to create a space with a unique sense of place, further enhanced by the involvement of local people.



An extension to an existing secondary school building in Ghuggu Kham village near Nainital in Uttarakhand, the new structure is located within the site which is at the peak of a hill overlooking a lush green valley on which the village spreads itself. Since the secondary school building had sufficient open space around it, the new building as well as the proposed play area is accommodated in the same campus. The client needed an extra classroom which would function as a multipurpose space where children could study/eat, art classes, library or village *panchayat* meetings could be held.

Concept

The building and spaces are designed according to the space requirements of the students and teachers. Local materials and techniques are used for construction, simultaneously involving villagers and school students in the process. Earthquake resilience, waterproofing and rainwater harvesting is incorporated into the design of the building, informed from the problems faced by the village. Hence, the building system and techniques are designed as a prototype for the village to adopt from. The materials used in the building are: stone for walls and roofing, wood for columns and roof support structure and mud for internal plaster.

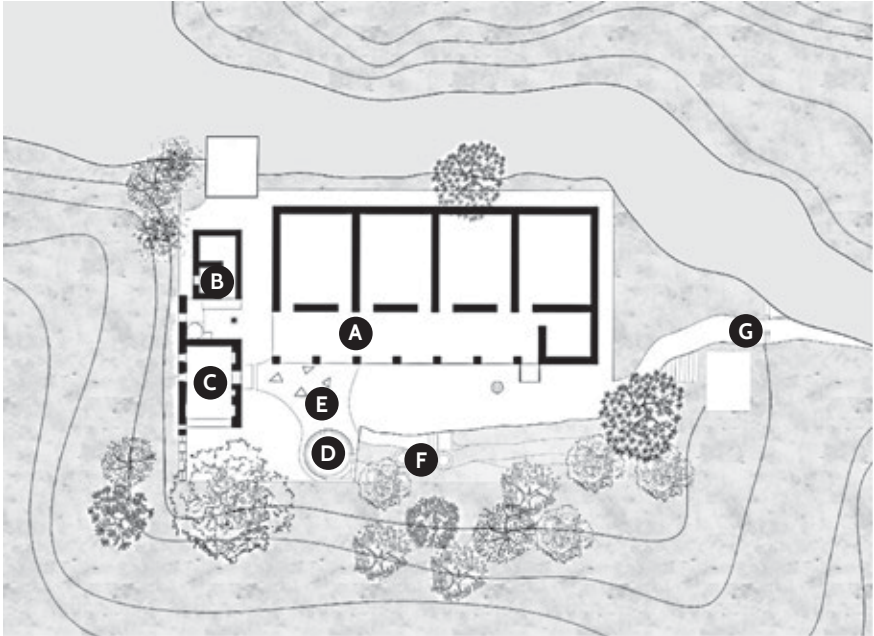


Design Process

The intent was to design an intervention cognizant of local building techniques in a way of modifying them to the present day and time, while saliently solving some inherent problems the locals were facing. Thus, the building is constructed using the local stone masonry technique with a combination of wooden columns and beams. In general, three challenges were recognized and addressed by fine-tuning the vernacular methods of construction. Firstly, the building is made earthquake resilient by adding bands of wooden beams within the stone walls. Secondly, rainwater harvesting is encouraged. A sedimentation tank filled with natural layers attached to the harvesting tank filtered the water safe for drinking. Lastly, water leakage in the traditional technique of roof construction is resolved by changing a few building details and adding a layer of plastic sheet. Involvement of local craftsmen, students and villagers made the construction process a synergising experience, encouraging locals to accept it as their own and to adopt from it.

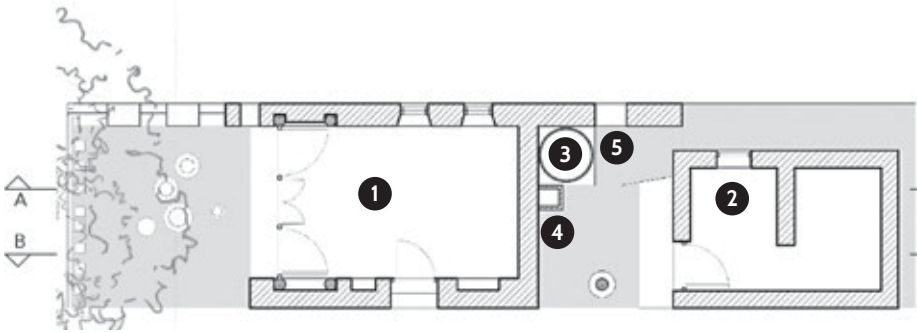
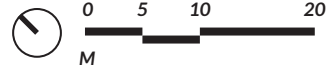
The stone was sourced locally from within the village. The mud excavated from the site was used as mortar and for plastering. The building uses materials efficiently so as to minimise wastage. The building is very raw as it uses natural materials in a natural form.

THE CHOWK INSTALLATION
Signage of the village



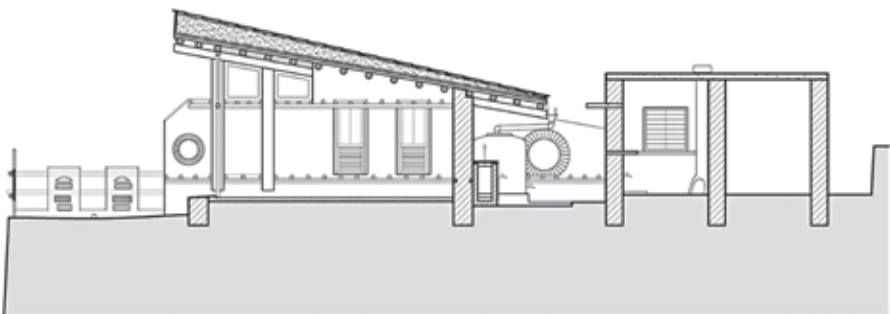
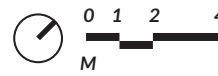
SITE PLAN

- A. Existing School Block
- B. Existing Kitchen
- C. Multipurpose Classroom
- D. Performance Stage
- E. Paved Seating
- F. Compost Pits
- G. Entry



PLAN

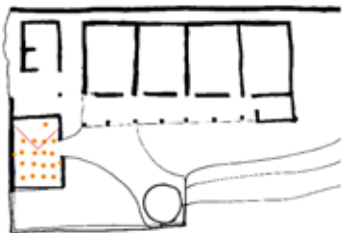
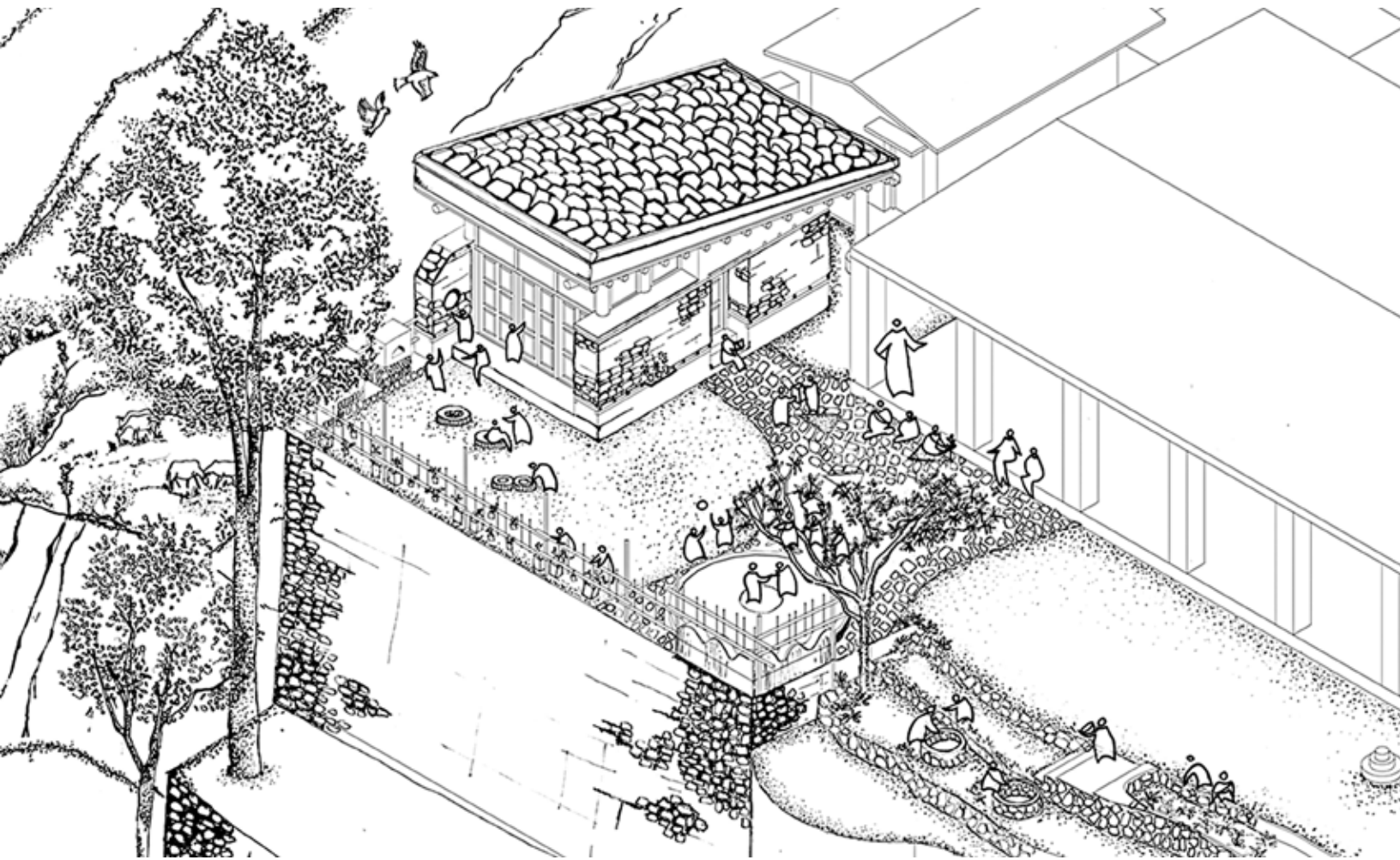
- 1. Multipurpose Classroom
- 2. Kitchen
- 3. Water Harvesting Tank
- 4. Sedimentary Tank
- 5. Wash Area



SECTION AA'



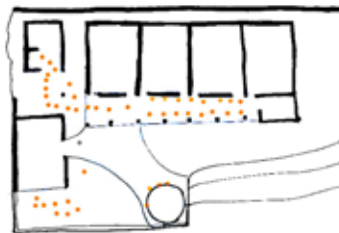
SECTION BB'



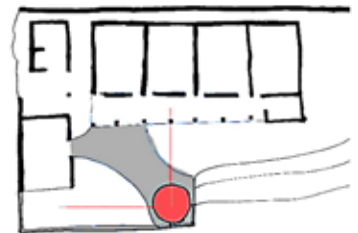
When the shutters are closed, the building behaves as an introverted classroom with a blackboard on the opposite wall.



The new buildings' face towards the valley is designed with shutters which open out completely to provide an undisrupted view of the valley.



The new school building is placed in a way to cause minimum disturbance to the ongoing activities. There are a variety of spaces to play and eat during lunch time.



The open area connects the old and the new blocks, coming together at the performance space. A fence separates the play area which extends onto the entire space.



The wood used is not cut in a saw mill but shaved with hand tools and placed directly. The wooden planks used in the roof are split from a thicker wooden log using an axe giving it a very raw finish. The building used local craftsmen and local labour dependent entirely on hand tools and no machinery. Car tyres were used as formwork to create multiple circular stone windows with mud mortar. The thick stone walls were carved at places to provide niches for storage. The building has one sided slope opposing the wind direction from the valley. One-sided sloped building opens out to the valley with a spectacular view of the valley and the mountains. The skylight towards the valley provides a very ambient natural light suitable for studying. The thick stone walls, mud mortar and the stone roof provide thermal insulation to the space.

The open space is designed and executed as a safe play and performance area for students of the school. A compound wall was made with locally sourced tree barks tied together giving it a very local and raw feel. A part of the compound wall was made out of stone exploring creative ways of stone masonry.



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THE BUILDING

The building overlooks the valley below. The building system and techniques are designed as a prototype for the village to adopt from. The materials used in the building are: stone for walls and roofing, wood for columns and roof support structure and mud for internal plaster. These local materials keep the classroom warm during chilly winters and when the weather permits, the class gets extended to the outside spaces.



The students of the school were encouraged to convert the plastic waste at their homes like bottles, cans etc. to planters which were hung on the compound wall making it very vibrant. There is a stage with a backdrop made out of waste glass bottles. The waste stones from the building were used to make a paved seating area for the kids with multiple tiny triangular pockets of green grass within.

The stage and the building are both finished up with a very local touch. The local women mud plastered them. 'Aipan', a traditional folk art made by women which symbolises good fortune and wards off evil was done on the thresholds of the building and the stage.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

GROSS BUILT AREA
35 sqm

LOCATION
Ghuggu Kham, Nainital, Uttarakhand

YEAR OF COMPLETION
2018

DESIGN TEAM
Monik Shah, Prasik Chaudhari, Aman Amin,
Krishna Parikh, Manuni Patel, Vedanti Agarwal,
Kishan Shah & Nishita Parmar

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS
Compartment S4, Sonam Gandhi



All images, drawings & sketches courtesy
Compartment S4





ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY



Tridip Suhrud, Writer and Cultural Historian
| tridip.suhrud@gmail.com

LANDSCAPES OF THE MIND

In the modern history of India, there have been a few personalities that have profoundly influenced the thinking of many generations on aspects of environment, culture and philosophy. Their thoughts and ideas have impacted not only people, but cultures across boundaries. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi [Mahatma Gandhi] is one of them. Tridip Suhrud, writer and cultural historian based in Ahmedabad, reflects on various ideas of Mahatma Gandhi about nature and ecology and its relationship with culture.

“**T**he three of us sleep under the open skies. Opposite us, we see the glowing Venus, to our right is the Great Bear and the Southern Cross to our left and Leo roars right above us and Jupiter is over our heads.”

Gandhi wrote to his youngest son Devadas on 11 May 1932. The other two in ‘The three of us’ that he mentions are his companions Sardar Patel and Mahadev Desai. This rare leisure is afforded to them as prisoners of the Raj in Poonā’s Yeravada Jail, a place that as much a ‘home’ as Ahmedabad’s Sabarmati Ashram. Devadas is also a prisoner of the Raj, albeit in Gorakhpur. Gandhi had this rare capacity to turn captivity, *un-freedom* to a deep sense of freedom, a soaring sense of freedom. This capacity came not only by cultivating acquaintance with the denizens of the skies and beholding the heavens but by turning inwards. But we are going ahead of us.

With his philosophical unease with modernity—as something that fundamentally alters the vocations of humans and their civilisations—his idealisation of rural communities—while remaining utterly urbane city dweller, his rejection of vivisection and adoption of recessive European practices of healing through nature and its elements—he remained deeply suspicious of Ayurveda—his experiments with ‘Natural’ foods and his incessant wanderings reminiscent of a pastoralist and his readings of Thoreau might lead us to hurriedly believe that Gandhi had a late 19th Century romantic imagination of Nature which viewed it as primeval, unsullied, almost divine.

FACING PAGE

**SABARMATI ASHRAM,
AHMEDABAD**

PHOTO CREDIT: *Shreyas Chaudhari*
on *Unsplash*

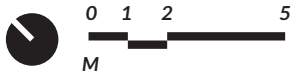
In 1922, while filling up a form, again something that prisoners are required to do, he was asked about his profession. He wrote: 'farmer and weaver', signalling his kinship with those who tilled the land and intertwined warp and weft to create tapestries of time. But this signalling was not devoid of self-practice. Gandhi thought of himself as someone who worked with his hands, engaging with materials to understand them and cultivate a transformative relationship. He was someone who knew intimately the practice of thinking with one's hands. Being with Nature was to understand the *sva-bhava*, the self-sense of *prakriti* and this required engaging with the material world. His relationship with Nature, with the land around him was marked by this need to have a transformative relationship. His was not the sight of a wayfarer, a wanderer, his are not the eyes that look at the 'Solitary Reaper' that listens 'motionless and still.' And for that reason many readers of his Autobiography moan the absence of the smells and sights of London, a city he knew as intimately as Johannesburg and Durban.

Gandhi's relationship with the material world changed to become deeply modern, very non-middle caste in the company of mason, carpenter, architect, designer and let us not forget body-builder Hermann Kallenbach [1871-1945] who shared with Gandhi his premises in different venues as in Orchards, three miles outside Johannesburg and, most famously in 1910, on his own 1100 acre property later named Tolstoy Farm, also near Johannesburg, on which they set up a colony for families of *satyagrahis* and others to cultivate self-reliance through carpentry, gardening, sandal-making and austerity. It was Kallenbach who introduced Gandhi to the community of Trappist monks on Marianne Hill, where they both learnt to make Trappist sandals, the minimalist design of which we remember as 'Gandhi Patti' or Sabarmati Chappals. The deeply etched memory of the Chapel on the Marianne Hill and Kallenbach's carpentry and architectural sensibility is evident in the assembly of beams that Gandhi made for his house 'Hriday Kunj'. If cultivating land in South Africa took the form of orchards, in India it made him sensitive to the pernicious exploitation of the political-economy of Indigo cultivation while allowing him to retain fondness for the luminescent beauty of *Neel*.

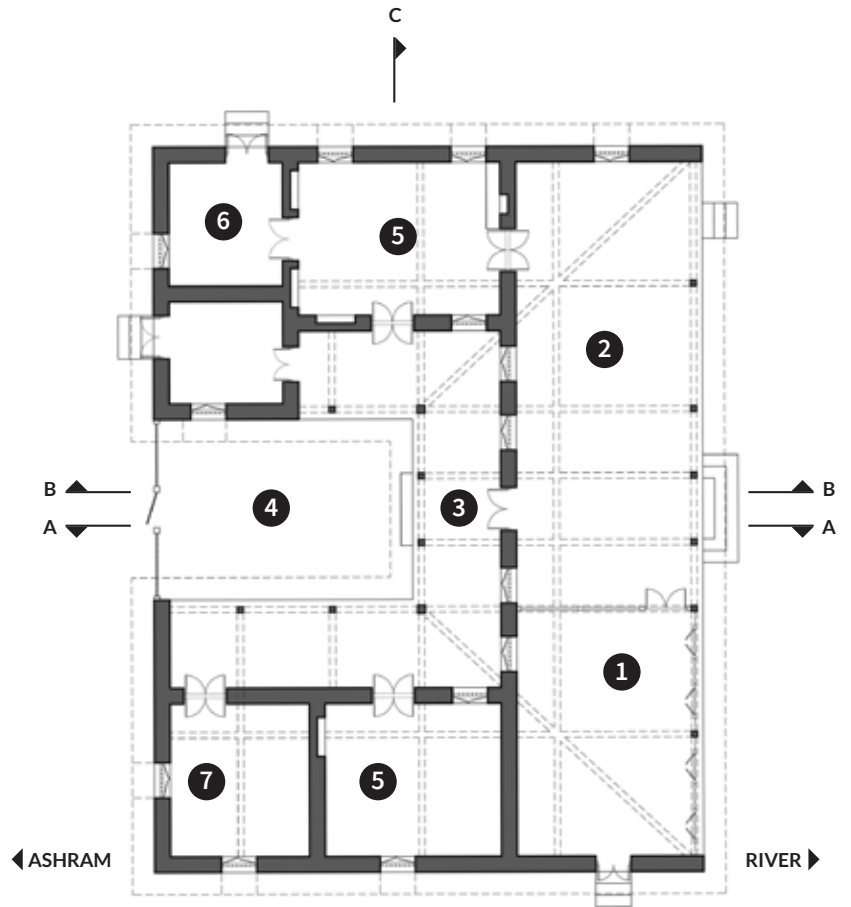
Two other practices, seemingly unrelated, gave him a unique sense of the human body, its proportions and its frailties. These were spinning and weaving and nursing. The *charkha* that he designed—the Yeravada Charkha, to mark its place of origin, the prison—has all the markers of expert carpentry as also an unusual sensitivity to bodily proportions, it adapts to bodies—growing and mature, female and male. His nursing, *Unta-Vaidyu*, quackery as he liked to speak of it in characteristic self-deprecatory manner, made him aware of the disease and decay as also the relationship between the mind and body ill-at-ease with each other, each producing its own melancholy that goes beyond particular pathologies and delirium. And the man liked to walk. So much so that he walked to meet his assassin.

**HRIDAY KUNJ
AHMEDABAD**

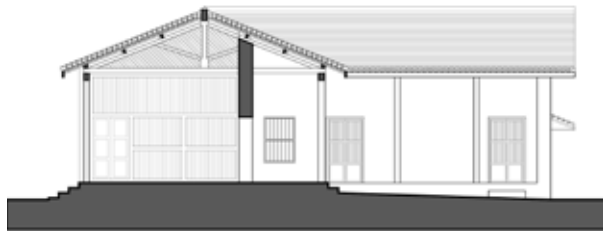
1. GANDHIJI'S WORKPLACE
2. ARRIVAL VERANDAH
3. VERANDAH
4. COURTYARD
5. ROOM
6. STORE
7. KITCHEN



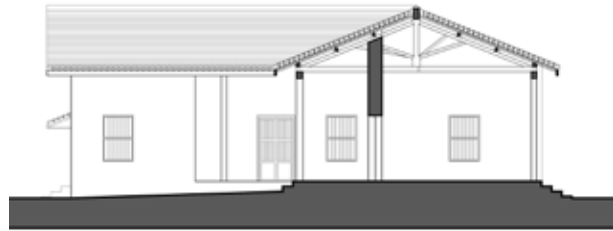
DRAWINGS CREDIT:
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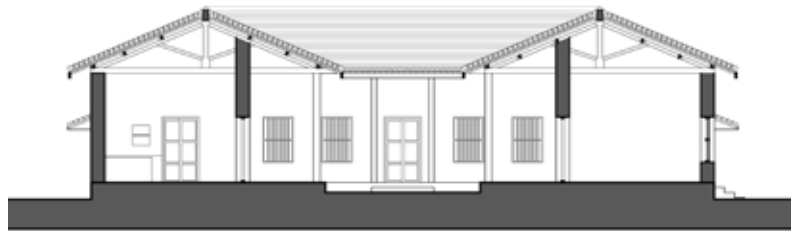
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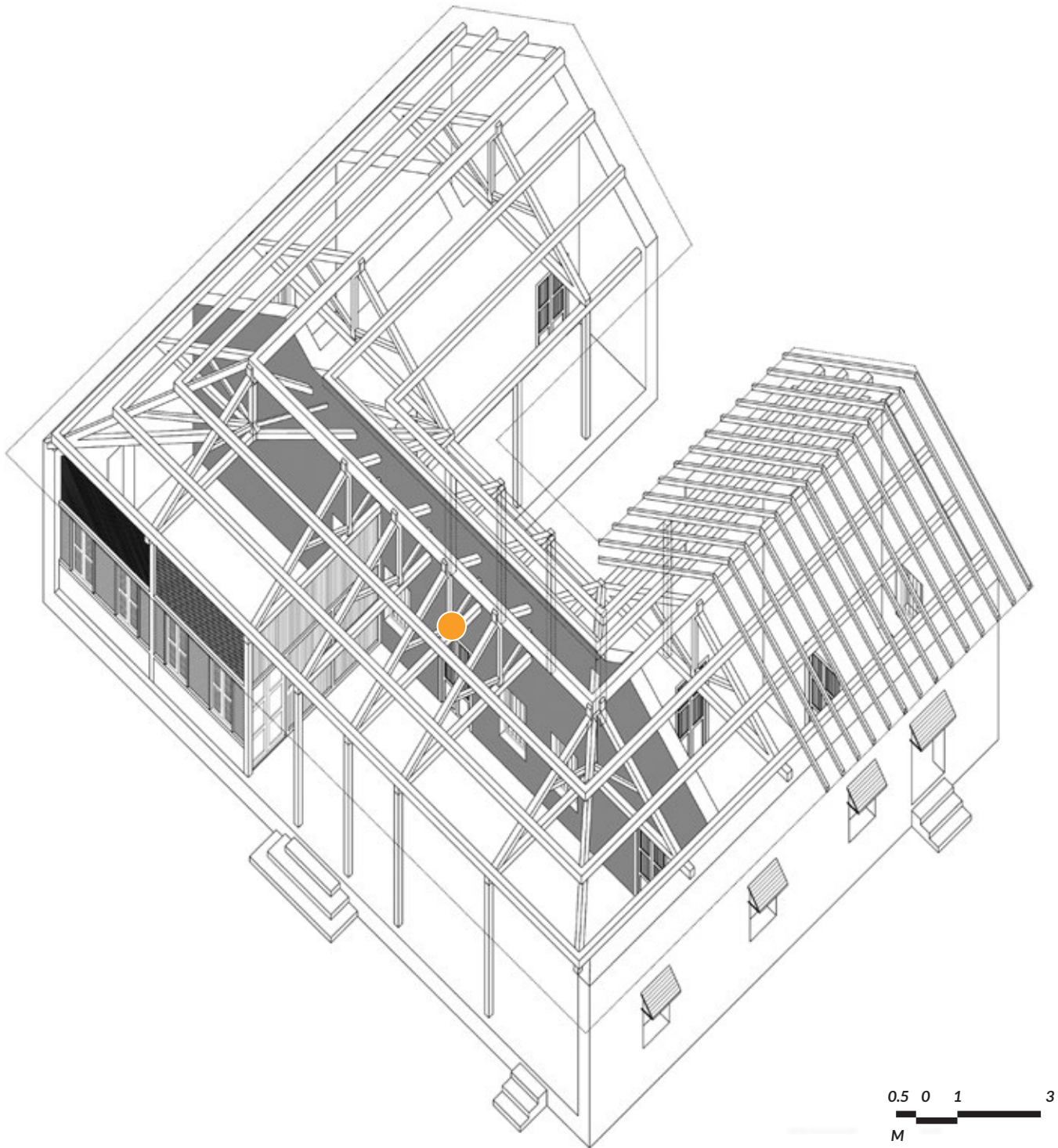
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.....SECTION BB



.....SECTION CC

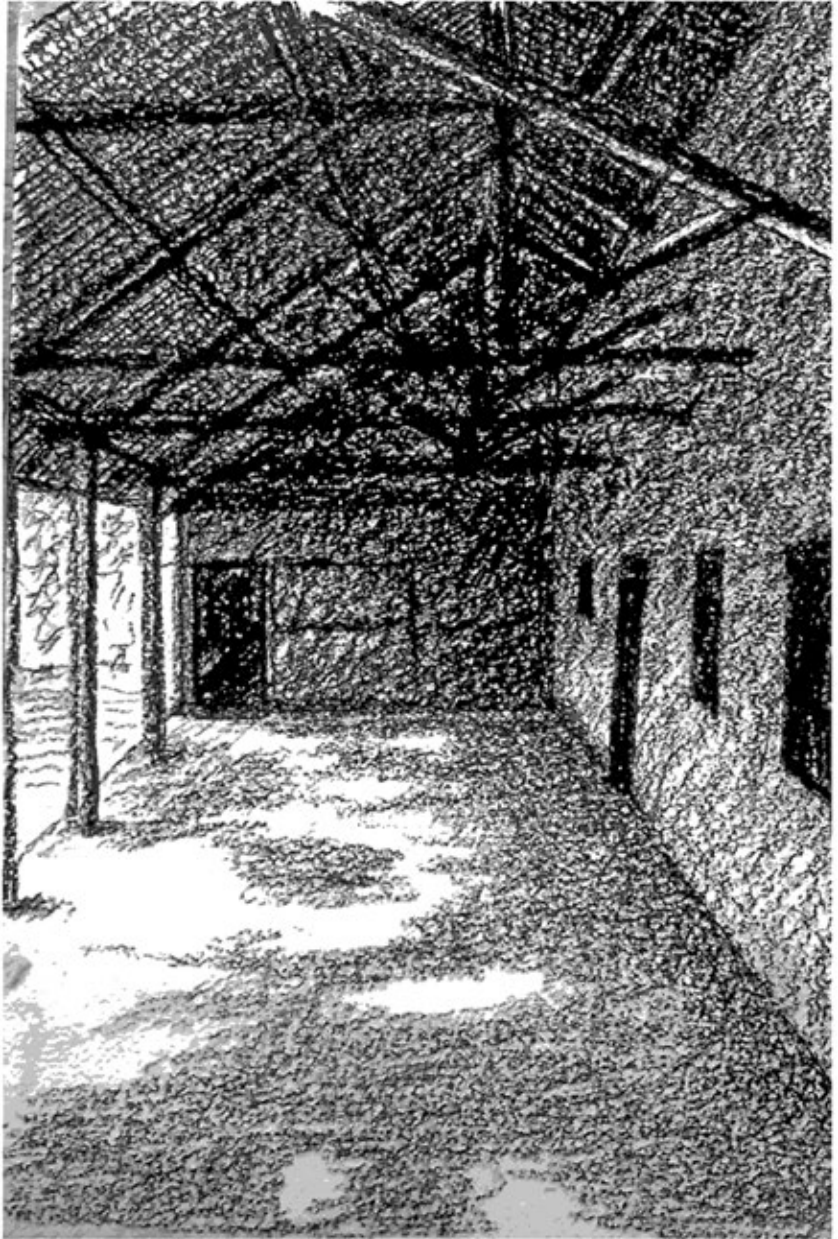


He was fond of music, both for its capacity to allow the spirit to soar, for words to take wings as also for its propensity to produce discipline necessary for a mass movement; “One great stumbling block’ he said, “is that we have neglected music. Music means rhythm, order.” Music was the difference between a mob and a movement of *satyagrahis*. He knew the sublime power of prayer, of *namasmaran*, of repeating the name. He said; “You must learn to repeat the blessed name of Rama with such sweetness and such devotion that the birds will pause in their singing

HRIDAY KUNJ
AHMEDABAD
Axonometric view showing
Structure & Construction

DRAWINGS CREDIT:
Krunal Mistry,
Anthill Design, Ahmedabad

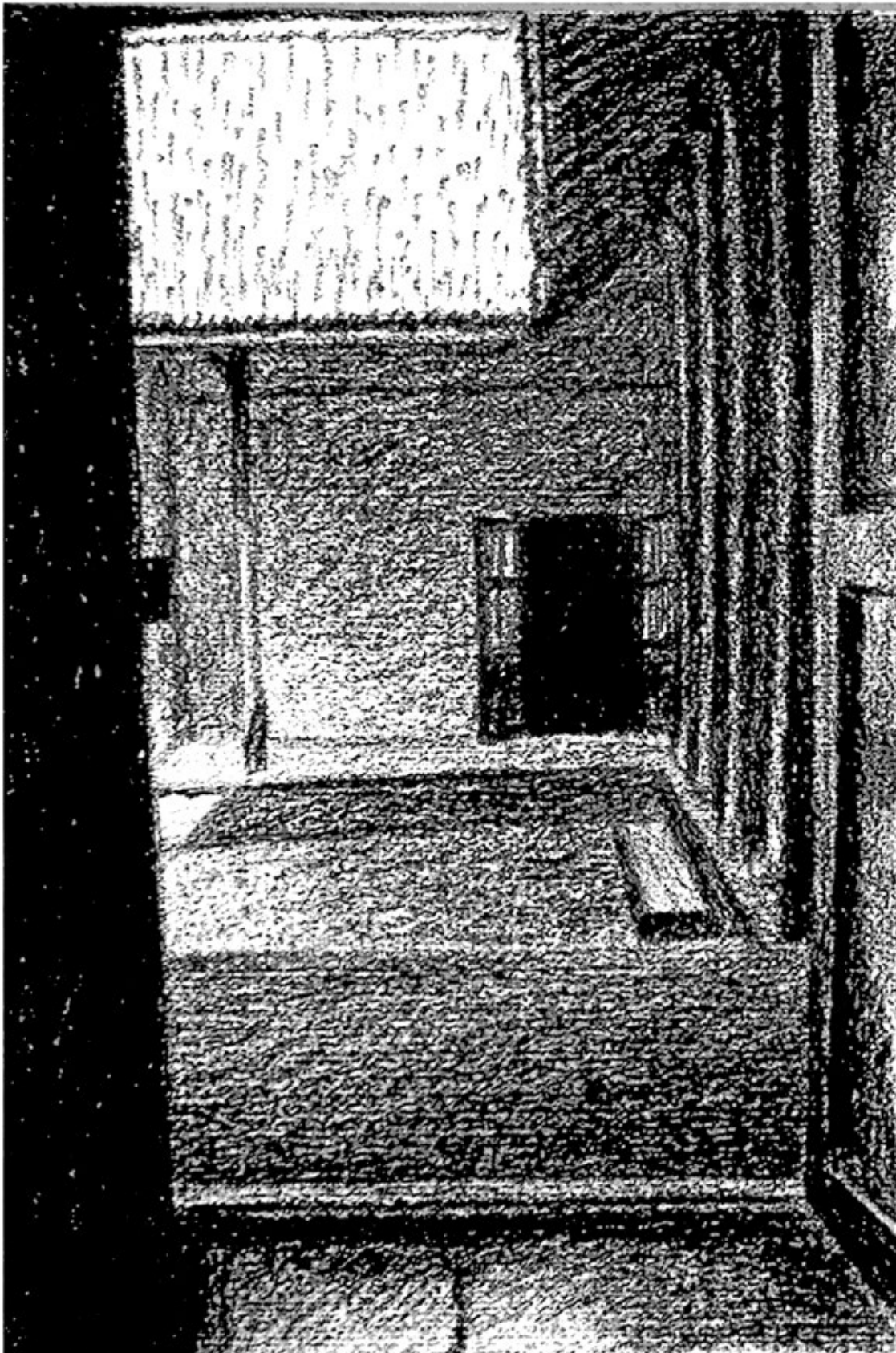
 See Reference note, page 35



HRIDAY KUNJ
AHMEDABAD
Verandah

SKETCH CREDIT:
Riyaz Tayyibji,
Anthill Design, Ahmedabad

to listen to you – that the very trees will bend their leaves towards you, stirred by the divine melody of that name.” While the walls of his house were bare, he would get Nandalal Bose to paint the panels of the Hari-pura Congress. He retained deep fondness for poetry, his Gujarati is marked with the poetic idiom and his English, even while addressing the bureaucracy of the Raj, captures the lilting rhythms of Cardinal Newman’s song.



HRIDAY KUNJ
AHMEDABAD
Inner Court
SKETCH CREDIT:
Khushboo Shah,
Anthill Design, Ahmedabad

And yet, or perhaps because of this, we see Gandhi as bereft of aesthetic aspirations, stern in his austerity, sanctimonious in his sparseness, spice less in the land of spices, achromatic in the midst of exuberance of natural dyes; unsympathetic to the possibility that desire could be the basis of enduring love.

Perhaps we need to take him more seriously than we do. Not his nostrums, not the ritualistic invocations of either the Indian State or his dreary followers but his self-practices, his deep longing to attain self-realization and Swaraj. He said that he had been striving and pinning for self-realisation, to see God face to face, to attain *moksha*, and his lifelong quest was that each one of us become capable of attaining Swaraj, both as self-rule and rule over the self. Swaraj and self-realisation require self-recognition, knowing the self. This self-knowing he called *antaryami*, the dweller within who is both the knower and the known, the one who moves us and gives us the capacity for profound stillness. At times he described the process of knowing the *antaryami* in Upanishadic terms, of lifting the golden lid that conceals the golden orb that is Truth. While at other times he spoke of the *antaryami* in winged words of a poet, as ‘a small, still voice.’

Gandhi’s lifelong quest was to be able to hear this ‘small, still voice’, to acquire the capacity to listen to the voice from within and distinguish between lure of a lie and the luminescence of Truth. He wished to be robbed of all self-volition such that he could submit to the *antaryami*. This required that he turn his gaze inwards while casting his sight outwards. He needed the stillness of silence in the polyphony that is freedom. While he could gaze at the skies and coin evocative neologisms such as *Akash Kusum* to describe impossible yearnings akin to holding divine flower from Yon High; his sight was on the *antaryami*, which he believed to be a real possibility. The only landscape that mattered to him were the landscapes of the mind. This would allow him to stop three bullets in their trajectory of hate and become a homeless wanderer, carrying the Ashram within him, making an ascetic of him. An ascetic for Gandhi is one who while remaining within the world, deeply embroiled, enmeshed in its everydayness, house-holding with obsessive attention to detail, struggling to reform structures of power and hierarchy and yet seeking to cultivate a philosophical detachment from it. The roots of this detachment, *Nishkama* of the Gita lie in the interiority of the person, for Gandhi in his *antaryami*.



Drawings and sketches courtesy Anthill Design, Ahmedabad [2009]



Reference

Riyaz Tyibji, fellow traveller in understanding the architecture of Gandhi’s buildings and in seeking to restore his ‘freedom’ bicycle describes the assembly thus:

“The trusses used at Hriday Kunj are technically referred to as King Post Trusses. A closed triangle with a central post and two diagonal splayed struts. Of the seven bays that make up the structure of the front verandah only the central 3 bays carry 4 conventional King-Post trusses. In the two corner bays on either side, two open half trusses allow the structure to rotate around and stiffen the corner forming the hip of the roof while not requiring the wall to thicken at the corner for bracing against lateral forces. With this unusual roof structure, the river facing verandah can remain structurally ‘wall-less’. The wall separating the inner verandah from the outer one is also ‘Non-structural’, unnecessary for the support of the roof. The wall has a ‘modern’ planar nature which is essential for Gandhi building spatially not structurally.”

Rupal Rathore, Architect
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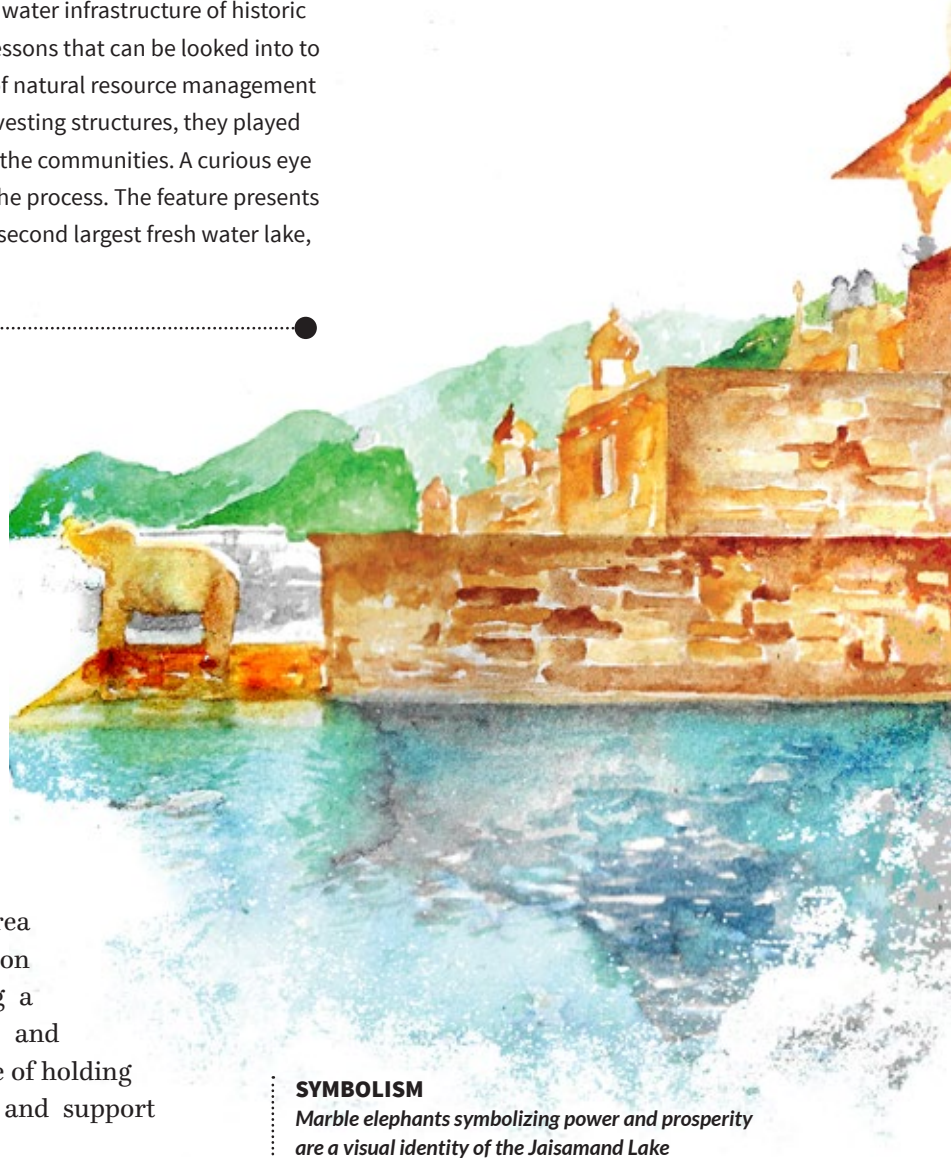
SEA OF VICTORY

LAKE JAISAMAND, UDAIPUR



The siting, design and management of water infrastructure of historic times in the arid region impart many lessons that can be looked into to come out with solutions for concerns of natural resource management of present times. Along with being harvesting structures, they played an important role in the cultural life of the communities. A curious eye towards their study is the first step in the process. The feature presents a brief study of Jaisamand lake, Asia's second largest fresh water lake, and the reservoir near Udaipur.

In a country where river towns stretched across fertile plains and became centres of political power and cultural abundance, Veerpura came to be after the success of an exceptional undertaking of hydrological engineering and building technology. The construction of a 400-metre-long stone embankment across the flowing waters of Gomati was realised in the late 17th century under the reign of Maharana Jai Singh of Mewar. A confluence of nine rivers and numerous rivulets, Jaisamand is today the second largest freshwater lake in Asia with a catchment area of almost 1800 sqkm. In this semi-arid region of Southern Rajasthan, those commanding a landscape of rugged terrain, dense forest and seasonal streams understood the significance of holding water in order to sustain their kingdoms and support agricultural livelihoods.



SYMBOLISM

Marble elephants symbolizing power and prosperity are a visual identity of the Jaisamand Lake



HAWA MAHAL

The palace stands abandoned signifying the crumbling remains of a glorious past

Even in times of divided administration and perpetual engagement in defensive war, infrastructural projects, especially those tackling the need to harvest water, were given priority and allotted a fair share of material and human resource. Dhebar Lake, literally translating as a catchment, finds a mention in *Ain-i-Akbari* stating that ‘the existing dam was rebuilt in 1687-91 to support wheat cultivation in the country around’. This essentially means that topographic conditions in the Aravalli allowed various channels of water to fuse and collect in natural depressions and therefore a temporary, locally executed dam was already in place before being ambitiously adopted by the State.

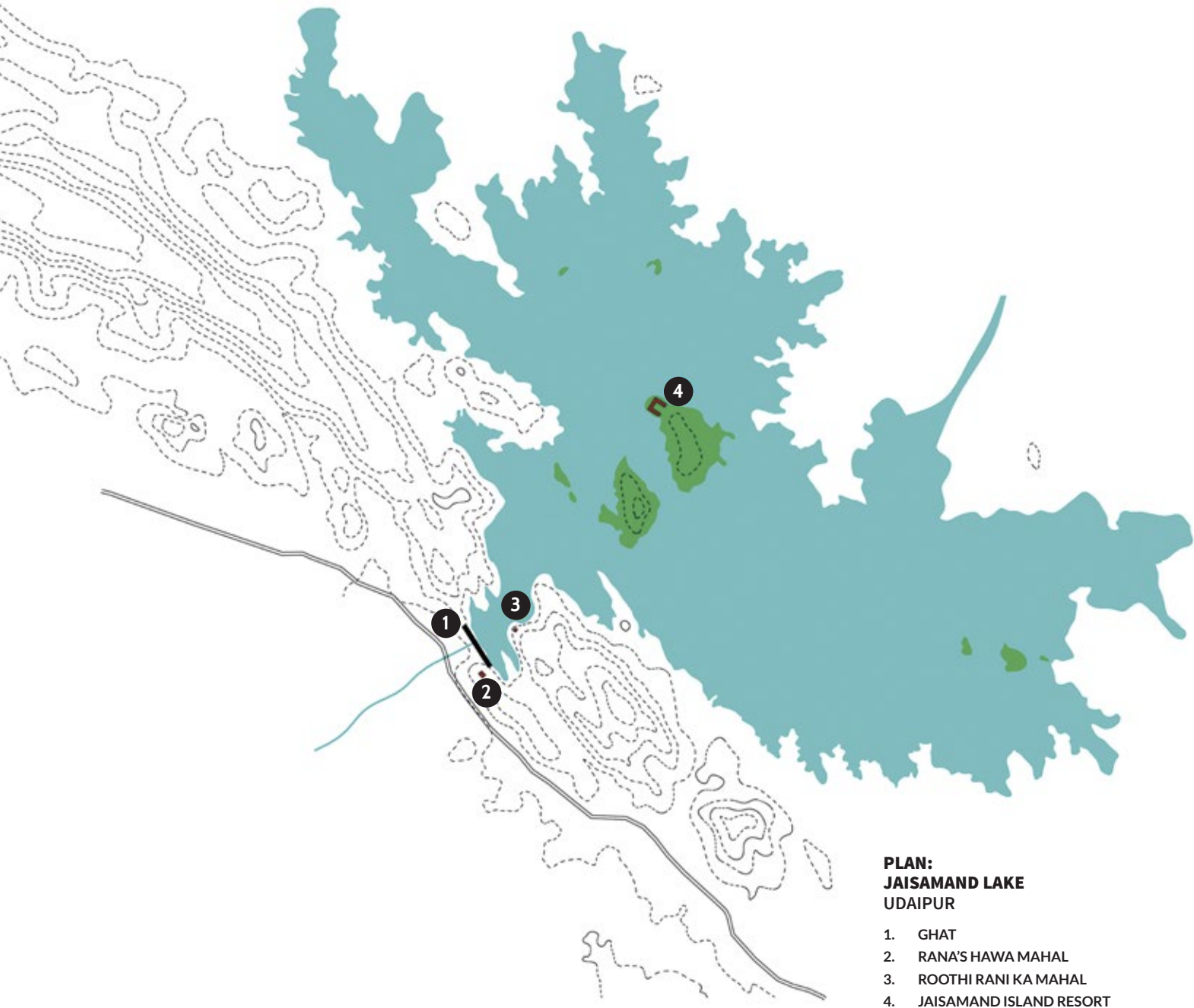
The Jaisamand reservoir is contained between forested hills that define its organic form and jagged edges receiving inflows through crevices in the land. In a depth ranging from 60 to 120 feet, natural mounds emerge above the surface of water, some becoming resting ground for migratory birds and others inhabited by tiny fishing hamlets or the Bhil tribe. Two palaces strategically sit atop adjoining hills beholding this magnificent view, one which was occupied by Rana Jai Singh himself, also known as the *Hawa Mahal*, and the other built for his youngest queen.

James Tod recorded this episode during the period of being appointed as a political agent to the Rajputana in these words:

“In less than five years after his accession [to Delhi?], the Rana was again forced ‘to fly the plains’ for the inaccessible haunts of his native fastnesses. Yet, in spite of these untoward circumstances and uninterrupted warfare, such were the resources of his little state that he was able to undertake and complete a work which still perpetuates his name. He drew a dam across a break in the mountains, the channel of an ever-flowing stream, by which he formed one of the largest lakes in India, giving it his own name, the Jaisamand, or ‘sea of victory.’ Nature had furnished the hint for this undertaking, for there had always existed a considerable volume of water; but the Rana had the merit of uniting the natural buttresses and converting the Dhibur Pul into a little inland sea. The circumference cannot be less than 30 miles, and the benefits to cultivation, and especially to the growing of rice, which requires constant irrigation, were great. On this huge rampart he erected a palace for his favourite queen, Comala Devi, familiarly known as the Ruta [Roothi] Rani, or ‘testy queen.’”

The embankment, built in a combination of marble blocks, earth and lime, is a stepped profile of three visible levels that gleams under the morning rays of the rising sun. The linear ghat allows itself to be submerged in part with the increasing water level of the reservoir, as well as reveals its extent when making the retracted liquid surface accessible. Envisioned with a pleasing symmetry of placing a Shiva Temple in the centre and rows of steps, plinths and *chhatris* on either side, it laid a religious foundation for the king to announce the new position of his throne. More importantly, the consecration acted as a focal point, and the ghat as a physical axis along which those who farmed the freshly irrigated land settled. A large public promenade flows along the top-most level intercepted with the relieving shade of *chhatris* that were adorned with intricate stone carvings to suit the Rajput taste for beauty and grandeur. This highly inviting platform to view the swelling volume of calm water became a catalyst to creating an engaging society, staging celebrations and viewing the royalty from an acceptable distance. Those who arrived by boat from the other ends were greeted with marble elephants that symbolised power and prosperity. The ghat was regarded as sacred, almost transcendental, with the quality of being a gateway to the astral world, and held at bay the sanctified waters of Jaisamand.

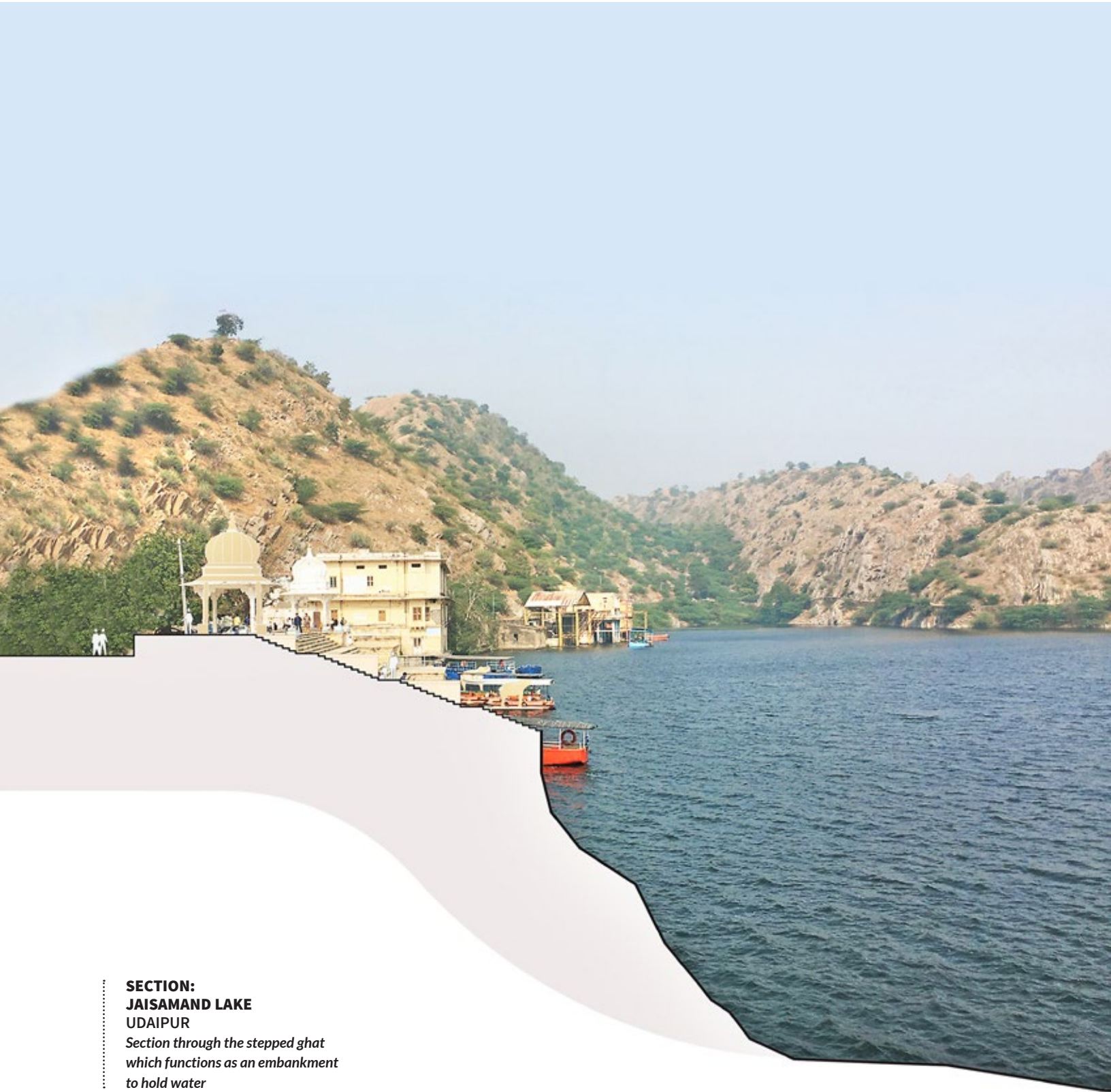




**PLAN:
JAISAMAND LAKE
UDAIPUR**

- 1. GHAT
- 2. RANA'S HAWA MAHAL
- 3. ROTHI RANI KA MAHAL
- 4. JAISAMAND ISLAND RESORT





**SECTION:
JAISAMAND LAKE
UDAIPUR**

*Section through the stepped ghat
which functions as an embankment
to hold water*

While the crumbling remains of the two palaces remind us of the time that has elapsed since an intervention of this scale and precision was materialised here, the ghat seems to have weathered gracefully. Perhaps since it still finds itself relevant as a functional public space where boats ferrying across to the lake islands dock. The opening of an island resort in 1995 and the introduction of a water pipeline to the city of Udaipur which is only 51 km away has altered the cyclic quantum of replenishment in the lake. However, it has also facilitated a seasonal tourist flow into this ageing town, including bird enthusiasts during the winter months. The documentation of historical sites is not merely an exercise to create records for academic purposes but to base the understanding of a city and its growth. To realise that the first step to laying a city's foundation was grasping the ecological reality of a place, of what it has to offer and what must be left untouched. This also governed the physicality of a settlement, its modes of transport, techniques of warfare, house typologies and trade opportunities.

Built-form can be thought of as the embodiment of stories from the past and events that have shaped history. A nation's narrative is as intertwined with its architectural legacies as it is with its land, rivers, mountains and trees. It can be deciphered in the multiple layers of intervention in cities, streets and buildings. 'Invoking a continuity with the legendary past- no matter how ambiguous that past might have been- enhances the city's attractiveness, gives it historical cachet, and hence equips it to compete for foreign investment and the tourist trade on more favourable terms. The past is kind of symbolic capital.' Architectural negotiations with heritage structures in India have either been with the employment of meticulous techniques of conservation, or through conversions into hotels or museums. An interest in regional techniques of construction and crafts have urged some design practices to find ways of incorporating them in contemporary buildings and advocating their relevance. Strategic ways of dealing with heritage sites that are threatened to be swallowed by generic urban development have come through different methodologies of adaptive reuse and revival. However, with numerous stepwells, cave temples and monuments dotting the Indian landscape, much lies neglected or forgotten. For sincere participation and engagement of the people, architecture and landscape must evoke ancestral roots and pull out cultural threads from the surviving specimens of ancient times.



All illustrations and drawings by the Author

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**DESIGN,
CONSERVATION
AND PLANNING**



REFLECTING CHANGE

REINVENTING AND SELF-LEARNING

IN CONVERSATION WITH **DR. MEGHAL ARYA**



Dr. Meghal Arya is an academician and a practicing architect. With a deep interest in traditional architecture and history, she has curated studios, workshops and seminars on these themes across the country. She did her Doctorate on “*Knowledge embedded in Architecture, Water Structures of Arid India*” from CEPT University in 2017. Presently, Meghal is a Professor at Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University, Ahmedabad. Dr. Arya shares her views about relationship between academics and practice and other issues regarding architecture profession.

Academics in Changing Times

I have been involved in academics since now two decades. The major changes are directly related to digital technology, since that has been the biggest change in the world in the past two decades. Today the students have a fantastic access to what is happening across the world. Through that, they construct a very strong definition of their world. They feed this by wanting to know everything about the end goal before they embark on any journey. They want to be informed of all the milestones and levels they will achieve on the way. Compare this to an actual physical journey. Today a young person would have seen a multitude of images about the place of visit, would have found out about all the places to see, places to eat, etc. and decided what all they want to experience, even before they set out. All of that is being carefully constructed for them, reducing personal exploration. They are well informed, which is a big shift.

FACING PAGE

MEWAR COMPLEX, NEAR UDAIPUR

ARCHITECT: *Arya Architects*

PHOTO CREDIT: *Ariel Huber*

Two decades ago, the students were innocent of what their world was, very conscious that there was a lot they did not know. They were a lot more reliant on their intuition. Earlier, they would not be able to know about all the places to be visited, would have had limited visuals about the place. Hence they had to remain open to exploring, to surprise, and maybe even shock and unpleasant experiences. Today, to be sure of their actions, there is a tendency to over think the end result, or the consequences. Today, if you ask them to do something, they ask you numerous questions on how to do. They are very pragmatic about their world, as against a more romantic position in the world and the profession in earlier times.

The other big change is in the ability to retain. Earlier, the training was to retain as much as possible, because there was no guarantee of future access. So, in a way the behavior was of a society that is resource scarce, and hence will hoard. Today, as they have access to information, the effort to retain is reducing. There is an assurance of access to the information at all times. But then, the manner of acquiring the information, and its possible connections are also created for them. So the ability to join the dots or to put things together through personal processes is limited. There comes a habit of a linear progressive search. Most apps [applications] are like that as they follow a step by step instruction and linear growth levels process. The students, having become familiar and used to that, continue to use the same process for their work. So they are not used to criss-crossing or network based processes. This is quite a general phenomenon based on my experiences of teaching in Europe and India.

This new scenario has both positive and negative aspects. It is a question of harnessing the positive aspects to their advantage. Simply put, if there is access to all this information, to be able to move about, to be connected, Is there a motivation for using all this to explore, experiment, and create a strong learning environment for themselves? With all this, there is a great potential for self-learning, which can only happen with motivation. The students who come with a sense of wanting to strive for success and a sense of achievement are the ones who are motivated to achieve, and that motivation is the key factor. Secondly, instead of sitting within the data, if they can review the information from outside of it, from a distance, they will see patterns, connections and possibilities. Then there is tremendous potential for synthesis.

The role of the educator is to create conditions for motivation, to give confidence to explore, to even fail and restart. The educator is required to be inspirational, to inspire a student to aspire. Earlier, one of the primary roles the educator was that of a repository of information. Today, that is required

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in a limited way. Interpretation and sieving of the information has become more critical. That is the shift. It is also important to show the students that the recognition of their limits is limited and that they can actually do more. It requires many soft skills apart from the domain knowledge. It requires nuanced conversations with individuals, on a one to one basis.

About CEPT

CEPT is one of the only institutions in undergraduate architecture which is a University with a niche focus on the built habitat and architecture as its founding and flagship program which it has remained for more than six decades now. Thus, its organizational structure evolved from a recognition of systems and practices suitable to architectural education.

My observations are my personal experiences based on the Faculty of Architecture within CEPT University, which was the School of Architecture when it was founded. Having said that, it is one of the only institutions in undergraduate architecture which is a University with a niche focus on the built habitat and architecture as its founding and flagship program which it has remained for more than six decades now. Thus, its organizational structure evolved from a recognition of systems and practices suitable to architectural education. It accommodates and gives agency to individuals within the larger system, recognizing that design and design thinking is not a linear, instructional process. The broad and overall contours of the curriculum were set, but it was open to wide range of interpretations, nurturing divergent viewpoints. Most other programs fit themselves as additions and/or affiliations to larger Universities where institutional structure and organization may not be able recognize peculiarities of architectural education. The other important aspect about CEPT is a continuous review of its curriculum and education processes. Since its inception, every decade of growth saw introspection, review and revision of the curriculum, thus accommodating changes in society and profession. This is over and above the annual formal Board of Studies review which is an internal process. The ability to restructure its learning on a regular basis, in whole or in parts, as a continuous reflective process is not something commonly found or easily undertaken. It has maintained an ability to allow new thoughts to be brought in. It allows for new ways of learning and teaching to be experimented with. It has been able to reinvent itself, time and again, despite its somewhat long history. This is special, because as institutions become engraved in their histories, the ability to change becomes challenging.

Finally, it was the teachers who made the place what it was. Their commitment and dedication to the place, knowledge and self-assurance gave students confidence in their own selves. CEPT University was one of the firsts to establish research in architecture at the undergraduate level. Now, it needs to be able to focus a lot more resources and energy towards a variety of publications, books, monographs and journals. It has started taking steps towards this through the University press, and hopefully, it will grow stronger. Secondly, as a University, we would greatly benefit from having many more debates.

Academics and Practice

In the past, when School of Architecture in Ahmedabad was set up, and upto as late as the 90s, Louis Kahn was a role model, particularly considering Prof. B. V. Doshi's association with him. He was seen as someone who was internationally famed as an architect and yet, spent time in the studios to teach, unlike say Le Corbusier. His presence on the campus nurtured his significance, as did the fact that people like Prof. K. B. Jain, or Prof. Anant Raje who had studied and/ or worked with him were shaping the early days of the institution. So, for the longest time, most people involved in the institution did both. All teachers practiced in some capacity, and many leading practicing architects spent great amounts of time in the institution. It brought some of the brightest minds into the classrooms allowing for greater integration and cross learning. Thus, the relation between practice and academics was much closer.

Today, as the number of institutions has increased, we have not been able to institutionalize this integration. With the huge number of institutions, the need for an equivalent number of competent, inspiring and knowledgeable teachers is very large and unavailable. The tendency, thus, is to doggedly follow written curriculums that do not necessarily adapt and modify themselves to changes in the profession, or profess to embark on journeys that would create shifts in the profession. Effectively, we have separated the two in their deeper connection. As the quality of education suffers, there will be a greater disconnect between the profession and academics. On the surface, there are interactions through visiting faculty, guest lectures, [most of which seem to further show the huge gap between the two], but their efficacy is hugely limited. So, today we see a great degree of divide between what is being taught in the institutions and what is being thought in the profession.

Thus, regarding change in practice being reflected in changes in education, at best, these are limited to representation techniques. There is a widespread use of technology, but other changes in the profession are not really reflected. Also, the pace at which projects move from conceptualization to realization stages in the profession has dramatically changed. There is a major change in the construction processes, technology and techniques. However, within academics, very few of these are mirrored. And because the profession is preoccupied with doing, very few new ideas, paradigm shifts in thinking are seeping into the profession. That requires time, patience, acceptance of failure, feedback loops to really work on new ideas.

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**MEWAR COMPLEX
NEAR UDAIPUR**

The human nature relationship as a both and relationship of mutualities and interconnections where the boundaries between the two are blurred. The question remains how much of the tension and connection between the rugged landscape can we express, while in some ways also articulating the life of the person, Rana Pratap, that it was to represent. Thus, comes the question of culture and nature relation.

PHOTO CREDIT: Ariel Huber





Doctorate Thesis

My research work and eventual doctorate is an instance of a very strong back and forth between academics and my practice. In practice, as you know, we design public architecture and infrastructure related to mobility, education, sports and leisure. Most have been government sponsored projects. In that, we were always looking at examples of public domains in history. What was public architecture historically was a question we were asking in the practice. We were researching traditional Indian architecture, and it was published as a book

NOCTURNAL HOUSE

AHMEDABAD ZOO, AHMEDABAD

The inhabitation of non-human species in constructs of a human mind is a complex question to ask, while still dealing, in the real world with expectations, aspirations and requirements of the client. The design is an attempt at the idea of immersive environments, and naturalised conditions created out of a design requirement.

PHOTO CREDIT: Meghal Arya

'Thematic Spaces in Indian Architecture'. Then emerged the question of type. Which buildings were considered public? We were doing conservation projects of forts and palaces and studying how these buildings, which were only considered monumental, related to people and to cities. They were partly public, partly private. From there came this question of which were the other building types that were public, particularly related to infrastructure. There is a big gap in the understanding of public buildings in the history of Indian architecture, apart from religious and feudal monuments. That intrigued me and led to the investigation of architecture for water, which though we see them today as evocative entities in the landscape, were essentially infrastructure works. From there came the interest of how water was harvested to the larger question of what all was related and linked to the harvesting of water. The research generated the term "spatial ecology", and that has now started framing some of the design decisions in the projects in the office. It is about understanding the networked and interrelated aspects of design. A couple of recent competitions were conceptualized based on this term, and revolved around the flow of water on the land, and building the relation of architecture to it. The consciousness of an integrated environment is now even stronger, and heightened. Today our struggle is to bring recognition that the large number of infrastructure being executed today is only seen for its engineering efficiency and not for their spatial and experiential presence. Its contribution in the experiences of the urban landscape is completely neglected.

Craftsmanship is deeply associated with a high quality of doing. And with that definition, like Richard Sennett writes, it can be expanded into realms beyond handmade, including community engagement.

Craft Traditions and Traditional Wisdom

Currently, the craft traditions in construction are used only in exclusive, special conditions, where there is time and leisure for the handmade to find expression. There is the need for a lot of time to experiment, do and review and redo as there is a strong feedback loop that is required for its enabling. So, in mainstream work, where time is a constraint and scales are often large, we don't really see the engagement with crafts. Despite our vast vernacular craft traditions, we have not been able to advocate their inclusion in PWD's Schedule of Rates, that are referred for the bulk of work. Craftsmanship is deeply associated with a high quality of doing. And with that definition, like Richard Sennett writes, it can be expanded into realms beyond handmade, including community engagement. There is a tremendous potential for architects in that. We can recover a way of doing that alludes to craft practices, and appreciate nuances of quality in any material. We have to be able to bring back the discerning eye for quality.

Traditional wisdom is a bigger challenge because it is greatly dependent on individuals, sharing processes and explicit communication which is not our strength. However, one can take some solace from other fields like culinary which has come back in a big way post the Pandemic, where there is a research and revival of traditional wisdom. So, maybe at some point, if we are able to research and record the wisdom, if we create systems and resources for this repository of traditional wisdom in construction, it would be a first step. Then we can review and address its incorporation within the profession. The book *'Handmade in India'*, by Aditi and M.P. Ranjan, does that for our craft traditions, but not for construction. There is a gap there. In fact, the core of my Doctorate was to seek the wisdom embedded in the water structures, and is now accessible as a book, *'Spatial Ecology of Water'*. At the Nagaur Fort, Mina Jain has been conducting training programs for young professionals and teachers to bring to them the knowledge and wisdom that was used in the conservation process. It is probably the longest running such program, and hopefully will provide a road map and pedagogical template to others in future.

Relationship of Nature and Culture

It's a complex question, and does not have an easy answer, at least not something that can be answered in this short space and time. There are so many complexities involved in that. The nature-culture relationship has traversed many shifts over time, where from being immersive to greater separation, and now once again, a more critical outlook to the separation. Is nature within, or is it the other? One is now seeing a shift to making attempts at integration. But there is also greater division amongst people in their responses. There is a large number of professionals who continue to work within the framework of the separation, as well as a growing number who want to see a blurring of the boundaries. So there is a great churning in the intellectual domains on what this relationship implies. And time will tell what is extracted from this churning.

Personally, for me the ideal condition is of integration to the extent that it is difficult to recognize the separations, to blur the boundaries. My personal preferences tend towards both and rather than either or, though it can create a condition of too much to filter. But it can also create many opportunities of new kinds of perspectives to emerge. In terms of design, I see it as an opportunity to design spaces with minimal boundaries, particularly in the context of our climatic conditions as well as traditional architectural elements. And of course, as I mentioned earlier, the idea of spatial ecology is beginning to find some traction in the work.

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I find that when I bring some of these concerns into the Studio in an explicit way, the students get very worried. They feel it as a burden of a moral dilemma. It paralyzes their imagination, aspirations and ambitions. So over time, I have constructed Studio briefs in such a way, that through the process, they themselves generate questions to some of these issues. It is introduced in a seamless unassuming way, and afterwards we have conversations about their choices and decisions, encouraging them to delve deeper. It becomes a bottom up approach rather than a top down approach. In this way, hopefully, it becomes part of their intuitive and immersive experience, thus, more likely to be carried forward.

While most architecture does find genesis in responses, and we are taught to respond to context, requirements, functions etc., I think that architecture needs to demonstrate the ability to be in a challenging mode. The profession needs to articulate a narrative that is created around anticipation, aspiration and advocacy

Profession of Architecture

If I reflect on the profession in India, I find that currently, we are in response mode. While most architecture does find genesis in responses, and we are taught to respond to context, requirements, functions etc., I think that architecture needs to demonstrate the ability to be in a challenging mode. The profession needs to articulate a narrative that is created around anticipation, aspiration and advocacy. In global terms, we are not positioned as trend setters or creating or evolving something new but remain followers. For example, we waited for a German to go to Bangladesh to build a school from mud and bamboo to realize it could be done, despite the vast existing vernacular traditions, and even then, there are very few projects in the public domain to achieve that quality. We rarely research and analyze our failures for improvement and thus, experimentation is not common. Some of the apparently poorer nations of Africa have been able to demonstrate better ways of working with their local materials. Such a fantastic scale and quality of work is being done in bamboo in South East-Asia that they can lay claim to having evolved it to new levels of craftsmanship. Even in technology, we are almost a decade behind what is happening globally, if not more. We are preoccupied with numbers, volumes and production. The ever-expanding requirement of a burgeoning population has created a crisis of exploration and quality. There is no dearth of talent in the country, but at an international level, we are yet to command a leadership position in any particular discourse in the profession. Maybe because we have not been able to identify a broad question that we want to ask, so then we don't see ourselves in a position of creating an answer or maybe because there is enough work for everyone, the opportunity for pause, reflection and introspection has not emerged. These are observations from what I see around.



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BACK TO FIRST PRINCIPLES

IN CONVERSATION WITH **NIKHIL DHAR**



PHOTO CREDIT | *Rashmi Dhar*

Based in New Delhi, **Nikhil Dhar** is closely associated with many landscape architecture programs in the country. He established his own landscape consultancy practice, *Artemisia*, in 1996, before joining landscape academics and research as a full-time occupation recently. His passion and interest for the subject of landscape architecture have also led to his participation in various forums including working with ISOLA as part of the Education Board and Conference content committees. Nikhil shares his views about landscape academics, the profession and other issues.

Both of my parents had completed Doctoral degrees in California by the early 1970s, so if not a given, it was fairly likely that, circumstances permitting, I would travel to the US for a Master's degree. I always had been interested in studying abroad to broaden my horizons. I saw landscape architecture as the most design-oriented fields related to architecture. I joined the program of landscape architecture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. So my choice of subject was the result of fairly simplistic thinking at the time, but fortunately, I have no major regrets about this decision!

Landscape Academics

Like many professionals, I also endorsed the idea of an inclusive Undergraduate Program in landscape architecture in India. I completely agree with this. It's very clear that some facets of our architectural training need to be unlearned before we develop the 'landscape point of view'. Having taught undergraduate landscape students in the US, I can recall the energy of interacting with a set of creative, uncluttered minds,

with no preconceived notions of how open space was to be perceived and conceptualized. Undergraduate LA students in India as well, would be free to choose their own inspiration or set of inspirations; ecology, art, cultural traditions, the creation of space, or even more theoretical premises. Also, a greater facilitation of people entering from non-architectural backgrounds into the MLA programs will be beneficial. Many giants of the field, including Dan Kiley, James Corner, Martha Schwartz and Peter Walker, have not been architects. It would be wonderful to see greater encouragement of critical thinking and creative risk-taking in our LA studios and a greater emphasis on debate, discussion and design process in college. In my opinion, a teacher should be a 'guide on the side' rather than a 'sage on the stage' and should encourage self-learning, creative thinking and discovery by students.

I would also be happy to see a decreased emphasis on the production of drawings and more emphasis on reading and writing on landscape architecture.

Landscape Programs

SPA is the 'big brother' of all of these, the first Landscape Architecture program in India, started in the 1970s. The program is strong at analysis and at the traditional program-driven design. To my mind, it is a comparatively industry-driven MLA degree; it attempts to deliver what the industry seems to seek at this time. CEPT is another senior member of the club. From what I know of it at this time, the program is an interesting combination of research and conceptual approaches to design. They have a system by which 2nd and 4th semester students study together in their Spring semesters, and are free to choose whichever studio appeals to them, among the topics offered, a flexibility that the other programs do not offer at this time. It is very early days for the program at Sushant, compared to SPA and CEPT, since it started in 2017. In my opinion, the department is doing some creditable work already, and I am sure that it will continue to improve steadily. Being involved in all three of these programs has been exciting and rewarding, and I feel that experiences and learning from each department have helped to improve my teaching skills over the years.

Landscape Research

I have some fairly straightforward thoughts on this. Study and learning new things make us smarter, so research will make us both better teachers and better professionals. I feel that professionals recognizing the processes of research and study in their own work will conduct better investigations

A greater facilitation of people entering from non-architectural backgrounds into the MLA programs will be beneficial. Many giants of the field, including Dan Kiley, James Corner, Martha Schwartz and Peter Walker, have not been architects.

and will share what they learn, expanding the collective knowledge. This will lead to an elevation in the quality of their own [and eventually] other's practices. Evidence-based design is gaining relevance, since one can claim it is more reliable than intuitive design. Research will help us create more knowledge on landscape performance, which will lead to stronger interpretations and responses. In landscape architecture, the research base is unfortunately not very strong at this time, even though many forms of knowledge are valid in landscape architecture. Typically, we landscape architects are not qualified and often do not have the time or mind-set for pure research.

For research to thrive, certain conditions need to exist. Critical thinking, questioning and unbiased and agenda-free attitudes need to be encouraged. This can happen in colleges as well as professional offices. Students and employees can be inspired to enjoy the quest for knowledge, which will lead to research gaining strength. In landscape departments, research-centric or research-intensive studio and thesis projects can be encouraged. Other ways can include organizing joint programmes, seminars and other interactions for students with research-oriented organizations and scholars.

Research has shown a negative correlation between age and research productivity: you need to 'catch them young'. Of course, one also needs to ensure that capable faculty are in place to create a research culture in an institution, which must include some amount of critical thinking about one's own institution as well. Sasaki wrote as long ago as 1950, "In schools, do not teach only techniques of earning, but encourage questioning and exploration of new ideas." This is even more vital in today's fast-changing and uncertain world, that is beset by new challenges.

A Landscape Practitioner and a Landscape Academician

Both fields definitely gain from being closely connected. To teach with conviction, you need a fairly thorough knowledge of what you are teaching. I do feel that being involved in teaching made me a better landscape architect in my practice. Through academics, professionals can stay updated with new theories, ideas and new ways of looking at things, which they can use in their own work. Colleges benefit from professionals teaching through their view of the 'real world' out there and their experience of the profession gained through years of work. A closer linkage between academics and the profession is definitely needed in other ways as well. One fairly obvious way of doing this could be through visits of students to offices and sites.

For research to thrive, certain conditions need to exist. Critical thinking, questioning and unbiased and agenda-free attitudes need to be encouraged.

Design Philosophy

It's difficult to define a 'design philosophy', since I believe that every site and design is unique enough to need an approach that, at least to some extent, 'goes back to first principles'. Of the few non-negotiables that we try to incorporate into all our designs, I would say the most important are the creation of space, the incorporation of ecological factors [no matter what the size of the project], and an effort to unify the architecture and landscape design, not only in terms of aesthetics, but more importantly, in terms of the way spaces connect. As related to ecological concerns, the idea of water recharge was built into even our first few projects; over the years we became more conscious and careful through our choices of native plants, limited areas of lawn, permeable hard surfaces, and the choice of materials with low embodied energy levels.

Among my projects, I have a soft spot for Vedic Village, which was both my first large hospitality-oriented project. Adit Pal and Rajeev Agarwal developed the landscape master plan, including making the vital decision that the resort design should reference the memory of the original site by retaining its paddy fields and fish ponds. The landscape was based on the creation of spaces of different scales and experiences, with the dense, fertile, tropical feel of the paddy fields outside Kolkata as a strong backdrop.

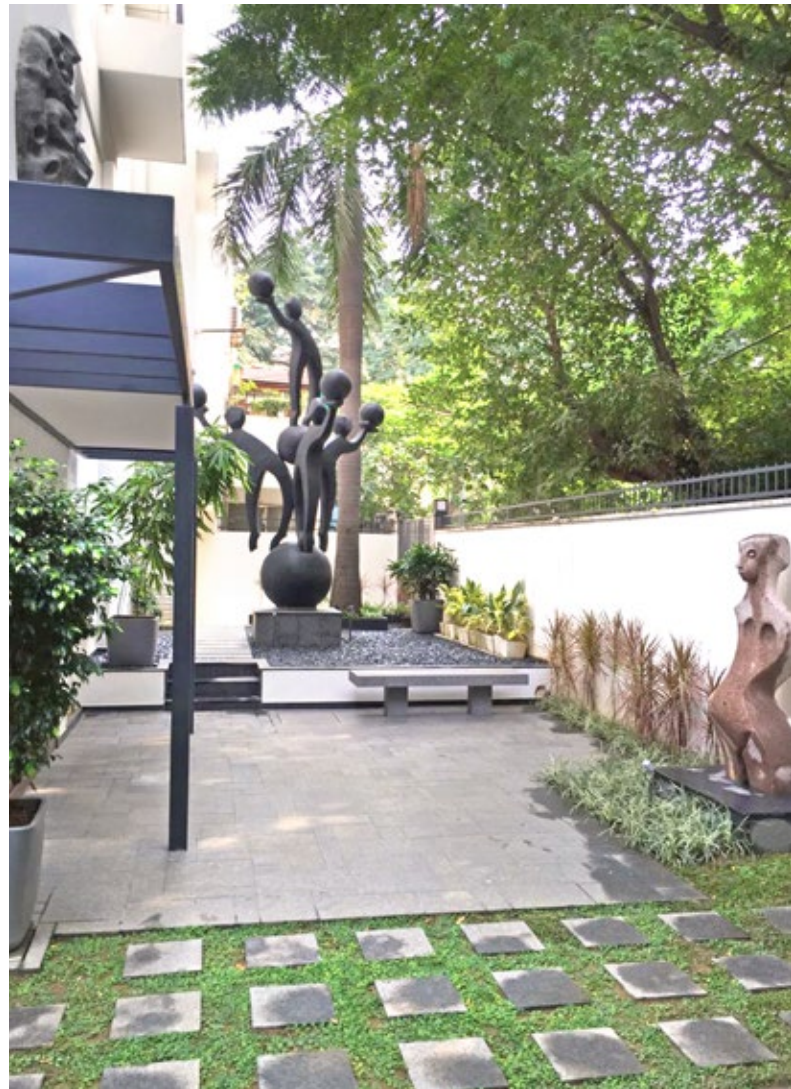
At the other extreme and much more recent, is a design for the HUDA City Centre forecourt, which is a landscape comprising almost entirely of stone boulders, gabion cages, steel trusses and a few slabs of Kota stone for seating. This was completely different from anything else we had done before. Unfortunately, a plan developed for the [sorely needed] traffic management of the area could not be implemented by the clients.

Two very small residential gardens are also dear to me. One is at the late Amarnath Sehgal's house in Jangpura, where the attempt was to integrate a studio space, his sculptures and the landscape into a unified entity; it was understated but

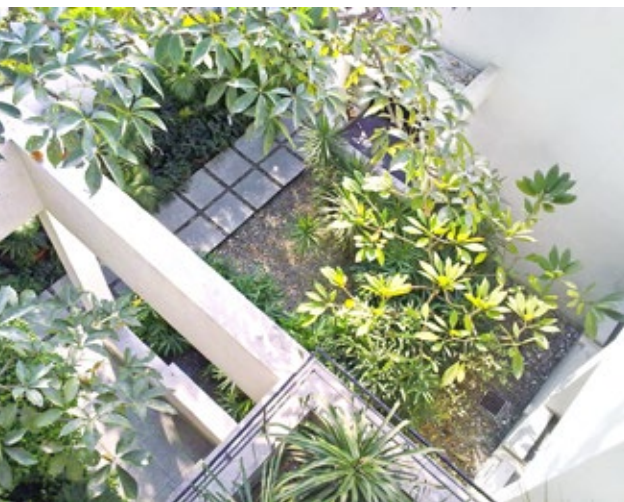
BELOW |

**AMARNATH SEHGAL
HOUSE-STUDIO
NEW DELHI**

*A design that seeks to connect
gallery, sculptures and the
landscape*



ultimately, very satisfying. The other garden was in Noida and here, the attempt was to create a green oasis fitting closely into a modernist house with an emphatic form, designed by Murad Chaudhari. I also enjoyed working on the IMT Nagpur campus and the Aalia Resort near Haridwar. Would I do these, especially the older projects, differently now? Absolutely. But given the time and stage of my career that these were done in, I thoroughly enjoyed the process of ideation and design development, the journey through to the final completion, and to a reasonable extent, the product.



Regarding ecological concerns, we can seek to educate ourselves better about natural systems and rhythms, climatic and ecological context and use these sensitively in our work. I realized fairly early in my professional career that if you are convinced and passionate about something, half of your battle is won. Many of the water recharge systems that I proposed were not mandatory or even widely understood at the time, but most clients understood the necessity of undertaking them. With the media coverage of our deteriorating natural systems, it is easier now to convince clients that we must do whatever possible in terms of the environment. I do believe that we can build in these ecological aspects of water management and recharge, native planting, water saving techniques, appropriate materials etc., perhaps with some additional costs, but with little impact on aesthetics or functional issues. These things are not difficult to do and it is often not too difficult to convince clients about them, either. We just need to try to build these into each of our projects, even with a few 'baby steps' to start with.

ABOVE LEFT |
RESIDENCE
NOIDA

A 'tropical' landscape attempts to create a green oasis fitting closely into a modernist house.

ABOVE RIGHT |
AALIA RESORT
HARIDWAR

The landscape design of the resort tries to draw one towards the banks of the river Ganga

PHOTO CREDIT: tripadvisor.in



IMT NAGPUR

One of the inward-looking Hostel courts, and the administration-library court in a searingly hot climatic zone; a campus landscape based on shaded paths and inward-looking corridors



VEDIC VILLAGE-KOLKATA

Textural variations in a guest villa entry court, and the 'tropical path'



**HUDA CITY CENTER
FORECOURT
GURGAON**

*A dismantlable steel-and-stone
landscape on a basement podium*

Working with ISOLA

I have thoroughly enjoyed the intellectual content of the conferences; each has had an important central theme, strong messages and the potential to elevate our views on landscape architecture. ISOLA has aimed, right from the start, to not just be a group of landscape architects showing our projects to each other. Speakers at its conferences have been nationally and internationally renowned experts on their subjects and have included artists, film-makers, sociologists, cultural geographers, scientists, environmentalists and SDG experts, apart from urban designers, planners, architects and landscape architects. I credit the core group at ISOLA in the early years for enabling this vision.

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Working on the Education Board [EB] has been very interesting. The structure of the Education Board has recently been amended to include faculty from all recognized landscape departments as members of its Working Group. In the near future, we are looking at landscape education workshops with IFLA, teacher mentorship programs with landscape architecture departments and workshops with experts from related fields, among other initiatives. I foresee a creative synergy developing, where I hope that EB initiatives and programs will create a self-sustaining momentum.

I feel that ISOLA's outreach to government organizations and agencies needs to be strengthened, in order for us to have a significant impact on our public landscapes. The intentions are there, and there are some very promising signs that ISOLA is being regularly approached and its' opinion sought, when city-level plans and impacts are being proposed, studied and discussed.

Can we do more? Definitely! We do need more hands on deck, and I request students and recent graduates to join ISOLA and offer some of their time to its various initiatives. We are part of an organization that depends on volunteers, and we do need to contribute whatever time is possible to this larger cause. The newly formed chapter of Tamil Nadu – Puducherry and its student wing, has shown that a small, spirited group can spark some interesting interactions. We would like to see enthusiastic participation from other student groups, as well. The starting of new chapters like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Hyderabad is a very encouraging sign.



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AN INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY THINK TANK

IN CONVERSATION WITH
ANJA KOLLER AND TANJA GALLENMÜLLER



Anja Koller

PHOTO CREDIT | **Christian Probst**

'topos' – *International Review of Landscape Architecture and Urban Design*, is an international and interdisciplinary review for landscape architecture, urban design and urban development. The quarterly publication covers a journey of almost three decades this year. Based in Germany, the first 50 issues of the journal [earlier *Topos*], till July 2005, were produced in two languages, German and English covering interdisciplinary subjects concerning European landscape architecture, urban planning, art, and architecture. Later on, it went global, covering extended geographies around the world and is now produced only in English language. **Anja Koller** [Editor] and **Tanja Gallenmüller** [who worked with *topos* for more than fifteen Years], share their journeys with the magazine.

●.....
How has *topos* evolved and responded to the changing times of both the profession and the world since the magazine was first published in 1992? And what changes has it gone through?

The idea of launching a European landscape architecture magazine in 1992 was born of the desire to extend professional communication across national borders and to explore guiding principles and policies with regard to the landscape of the late 20th century. The profession was not as emancipated or established in some parts of Europe as it was in others in the early 1990s; in some cases educational centres were only just being set up, and some were even being dismantled. And thus, a magazine was created that looked beyond its own horizons—in both a geographical and thematic sense—and showed what was happening and what was possible elsewhere. The timing proved to be almost perfect: With the increasing internationalisation of the profession in the 2000s, with more international competitions

***topos* focuses on landscape architecture as well as increasingly on architecture and urban planning, and now sees itself more as an interdisciplinary think tank aimed at addressing the challenges urban and rural areas will face in future.**

and courses of study, as well as the founding of branch offices in the Middle East and China and an increase in international cooperation projects, the logical consequence was make *topos* a global publication. The bilingual European Magazine for Landscape Architecture therefore became the English-only International Review of Landscape Architecture and Urban Design.

As the field of work changed, i.e. with the focus increasingly being directed towards cities, *topos* changed along with it: Beginning with issue 51, the magazine began to emphasise an urban context, and used a more modern glossy layout as well. The third major change came in 2017 with issue 99, a relaunch that continues to define the magazine concept today. *topos* has indeed undergone a transformation process during these past few years, and it currently focuses on landscape architecture as well as increasingly on architecture and urban planning. It now sees itself more as an interdisciplinary think tank aimed at addressing the challenges urban and rural areas will face in future.

What's the status of the professions of landscape architecture and urban design in Germany? How has being based in Germany influenced the character of the journal?

The change in these professions has always been reflected in the topics the magazine has chosen. Even though *topos* first presented projects from Europe and then from all over the world, the fact that the editorial office is based in Germany has certainly influenced the topics. Here in Germany, climate change and the tasks associated with it regarding landscape architecture currently have a strong influence on planning, so it's certainly interesting to know what best-practice projects there are elsewhere in the world.

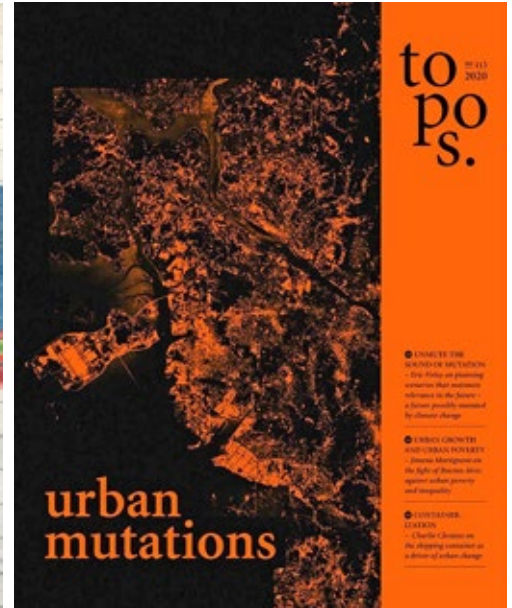
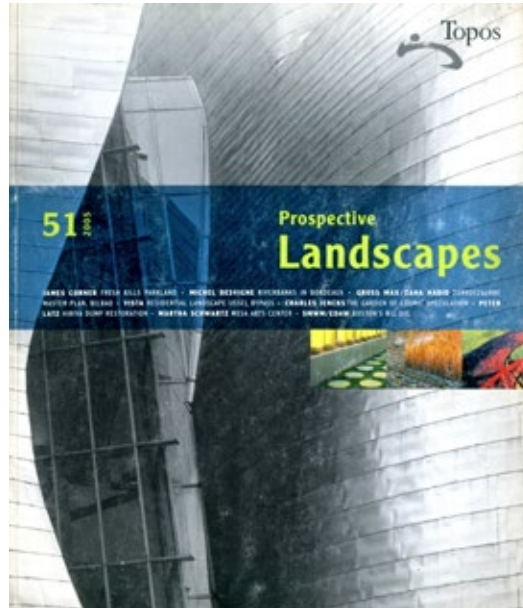
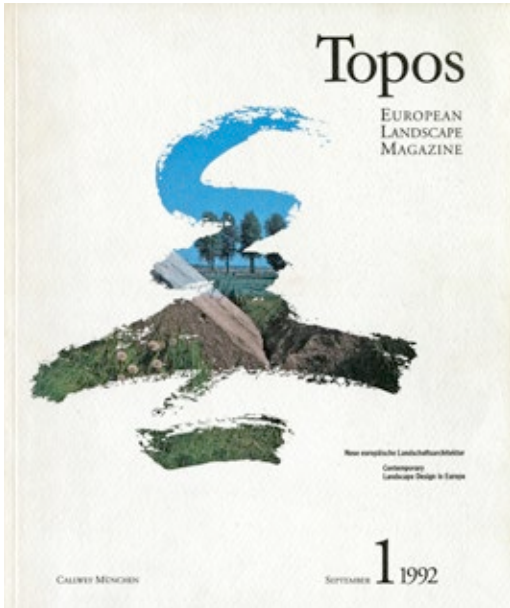
For *topos* it's of utmost importance to always be part of a network of institutions and associations that drive change when it comes to shaping future landscapes. We learn from each other, we try to give them a voice and we always strive to be an inspiration and source of knowledge for all of them. And of course, these associations are an important source of knowledge for us as well.

topos puts more emphasis on the larger intellectual ideas regarding urban design and landscape, processes and discourse concerning the topics of cities, land use, transportation and infrastructure among others. Can you comment on this?

Yes, indeed! *topos* has undergone a transformation process during the last few years. It focuses not only on landscape architecture but more and more on the issue of how urban areas will be shaped in future, on how we will build and plan in the future and on how we all will live in urban [and rural] areas in future. In this context we try to find answers to the big issues like urbanization, digitalization and climate change, and we examine the topics that are directly connected to all of this [mobility, green technologies, water issues, infrastructure, land use, urban poverty, etc.]. *topos* sees itself as an interdisciplinary think tank in order to address the challenges we face now and will face in the future.

The selection of topics and articles in *topos* is made solely by its editorial staff. We have a great variety of research and international contacts, and we continually interact with authors who keep their eyes and ears open for us. This keeps us up to date with what's happening on the international level. When it comes to monothematic issues, it's important for us to take a broad, profound and [now] strongly interdisciplinary view of the respective topic.

For *topos* it's of utmost importance to always be part of a network of institutions and associations that drive change when it comes to shaping future landscapes. In 2007, *topos* signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Mutual Support with the International Federation of Landscape Architects IFLA [ASLA is also a member] and the International Society of City and Regional Planners ISOCARP. We learn from each other, we try to give them a voice and we always strive to be an inspiration and source of knowledge for all of them. And of course, these associations are an important source of knowledge for us as well.



topos

Covers:

1st issue [1992, then called 'Topos - European Landscape Magazine'], 51st issue [2006], and recent issue 113 [2020]

topos is independent, i.e. not affiliated with any professional institution, giving the editorial office free rein over content and opinion. With a limited advertising base, how does *topos* sustain itself financially?

We always strive to be creative and to build loyal readership. Paid content is an issue as well; However, it is all but easy as the willingness to pay for digital journalism is still limited. Our goal is to further on create content [online and print] that is outstanding, intellectual, meaningful and socially relevant, which hopefully will be appreciated by a hopefully increasing readership that is open to pay for relevant content.

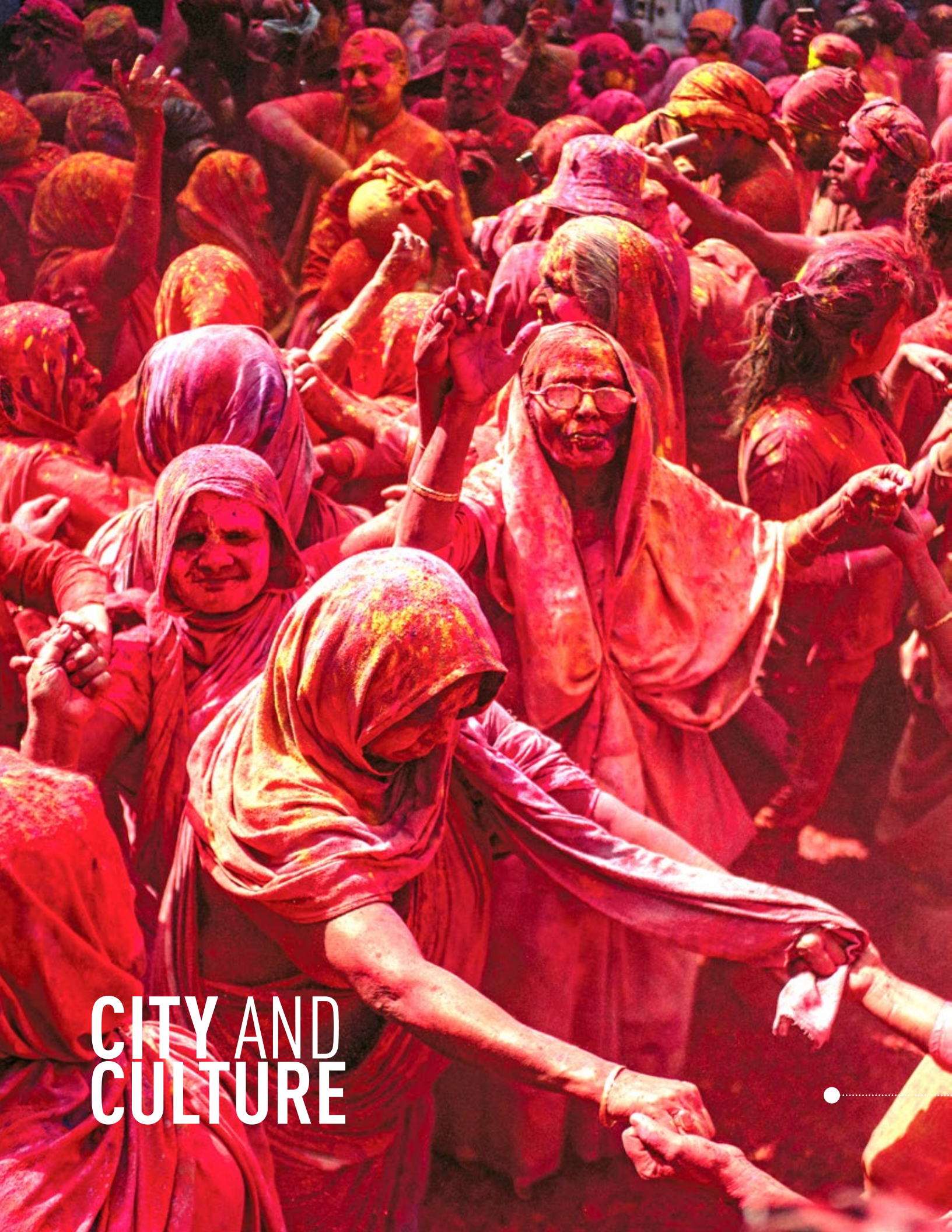
topos has always kept pace with the times and has reacted to changes in the profession by adapting itself accordingly to relevant topics and by continually realigning itself [as mentioned in our first answer].

In another decade or so, *topos* won't only be a magazine in printed form or online, but will increasingly become a professional brand and a world of its own that first and foremost attempts to answer the question of to how we will build, plan and live in the future. We're also working to further develop *topos* into a think tank for every professional and enthusiast who wants to be an urban game changer.



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[W]: <https://www.toposmagazine.com/>



CITY AND CULTURE



Arshan Hussain, Architect
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NATURE VENERATING FESTIVITIES



UTTAR PRADESH



Many Indian festivals, embedded in mythology, represent a tradition of a harmonious relationship with nature in its various forms, Centered around the elements of the Universe – sun, moon and stars or of Earth – rivers, forests, seasons, these festivals celebrate the ideas of conservation, reverence and living with nature. The article defines some of such nature related festivals in the religion of Hinduism and cherishes some of the nature poetry, inspired by the geography and seasons of the Indo-Gangetic plains of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

The ancient Indian almanac has a vast tract occupied by celebrations. These festivities are rendered in natural and mythological hues, which is owed to the naturally endowed morphology and vast religious pantheon of India. Furthermore, the green appearance of these festivals has been an act of balancing the ecological equation through conservation and reverence. The Vedic highbrows, thus, forged a systematic calendar by employing the spiritual, astronomical and cosmic knowledge *vis-à-vis* nature. A planetary nomenclature is followed to christen the weekdays; the fortnights are instructed by lunar motion and thus the lunisolar months came into being. The calendar so formed reckons the dates based on *Samvat* Era; the new era which dawned with the defeat of *Scythians* by the great king *Vikramaditya Sakari* around 57 BC. Most of the other Indian communities have calendars which function on similar lunisolar months except Islamic Hijri calendar which is purely lunar.



FACING PAGE

HOLI AT VRINDAVAN

PHOTO CREDIT: Tom Watkins on Unsplash

Northern state of India, Uttar Pradesh [UP] is the heartland of Indian culture. A substantial chunk of Vedic culture evolved in this region along with the rest of India. It is the region which witnessed the catapult of Islamic rule in the country by providing earliest strongholds and Mughal capitals thus inventing the cultural amalgam of ‘Ganga-Jamuni’ culture. Its archaic cities, agrarian lifestyle and spiritual rivers make this Indo-Gangetic state the exhibitor of an array of festivals. The calendars are dotted with numerous festivities, with intertwined natural and religious underpinnings. The dates are such set that they occur on the appearance of a heavenly body in a certain position at the time of the event.

The Hindu calendar, in the north, onsets with the month of *Chaitra*. However it is the succeeding sacred month of *Vaisakha* which is the harbinger of traditional “solar new year”, with the festival of *Baisakhi*. The month of *Vaisakha* has April as the Gregorian counterpart. On *Baisakhi*, the sun enters the asterism of Aries marking the solar New Year. The agrarian event of thanksgiving for an abundant Rabi crop is one important event of *Baisakhi*. Bathing in the Ganges or other sacred rivers is also considered. It is an important Sikh festival concerning various events related to the Sikh Gurus. Buddhist community celebrates *Buddha Purnima* or *Vesak* on the first full moon to commemorate the birth, enlightenment and death of Lord Buddha. Devotees offer flowers and candles to the masters.

The chronic season of summer follows *Vaisakha*. Maithili Sharan Gupt, the great Hindi poet wrote of the scorching Indian heat:

उग्र रूप धारण कर जिसमें दिनकर भूमि तपाते हैं
हो जाते हैं शुष्क जलाशय, वृक्षाधिक कुम्हलाते हैं

*Taking a fierce form, sun bakes the land
Reservoirs run dry, trees seem faded*

The hot month of *Jyaishtha* [corresponding with Gregorian May-June] accentuates the homage towards nature through the festivity of *Bargadee Amavasya*. Married women pay respect to the Banyan tree for the well-being of their husbands. Circumambulation of the tree and offerings are the integral rituals. The same month, descent of River Ganges is celebrated by dipping in the same on the occasion of *Ganga Dussehra*.

Sawana is the month of rains in the local calendar. Eighteenth century Urdu poet Nazeer Akbarabadi spoke on the lush Indian landscape during rains:

ہیں اس ہوا مے کیا کیا برسات کی بہاریں
سبزو کی لہلہاہٹ باغات کی بہاریں

*This breeze has the bounties of rains
The waving of greens, the bounties of gardens*

During this bountiful season hibernating animals/insects also come out on the surface. The reservation of sacred spots for animals in the Hindu Mythology are facilitated by their association with deities and inclusion in local folklore. These ancient acts buttress the Indian sensitivity towards the natural hierarchy. The festival of *Nag Panchmi* is one archetype in this month. This day recalls Lord Vishnu's recline on *Shesh naga*. The snakes are appeased through offerings of milk and are worshipped. The land of Uttar Pradesh is mostly a green patch of agrarian life. The farmers exalt agriculture, which is their livelihood, to the rank of a deity. *Hal Shasti* is another festival in which the blade of the plough is decorated and worshipped by applying powdered rice and turmeric. The fields are not worked upon and feasts are arranged. During the Monsoon period, the Jain monks stay at one place as opposed to their movement through the year.

The *Sarad* season cues towards a subtle autumn. Ram Vilas Sharma, the eminent thinker, painted the poetic canvas of an evening at the autumn agricultural landscape:



सोना ही सोना छाया आकाश में,
पश्चिम में सोने का सूरज डूबता,
पका रंग कंचन जैसे ताया हुआ,
भरे ज्वार के भुट्टे पक कर झुक गये ।

*Gold dominates the sky
Gilded sun sets in the west
Ripen colour like gold
Maize laden with kernels
stoop upon ripening*

Kartika is the second month of this season. Gregorian calendar observes the months of October and November around this time. The grand festival of *Diwali* is celebrated in the dark half of the same month. *Diwali* heralds the arrival of winters and an agricultural halt. The following day *Gobardhan Puja* is performed. It has mythological association concerning Lord Vishnu's protection of cattle from Lord Indra. Ergo, cattle is worshipped along with the dung. Same month, the four day event of *Chatth Puja* is observed as a thanksgiving to sun deity for the blessings of life. The offerings are made to the rising and setting sun god at the river banks. The Muslims prayers, too, through the day are scheduled in accordance with the sun movement. The prayers are lined relative to various positions of sun from dusk till dawn and around. In the holy month of Ramadan, the believers fast during the sun's presence.

	FESTIVAL	INDIAN MONTH	GREGORIAN MONTH	SEASON	ASSOCIATED NATURAL ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
	Makar Sakranti	Magh	January	Sisira [Dewy]	Planetary/ Astrological: Asterism of Makar [Capricorn], Sun god	Sun enters the asterism of Capricorn, winter solstice, Bath in Ganges
	Basant Panchmi	Magh	February	Sisira [Dewy]	Seasonal: Spring season	End of winter, Arrival of Spring season, Yellow apparels are worn, Various deities worshipped
	Magh Mela*	Magh	January-February	Sisira [Dewy]	Planetary/ Astrological & Riverine: Sacred Rivers, Sun god, Jupiter	Beginning of sun's northward journey, Transition of Jupiter into various asterisms/ zodiac signs, Atonement by dipping in sacred rivers
	Baisakhi	Vaisakha	April	Vasanta [Spring]	Seasonal & Agrarian: Spring season, Harvest festival	Sun enters the sign Aries, Solar Hindu new year, Rabi Harvest, Bath in sacred rivers
	Buddha Purnima	Baisakh [Buddhist]	April-May	Vasanta [Spring]	Flowers	Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death commemoration, flowers are offered to masters
	Bargadee Amavasya	Jyaishtha	May	Greeshma [Summer]	Plants: Banyan tree	Tree worshipped by women for the well-being of their husband
	Ganga Dussehra	Jyaishtha	May-June	Greeshma [Summer]	Riverine: River Ganges	Celebration of the descent of river Ganges on earth, Bath in Ganges
	Nag Panchmi	Sawana	July-August	Varsha [Rainy]	Animals: Snakes	Recalling Lord Vishnu's rest on Sheshnaga; Snakes are worshipped
	Halshasti	Bhadrapad	August - September	Varsha [Rainy]	Agrarian: Harvest	Harvest festival; Blade of the plough is worshipped
	Diwali	Kartika	October-November	Sarad [Sultry]	Seasonal: Winter season	Mythological events, Arrival of winter season, Agricultural halt
	Gobardhan Puja	Kartika	October-November	Sarad [Sultry]	Animals: Cattle; Cow-dung	Recalling a mythological event concerning Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna; Cattle is worshipped
	Chatth Puja	Kartika	October-November	Sarad [Sultry]	Planetary & Riverine: Sun god, Sacred Rivers	To thank sun god for life by offerings, Performed on river banks
	Devuthan Ekadashi	Kartika	October-November	Sarad [Sultry]	Agrarian/ Plant: Sugarcane harvest, Tulsi plant	Awakening of Vishnu marking onset of marriages and festivals, festivals of god, Beginning of Sugarcane harvest, Marriage of Tulsi plant with Lord Vishnu
	Kartika Purnima	Kartika	November	Sarad [Sultry]	Riverine: Various Rivers	Dip in Ganges or any stream is sacred; takeaway of sacred water
	Kumbh Mela*	Magh, Chaitra, Vaisakha, Bhadrapad	January, February, March, April, May, August, September	Vasanta [Spring], Greeshma [Summer], Sisira [Dewy]	Riverine: Various Rivers Planetary: Jupiter, sun & moon	Pilgrimage festival with a rotation of locations and time, Relative astrological position of Jupiter, Sun and moon, Sacred bath in the rivers
	Ramadan	Ramadan [Islamic]	—	—	Planetary: Sun	Fasting when sun is up in the month of Ramadan; All the prayers through the year are offered according to sun's relative positions during the day/night

*MAGH MELA COINCIDES WITH KUMBH MELA EVERY 12 YEARS DUE TO ASTROLOGICAL/ PLANETARY RELATIVITY

Hindu marriages are prohibited for a period of four months which is considered the slumber time of Lord Vishnu. It ends in the bright half of the *Kartika*. This day is known as *Devutthan Ekadashi* and marks the resumption of Hindu wedding season. For the farmers it is the time of reaping Sugarcane harvest. Last celebration of the month occurs at the *Kartika Purnima* on which the believers gather on River Ganges for sacred dip. Garmukteshwar in western UP is a spectacle of pilgrimage on this occasion.

Around the month of *Magh*, the sun begins its northward journey and enters the *Nakshatra* or asterism of *Makar* [Capricorn]. This calls for the celebration of *Makar Sakranti*. The sun returns to the winter solstice and this change of directions is considered auspicious. Bath in river Ganges is sacred. But the most revered occasion propitiating the sacred rivers and sun god is the ancient *Magh Mela*. Allahabad or Prayag in southern UP is the oldest site, being the confluence of three sacred rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Sarasvati. This annual fair is the precursor to the world famous *Kumbh Mela* which records breath-taking crowds. The *Mela* rotates to various location through the country and occurs at intervals of three and six years relatively. The grand *Kumbh* occurs every 12 years, with the relativity in positioning of Jupiter, sun and moon and coincides with the *Magh Mela*. Pilgrims form all across the world camp near the rivers and perform sacred dips.

The calendar comes to a close with the smiling spring season. Urdu revolutionary Faiz Ahmad Faiz penned on the winds of the spring:

گلوں میں رنگ بھرے بادِ نوبہار چلے
چلے بھی آؤ کہ گلشن کا کاروبار چلے
*It lends hues to the flowers,
the new spring breeze flows
Come forth so the garden glows*

The festivities of *Basant Panchmi* is the gift of spring. The ripening of crops and waving yellow mustard fields herald the arrival of *Basant Panchmi*. A wave of yellow apparel, matching the mustard fields, is flaunted by the agrarian northerner. Various deities are worshipped and songs are sung along with special feasts. These festivals are the spokes that comprise the wheel of Indian festivals which has trekked the soils of many centuries and cultures leaving the moral impression of nature sensitivity on its trail.



Icons-graphic by M. Shah Alam

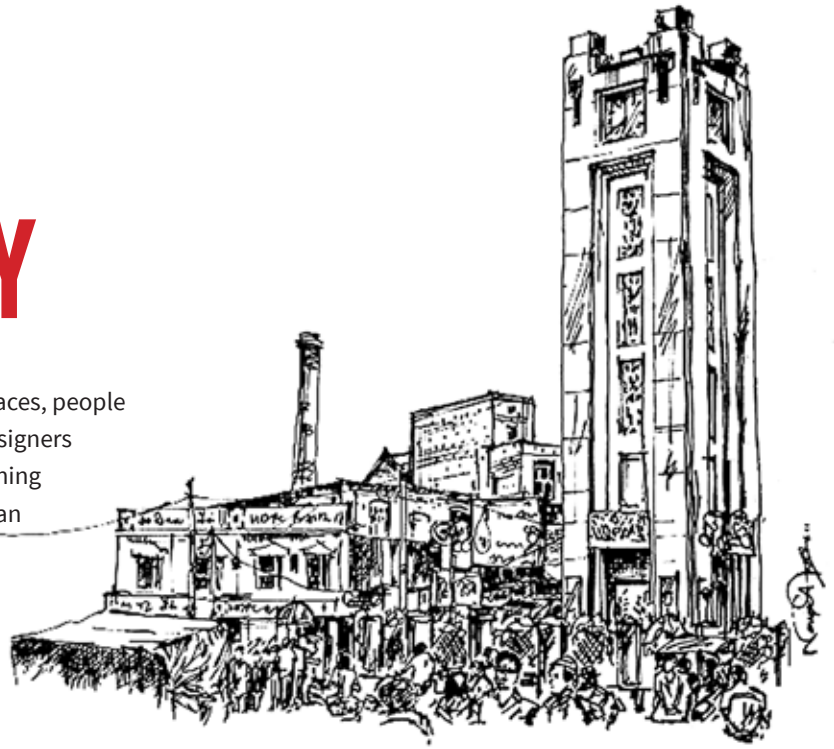


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CITY, CULTURE & CREATIVITY

Many diverse layers of a metropolis – nature, history, spaces, people and culture - are looked at through the eyes of urban designers in *City, Culture and Creativity*, an international sketching competition organized by Delhi-NCR Chapter of the Indian Institute of Urban Designers IUDI in 2020. In the form of illustrations, sketches, paintings and in other graphic formats, various entries show the vibrant world of Delhi that surrounds them. The special feature showcases the winning entries.



“Urban design is about making connections between people and places, movement, and the built environment, nature, and built structures. It draws together the many elements of place-making, environmental concerns, social equity, and economic viability into the creation of places with distinct beauty and identity. Place-making is the creation of a setting that imparts a ‘sense of place’ to an area that is actively used by people. A place that is open and accessible to all the people qualifies to be a public space. A person trained as an artist, architect, or designer captures the essence of these places through sketches, paintings, and digital graphics through various mediums.

As the world continues to urbanize and globalize, cities are becoming the predominant form of human settlement and the scale at which many of the most pressing societal issues are engaged. Cities are places to explore culture and creativity. Delhi has many facets and has been recognized as a multi-layered city, cities within a city, a cosmopolitan city, etc.”

The art-based competition invited urban designers for expressing an image of the city of Delhi through various mediums. The entries for the competition were invited under the themes of Nature, Streets, Settlement, and Experiential.

Judging Criteria

- *Creativity in depiction of Delhi*
- *Relevance to the submitted theme including overall artwork and graphic exploration.*

The Jury

Anand Wadwekar
Architect-Urban Designer

Gopika Chowfla
Graphic Designer

Mark Warner
Architect-Visualiser

Organized by



Jury Comments & Feedback

The CCC competition gave an opportunity to rekindle what has been lacking in our consciousness of contemporary urbanism. As cities are being reduced to a mere technological problem under various development programs, we need to reclaim cities through creativity to keep the human aspects alive in our discourse on urbanism we practice. All the entries received in CCC essentially takes the point forward that the act of representing the imagined and experienced cities through drawings, texts, images unfolds the tremendous possibilities of rebuilding and rethinking about our collective urban sense. These entries uniquely celebrate the spirit of Delhi through its peace, turmoil, chaos and tranquillity, especially the winning entries reinstate the fact that a city like Delhi can't be seen from one perspective only, Delhi inhabits the infinite possibilities of experience, imagination and perception and hence remain elusive and invisible too. Congratulation to all winners, participants and special kudos to IUDIDNCR and CCC organization team for celebrating Delhi and its spirit.

— *Anand Wadwekar*

To invite designers and artists to interpret their city through art is a wonderful idea. Beyond planning, architecture and politics, it is important to bring in other voices and perspectives into the building of our cities and this is a good initiative towards that. It was great to see the work that came in and I congratulate all the winners of this competition.

— *Gopika Chowfla*

It was a delight to see the works of this competition. The insights into Delhi, and therefore cities in general, made one think. Graphically very well-conceived entries.

— *Mark Warner*

FIRST PRIZE

DELHI: RIVER YAMUNA & TANGLED ELECTRIC POST A METAPHORIC WITNESS OF AN URBAN PALIMPSEST

Vivek V.

Architect/ Urban Designer, Assistant Professor, M.CAP

*Delhi, a city of aspiration from walled city to world city.
A city of hope, anxiety and pain...*

Eternal city of Delhi keeps changing..

*Changing its mood from Shimmering lights of the Bungalow zones,
To the shady corner of the cities backyards – the Slum.*

The river Yamuna and the electric post

Witnessed the eternal city of Delhi.

And yes it witnessed Invaders and conquerors,

Merchants and immigrants,

Regulations and violations,

Constructions and Demolitions,

From Palaces to mausoleums

Politicians to policemen.

Office bears to slum dwellers,

Streets of Delhi has seen its phase, through the faces of different Phase.

*Whispers of the River Yamuna and the buzz of the electric post
have stories to tell about the city of different creeds.*

Layer by layer adding to the palimpsest....

The walls of the Lodhi colonies paints “We love Delhi”,

Even between the chaos and Pollution,

Crimes and rapes.

*It's the colonial power that has now transformed into people's arena around India Gate,
Which embraces cities love and dust, its trust and rust.*

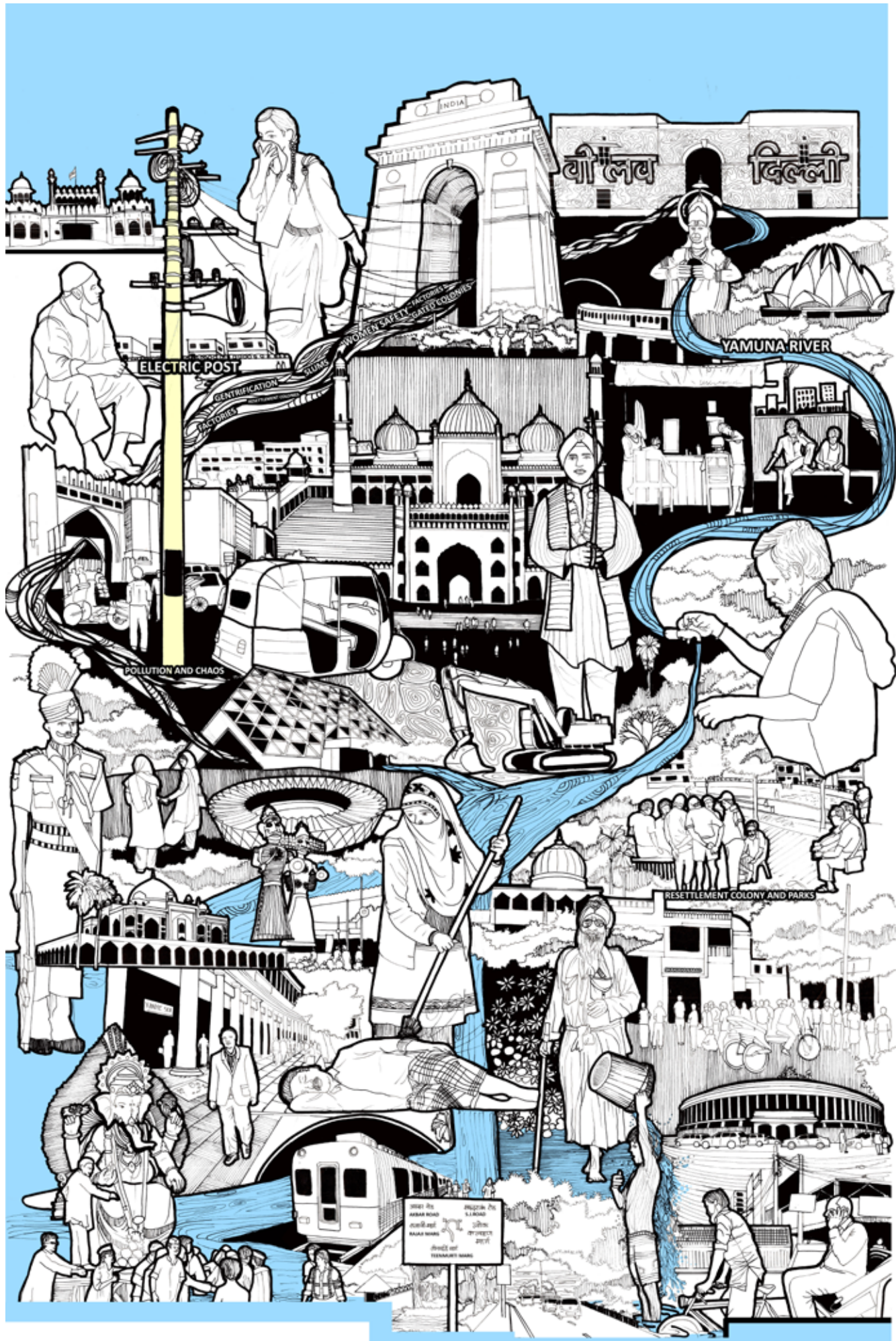
From old Delhi to Lutyens Delhi,

From Connaught place to Humayun's tomb,

From Gated colonies to Slum quarters,

The city has addressed its contrast.

Yet we love Delhi, for its warmth and care, for its Dynamicity and Ethnicity.



वी लव दिल्ली

ELECTRIC POST

YAMUNA RIVER

GENTRIFICATION FACTORIES

POLLUTION AND CHAOS

RESETTLEMENT COLONY AND PARKS

INDIA'S NEW HIGHWAY ROAD
दिल्ली का नया बाजार
दिल्ली का नया बाजार
दिल्ली का नया बाजार

SECOND PRIZE

CAPITAL CITY & ITS FRAGMENTS: CONFLICTS & CO-EXISTENCE

Debayan Chatterjee
Urban Designer & Architect

Delhi, being one of the fastest-growing Third World cities, is well-known for its heterogeneous character. It is a city of fragments, “where urbanization takes place in leaps and bounds, creating a continuously discontinuous pattern”. [McFarlane, 2012] The fragments are: the historic city, the colonial centre, planned districts, unauthorized settlements and slums; and all of them fall under two broad categories: formal and informal settlements. These settlements are different in characters, and my illustration showcases how they are physically juxtaposed but architecturally and socially distinct. My artwork further illustrates the relationship between formality and informality and how the perception differs for various stakeholders.

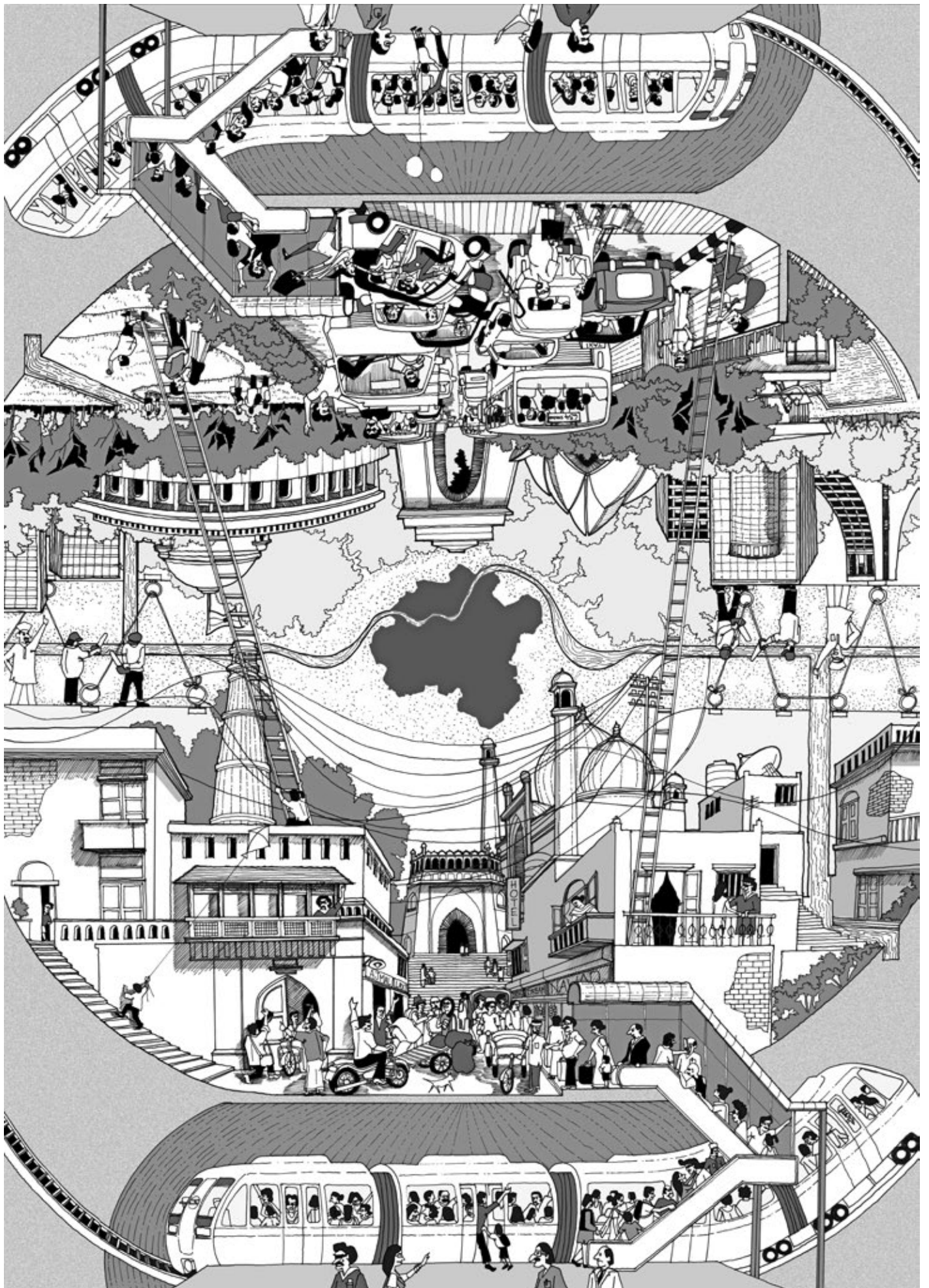
Decision maker’s viewpoint

Believes in binaries, stresses on “formalization” or “otherness”;

Common man’s viewpoint

Believes in flexibility, considers the city as a backdrop for activities;

[Note: Viewers are free to choose the way they want to orient the painting based on their own viewpoint.]



THIRD PRIZE

TRANSCENDENTAL EPOCH

Shubhajit Bagchi & Soumyajit Bagchi
Urban Designer & Architect



No one belongs to *Diili*, yet *Dilli* belongs to everyone. It's not just a city; it's a feeling, a voyage between distinct eras of time. From the nostalgic narrow lanes of Old Delhi to the grandeur of colonial era of Rajpath, tracing aspirations from the modernist Connaught Place to the sleek and seductive essence of Cyber Hub, Delhi simply makes you travel in time. Its beautiful juxtaposition recites a tale and when a lone traveller hears it, he uncovers his missing pieces and envisages it as his home.



This artwork portrays a euphoric expedition of medieval era folks in the current age of millennials, which gives a satirical picture of bumping of different epochs of past and present and the old ones getting perplexed in this new generation's digital era, representing a rigid dichotomy of old and new lifestyles.

JURY COMMENDATION

LUTYEN'S DELHI TRAVELS TO MADHUBANI: AN EXPERIENTIAL JOURNEY OF THE BUILT AND NATURE

Meghana Patel
Architect, Urban Designer

Built in 1911, Lutyens' Delhi has been one of the brightest spot of India's modern architectural history.

This painting is a confluence of architectural drawing and Madhubani painting style. The layout and the river in the background resemble the plan of Lutyens' Delhi, overlaid by Madhubani style tree, resembling the generous green cover that the precinct offers. Amidst the pollution that Delhi has been grappling with the recent times, Lutyens' Delhi has not only been a visual relief, but also been a breath of fresh air for Delhites, with its generous green cover and open spaces. The tree is also a metaphor for the tree of wisdom, which the various think-tanks housed in the area offer.

With the government's new proposal of re-imagining the iconic area, we can only imagine a responsive solution reinforcing Lutyens' and Baker's vision for the national capital. The painting is a small effort to celebrate this modern piece of Architecture and Urban Design, which has also become a beautiful identity of the Indian political and administrative system.



JURY COMMENDATION

UNLOCKING MEMORY LANE THROUGH MENTAL MAPPING

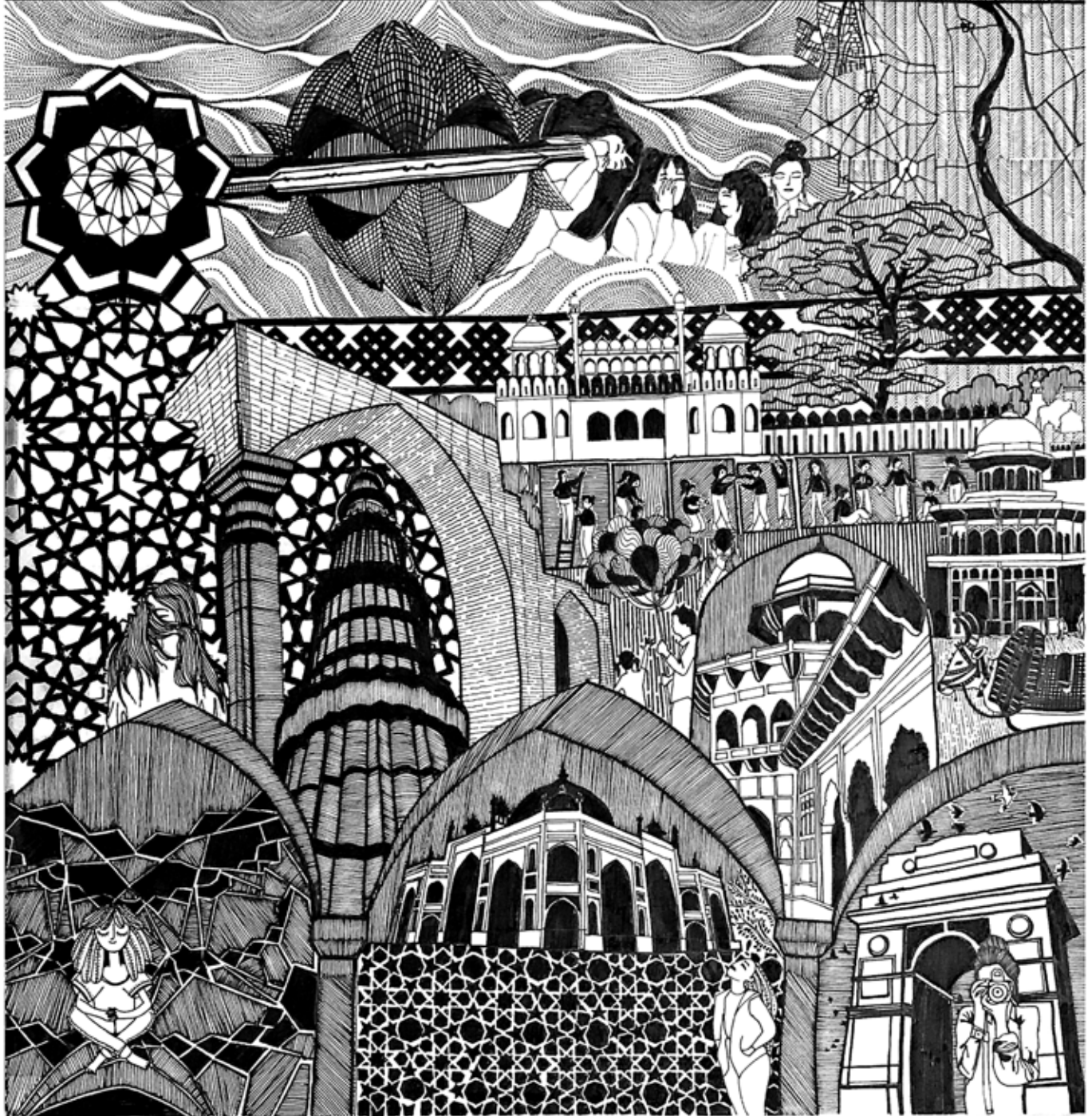
Anita C. Jakkappanavar
Architect & Urban Designer

The illustration is inspired by the reading of the city form through experience of urban spaces through its architecture and through senses like sight, touch, feel, smell, and sound. Delhi is made up of complex matrix of old and new fabric of urban form which translates a strong memory of urban spaces. And these memories are not erased. An urban memory entangles with its history and the city itself, which keeps the marks of its constant processes of transformation and permanence.

The intent of the illustration was to create a memory map and interpret a story of the city tale which conveys collective memory to understand its present and past which are closely related to identity of the place. The illustration is an attempt to read the urban landscape which is composed of many complex layers in reference to time. Without the memory of the past, we can't lay the foundation of the future, so the illustration is the collection of memories through experience wrapped in time through our rich cultural heritage intertwined with new waves of urbanisation that stress the importance of an experience without erasing our own history.



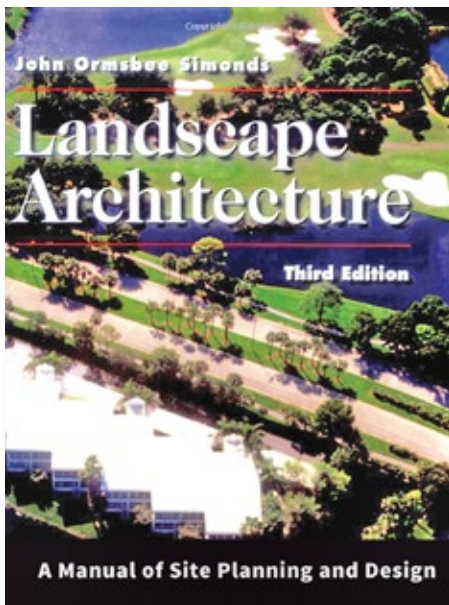
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Review by Nikhil Dhar, Landscape Architect
| artemisia.nikhil@gmail.com

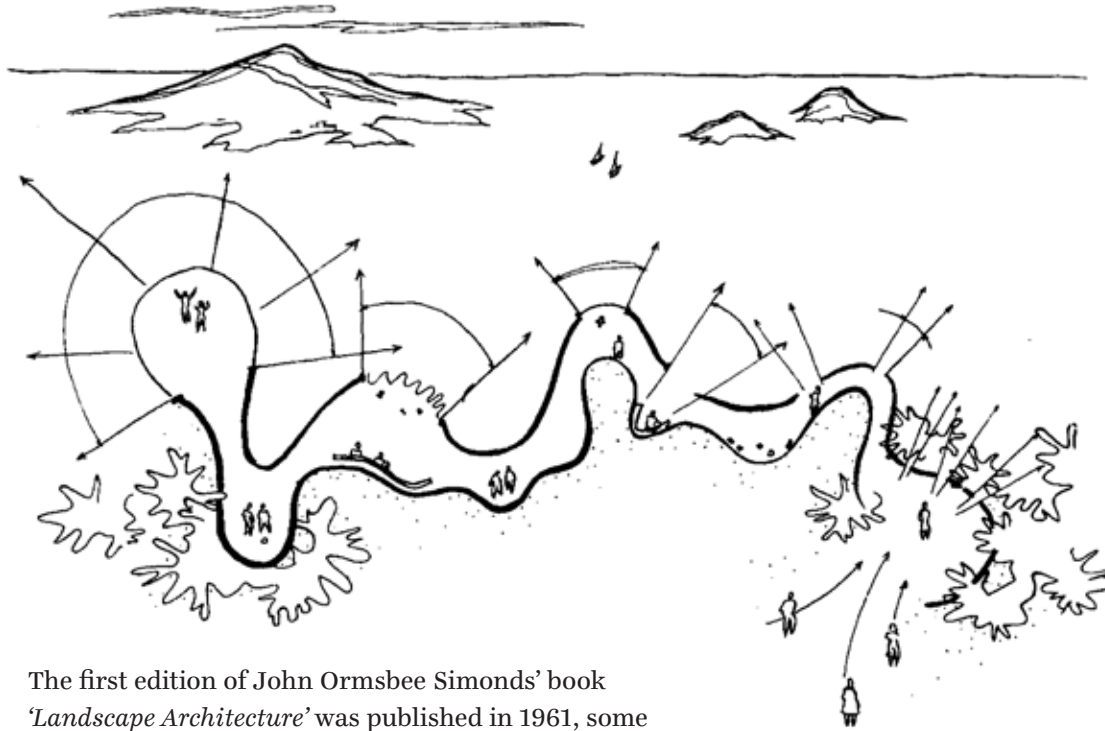
DECIPHERING A DISCIPLINE



**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE:
A MANUAL OF SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN**
Author: John Ormsbee Simonds
Published by McGraw-Hill Education
3rd edition, 1997
Size 215 x 282 mm, 384 Pages
Hardcover
ISBN-13: 978-00-705770-9-1

With a rich legacy of earlier books on the subject by the author, John Ormsbee Simonds's book, *Landscape Architecture: A Manual of Site Planning and Design* [1997] very successfully, contextualizes the subject of landscape architecture for students and practitioners in an easy and affable way. Exploring the history of the subject as reference, defining the aspects and elements of landscape design, and emphasizing a relationship of landscape architecture with the larger context, the narrative of knowledge adopts an interesting graphic language to disseminate the theory and practice of the discipline. It remains a classic of all times.

The term landscape architect was first defined by Frederick Law Olmsted towards the middle of the 19th century, but the first books that dealt with landscape architecture, rather than 'gardening' or 'landscape gardening', appeared much later. Norman T. Newton's 1971 book *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* covered the development of landscape architecture from private gardens in olden times, to the planning and design of public open space in the modern world. A second history of landscape architecture with a more comprehensive view was *A History of Landscape Architecture: The Relationship of People to Environment*, written by George B. Tobey in 1973. A third key treatise related to landscape architecture was written by Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe in 1975 and titled *The Landscape of Man: Shaping the Environment from Prehistory to the Present Day*.



The first edition of John Ormsbee Simonds' book *'Landscape Architecture'* was published in 1961, some years before the seminal works mentioned above, with subsequent editions published in 1983, 1997, 2006 and 2013. This book differed from the others, in that it dealt with the theory and practice of landscape architecture, with historical connections used primarily as references. I stumbled across the 1997 edition at the Galgotia & Sons bookshop in Connaught Place, with no prior knowledge of the book. Buying it was among the best investments that I have ever made. Much like the field of landscape architecture itself, the book is a wonderful balance of science and art, and emphasizes the close link that is essential between humans, nature and ecology.

'Landscape Architecture' can be divided into three broad sections. The first section deals with the basics, or the materials that are available to us as landscape architects. These first chapters cover climate, land, water, vegetation, landscape character and topography. Highly readable text, attractive photographs and beautifully evocative sketches ensure that one's interest never flags, and that even complex concepts are easy to grasp and understand.

Each chapter is scattered with gems: pages on appropriate responses for each climate type, related to community, site and buildings; sketches on how landscape affects micro-climate; axioms of water resource management and sketches showing how water behaves in the landscape; sketches on earthform, grading and slope retention techniques. Every few pages reveal new and exciting resources.

“one designs not places, or spaces, or things, one designs experiences”

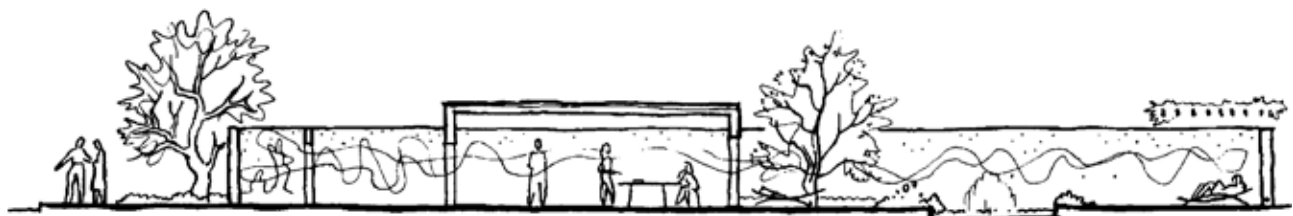
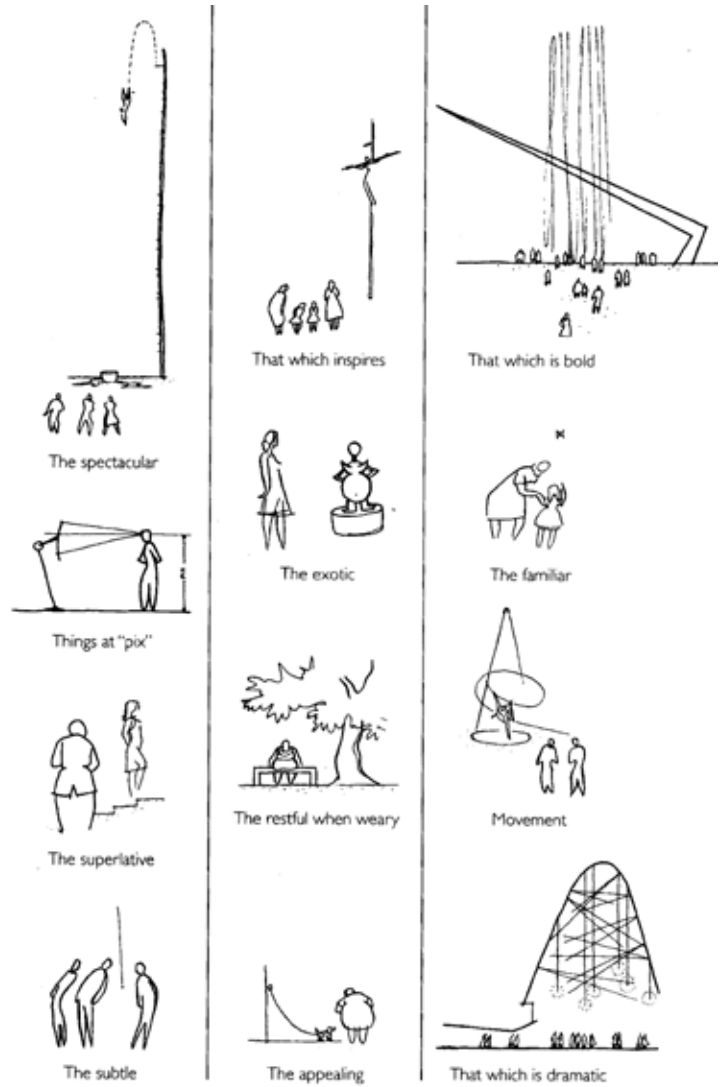
ABOVE LEFT |

The modulation of a view.

From a glimpse through loose foliage, to enframing slot, to wider sector, to reverse interest, to vista, to object seen against the view, to reverse interest, to objects placed against the view seen through a film of fabric, to concentration in a cave like recess, to full, exuberant sweep.

The second section of the book deals with the steps and systems that make up the everyday practice of landscape architecture and covers, among other topics, site planning and development, planting, circulation and structures. From initial site analysis to concept sketches to site plans, the entire design process is described and explained. Site development guidelines break down the basic ‘bones’ of landscape into a set of easy to understand points, an ideal starting point for the functional aspects of design. The four pages of sketches that deal with planting are a treasure of distilled knowledge and experience in themselves. These pages and the sketches that deal with volumes and enclosure, and the base plane, are personal favourites of mine. The chapters on circulation, structures, habitations and the visible landscape are also strongly expressed and easy to comprehend.

The final section of the book deals with the ways that landscape architecture connects to the larger systems that we have created, in the places where we live and work. Community planning, urban design, and regional environments are studied in ways that manage to both look at the larger picture and to describe how these fields connect both physically and conceptually to the field of landscape architecture. The gems are visible even in these larger concept chapters: a list of new directions that community planning needs to incorporate; sketches of landscape signage and lighting; regional settlement patterns; greenway concepts. The book ends with a final chapter that ranges from the author’s own experiences and revelations to some of the movements in landscape architecture and musings on the need for another revolution in landscape architecture connecting function, form and the environment.



Living space in the city may extend from property line to property line

Simonds' book is wonderfully user-friendly, retaining one's interest with sketches, nuggets of information and tables that provide information in concise and efficient ways. It analyzes the subject of landscape architecture in parts that are studied separately, but never fails to emphasize that these parts are inter-connected and that each is vital to our living environments. This book has informed and influenced both my practice and my teaching, and I find it invaluable to go back to when one is deeply entangled in the practicalities of a landscape practice. It reminds one of the vitally important things that one sometimes forgets. To my mind, *Landscape Architecture* should be required reading for all landscape architecture students. It will explain the basics of the profession, broaden their thinking and increase their sensitivity to our planet and their skills as designers.

It is impossible for me to be dispassionate about *'Landscape Architecture'*; it is my own personal landscape Bible. Because of its scope, breadth and its clarity, I rate it even more highly as a first book on the subject, than Michael Laurie's *'An Introduction to Landscape Architecture'*. Simonds' book is written with love for the discipline and a deep concern for our living environment.

To quote the book's concluding words:

*"And so we come back full circle.
What, again, is the work
of the landscape architect?"*

*It is believed
that the lifetime goal and work
of the landscape architect
is to help bring people,
the things they build,
their communities, their cities
—and thus their lives—
into harmony with the living earth."*

**“into
harmony
with the
living
earth”**



Landscape Architecture, LA



Release
of the
Inaugural
Issue
at
New
Committee
Room
SPA
9th February 2001
3pm
Chief Guest
Shri A.P. Kamble



**TURNING
20**



LA JOURNAL ISSUE #1

Release Function, 9 February, 2001
SPA, New Delhi

Editors, LA Journal
| lajournalindia@gmail.com

TURNING 20

On the ninth of February [2021], LA Journal completes two decades of its fascinating journey. Over the past two decades, the profession of landscape architecture in the country has transformed into a more formalized, widespread, and diversified field. From the 1970s and onwards, it has played a crucial role in the story of urban development in India. With just two postgraduate programs, academia has expanded to include many more. From less than four hundred landscape architects at the time of the release of the Journal, the landscape profession has now grown into a vibrant community of around a thousand professionals spread all across the country [and beyond], and the next generation of practitioners are leading by shaping the spaces around us. As the profession and the world around have changed, so has the Journal. From its first edition of only 8 pages, it has now expanded to over 100 pages or more. Over time, the Journal has encouraged many—and often contrasting—viewpoints on various aspects of the discipline of landscape architecture. It has tried to nudge, encourage, provoke, and hopefully inspire its readers in many ways. It will be presumptuous to assume its role as anything more than this.

For us, the Journal is one of the most significant factors in our lives that have shaped us. On the occasion of completing two decades of its journey, we look back for some philosophical personal learnings.

Change

When we observe the changing world around us, along with the growth and evolution of the Journal, we realize that we too have changed [in a good sense, we hope]. Probably, the presence of our daughter, the most apparent testimony of change, just two years younger than the Journal, has played a crucial role in this awareness.

With each passing year, along with knowledge, we have acquired [hopefully] new wisdom, and are now more familiar and conscious with ourselves and the ways of the world as compared to when we started. Being nostalgic about the past, lamenting about the present while worrying about the future has gradually given way to embracing the present realities with more ease, acceptance, confidence, and comfort.



Time is continuous and connected with no boundaries. The past (*memories*) the present (*reality*) and the future (*vision*) are all a part of the same plane of existence. Not everything familiar and old is valuable and not all new ideas about the present and future are to be looked at with apprehension and doubt. We try to embrace whatever is exciting, relevant, and beautiful for the journal across all time scales. Many of our views have changed with time and will evolve further as we grow. At the same time, the memory of Prof. Mohammad Shaheer, our guide, and mentor, whom we lost along the way, is an intrinsic part of our mindscape, ever there and inspiring for us.

Over our journey, there is also the realization that the change that we all hope to see in the landscape discipline through our work will possibly take years or even decades. Our contribution in the form of a Journal, publications, research works, practice and student design competitions, is but a small part of a greater whole, of the process of change where practitioners, academicians, and industry, all are working together.



Engagements

Our years with the Journal have given us many opportunities to engage with a diverse set of people across the world, who share the larger vision of the discipline of landscape architecture, its meaning, and dissemination by contributing to it in one way or the other. Importantly, many of them have become friends, with whom we often have discussions about our work. We cherish these encounters as sources of inspiration, enlightenment, and learning and every such discussion have contributed to the idea of further enhancement and progression of our works. At times, there has been a difference of opinions. It is partly due to the overlapping boundaries of “*subjective*” and “*objective*” in the eyes of both sides. With this knowledge, we are learning to segregate the “*factual*” from the “*perceived*”, and curate our discourse accordingly. We also now believe that being too close or too far to a situation

creates a distorted view, colored by emotion on one hand and hampered by a lack of awareness on the other. One needs a healthy distance for a rationale perspective. With this idea, we have got the journal and our projects reviewed from time to time by professionals who are aware of our journey, but at the same time, but are not part of its core work.

High expectations can bring about big disappointments. We should be prepared for them. As with us, it is unrealistic to expect a single individual, practice, or situation to have all positive traits. We have to always work and engage within varied and at times, challenging contexts to achieve the intended results. Also, no one factor is responsible for the merits or faults of an endeavor. There is a combination of factors that attribute to its growth or stagnation. Another important realization of ours is that a moral character needs an abundance of real-life circumstances and engagements to emerge. It is not a quality that evolves in isolation and a short period. This has become amply clear as we engage with various contributors for the journal and the books.

Journey

We believe that free space without being self-conscious, away from the fear of judgment and the idea of success or failure, is the best creative realm to be in. At times, predictable approaches lead to static outcomes while an open-ended journey leads to greater possibilities and serendipity. We try to position our efforts in that space with no predetermined paths or schedules.

In the end, we hope that some of our work brings joy to many for years than gratifying a few for a short period. We know that whatever we do may not be enough, but we try to achieve as much as we can with hope for more. We strongly believe that the world shows what one wants to see. So, we try to look at the mysteries and challenges of the world with a positive attitude and a sense of eternal hope.



Water colours by Tanvi Dua
[Instagram]:@tangled.vignettes

20⁰⁵



09.02.2001

09.02.2021

20 YEARS



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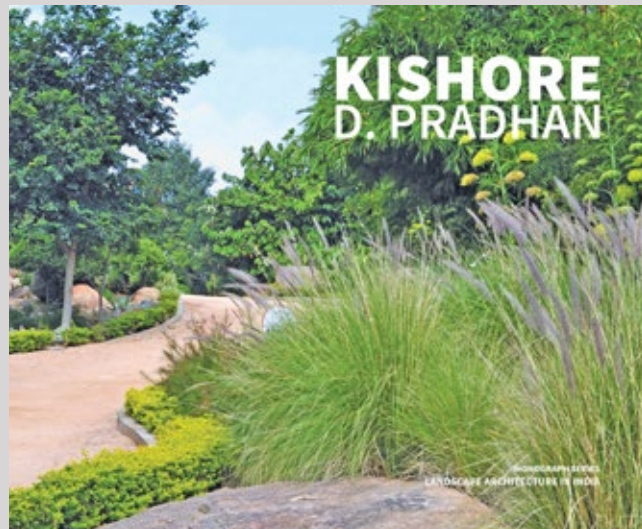
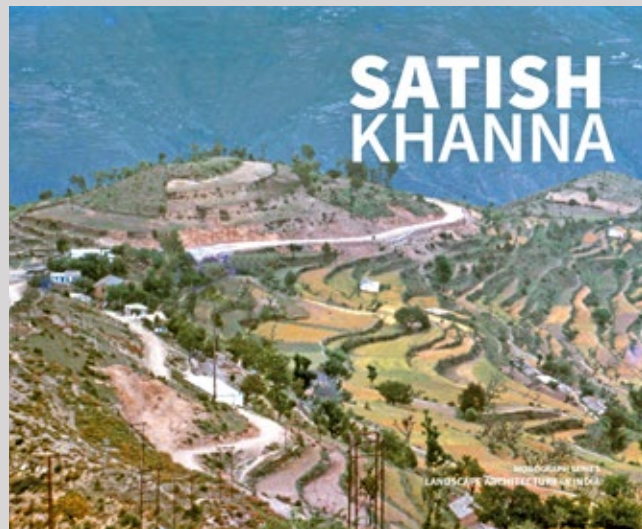
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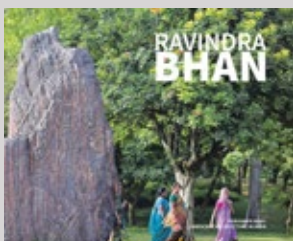
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REFRESHINGLY ASITLY RISHORLY



The monographs in the series profile design philosophies, works and experiences of eminent landscape architects, who have practiced in the field of landscape design and architecture. They explore their significant role and contribution in giving a sense of identity, meaning and purpose to the discipline in academics and practice in the country.

ALSO IN THE SERIES [PUBLISHED IN 2020]



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