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Year: 2022

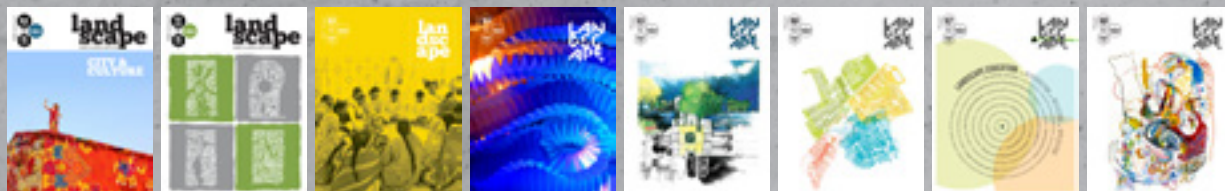
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editorial

A special feature in the Journal celebrates the idea of hope in one of the most conflict ridden regions of the world, Afghanistan. *Jon Coe's* contribution in the area of policy and projects in rural realms are inspirational lessons for spatial designers, who intend to work as facilitators with learning from traditional wisdom for improving livelihood opportunities and nature conservation methods for rural communities. Farming finds another

context in the homestead garden in Kerala, where the place becomes a microcosm of a peaceful and happy co-existence of nature and man. The book, *Wandering and Ponderings* by *Shirish Beri*, reviewed by *Manalee Nanavati* reflects explorations of many symbiotic realms across the country where the author captures the spirit of a few by his hand-drawn sketches.

In the urban context, nearly a century ago, *Patrick Geddes* called upon revitalizing the urban forms and their functions while working on a local level, with communities and public participation. *Patrick Geddes in India*, reviewed by *Prashanta Bhat*, brings to forefront many of his ideas in context of traditional parts of urban India under colonial rule. Chandigarh, a site in the modern history of the country is the subject of another feature by *Rajnish Wattas* who informs about its natural character and integration in the master plan, which has given another dimension to city's relationship with nature. *The Architecture of Nothingness*, reviewed by *Rajat Ray*, tries to connect philosophy, architecture, art and design, social and cultural realms in many interesting ways, exploring ways of discovery, perception, at times as sources of inspiration and finally, as elements of integration.

We are happy to share that with the new year 2022, the Journal is coming back to production of its printed copies. These are exciting times for all of us here. Many thanks for all your love and support.



—EDITORS
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COVER | 'LIFE OF STILL LIFE' by artist Priyanka Bardiya [10" x 14" | Water color, pen and ink, collage and oil pastels].
From 'Classmates' exhibition curated by IGA Galleria, Pune



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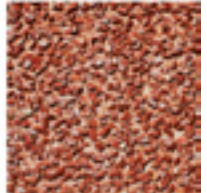


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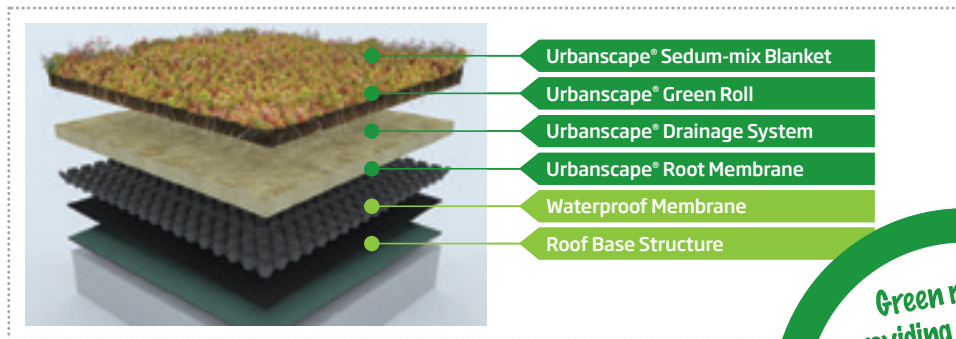


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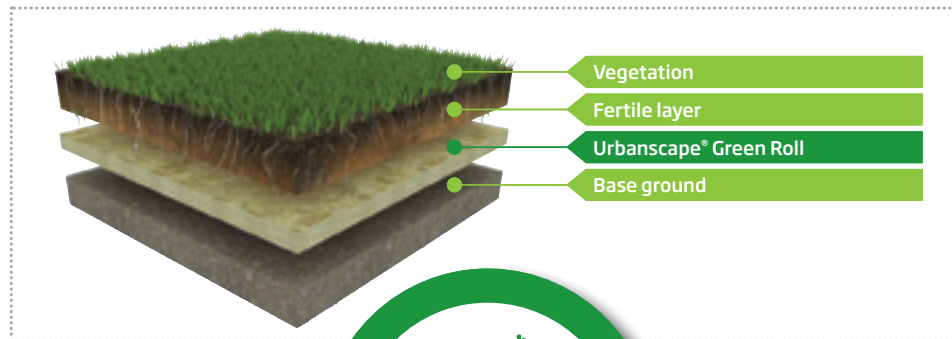
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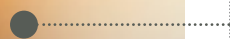
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TRIBUTE



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ARCHITECTURE AS A PERFORMING ART

REMEMBERING ASHOK DHAWAN [1942-2021]



PHOTO COURTESY | Iftikhar-mulk Chishti

Ashok Dhawan, urban designer, architect, interior designer, actor, traveller, photographer, gymnast, swimmer and much more, passed on in Delhi in June 2021 at a private hospital due to post-Covid respiratory complications. For a man who was known for his sports activities this was an unfortunate way to go. Covid-19 had played havoc with all of us without recognizing any boundaries as pandemics are known to do. The fact is that Ashok died in difficult times.

Magic of Ammonia Printing

The fact also is that Ashok was born in difficult times in Delhi in 1942 when cholera hadn't yet been eradicated, World War II was on, the freedom struggle was at its peak, leading up to Independence, the Partition and riots. Ashok remembered witnessing the violence from the window of his family home located in Connaught Place. Exposure to the Robert Tor Russel designed mixed-use neighborhood of that time must have left a lasting impression as he had fond memories of spending his growing-up years playing in the vast expanse of the Central Park, the covered corridors of the inner and outer circles and the traffic-free, tree-lined radial avenues. Coupled with it, as luck would have it, next door to their flat was located the architecture firm, Kothari & Associates. Impressionable Ashok was mesmerized by the magic of the blueprinting process, unknowingly marking the beginning of his fascination with architecture. It may seem ironic that many decades later, when we started working together around the time of transition to digital printing, Ashok was to gift me his 'imported' ammonia printing machine, now a part of my precious memorabilia.

PREVIOUS PAGE |
PHOTO CREDIT: Chelsea Audibert
on Unsplash

All Rounder in the Making

Modern School, built just a decade before Ashok's birth on one of the radial avenues of Connaught Place at a walking distance from where he lived, was a co-educational experimental school with a liberal and indigenous character imparting an all-round education. Ashok was lucky to be admitted there as this was where his innate abilities were honed, his talent for swimming and gymnastics came to the fore, his love for photography and acting evolved. His interest in serious academics was kindled when with the help of the legendary Principal M.N. Kapur he was awarded a full scholarship around 1952 after the untimely demise of his father. Fighting adversity, it was at Modern School that he came into his own and struck long-lasting friendships.

The Crit Room Boys

Kimti Lal Sharma, a neighbor in Nizamuddin East where Ashok's family relocated, introduced him to the School of Planning and Architecture [SPA] where the former was already studying. Ashok had fond memories from his student days spent at the Walter George designed austere campus in Kashmiri Gate. About ten years ago, on an accidental rediscovery visit with him to the now dilapidated campus, his nostalgic excitement about his days well spent there was palpable, as the actor in him started running around the upper central courtyard balcony reliving his carefree days chasing young damsels. He remembered his theatre rehearsals and first lessons in architecture learnt under the mentorship of teachers like P.N. Dutt, V.B. Vaidya, K.D. Mistri and in the company of his best friends Ashok Tandon, Sumit Gosh and Swadesh Aneja who along with him were known as 'Chowkadi' or 'Crit Room Boys'. He graduated in 1963 winning the Graduation Thesis Award, which coincidentally, found a place of pride in 'Metamorphosis: *koi louta de meray beetay huey din*' ['if someone could bring back my bygone days'], an installation that I had the opportunity to put together thirty years later as part of the golden jubilee celebrations of SPA.

The Morning After

Two years later, after training under the senior N.K. Kothari of Kothari & Associates, he won a scholarship to the Yale School of Architecture, resulting in his first international exposure. With 'flower power' on the rise, he entered Yale at a time of exciting transition when post-modernist Charles Moore had just taken over from Modern/ Sarasota/ Brutalist Paul Rudolph as the head of the school. He was lucky to find sympathetic mentors who had a life-long impact on him. Ashok would remember fondly the years he spent at Yale, a 350-year-old historical Ivy League university where he enjoyed the liberal cross-disciplinary atmosphere, taking photography as his minor, spending time photographing activities at the Drama School. Curiously, many years later in 2001, we got to celebrate his Yale years together by exhibiting a tongue-in-cheek photographic installation of his from those days titled 'The Morning After', at 'Converging Diversions', a cross-expression art show that I had the honor to curate at the Visual Art Gallery, New Delhi.

God is in the Details

Taking a break from his work in the US in 1971, after almost a year-long stay at an archeological site in Israel and his marriage back home in Delhi, Ashok spent another four years in the US gaining hands-on experience working in Baltimore and Philadelphia. The high point of his almost decade-long working experience there was his two-year stint at the prestigious New York-based firm of I.M. Pei and Partners. His passion for materials and how they get resolved in the form of an architectural detail came to him thus. Many years later, visiting together with him the I.M. Pei-designed Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong, I realized that it was almost like a pilgrimage for him. The reverence with which he touched, moved his hands and felt the architectural details of the building was moving.

Becoming Familiar with the Unfamiliar

The world turned a bit topsy-turvy in the mid-seventies with the oil crisis. Besides everything else, it put in the hands of the oil-rich middle eastern Shahs and Sheikhs petro-dollars from which some small change found its way into design-based creative activities. This was good news for architects from all over the world, east and the west. They lined up for commissions and jobs. Ashok made good use of this opportunity by working first in Iran, then Kuwait and finally in Saudi Arabia. His American education and training came in handy for landing him lead roles in offices and establishments in these locations. This nine-year-long Middle East stint exposed him to the wealth of the unfamiliar vernacular design of that geo-cultural region, particularly Iran, something that was to find resonance in his later work.

Practice of Mentoring and Healthy Competition

Oil-based geo-politics was changing rapidly, with a revolution in Iran and war in Iraq, it was time for Ashok to return home to a changed India. He returned in 1985, settling down to a practice combined with teaching at SPA, his alma mater where he continued to be a visiting professor till 2000, mentoring students with joy. Unlike most architects today, Ashok, with a firm belief in the institution of democratic design competitions, participated in many, in some taking part independently, some with other practices and one in partnership with an international consortium. This didn't always translate into winning commissions, but it won him awards and of course, visibility.

Practice of the Part and the Whole

Around the same time in 1987, along with his Nizamuddin friend Kimti Lal Sharma, by now an urban planner, and Satish Khanna the landscape designer, he set up Dhawan Khanna Sharma Pvt. Ltd [DKS] to work on the design of the New Tehri Township at Garhwal, for which they had won the commission.

This environmentally-sensitive project went on for more than ten years, culminating in their receiving the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in 1997 followed by a nomination for the Aga Khan Award in 1998. In addition to its core office, which was probably one of the largest in town then, DKS for the first time partnered with young boutique practices to design smaller parts out of the whole, a rather uncommon practice for which they received appreciation.

Practice of Thematic Narratives

It was sometime in the early 1990s that Ashok was invited to design the first Indian restaurant in China and thus started his foray into the world of interior design under the label Dhawan Chishti Architects. That was when our almost twenty-year-long, off and on professional engagement began. The projects were restricted to restaurant design in Shanghai, Dongguan, Delhi and Mauritius. Despite the fact that out of ten projects designed, only three were executed, it was a delightful experience to partner with him on these narrative-based thematic projects. Conceiving, developing and executing these special schemes with Ashok was a joy. Our professional association was marked by mutual respect for each other's capabilities, courage to think out of the box and having fun cracking problems together. In spite of being ten years senior to me, never was there an unpleasant moment between us, never a dispute or any rancour, a remarkable feat in this day and age.

Practice of International Liaisons

A unique dimension of Ashok's professional life was his special knack for forging professional collaborations with international architectural practices in need of local professional support. His decade-long experience in various American offices at various levels combined with his other qualities served him well in taking on the role of local architect for international practices, which he elevated to a fine art, something not many local practices have been able to do. This resulted in him helping design, manage and execute prestigious projects for well-known international practices such as Safdie Architects [Boston], A.M. Stern [New York], HOK [Orlando], H2L2 [Philadelphia], FORREC [Toronto], Bose International [Orlando] and Studio U+A [New York/ London]. His insistence on his involvement with the project right from its inception through the design development stages won him their respect and added value to these projects.

Practice of Passion

In tandem, his umbrella practice under the label of Ashok Dhawan Architects continued to work on architectural projects of varying scales and complexities such as the Hudco Tower in Bhikaji Cama Place, Vatika Resorts in Sohna, private residences including his own family residence-cum-office at Nizamuddin East for which he received the JK Architect of the Year Award in the Residential

Ashok Dhawan

March 07, 1942–June 10, 2021

EDUCATION**School**

Modern School, New Delhi [1958]

GraduationSchool of Planning & Architecture,
Delhi University [1963]**Post-graduation**Yale School of Architecture,
Yale University [1967]**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

Kothari & Associates, New Delhi [1963–65]

I.M. Pei & Associate, New York [1967–69]

H2L2, Philadelphia [1972–74]

Worked in Baltimore [1974–76]

Semka Consulting Architects/ Engineers,
Tehran [1976–1979]

Kuwaiti Engineer's Office, Kuwait [1980–82]

Royal Commission, Saudi Arabia [1982–85]

PERSONAL PRACTICEAshok Dhawan & Architects, New Delhi
[1985–Ongoing]

DKS Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi [1987–97]

Dhawan Chishti Architects, New Delhi
[1992–2012]

Category in 1994. He was supported ably in this multifaceted endeavor by Shabnam, his professional colleague who worked with him for over 30 years with exemplary dedication, rising to become a partner in recent years. The practice was marked by a high degree of professional integrity, passion and hard work. A reading of his varied body of architectural work reveals the influences imbibed from the Iranian vernacular and the Western high-tech vocabularies on the one hand and his preoccupation with pure geometry, local materials and fine detailing on the other.

All the World's a Stage

Having been so engrossed with the architectural profession in so many diverse ways, it did come as a bit of a surprise to see Ashok devote a good chunk of his time particularly through the last decade or so to theatre, his second or who knows, maybe his first love? From the casual annual Modern School theatrical productions that he participated in religiously, it didn't take him long to transform himself into a professional actor of great range and virtuosity. So much so that he became a much sought-after actor in town in his age group. For me personally, having taught the theory of design through theatre, it was a pleasure to see him on stage enjoying himself thoroughly, perhaps reminding himself and us all that the world is but a stage where we come, say our two bits and move on. As he has, leaving us fumbling for our lines.

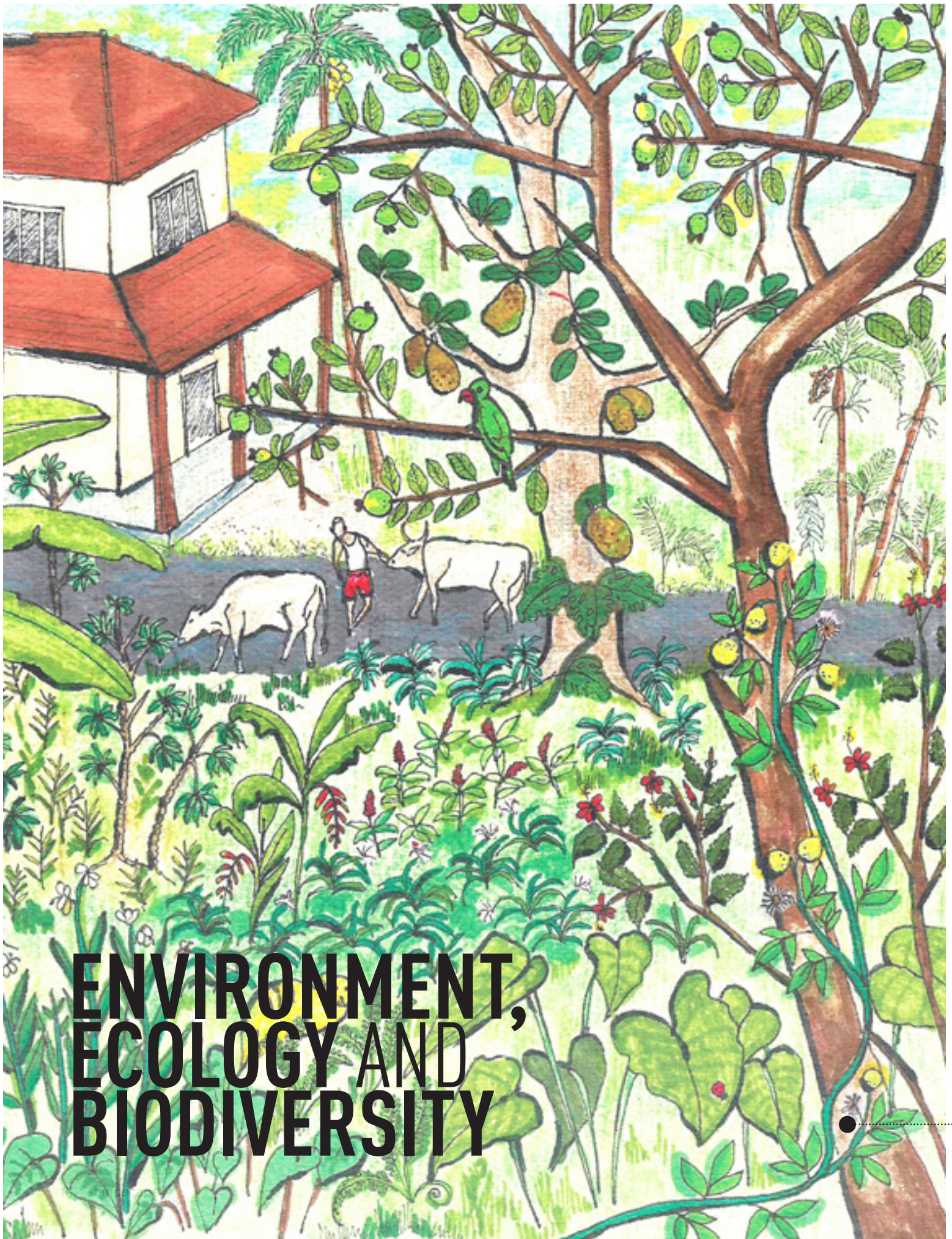
Travels here and Beyond

He would often reminisce how Cyrus Jhabvala, the HOD Architecture at SPA, after responding to his news of having won a scholarship to Yale with a wry, 'So what?' advised him instead to make use of such opportunities to travel, to see the world. Travel he did, with a passion and exhibiting a childlike curiosity that was in fact his second nature. He travelled the globe extensively, visiting almost all the continents, including exotic places such as Mongolia, Iceland, Chile, Cambodia and Lake Manasarovar before embarking on his eternal journey beyond.

Alvida [Farewell]

Coming a long way from the difficult times of his birth to the difficult times of his death, he lived a full life with courage and curiosity. I will remember him for having touched the lives of his family and friends in his unique way. I will remember him for his distinctive eloquence and his sartorial elegance; for his *joie de vivre*, love for good food and a hearty laugh, love for well-made objects and pretty faces. I can hear him say the lines to his 'lady love' from one of his early plays that he would often repeat, '.....*Kitna haseen mousam hai, chalo dur kahin ghoom kay aatay hain.....*' ['such a beautiful weather, let's go for a walk somewhere far off'], except this time around we know that he will not return!





ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY



Deepthi C.B., Landscape Architect
| deepthi_cb@yahoo.co.in



THE WHOLESOME UNIVERSE

MY GRANDFATHER'S HOMESTEAD GARDEN

A small home garden, with its healthy biodiversity, becomes a wholesome universe, imparting many environmental and cultural values along with being a multifunctional living space with rich symbolic meanings.



Why do we find nature so attractive and rejuvenating?

I believe it is the comforting melodies and harmonious coexistence of all the elements which does the wonders, making one feel relaxed & free, where that moment of tranquillity just belongs to you. Our gardens are often an indirect attempt to bring these experiences and emotions closer to our homes.

As kids, our favourite part of the summer vacation was to visit our grandparent's house and homestead garden in the village of Venmony, located on the eastern elevated region of Alleppey district, Kerala. Our house had a two acres of land in which my grandfather had developed a functional yet aesthetically appealing homestead garden. It is a traditional garden practice of using the adjoining land area for cultivation of trees, vegetables and flowers for worship along with livestock, poultry and fish for the basic family needs. This made our houses self-sufficient and nurtured a unique biodiversity in itself.

Environmental Hub

The garden being nestled far away from the busy city life was a perfect place to contemplate- a garden at peace, yet full of surprises and paradoxes. It used to embark my imagination: resulting into interesting thoughtful ideas and inventiveness. The garden grew out of everyday practise with minimal interventions and matured with time: birds-animals-plants-people harmoniously interacting with each other and forming a civilised wilderness.

PREVIOUS PAGE |
HOMESTEAD GARDEN
Crops, fruits, flowers and faith

These interactions made us feel its smell, texture, seasons, fragrance, music, intricacies, and the dynamic qualities, thus creating a symphony beyond visual. The most magical aspect of the garden was the plant composition – it looked natural and rustic, yet tamed. The air would always be filled with fragrance of flowers of jasmine, *cananga* tree, rare varieties of *Ixora* or the *Plumeria* tree.

It was a garden where the edible plants coexisted with its natural ‘neighbours’ and once its life cycle is complete, they would naturally decompose in the soil and return back to nature. At times, attempt would be made to ‘clear’ the garden off weeds, but in the humid weather and with the intermittent rains, they would sprout back with even greater vigour. That is the beauty of nature: how much ever you try to control it, it finds its way out and heals itself.

Productive Landscape

My grandfather had efficiently planned the land by placing the tall trees like teak, jackfruit or breadfruit trees along the periphery as wind breakers and rest of the garden was planted with diverse varieties of fruit trees [mango, water apple, guava, coconut, rambutan, cashew, papaya, starfruit] and spices [nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper, cardamom, all-spice tree, coffee]. The intermittent spaces were used for the cultivation of seasonal vegetables [beans, tomato, chilly, brinjal, ladies finger, gourd varieties] and tubers [tapioca and yam varieties]. He knew in which season which plant would flower, pollinate and fruit, best suited for our health – the *sattvic* food.

birds-animals-plants-people harmoniously interacted with each other and formed a civilised wilderness. these interactions made us feel its smell, texture, seasons, fragrance, music, intricacies, and the dynamic qualities, thus creating a symphony beyond visual.

THIS PAGE |

CIVILIZED WILDERNESS

Paddy fields, and

Biodiversity in water



they were my early lessons on sustainable design. the design was connected to all life forms of nature and the purpose was to consume within one's basic needs.

THIS PAGE |
IN HARMONY
*Edible garden, and
Dense forest around the kavu*

The adjacent land was used for cultivating rare varieties of rice, being the staple food of the state. The manure used was organic and often ducks were used to further eat away the pests.

A food chain existed in the garden and there was so much biodiversity in just a square foot of the land. They taught me that designing cannot be perceived in isolation. Each entity, layers and value system should be seen as a whole.

Livestock rearing was an integral part of the household. The cows apart from meeting the needs of milk and other dairy products also would provide us with manure which would either go to the biogas plant or be used as fertiliser to the crops. The straw from the paddy cultivation would be used as fodder for the livestock. No product ever got wasted; instead it would be used for a well-balanced sustainable lifestyle approach.

These gardens were thus an inspiring example of the close harmony and inter relationship between land, flora, fauna, climate, livelihood and culture. They were my early lessons on sustainable design. The design was connected to all life forms of nature and the purpose was to consume within one's basic needs.



The Sacred

The back area of the garden had a sacred grove. In ancient times nature was worshipped and idolized and often symbolized as animal or tree figures. When any natural calamity happened, it was assumed that she was angry and hence was offered food and prayers. Our sacred grove had a stone idol as a deity and a simple lighted lamp situated amidst a thick and dense forest patch.

These sacred groves played an important role in the water harvesting and soil conservation. As people were prohibited from felling trees and even removing a twig was considered as taboo, these groves survived over the years in their pristine state. They were rich abodes of rare medicinal plants and herbs. This reminiscence of an ancient ritual helped in moulding us with the culture and beliefs of the land.



LEFT |
PEACEFUL
Coexistence
with nature

this multi-functional explorative usage of spaces, where all the age groups would interact, imbibed in us the virtues of oneness, sharing and gratitude. the garden was not just an exposition of materials, textures or scale, but it was a journey.

Cultural Space

The harvest festival of Onam would bring the entire family together. It marks the end of the Monsoon season and the onset of the regional New Year. The spaces of the gardens would expand to accommodate the 10 days of celebrations and rituals. The family members would collect the garden flowers and lay them in gracious designs on the floor to form the *pookalam* or flower *rangoli*. Afternoons would be spent relishing the wide food spread of *sadyaon* banana leaves and later followed with community building traditional games.

This multi-functional explorative usage of spaces, where all the age groups would interact, imbibed in us the virtues of oneness, sharing and gratitude. A combination of natural and cultural evolutionary processes over the centuries had been the underlying factor of the rich and diverse landscape of the garden thus maintaining a delicate balance between man and nature. The garden was not just an exposition of materials, textures or scale, but it was a journey.



The commonly found weeds in the garden which had great medicinal qualities and hence used as home remedies, and in Ayurveda were:

Giloy [*Tinospora cordifolia*], Kasithumba [*Impatiens balsamina*],
 Cherula [*Aerva lanata*], Nelitali [*Aeschynomene indica*],
 Mullencheera [*Amaranthus spinosus*], Sathakuppai [*Anethum graveolens*],
 Chomara [*Anisochilus carnosus*], Brahmi [*Bacopa monnieri*],
 Snehapullu [*Chrysopogon aciculatus*], Mukkootti [*Biophytum sensitivum*],
 Thavizhama [*Boerhavia diffusa*], Kodangal [*Centella asiatica*],
 Cheruthakara [*Chamaecrista mimosoides*],
 Keezhanelli [*Phyllanthus niruri*], Shatavari [*Asparagus racemosus*],
 and Thottavadi [*Mimosa pudica*]

All illustrations and images by the Author



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URBAN WILDERNESS

CHANDIGARH'S LEISURE VALLEY



In the master plan of the new capital city of Chandigarh, the central low lying, linear and eroded valley at the site was envisioned by Le Corbusier as a city level recreational natural feature “*Valley of Leisure*”. Over a period of time, Leisure Valley has evolved as the main lung of the city. Rajnish Wattas notes its inception and evolution as a natural repository of interlinked spaces offering diverse set of experiences to the citizens of the city.

Preamble

Rapid and dehumanising urbanisation taking place world over, more intensely so in emerging economies like India, driven by impatient capital is snapping man's primordial bond with Nature.

With the catastrophic convulsions wrought by the pandemic, the very nature and identity of the city is under scrutiny. Leading urbanists and city administrators conferred together sometimes back on ways to reconfigure the cities to be more resilient, sustainable and safe from such future onslaughts. However, what has clearly emerged is a rethink on the man-nature compact and their interdependence in urban areas.

Chandigarh, 20th century's utopian 'Garden City' planned on human scale as an ode to the 'Pact with nature' doctrine, stands out as a rare exception. Notwithstanding enormous pressures and manifold increase in city population than planned for — from half a million to nearly 1.3 million and still counting, it has withstood these pressures to continue offering an excellent quality of life nurtured and sustained by its bountiful parks and gardens. The recent pandemic, reaffirmed the need for urban areas to incorporate islands of natural settings, urban wilderness/ forests and retreats for citizens to escape to from the humdrum of high pressure city life.

Attributes of the City Site

Soon after the partition of India, following its Independence from the British rule in 1947 — the province of Punjab was divided into two parts. While the more developed chunk of West Punjab fell into the newly born Pakistan, the less developed East Punjab came to India. As such, not only was the Indian Punjab province saddled with lakhs of homeless refugees, it had also lost its beloved capital city of Lahore. In order to resettle the vast exodus of homeless people and to restore lost Punjabi pride — the Chandigarh project, as the new state capital was conceived.

After an aerial survey, keeping in mind various parameters of connectivity, centrality of location and security from Pakistan border, a suitable site falling in Kharar teshsil of Ambala district was shortlisted, among many other contestants. It was located at the foothills of the panoramic Shivalik hills demarcated by two seasonal rivulets Patiali-ki-rao on the north-western side and Sukhna-choe on the south-eastern flank. Another smaller seasonal rivulet called N-Choe cut through the heart of the 114 sq. km area to be developed as the planned city. A gentle slope from north-east to southwest of the site ensured easy surface drainage for the new city. The site not only had the rivulets but also clumps of mango, *jamo*, *kikkar*, *palash* and date palm trees amidst farmlands and small hamlets blessed by the skyline of the resplendent blue Shivalik hills with the jagged peak of Kasauli as a prominent feature.

MAYER'S MASTER PLAN

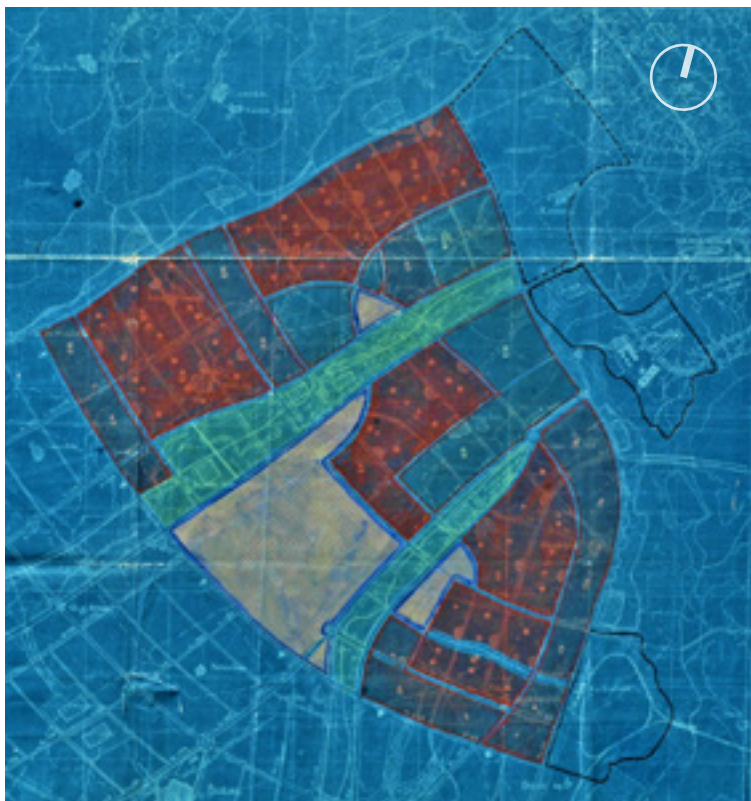
Based on module of neighbourhood unit ['Superblock'] placed along curvilinear roads, Albert Mayer proposed a fan-shaped master plan for the city of Chandigarh. The basic location of the Capitol, City Centre, a linear parkland are sited nearly on same positions as seen today
SOURCE: Chandigarh Architecture Museum

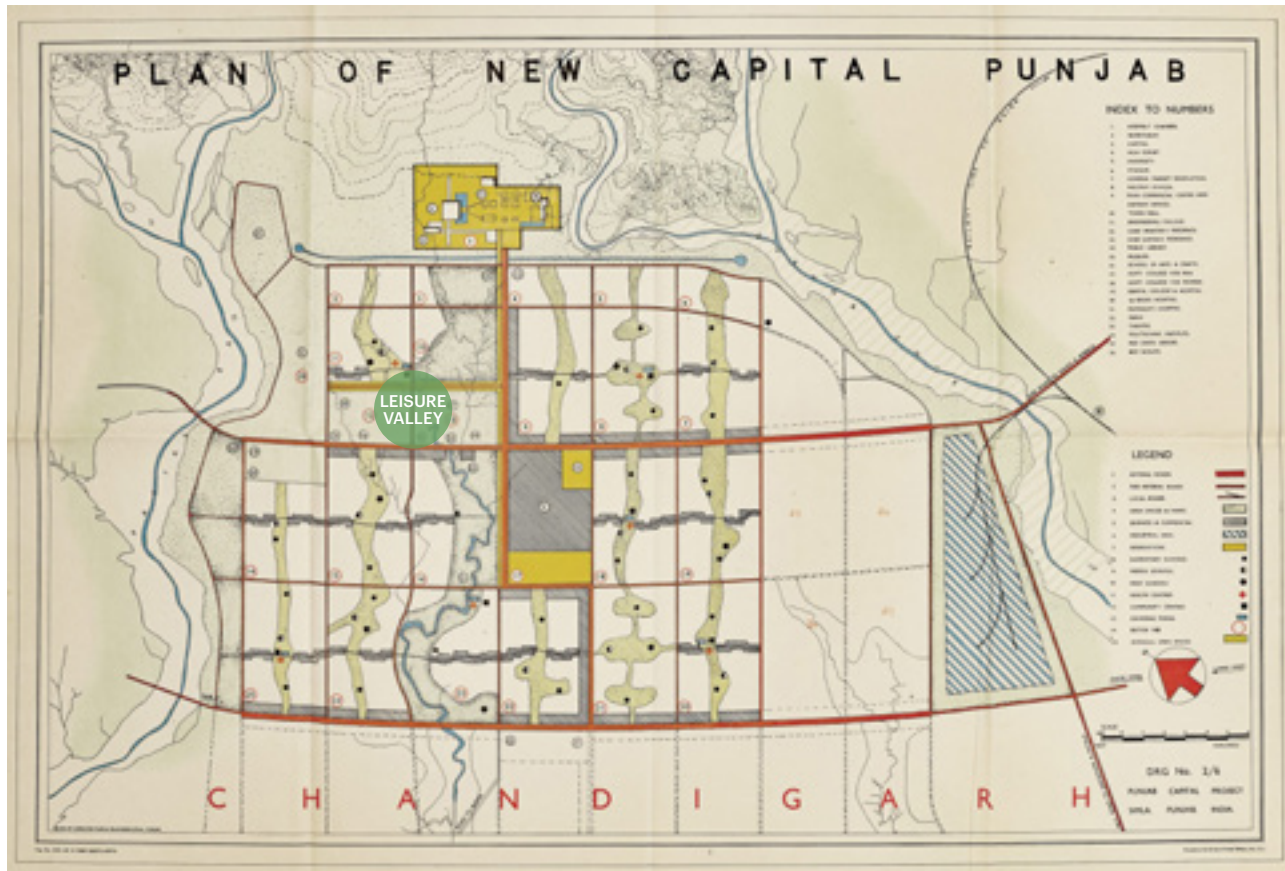
Quest for a Garden City

In a remarkable confluence; the vision and aspirations of the founding fathers of Chandigarh were in complete tandem with the beliefs of its first planner Albert Mayer initially chosen for the project. It was visualised on the core values of a 'Garden City' as its key aspirational goals, right from seeding of the idea to the realisation. Conceived by Ebenezer Howard in 1898 the objective of the 'Garden City' was to create self-sufficient towns with a maximum population of 20,000 to 30,000 people. Howard managed to get two such cities — Letchworth and Welwyn

— built in England; and in the United States the suburb of Radburn in New Jersey and some 'Green Belt' towns, which later became catalysts for urban theorists.

Albert Mayer's masterplan for Chandigarh recommended "open spaces, green spaces, good light and good view in our homes and offices." He also made a strong case for providing a "greenbelt of forest, agricultural land, parks and golf courses for new towns because it limits the ultimate growth of the towns to indefinitely sprawl". The new capital was to be a more reposeful setting for urban life, "a complete escape from the rush of cars, the movement of crowds and the uproar of the street characteristic of the industrial city". His layout plan therefore spread out between the natural borders of the two seasonal rivulets: Patiala-Ki-Rao and Sukhna-choe conceptualised a 'Central Park' like continuous parkland along the third seasonal rivulet N-choe cutting through the heart of the fan-shaped layout proposed.





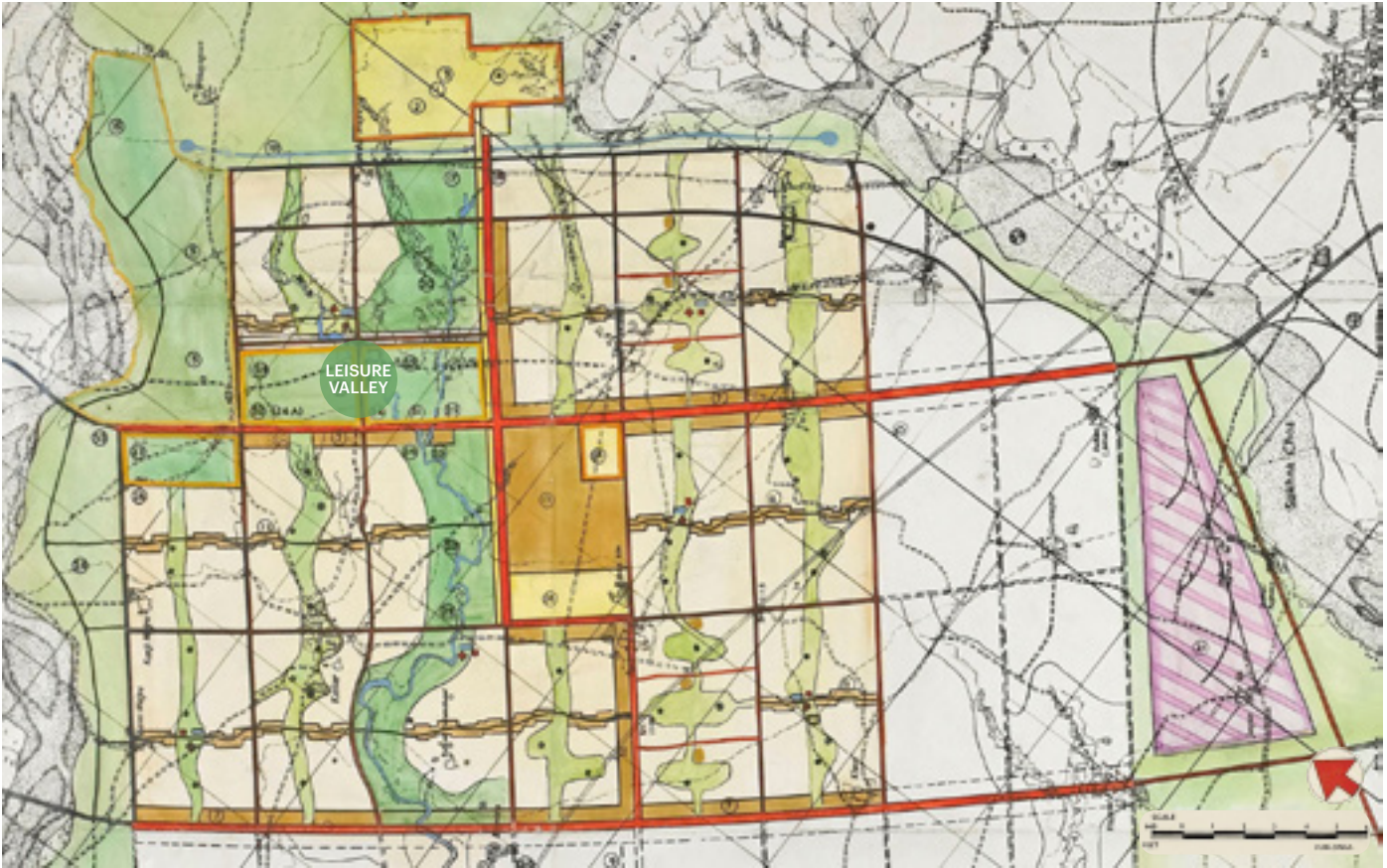
But with the tragic death of Mathew Nowicki, a close associate of Mayer for the Chandigarh project, he was not in a position to continue, and soon replaced by the Swiss-born French architect-planner Le Corbusier.

THE NEW CAPITAL
Plan of Chandigarh as proposed
by Le Corbusier
 SOURCE: fondationlecorbusier.fr

Corbusier too in his layout plan for Chandigarh created a marvellous natural feature from the existing eroded valley on the site along the N-Choe. Instead of levelling out the eroded depression, he decided to turn it into a recreational feature calling it the 'Valley of Leisure' [Leisure Valley]. This would constitute a major part of the city's overall function of 'care of body and spirit' as enunciated by Corbusier.

The Leisure Valley

This 8km long linear valley is 3-6 metres deep and 300 to 600 metres wide with natural undulations, and a rivulet passing through in the heart, was an ideal natural feature to be developed into a string of theme garden interspersed with natural retreats and 'wilderness' with groves of trees laid out in an organic geometry. It simulated urban wilderness, where at a number of low points, one ceases being connected to the skyline of the city — only to be blessed by the jagged skyline of the majestic Shivalik hills visually. The meandering pedestrian pathways are full of serendipity and hidden wonders — where chance encounters happen with beautiful birds — both residents and migratory! Besides spotting a rare woodpecker or a kingfisher you may be also dazzled by a silk cotton tree — the harbinger of spring in the city in the month of March.



LEISURE VALLEY

Leisure Valley as indicated in
Le Corbusier's evolutionary layout plan
SOURCE: Department of Urban Planning

On one hand this ensured the preservation of an existing ecological feature of the site, and on the other it provided an opportunity enabling the city residents to move through the heart of the city in a continuous band of various theme gardens. Also this provided an unobstructed vista of the Shivalik foothills to the residents of the south-western end of the city too. As such, the significance of this parkland is not only of environmental and ecological values, but of enormous aesthetic value too. It also provides a unique opportunity for a possible pedestrian link to the Capitol Complex of the city from its south-eastern end.

Besides groves of existing trees on the site, before the city was built; mostly comprising: *gular*, *tali*, *kikkar*, flame of forest [*palash*] and date palms — the new plantation of flowering trees like jacrandas, *kachnars*, silk cottons, golden trumpets and silver oaks were introduced for aesthetic splendour.

The Leisure Valley plays a vital environmental role as most of the storm water discharge and run-off of the city pours into it to be finally discharged through the rivulet. This also enhances the ground water levels and is the oldest feature of water harvesting in the city.



One of the key things done to consolidate the erosion of the rivulet's earthen banks, stone pitching with natural boulders was done to strengthen them. Another step towards checking erosion, was to plant nana-bamboos along the embankments as they are natural soil binders and quick to grow. But care was taken to plant a special species of the bamboos known for their small size limiting their vertical growth. Corbusier also proposed 'glyptic pools' and water falls by damming the N-choe at various points.

LEISURE VALLEY

N-choe rivulet with stone pitching and bamboos on embankments [TOP], and Bridge across N-choe with bamboo groves [CENTRE]



..... **NATURE TAKES OVER**
*An old pilkhan tree
in Leisure Valley*

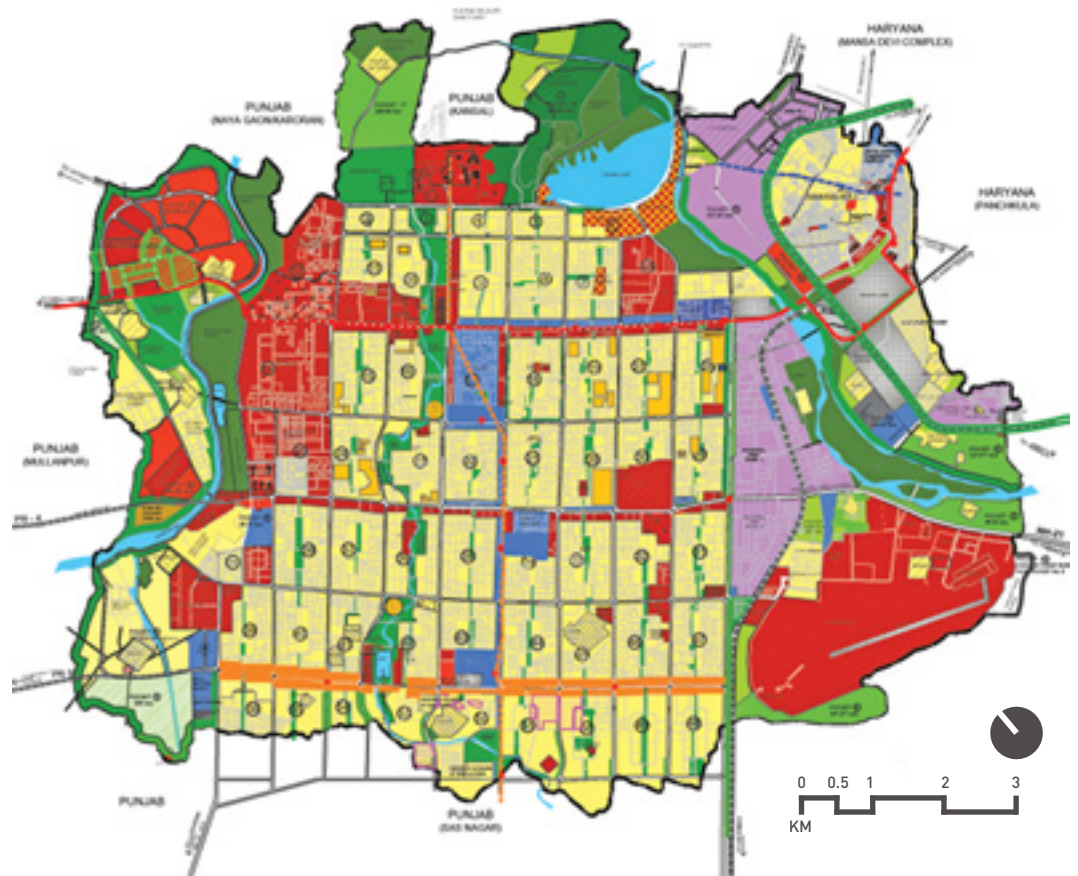
The Wilderness Experience

If you pause to stop by one of the many naturalistically designed foot bridges across the rivulet connecting the meandering pathways for walking, you can completely be detached from the built-form of the city and feel as if you're romping along a hill knoll. The eroded valley was turned into rolling mounds with patches of grassy lawns reminiscent of English countryside, with tree groves for accent. These groves punctuate the more formal row plantation of smaller trees along the pathways for shade.



While some parts of the Valley has prominent thematic displays of plants like the Rose Garden developed in Sector 16 — other parts like Sectors 3 and 10 are more naturalistic and provide experience of being in the wild — with no hints of urbanity visually or in geometry. The organic waywardness of earth forms, plantation patterns and the serpentine rivulet make you forget that you're in the heart of a bustling city of nearly 1.3 million inhabitants.

COLOURS OF NATURE
*A full-bloom kachnar tree
[Bauhinea variegata] in
Leisure Valley*



**PERSPECTIVE PLAN:
CHANDIGARH 2031**

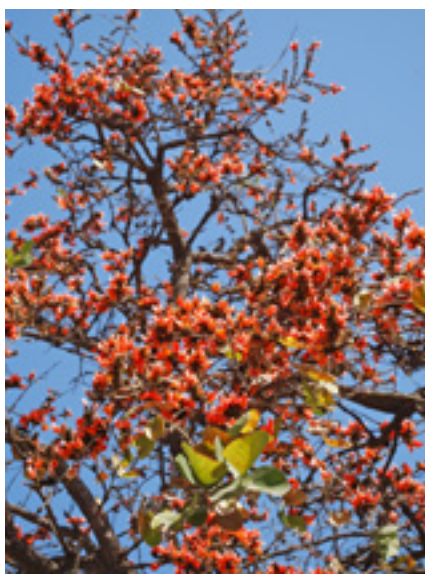
SOURCE: Department of Urban Planning

LAND USE

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Organised Open Space
- Forest
- Agriculture
- Waterbodies

During the Pandemic lockdowns, the numerous gardens and the Leisure Valley became breathing spaces for the people of Chandigarh to nourish their souls by communion with Nature. Children cooped-up in small homes could run in glee and the elders walk around in freedom. The gardens and natural retreats like the Leisure Valley reaffirmed the role of landscaping in making cities more resilient in times of public health crises of cataclysmic ramifications, like the Covid-19 outbreak.

One only hopes that the lessons learnt from Chandigarh's landscaping during the pandemic become catalysts of reimagining our cities.



All photographs by the Author

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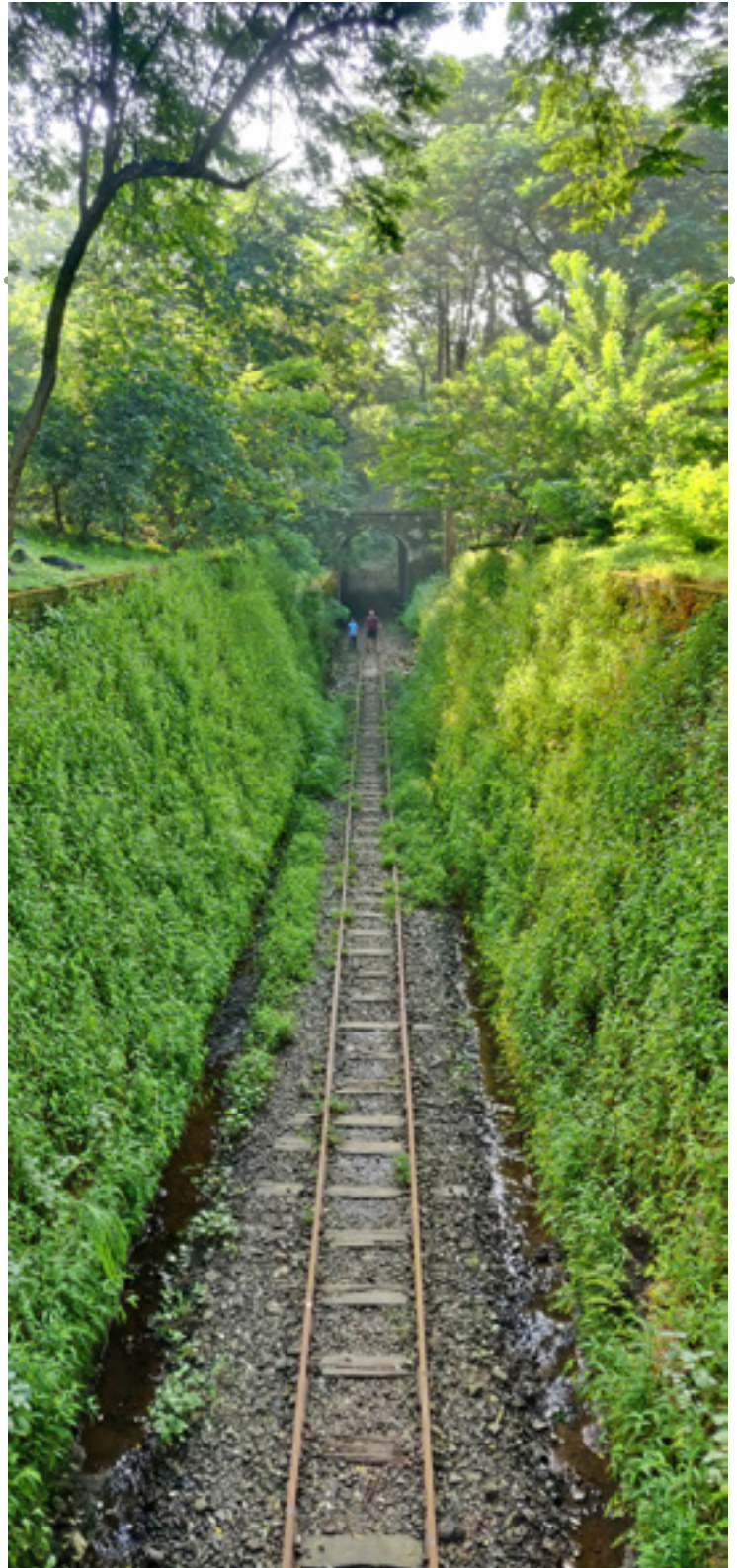
WILDERNESS AT BAY!

A FEW STORIES



The development of Mumbai as a financial-commercial capital of the post-independence India, saw many transitions to its inherent estuarine ecology. Large-scale migration influx contributed to continued efforts to decongest the city and provide the necessary infrastructure. Urban projects over the years, radically transformed the physical landscape of Mumbai and endangered its environment. A massive environmental transformation, in colonial and post colonial times have resulted in razing of the hills, deforestation, silting of rivers and creeks, shrinking of mangroves that has made Mumbai lose its connection to wilderness. Today we are witnessing the impact of all of the above through flooding. With the current prediction of submergence of coastal lands by 2050, one may imagine whether the wilderness of Mumbai's past will be the wilderness of its future. Before becoming the trade hub, Mumbai was known for its wilderness. In present times, it is an unbelievable imagery, but just like any other civilization that flourished due to strong natural forces, Mumbai too has a rich history rooted in its estuarine ecology and diversity of "blue-green" ecosystems. Over time, a large part of the wilderness was lost to development, while some has retained its identity in the growing urban context despite neglect.

The feature is an attempt to put together some of the interesting stories of the wilderness of *Bom Baim* [Portuguese for 'good bay'] where it is celebrated by authors across discipline and language in their own creative and artistic understanding.



[1] A 450-year old sculpture from the Portuguese-era of Ceddes depicting the rich flora and fauna of then Bombay

[2] Map of the stories documented in this article.
Created by Rayhaan Albuquerque

LEGEND

1. The Reclaimed City, Kandivali
2. The Ambawadi City, Mazagon
3. The Toddy City, Dadar
4. Mumbai in a Estuary, Mithi River
5. The Corvidae City, Kala Ghoda
6. The Island City, Colaba
7. Ecological Society, Sewri Mudflats
8. Wilderness in Architecture, Bombay
9. The Exotic City, Rajbhavan and Zoo



[1]

[2]

HISTORICAL TIMELINE mumbai



[3]

Prehistoric period

Pleistocene sediments and tools found near Kandivali in northern side by British archaeologist Malcolm Todd in 1939 indicate habitation since the Stone Age. This proves that the city was drifted from the African subcontinent as Wilderness and stones still resemble the original condition.

The Reclaimed City

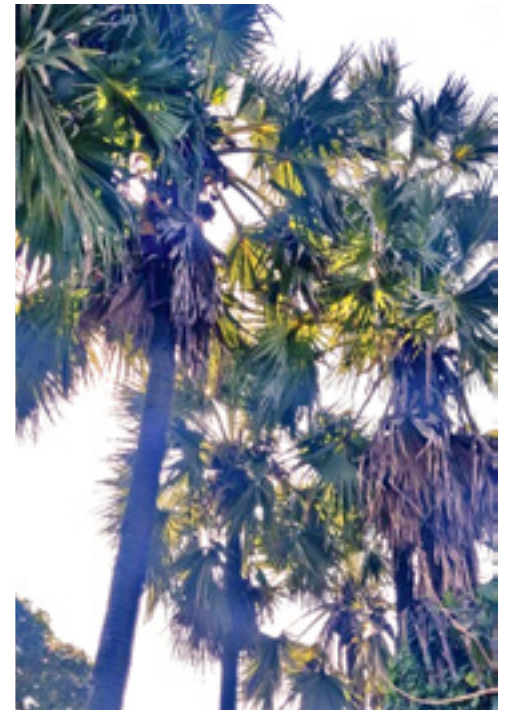
[*City Adrift: A Short Biography of Bombay* by Naresh Fernandes]

Lieutenant-Commander KRU Todd got wind that the prehistoric man had lived in Mumbai when he examined the gravel of the Back Bay reclamation scheme of the 1920s, on the city's southern tip. The Back Bay scheme created 439 acres of new land between Churchgate and Colaba, which had been carted in from Padan Hill in Kandivali. Naresh Fernandes writes about the amateur archaeologist Todd who presented a paper to the Prehistoric Society in 1932, laying out details of rough tools and flakes that seemed to be approximately 300,000 years old, to exist in the hills of Kandivali.

[3] *Neglected rock cut caves of Magathane from Hills of Kandivali*



[4]



[5]

Indigenous dynasties

[3rd century BCE–1350 CE]

In the period, Mumbai was ruled by Satvahana and Rashtra Kingdom, and later by Khilji and Yadava dynasty. This was also the time when many communities such as Pathare Prabhu, Bhandaris and other early settlers came to the region along with Raja Bimb.

The Toddy City

[Shivaji Park: Dadar 28 - History, Places, People by Shanta Gokhale]

The author talks about the earliest settlers of Bombay who were called 'Bhandari'. They were converted into toddy tappers and the area in which they lived was called Bhadarwadadas. The author explains the importance of the sea and the forest near Bhandarwadadas all over old Bombay as most Bhandaris shifted to become *kolis* or fisher folks and began to settle in Gaothans near the sea coast. One such sea coast is Worli and Mahim Koliwada.

[4] *Toddy village of Bombay [then], and [5] Toddy village of Mumbai [now]*



[6]



[7]

Islamic period

[1350–1535]

During these centuries, the city was under the influence of the Gujarat Sultanate and was linked to the Mughals.

[6] [7] "My own Mazagon" book cover and William Hooker's painting of the famous Mazagon mangoe

[8] Hills of Mazagon shown by James Wallace [then], and [9] Hills of Mazagon [now]



[8]



[9]

The Ambawadi City

[My Own Mazagon: The History of a Little Island in the Bombay Archipelago by Captain Ramesh Babu]

The author gives a detailed understanding of the wilderness of Mazagon. He writes that Mazagon was a land of wilderness and indigenous communities such as Bhandari, Agris and Kolis. He mentions the famous story of the favorite fruit – the 'Mazagon mangoe' – which was found in the wilds of Mazagon as the fleshiest and sweetest serving fruit of the royal plate of Mughals royals including Shah Jahan. A place called Ambawadi still exists in the old quaint village of Matharpacady in Mazagon.

Portuguese period
[1535–1660]

This was the time when Garcia de Orta, the first Portuguese settler, settled in the ‘Manor house’. He documented and researched the wilderness of the island for the first time. Much later, a marriage treaty placed Bombay in British possession as a part of Catherine of Braganza’s dowry to Charles II.

British East Indian period
[1660–1857]

This is the time when Bombay was established as a major commercial port. British East India expanded ports and walled the Island to protect them from the threat of Maratha and Portuguese neighbours. During this time, Mumbai’s wilderness possessed threats and many lands began to be reclaimed for the expansion of the city by demolishing various mountains.

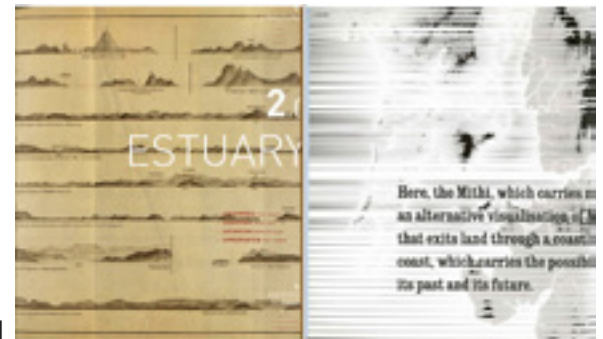
Mumbai in an Estuary

[SOAK: *Mumbai in an Estuary* by Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha]

The book SOAK was envisioned as a research compilation that explored Mumbai’s ravenous history with water in response to the Mumbai floods of 2005 that resulted in collapse of the city’s urban Infrastructure. Being more scientifically empowered, the British built causeways and seawalls that marked a definite division between land and water unlike the more ephemeral understanding of the locals. In the book, the estuarine wilderness of Mumbai is represented by developing cross-sections. Design solutions are suggested rooted in the vernacular wisdom of the locals. Inputs are borrowed from the local knowledge and practices of the fisher folk community.

[10] SOAK: Images from the book with transects along the city

[11] Mithi River near its source at Sanjay Gandhi National Park, and [12] the river near the airport in the centre of the city



[10]

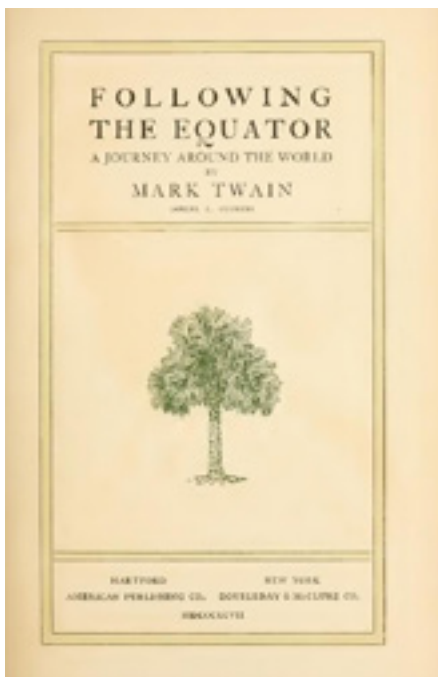


[11] [12]

The Corvidae City

[*Following the Equator - A journey around the world*
by Mark Twain]

On his exploration trip, Mark Twain landed up in Bombay in 1896 and stayed in the Watson Hotel [now Esplanade Mansion] at Kala Ghoda. He explores the creative, diverse, and bustling city life in his book. He describes how he gets disturbed by the Indian crows on his hotel room balcony who, in his views, have taken different avatars of a gambler, a spy, a guard, an informer, a thief, etc. to sustain this long. He is also amazed to see how wilderness in the city is also interlocked in faith, such as the relationship of the Parsis with vultures.



[13]

British Raj period [1661–1947]

Under the British rule, large parcels of land were reclaimed and various infrastructure works were designed for the city – causeways, rails and port.



[14]



[15]

The Island city

[Colaba: *The Diamond at the tip of Mumbai* by Shabnam Minwalla]

Due to its forest cover, wilderness and neglected condition, Colaba was used for tertiary activities such as the location of Bombay city's lunatic asylum, geomagnetic house, etc., by the British. In the book, the author describes the 'bandar gang' of the wilderness of Colaba that prowled around Back Bay then, that the floating police had to be set up to tackle them. She also mentions a dramatic event of 1872, where an English woman, while returning from church, was attacked by a mounted Armenian who shot away her coachman's ears.

[14] An archival painting of a view from Malabar Hill [then], and [15] the view with dense pollution and smog [now]

[16] An image of Sewri Mangrove Forest



[16]

Building an Ecological Society

[Salim Ali for BNHS]

Born in Mumbai [then Bombay], Salim Ali's interest in birds started in this city because of the fall of a yellow-throated sparrow, which led him to create a section on sparrows and birds in Bombay Natural History Society [BNHS], a pan-India wildlife research organization. Salim Ali also took up the condition of Sewri Mudflats — an enthralling wetland which is also a breeding ground for flamingoes — which were declared a protected ecology in 1996.



[17]



[20]



[22]



[18]



[21]

[17] Beautiful carvings of animal heads can be seen on a column base in Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus [CST] ticket counter

[18] A peacock on the elevation of CST railway headquarters building which was constructed in 1874

[19] Monkey stealing mangoes in the elevation the BMC headquarters building

[20] Elephants flank the entrance of Imperial Cinema on Lamington Road

[21] An elephant can be seen on the external elevation of Mangaldas family building in Bhangwadi

[22] An elephant procession – one of the many motifs carved out on the outer walls of Lakshmi building in Fort – is mentioned in a 1938 newspaper article



[19]

Wilderness in Architecture

[*Bombay Gothic* by Christopher W. London

Alice in Bhuleshwar: Navigating a Mumbai Neighbourhood by Kaiwan Mehta]

Bombay Gothic talks about many of the architects who took inspiration from the idea of wilderness in various public buildings of the city. Christopher notes that the buildings of Victoria Station and Municipal building designed by F.W. Stevens as “urban jungle” where one can see many species from the wild – snakes, monkeys, owls, peacocks and peahens. One can also observe depiction of different types of plants in the elevations which add to the native landscape aesthetic of the building. These inspirations from Indian wilderness, including a few from mythology [elephants which also symbolically represent lord Ganesha] were also used by locals while designing their private residences and institutions.

Kaiwan’s *Alice in Bhuleshwar* talks about this significant wilderness being used in buildings’ elevations which show the connection of an individual and his family legacy, and symbol of stature and prosperity the individual enjoyed in the past.

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Post-Colonial Modern India [1947-Present]

Post-independence, the city adopted the modern outlook and on the way of development forgot the indigenous wilderness which saved the city from floods and rising tides in the bay.

All images courtesy of the Authors



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PLANTING AS AN ANCHOR

BENGALURU



The landscape spaces, especially in realty and developer-led projects have increasingly become area-specific, amenity-laden and experience-driven. Within this new reality and set of constraints, where does planting stand? A case example in one of such works illustrates a few ideas.

Located on the outskirts of Bengaluru, a 70-acre low-density residential development has a standard layout with residences along a grid of roads with a central park and smaller pocket gardens. A dry *nala* edges the northern side of the property. There is an attempt to use planting as the main anchor in landscape design in the form of avenues, edges and hedges, clumps, clusters and as feature specimen connecting various spaces while offering experiential qualities. The variation of planting species also contributes to the diversity of the landscape.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT KEY PLAN

- PLOT WITH FRONT AND BACK YARD
- ROADS WITH GREEN EDGE
- PARKS
- COMMON AMENITY LAND
- NALA
- FUTURE EXPANSION



The landscaped stretch adjacent the road carriageway had to unify the street language and tie together varying building elevations. Each lane has its unique set of multilayered planting with flowering avenue trees and shrubs in the green verge, in-between plots and in front of each residence. The tree branches provide nesting space for the birds while their dense canopies offer protection from the larger predatory birds. Nectar from the smaller flowering shrubs and climbers attracts the sunbirds, fruits from the *champaka* tree and other berries nourish the bulbuls and the rose-ringed parakeets feast on the pods of the *spathodea* tree. The population of these small birds and insects has visibly increased over the last few years.

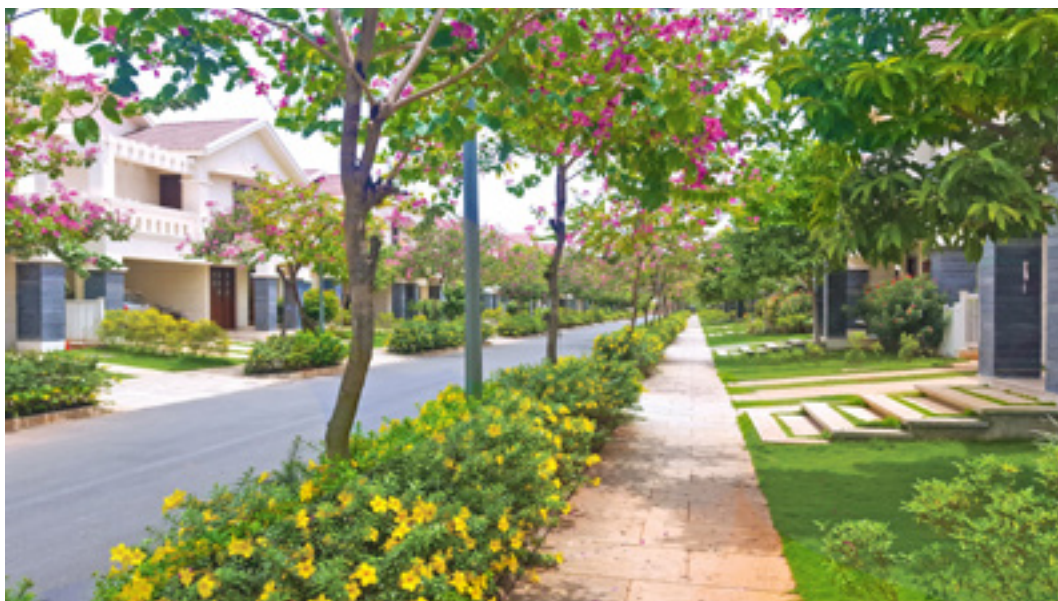
The edge of the Central Park is hemmed in with a thicket of small and medium size flowering trees. While the park amenities and its civil works were done over a course of time, the trees were pre-decided and planted ahead of time and allowed to grow in-situ. Indigenous specimen trees and fruit trees, especially those with simple leaf structure, are planted in pause points along the garden and in-between play grounds and sandpits. A colonnade of *gulmohar* trees as the main spine, cuts diagonally across the park. Pocket orchards, planted in between play courts, are refuge places overlooking the turf. The Banyan Court forms the focal point and entry into the park.

As a nod to the neighbouring villages, an interpretation of the *katte* or community gathering spaces is attempted at the park. The space is designed with male *peepal* tree and female *neem* tree to form an ecological powerhouse with seating steps.

The setback to the seasonal *nala* on the north is developed as a meandering pathway, with large indigenous trees and clusters of smaller fruit trees, interspersed between the existing trees along its bank.

BELOW |
STREETSCAPES
The dense canopy of *Bignonia megapotamica*

RIGHT & BELOW RIGHT |
**CENTRAL PARK
& POCKET SPACES**



RIGHT |
NALA EDGE
The setback to the
seasonal nala developed
as a meandering pathway



CENTRAL PARK & POCKET SPACES

RIGHT CENTRE | An interpretation of the *katte*—community gathering space—with a male *peepal* tree, a female *neem* tree and seating steps is attempted at the park

RIGHT BOTTOM | The play area has a jackfruit, *jamun* and a starfruit tree. Its shade will make the ground cool enough for play during the day. Kids have also started eating the tart starfruits, right off the tree. Mango and *sapodilla* trees also grow nearby.





*Mimosops elengi/
Bakul*

*Cananga odorata/
Ylang-ylang*

*Bixa orallena/
Lipstick tree*

*Butea monosperma/
Palash*

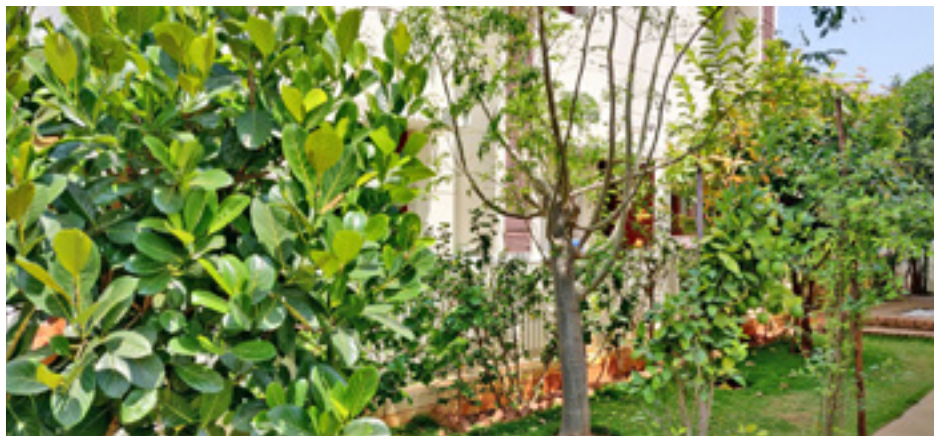
*Mesua ferrea/
Nagkesar*

*Brownea
coccinea*

*Kadamba trees
as the road avenue*

ABOVE |
CENTRAL PARK & POCKET SPACES
Tree edge of the lawn

BELOW LEFT & RIGHT |
RESIDENTIAL GARDEN
The vegetable garden, and the fruit trees: Jackfruit, drumstick, mosambi, pomegranate, guava and mango



At a residential level, many in the community have shunned lawns and have started practicing organic gardening in their backyards with vegetable patches, small fruit trees, indigenous flowering shrubs and climbers, a space as a nesting ground for the small birds.

PLANTING LIST

Large Trees [Avenues]

- Spathodea capanulata*
- Peltophorum ferruginium*
- Anthocephalus cadamba*
- Tabebuia rosea*
- Jacaranda mimosaeifolia*

Medium size Trees [Avenues]

- Bauhinia blakeana*
- Cassia reginera*
- Cassia javanica*
- Cassia fistula*
- Khaya senegalensis*
- Cordia sebestena*
- Bignonia megapotamica*
- Michaelia champaka*
- Azadirachta indica*

Frontyard Trees

- Plumeria varieties*
- Erythrina cristagalli*
- Lagestroemiathorellii*
- Lagestroemia speciosa*
- Filicium decipiens*
- Calistemon lanceolatus*
- Solanum macaranthum*
- Tabebuia argenia*
- Xanthostemon crisanthus*

Flowering Shrubs

- [Road-verge, Edge of plots, and Park]
- Allamanda schottii*
- Hymenocallis littoralis*
- Lemonia spectabilis*
- Galphimigracilis*
- Leucophyllum frutescens*
- Jatropha duckfoot*
- Plumbago capensis*
- Hamelia patens*
- Ixora coccinea*
- Tecomaris capensis*
- Stachyterpeta indica*
- Hibiscus viceroy*
- Hibicus la-france*
- Tabernaemontana coronaria, double*
- Tabernaemontana variegated*
- Lantana sellowiana*
- Buddelia davidii*

Trees in clumps/ rows

- [Open Spaces]
- Delonix regia*
- Saraca indica*
- Ficus lyrata*
- Chorisia speciosa*
- Brownea coccinea*
- Pongamia glabra*
- Alstonia scholaris*
- Millingtonia hortensis*
- Albizia lebeck*
- Terminalia catappa*
- Bixa orallena*
- Nyctanthesabrbror-tristis*
- Markhamia lutea*
- Bauhinia purpurea*
- Thespesia populanea*
- Pterospermum acerifolium*
- Magnolia grandiflora*
- Cananga odorata*

Specimen Trees

- Samanea saman*
- Parkia biglandulosa*
- Ficus bengalensis*
- Ficus religiosa*
- Ficus glomerata*
- Ficus carica*
- Dillenia indica*
- Colvillea racemosa*
- Bombax malabaricum*
- Couroupita guianensis*
- Cassia fistula, white*
- Clusia rosea*
- Messua ferrea*
- [including fruit trees with Mango varieties, Sapodilla, Jackfruit, Jamun, Starfruit Breadfruit, Dwarf Coconut trees]

Creepers

- Quisqualis indica*
- Thunbergia mysorensis*
- Thunbergia alba*
- Gloriosa superba*
- Jasminum varieties*
- Clematis paniculata*
- Passiflora caerulea*



The birder's group of this residential community have recorded more than 30 varieties of birds, regularly sighted, within the complex. The population of garden lizards, frogs and toads, chameleons, squirrels, a variety of snakes and an odd mongoose are also breeding and flourishing in this open space and this perhaps an indicator of the health of the eco-system of the landscape.

ROW WISE FROM TOP LEFT |

Scaly-breasted Munia, Black Drongo, and Indian Robin-Female. Striped Tiger Butterfly, Purple-rumped Sunbird, and Sunbird. Oriental White-eye, Black-shouldered Kite, and Wagtail. Red-whiskered Bulbul, Tailorbird, and Rose-ringed Parakeet. Garden Lizard.

On-site pictures courtesy Birders Group of Bellezea

Key plan and all images courtesy of the Author

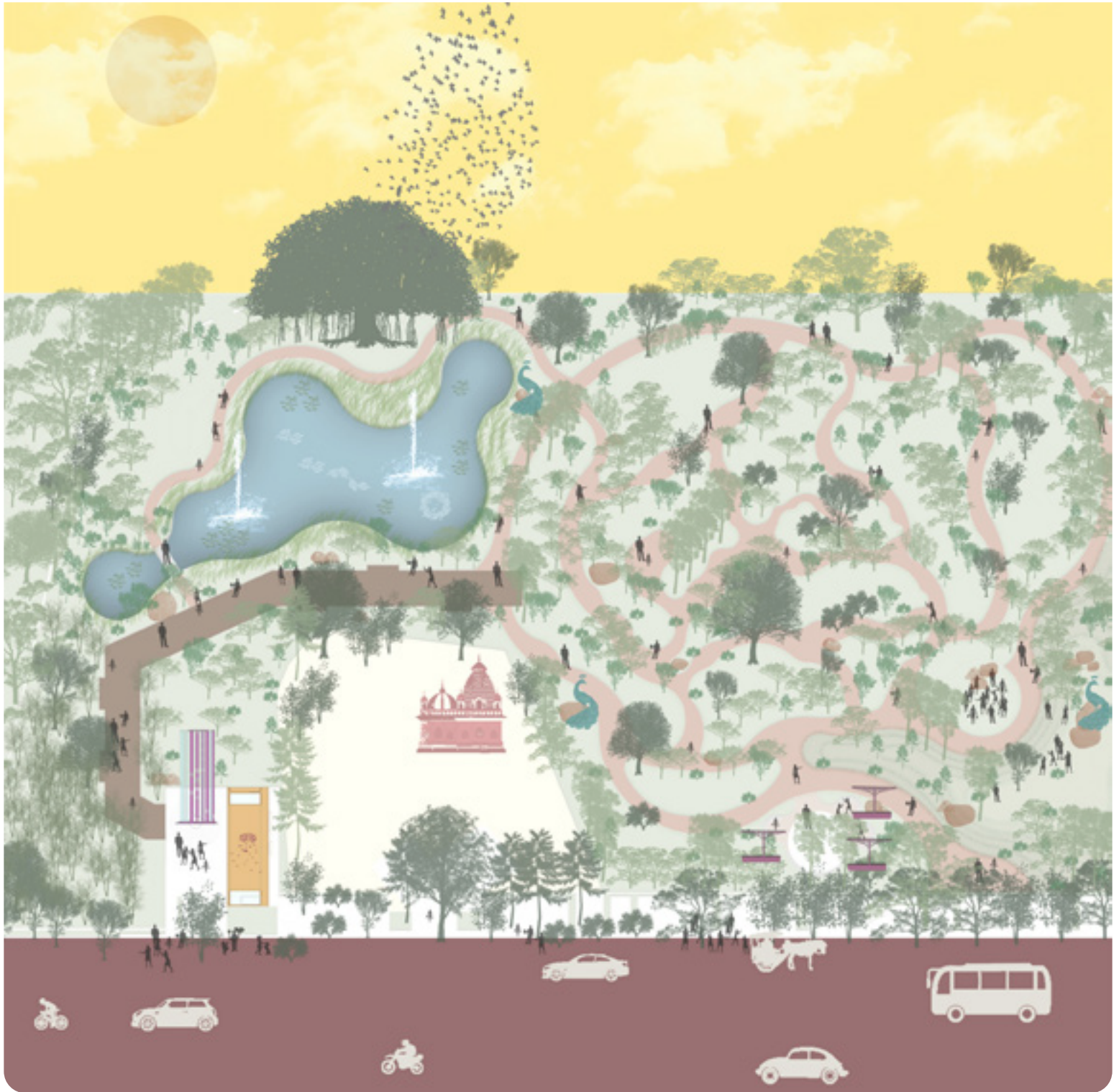


environment, ecology and biodiversity |

Urbscapes, Ahmedabad
| studiourbscapes@gmail.com

URBAN SYMPHONY

AHMEDABAD



The project is an example of rejuvenation of an abandoned public park in dense neighbourhood into a healthy and vibrant public space through CSR. It introduces the idea of bringing wilderness right at the doorstep of the urban residents and offices, by integrating the natural layer with urban needs and functions of public open spaces.

The work for the development of the park in a dense neighborhood, with mixed landuse, was taken up under CSR of Symphony Limited, a corporate group of companies. Not long ago, the site for the park, surrounded by many corporate offices was an abandoned land and a dumping ground with construction debris and garbage, a dried well and a lake. It had no visual and physical access from the surrounding areas.

With many existing parks in the surrounding areas catering to the residential neighborhoods offering ample open areas, grass areas for recreational and congregational purposes, the concept of introducing wilderness was adopted to give the park a distinct character. The entrance, with a subtle gesture with universal accessibility to a plaza, is designed with the sculpture – “*Sangati*” and mural – “*Sayojan*” – artworks. The sculpture denotes Beethoven’s “Symphony 5” into a composition of the natural elements and man while the mural dictates this composition as an ever ongoing process of man and nature. Various public facilities are provided at the entrance for easy access.



EXISTING SITE

Before the project intervention, existing site was a dumping ground for construction debris and garbage. The site also included a few mature trees [such as a banyan tree] which formed an integral part of the new proposal.



CONCEPTUAL SECTIONS

Lake edge deck & trail, and Bamboo plantation & deck



PLAN
SYMPHONY FOREST PARK
BODAKDEV, AHMEDABAD

1. ENTRANCE
2. ENTRANCE PLAZA
3. SECURITY CABIN AND UTILITY BLOCK
4. DRINKING WATER AND TOILETS
5. RETAINED BAMBOO PLANTATION
6. BRICK WALKWAY WITH SEATING
7. BRIDGE
8. WALKWAY ALONG WATER EDGE
9. LAKE
10. ENTRANCE TO DENSE PLANTATION
11. WALKWAY WITH DENSE PLANTATION
12. WALKWAY FROM TALL PLANTATION
13. WALKWAY WITHIN GRASSLAND
14. WALKWAY WITH BOTH SIDE BAMBOO PLANTATION
15. WALKWAY ALONG TALL TREES
16. MOUND
17. AMPHITHEATRE
18. CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA
19. SERVICE GATE
20. PARKING
21. TEMPLE GATE
22. TEMPLE GROUND



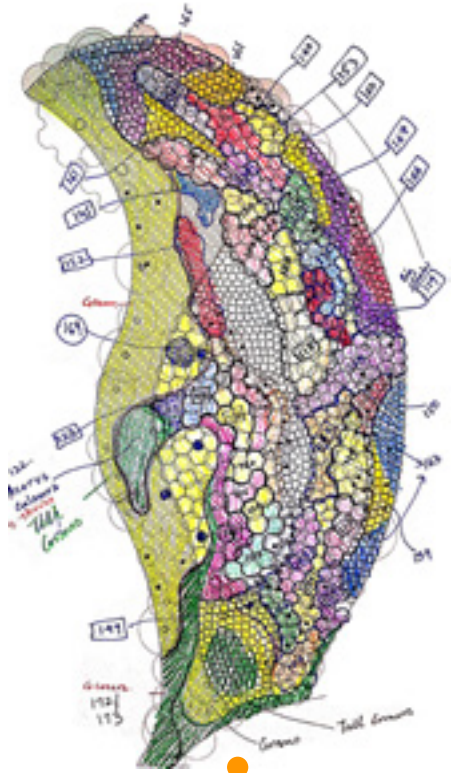
PLANTING

[BELOW] Preparation of planting with soil mixing of cocopeat, rice husk & garden soil, and [RIGHT] Conceptual Planting Plan: Zone 3



COMPLETED SITE

[BOTTOM] Aerial evening view of the Symphony Forest Park



The mapping the existing trees [more than 65 in numbers], topography, soil, hydrology and sun orientation informed various design decisions. Location of existing mature trees guided the alignment of walkways, which link various experiential spaces with views interspersed with large boulders, seating areas and tree groves offering opportunities of relaxation, recreation and discovery.

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A WALK IN THE PARK

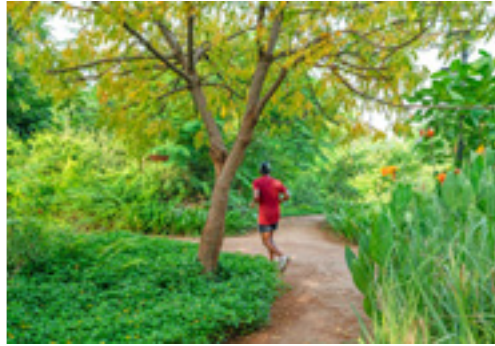
Views of the park including its entrance zone which is designed with a sculpture "Sangati" that denotes Beethoven's "Symphony 5" into a composition of the natural elements and man, and a mural "Sayojan" dictating this composition as an ever ongoing process of man and nature.



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WILDERNESS

The concept of introducing wilderness has been adopted to give the park a distinct character. Its new design interventions incorporate and complement the existing. Extant mature trees guided the alignment of walkways and trails with seating areas and tree groves offering points of relaxation and discovery.



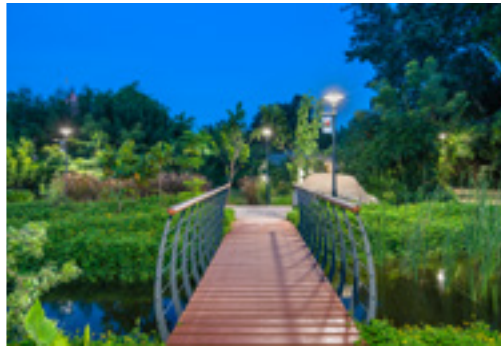
The park has over two hundred and fifty plant species [including few of the rare trees of Ahmedabad], many with mythological and religious values. Around thirty thousand saplings of plant species, trees and shrubs, are being grown to create the experience of a wooded forest. The existing dried lake has been revived and reshaped to increase its surface area and reduce depth and is now home to local fishes and turtles. Altered topography ensures the surface rainwater drains in the existing dried well which now has become a recharge well while an amphitheater in a corner offers a space for congregation.

The park, with its thriving biodiversity, and with home to variety of birds and insect life, is visited frequently by local residents and visitors.

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URBAN OASIS

The park's existing dried lake was redesigned and revived, and is now home to a variety of aquatic life. The park is designed to be used during day time as well as in the evenings. The rejuvenated park is now a forest amidst a concrete jungle.



PLANTING LIST

Trees

Acacia nilotica
Albizia lebeck
Azadirachta indica
Bauhinia blakeana
Bauhinia purpurea
Bombax ceiba
Butea monosperma
Callistemon lanceolatus
Cassia fistula
Delonix regia
Erythrina indica picta
Holoptelea integrifolia
Melaleuca leucadendron
Milletia ovalifolia
Plumeria obtusa
Saraca indica
Spathodea campanulata
Tabebuia argentea
Tecomella undulata
Terminalia bellirica

Shrubs

Arundo donax variegata
Asystasia angustifolia
Asystasia gangetica
Bambusa multiplex
Bambusa ventricosa
Caesalpinia pulcherrima
Cassia biflora
Cestrum diurnum
Cestrum nocturnum
Cynodon dactylon
Dombeya wallichii
Eranthemum roseum
Euphorbia leucocephala
Hibiscus dwarf
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis
Hibiscus syriacus
Ixora coccinea
Ixora dwarf
Ixora parviflora
Jasminum multiflorum
Jasminum pubescens
Jatropha gossypifolia
Ophiopogon japonicus Nana

Pennisetum alopecuroides
Pennisetum rubrum
Pennisetum setaceum
Phyllostachys nigra
Ruellia cuspidata
Saccharum benghalense
Senecio confuses
Stachytarpheta jamaicensis
Stenotaphrum secundatum
Tabernaemontana coronaria 'dwarf'
Tabernaemontana coronaria 'flore pleno'
Thryallis glauca syn. Galphimia glauca
Typha elephantina
Wedelia trilobata

Creepers & Climbers

Allamanda
Bougainvillea selected cultivars
Clematis gouriana
Ipomoea horsfallia
Petrea volubilis
Quisqualis indica
Thunbergia grandiflora

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

PROJECT NAME
Symphony Forest Park, Ahmedabad

SITE AREA
11,000 sq mts

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
Urbscapes, Ahmedabad

TEAM
**Nidhi Parikh, Narendra Mangwani,
 Sagar Prajapati, Himen Vasani,
 and Aakash Panchal**

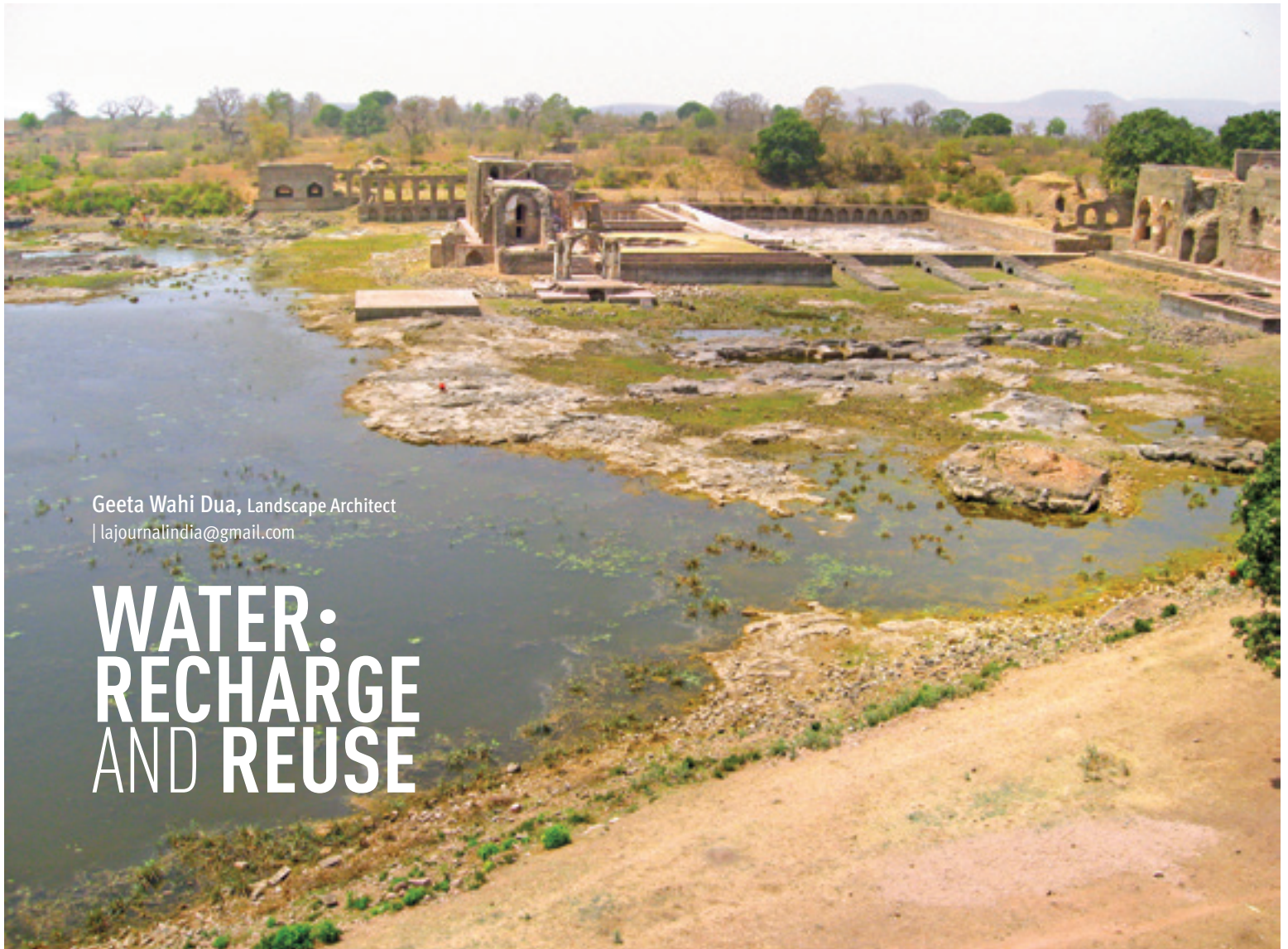
ARCHITECTS
Urbscapes & Modo Design

PHOTOGRAPHS
Inclined Studio, Urbscapes

CLIENT
Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation

CSR
Symphony Limited, Ahmedabad





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WATER: RECHARGE AND REUSE

With the scale and pace of urbanization in the present times in the country, large parts of urban areas across geographies have become impermeable in a very short period. During monsoons, this large unobstructed swath of land – roads, streets, pavements, plazas, and other non-porous surfaces – does not allow water to either slow down or percolate. The quantity of surface runoff as a sheet flow, at a fast speed, generally exceeds the carrying capacity of the drainage infrastructure, which remains in a dire need of up-gradation and maintenance. Moreover, the defunct historic water infrastructure of most of the Indian cities, across geographies, in the form of a network of open channels, drains, canals and lakes remain defunct in the present times and hence has lost its ecological relevance. So, in the absence of any medium for water percolation, there is a negligible degree of groundwater recharge during these wet months, which leads to depleting groundwater levels, especially dry and arid regions.

The subject of urban stormwater management is one of the prime focuses of any discourse on sustainable development. It elaborates on the urgent need to create a balance in dense urban areas, which are always water-stressed - the amount of water being naturally received [through rainfall], available in surface and sub-surface resources like rivers [for use] as against what is needed, used and harvested for various potable and non-potable purposes. The article discusses some of the important aspects.

HISTORY AND ECOLOGY

While keeping the historic spirit intact, it is important to adopt an ecological approach to revive historic waterbodies. Munja Talao in Mandu royal complex, Madhya Pradesh

PHOTO CREDIT: BSD

Slow the Flow

The first and foremost step in urban stormwater management is to create ample opportunities during rains for surface water to slow down and percolate in the ground. The decentralized system may start from the plot/ site/building premises with a substantial flow. Accumulating surface runoff along with directing a part of the rooftop and surface runoff from paved areas to recharge/ harvesting pits of abandoned bore wells while at the neighborhood level, part of the surface runoff from roads and streets can be directed to nearby planting areas of local parks and gardens with a series of bio-retention ponds and open drains/ channels. The interconnected system of historic open drains and canals, if revived by appropriate technologies, can be re-envisioned as catchment areas for the outflow of the surrounding areas.

In large urban centers, the design of roofs as green roofs to manage holistic systems of stormwater management may be explored. Large areas of wide road dividers, roundabouts, areas under flyovers, Metro corridors, and skywalks may act as sites for bioswales and retention ponds. Planning of large-scale public areas and transportation corridors – city roads, bus depots, and large runways of airports - with planting and water harvesting structures can open new possibilities for slowing the flow and hence facilitating recharge of the sub-surface sources and harvesting of surface water for future use.

URBAN STORMWATER

The quantity of surface runoff as a sheet flow, at a fast speed, generally exceeds the carrying capacity of the drainage infrastructure, which remains in a dire need of up-gradation and maintenance. A submerged road after heavy monsoon showers in Ludhiana, Punjab. September 2021

There is a prohibition on unregulated extraction of groundwater in many of the Indian cities located in arid regions with water scarcity. Mandatory regulations for the owners to capture the surface runoff and harvest it for non-potable uses or recharge the groundwater in their properties will further improve the sub-surface water regime.

Treated Wastewater - An Alternative Source

One of the important concerns of urban water management in Indian cities is near total dependency for their water needs on municipal supply, raw surface, and sub-surface water. Most of the potable water needs of a city are met by municipal water supply through piped water systems [available for a limited period] or tankers. Along with it, there has also been extensive use of wells, hand pumps, bore wells, and other underground structures for groundwater. With more of the forest cover now being converted into urbanized land, the situation is going to aggravate in coming times.

Keeping in view the growing population and expanding urban envelope, it is important to explore the option of using treated wastewater for fulfilling water needs. As per a recent study by the Centre for Science and Environment, CSE, at present 80 percent of wastewater, globally, flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused and in India, only 22 percent of sewage generated is treated.



Earlier the concept of water treatment plants was generally related to a high economic and technology preposition, which could only be made and constructed by government agencies, large industrial units, and corporate houses. But now with advancements in technology, various new, affordable, and easy to maintain ways are available to treat wastewater and reuse it for fulfilling various environmental and aesthetic needs in a decentralized manner.

One of the most commonly used systems is the Decentralized Wastewater Treatment System [DWWTS]. It includes collection, treatment, disposal and reuse of wastewater from various sites of residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and other land uses for non-potable uses. It consists of a sequential process of treatment of wastewater through different stages – Preliminary/ Primary treatment through sedimentation and screening followed by Secondary Treatment through biological decomposition of organic matter [aerobic or anaerobic methods] followed by Tertiary treatment through constructed wetlands with native wetland plants, and later through polishing ponds, where a combination of physical, chemical and biological processes take place leading to a considerable improvement in the quality of water. Earlier issues of the Journal have featured some of the case examples in this regard – Wastewater treatment of sewage water for the irrigation of a public park [*Sindhu Baug, Gandhidham, Ahmedabad, Good Earth Consultants in Emerging Practices: LA-24*] and restoration of dilapidated village pond [*Constructed wetland at Rajokri, Delhi Jal Board by Ankit Srivastava in LA-61*] to name a few.

Spatial designers are envisioning new ways in which water can be looked at to create exciting and evocative experiences in different contexts. Many dried-up urban lakes, abandoned quarry sites, water structures located in heritage sites, and historic precincts [moats, lakes, tanks, and others] are being revived, at times by using groundwater. While taking into account the aesthetic aspects of such features, it is equally important to adopt an environmentally conscious approach – of exploring possibilities of using treated wastewater, preferably from nearby landuses instead of raw water [both surface and subsurface] in these water designs, so that they remain true not only to their historic and cultural spirit but also to their environmental values. Ideas for designing these water structures with semi-permeable/ permeable linings of locally available natural materials while taking into account evaporation losses will further enhance their environmental relevance in present times. The irrigation requirement of planting areas of various scales of landscape works can be addressed by treated wastewater.

In recent times, new upcoming large institutional and corporate campuses, especially located in water-stressed geographies, are adopting the sustainable system of water management and striving to make these sites as water sufficient developments, with reliance on the municipal supply only for potable water. Protection and restoration of processes and systems associated with the site's hydrology, dense plant cover to increase groundwater recharge, use of treated wastewater for landscape irrigation, hence reducing raw water usage, recharging groundwater, and harvesting it for



WORKING WITH NATURE

Newly developed seasonal pond with bentonite clay lining, Kishan Bagh eco-restoration project, Jaipur

PHOTO CREDIT: Vijay Dhasmana

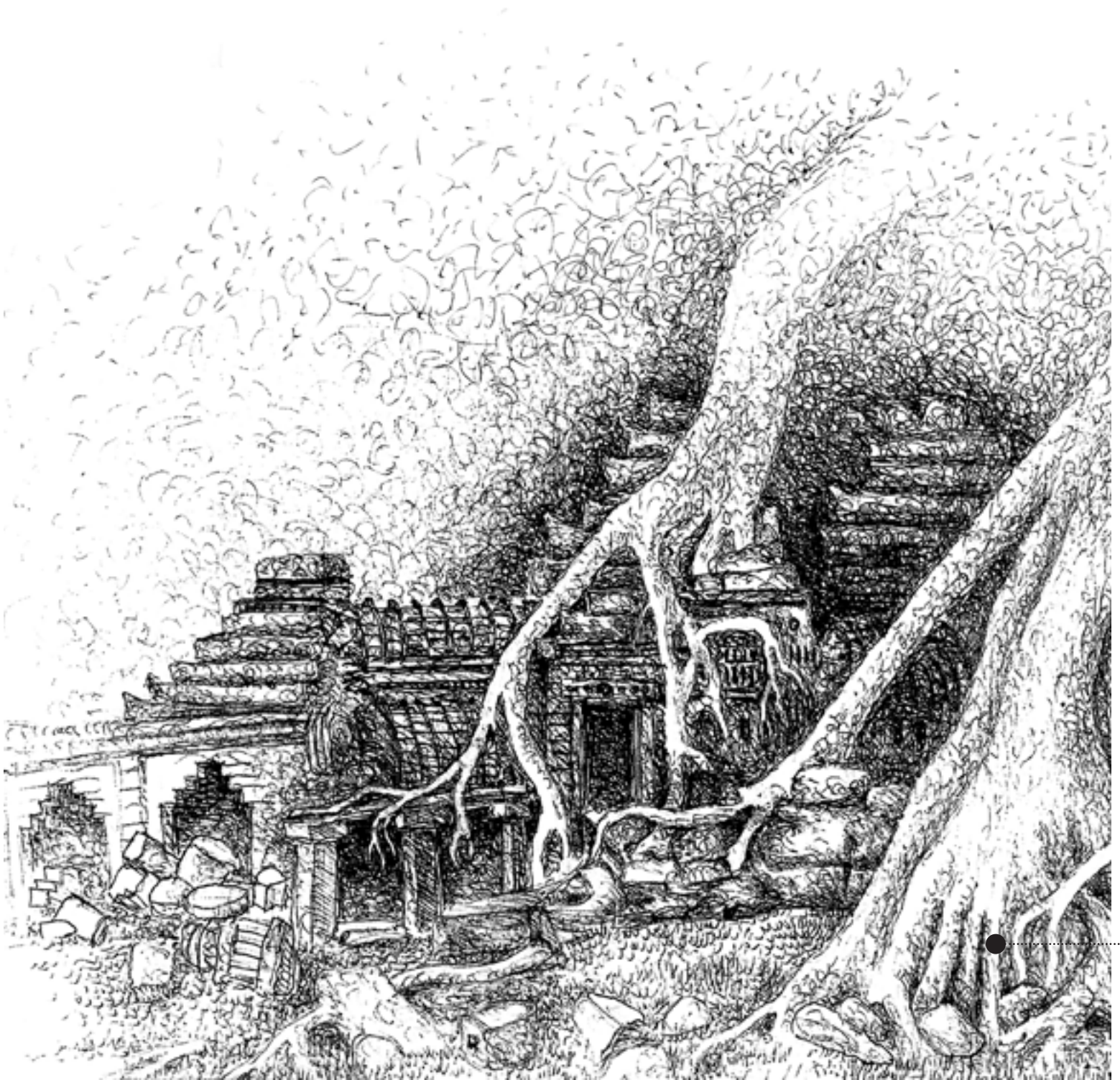
future use by designing different water structures and protecting and enhancing on-site water resources for environmental benefits are some of the adopted strategies. In some of these developments, regional traditional practices for water conservation have inspired designers to imagine and design new methods for resource conservation.

As Sanjay Prakash, a design practitioner points out, positive impacts of these natural systems are hard to quantify, so there is a need to educate technocrats – engineers, architects, landscape architects, planners, and designers who engage with spaces and the natural environment, about their use and larger ecological value. Simultaneously, there is a need to include these systems in the CPWD/PWD Schedule of Rates and increase their manufacturing and availability on a large scale.

Efficient urban stormwater management in Indian cities needs active participation of authorities [to institutionalize natural practices and formulate various legislations at State and Centre levels], building and construction industry [for creating manufacturing and supply chains of these products and technologies], institutions [as knowledge and research partners], clients and professionals [for onsite promotion of these practices]. With growing awareness in the society at large, about the need to conserve natural resources and a technology world that is vibrant and robust, these urban concerns stand a bright chance to be addressed sustainably in the future times.

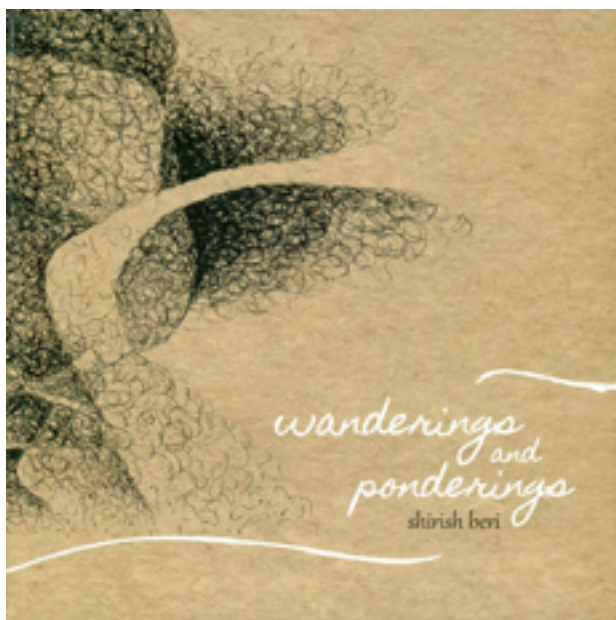


CITY AND CULTURE



Review by Manalee Nanavati, Architect
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A JOURNEY IN THE OUTER AND INNER WORLD



WANDERINGS AND PONDERINGS

Author: Shirish Beri
Published by Shirish Beri, Kolhapur,
Maharashtra, 2021
Size 200 x 200 x 27 mm, 276 Pages
Paperback
ISBN: 978-93-5419-074-2

What would you expect from an empty-handed wanderer who has set out on a journey merely to gather experiences; from an explorer who has been observing, sensing and thinking about everything that comes his way with a child-like wonderment? Stories of his manifold experiences, joys, learning, understandings and uncommon wisdom; and that's precisely what this book has to offer. It reveals the 'wanderings' and 'ponderings', in their literal sense, of Shirish Beri through his poems, sketches and a handful of essays.

The wanderings and ponderings here are guided by an inherent search for meaning. Hence, the external journey into the physical world gives shape to a journey within. Through the explorations at places and with people on this journey numerous questions are raised, accepted and attempts are made to make sense of them. These attempts may or may not

find absolute answers, but they certainly find manifestations in one's life and one's work, leading both in a meaningful direction. Shirish Beri's own works are an example of the same. Many of us know him through his projects such as the drug de-addiction centre in Pune, where he has attempted to explore how architecture can guide the behavioural psychology of its inhabitants, or his own house 'Laya', where his architecture shapes a close-knit living in and with nature. Such meaningful and sensitive creations hint at a deeper search behind, a glimpse of which can be seen in this book.

Through this book the author, as a person and as an architect, opens up his personal journey to the reader. But, the beauty is that the reader can easily connect to it based on his/her own journey and can take away pieces of thoughts accordingly. The questions, reflections and thoughts are very strongly relatable for anyone walking on the path of a seeker or learner, more so in the field of architecture. Each section of the book opens up with an introductory essay, which then leads one to the author's pool of experiences, memories and

PREVIOUS PAGE |
ANGKOR WAT
Ta Prohm, Angkor, Cambodia
SKETCH BY Shirish Beri

thoughts; and without realising, through his words and sketches, one is taken to one's own trip, one's own inner ponderings! Consequently, it doesn't remain a personal journey of the author but also becomes part of the journey of the reader.

Travelling is seen here as a medium to gain solitude, to gain space and platform for this internal dialogue. Travelling through the length and width of the country and beyond, to places like Mandu, Kottayam, Delhi, Kashmir, Ladakh to Japan, Istanbul, Venice and Greece, the author notes his observations and experiences as sketches, poems and thoughts. The observations, of course, are made by an architect, and hence, with an eye to sensitively recognise formal and spatial qualities, which can be seen in the sketches.

The sketches are indeed a treat for any reader. They capture in a very obvious manner the language, experience, textures, moods and layers of places. Whether it is snow, water, rains, wind, dark clouds or mist, or even roots of a banyan tree or weathered rock, they reveal themselves through these sketches in a way that the entire setting can be experienced. The medium of drawing changes with change in the texture of the object or scene; and the most appropriate medium is used for each. Beri's sensitivity and depth to hear the silences of the rocks and ruins gives life to not only built but unbuilt as well. There is no differentiation seen between rocks, trees and buildings. A space or form is perceived with the same level of engagement, in the author's words 'whether it is a stone carved by man or by nature'. Often, human figures are included in the drawing to illustrate the enormous scale of the rocks, mountains or buildings. Such approaches are observed in both, his sketches and his poems; which indicates how he sees humans and human creations as a part of the bigger world of nature — a perception only someone who recognises a bigger picture of the universe as a whole can achieve.

BELOW LEFT |
**DODDAGADAVALLI
LAXMI TEMPLE**
NEAR BELUR

BELOW RIGHT |
PALAZZO VECCHIO
FLORENCE



These temple ruins with their own
mysterious, enigmatic presence
seem to engage me with a greater intensity
This quality of involvement
could never be experienced by me
in a recently constructed temple
The play of light and shadow
In the old temple gives it
a completely ethereal quality
The brightly lit, dark
but it all, new temple
is no comparison at all

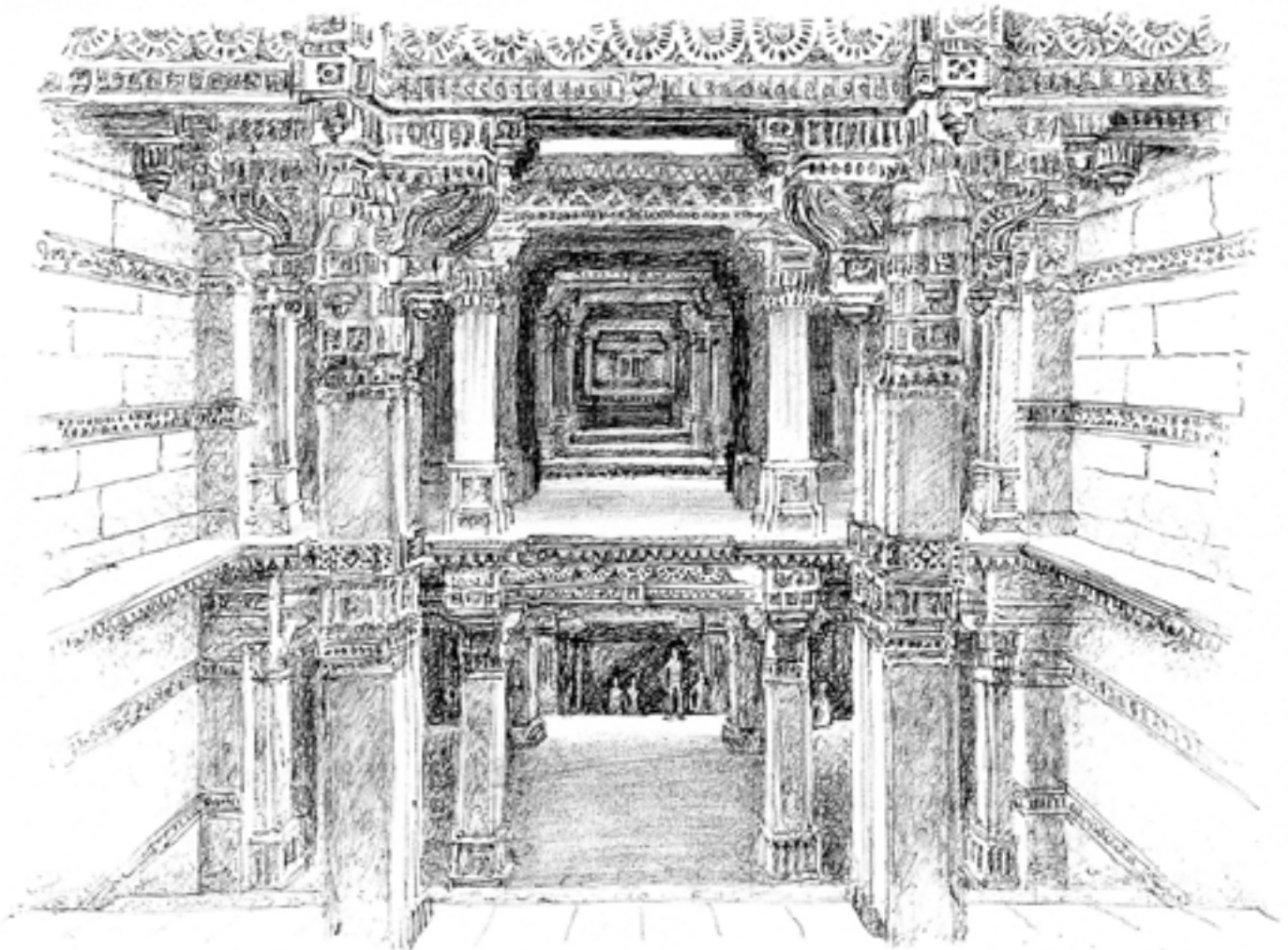


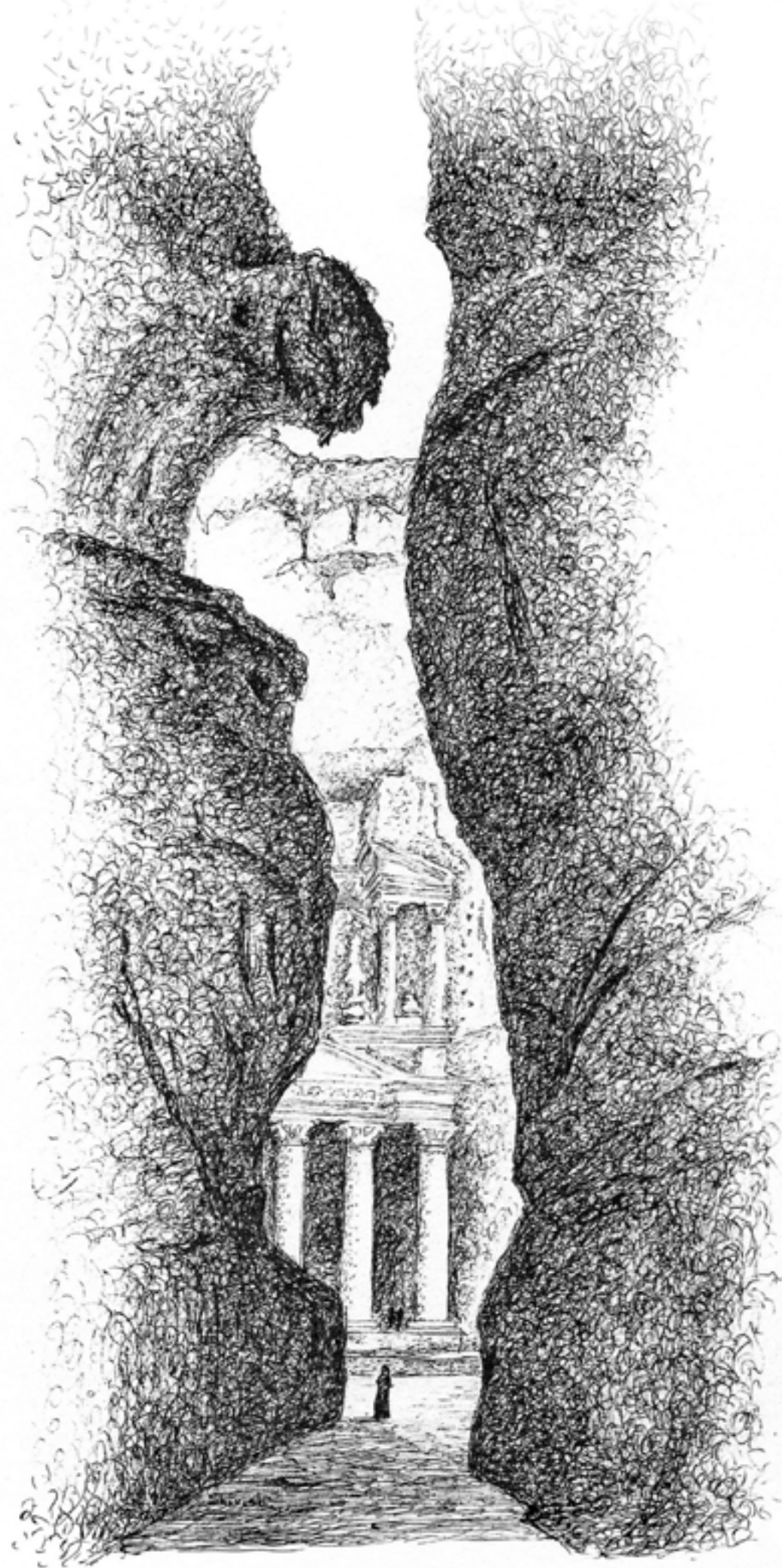
ABOVE |
RUINS
NEAR DELHI

BELOW |
STEP WELL
ADALAJ

This humbleness and this deep sense of attachment with nature are observed in Beri's architectural work as well. However, it is this sensitivity that also brings along some annoyance about the haphazard interventions in urban and natural landscapes as expressed in some poems. Some of his lines in this regard such as towering landmarks shifting from temple or mosque to bank/office/hotel building, and how it represents a shift in human values from 'sanctity to salability', and the Chinese fishermen's technique of catching fish are so well versed that it lingers in the mind for long. Appreciating good things, creatively criticising the issues and hinting at simpler alternatives for it at the same time is a rare approach; and even rare is writing it so simply. The poems become more engaging as they commune insightful thoughts expressed in a simple language, in an effective way.

Pieces like 'beach crab and its flexibility for food and shelter' are really enjoyable for their simplicity, and equally enjoyable are the thoughts such as 'a city having a collective subconscious existence'. Nonetheless, what will leave you thinking are his takes on some key topics such as progress vs development, sustainability, timeless appeal of architecture, use of technology, social inequality, hypocrisies and alike. These will certainly trigger questions that are important for any architect to ponder upon.







Why did those rocks in the corner of the site beckon me to start a dialogue with them?



How did my building for DNA fingerprinting, originate from the DNA double helix on the ground?



The 'Ellan

*They sent an expensive chariot for me
a chariot equipped with
all the luxuries one could think of ...
soft velvet cushions, beautiful lamp shades,
thick layers of carpets,
an exquisite dressing table,
the most elegant wardrobe
and elaborately carved timber walls.
It was fancy, but when I entered the carriage
I felt a tremendous absence,
absence of an 'Ellan', which
relates the finite to the infinite,
which enables me to be
part of a diverse unity .*

*The elaborately carved walls
imprisoned my spirit.
They had not a single opening.
The obvious reason was to prevent me
from the sun, wind, rain and dust,
The hostile Nature and people.
Thus preventing me from
experiencing this 'Ellan'*

*The lovely chandeliers couldn't match
the radiant life energy of the sun
nor could the thick carpets match
the intimacy of mother earth, the grass
with her varying colours & textures.*

The importance of such ponderings is particularly more in today's time because they eventually reflect in the work of an individual. The act of creation finds its meaning through the internal journey. Such a dialogue, between the inner and the outer world, is uncommon in the time of mass production and fast production but is essential in a field like architecture, where the creation is going to make an impact on the lives of its inhabitants and also on the environment. In that context, contrasting to the practical, ambitious and power-driven line of thought, this reading will give a touch of life, joy, philosophy and thinking.

The book will provide a piece of relief from the materialistic talks of the consumerist world. It will take you to the muddy paths, under the shades of huge Banyan trees, in the drops of rains and inside the humble built/ unbuilt forms. Away from the egoistic built world, suddenly making you question the choice for detachment – detachment from nature or from the self-centric initiatives. Moreover, the simplicity and effectiveness of language will keep you hooked. Reading a poem will tempt you to read the next, and you will feel like reading it all in one go. In general, a light read, but a profound one to take away from!



ABOVE |
A HOUSE IN RAJASTHAN

TOP LEFT |
THE ELLAN

All sketches by Shirish Beri from his
book 'Wanderings and Ponderings'

Review by **Rajat Ray**, Urban Designer & Academician
| shalgram@gmail.com

FROM HUMAN TO HUMANE

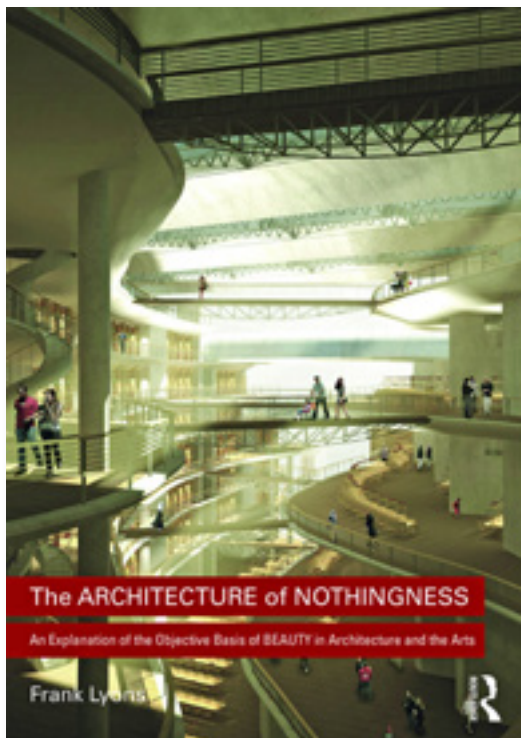
The article is a longish version of a common book review. The subject matter of the book comprises discussion about certain fundamental aspects of building design with an almost universal appeal albeit within the ambit of modern architecture; yet significantly different from various prevalent approaches of architectural appreciation and theorization. Discursively written, connecting various bodies of knowledge, covering a range of important ideas tied together by an easily accessible language; encourages one to represent an immersive experience of reading through the text complemented by excellent illustrations, with a small amount of elaboration.

Old Naturalism

In order to set up the context of his ‘story’ about searching for an objective explanation of quality and beauty in Architectural works, Frank Lyons begins his book by invoking Nature. He says Nature functions precisely, consistently and beautifully with a rigorous and absolute *order* that pervades the spheres of the Arts and the Sciences. But doesn’t it ring a bell! To begin with, there seems to be an attitudinal difference in his views *vis-à-vis* the familiar dominant classic western approach to nature. To articulate this distinction for us, an Indian audience, quasi aware about western thought, it may suffice to reiterate some historical facts, before proceeding with the author’s almost a lifetime work, informed by multidisciplinary erudition, executed with utmost love and care.

European, or more specifically Italian, Renaissance, at its core was a very significant revolution in human history. Among other things, Renaissance Man rejected the hegemonic Christian clergy posing as sole agents of God; and took it upon themselves to connect to divinity. They believed God is creator of Nature and principles of nature are his signs. They focused attention onto Nature’s creations to detect those principles. This was in the sixteenth century.

“... *The urge for studying nature was as inevitable as the pull of gravity. Naturalism, indeed, was the centre of gravity for both art and philosophy [which then included science]. For philosophy, nature rediscovered, was a wonderful object of knowledge and contemplation; for art it was a miraculous example to be imitated....*”^[1]



THE ARCHITECTURE OF NOTHINGNESS

AN EXPLANATION OF THE OBJECTIVE
BASIS OF BEAUTY IN ARCHITECTURE
AND THE ARTS

Author: Frank Lyons

Illustrations by Alicja Andreasik Lyons
& Frank Lyons

Published by Routledge Taylor & Francis
Group, New York, 2019

Size 175 x 245 mm, 250 Pages

Paperback

ISBN: 978-1-138-21415-6

Imitation

For example, by observing and penetrating into the ostensible complexity and variety of natural objects, they kept discovering, wonderful abstract ratios and proportions. Even these pure rational laws were held as determiner of 'Beauty'. But discovering them was not enough, the task of renaissance men was to incorporate these ideas into their own works like paintings, sculptures, music, simple mechanical devices, architecture and even town planning, by imitation.^[2] This renaissance, even analyzed human vision to discover the hidden optical laws, of convergence and foreshortening and invented geometrical methods of perspective drawing with vanishing points that revolutionized three-dimensional plastic representation and form.

"... Art, Alberti tells us, must imitate nature in its essential qualities and not merely reproduce appearance. The latter must be observed, analysed, and used only as a doorway to the understanding of the order and organization in nature. Thus, architecture, which obviously cannot be the copy of anything in nature, does, nevertheless, imitate nature in its laws and method..."^[5]

Separation

From Renaissance to Modernism one can see how the Man of Europe, surely in architecture, first respected and learned from nature - look at early renaissance architecture and geometric gardens, thereafter started flaunting, with exuberance in Baroque architecture and, large scale taming of nature in parks and avenues and how, finally, after 'Enlightenment', they replaced of God by themselves, when nature became a resource for limitless consumption, at best, subject to a paternalistic treatment by industrialized Modernism. The philosophical underpinning force of the last leg of this process moved along a line of thought emanating from the 18th. century German philosopher Emanuel Kant's ideas, and proceeding 'historically' [dialectically] forward, leading progress of man, through Hegel up to Marx. Man adopted full responsibility of determining his own future. Man, and Nature were separated.

Integration

Prof. Lyons on the other hand finds his ideas regarding architecture aligning with a different philosophical path, also emanating from Kant but going to Schopenhauer instead. Kant had claimed that the world has a humanly perceptible realm called phenomenal and an imperceptible realm called noumenal. While Hegelian line altogether rejected existence of a 'noumenal realm', Schopenhauer strongly held on to that. He postulated that Kahn's imperceptible 'noumena', albeit beyond sensation and knowledge, to be existing simultaneously inside all phenomena including all subjects and objects, natural or manmade and is keeping all of them **integrated**. The human sense of compassion often overriding reason is one example of that. Attaining of a higher quality of life and transcending to the noumenal,

going beyond the phenomenal world, would be the purpose of good 'life' of man. And that evolutionary ascent must strive up through enrichment of relationships and experience of beauty. This is metaphysics of Europe. Incidentally it is similar to the ancient Vedantic thoughts where the noumenon is equivalent to Brahman and the Buddhist thought where it is 'Nothing'. Lyons seems to lean to the later sense. However, this integration per se is shown to be manifest in the working **orders** of the universe, in nature, in life systems, in all cultural practices. Science deciphered them by analysis, producing knowledge and evolving itself in the process; and the Arts highlights the same by transformative representations as enjoyable creative production. At some point Lyons quotes Alvar Alto to illustrate his value for 'syntagmatic' contiguity in the integrative process over the paradigmatic, morphology over typology "... *'architecture and its details are in some way all part of biology..... and not like biology'* as a metaphor or allegory". For one thing, just to be like another, the two things must stand apart. For Lyons they remain connected.

Orders & Objectivity

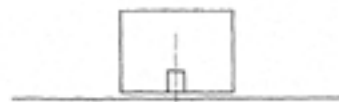
Before entering into the discussion of architecture proper the author analytically cuts through Physics, Biology, Arts and Music to unveil two essential determinants of a cultural product.. First, if one seeks organisation in any manmade object; one may readily detect its **Order of Form**, at a simple level, in its nature of configuration its material, its logic of structure and other physical attributes. And second, is the **Order of Content**, the other order in play without which the object's connection with world cannot be satisfactorily explained. This too may be readily detected in appreciation of the object for its use for a purpose. This is different from the usual Form & Function couple in architecture, instead it is closer to Form & Content couple in art appreciation yet with an alternate approach to communication.



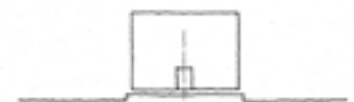
[i] A child's rendering of a house



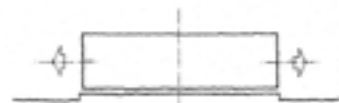
[ii] The prototypical house serves as the basic generic for Wright's design



[iii] The centre is emphasised by maintaining a central entrance



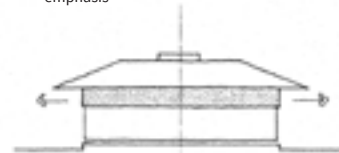
[iv] Raising the house on a stone plinth gives further importance to the centre



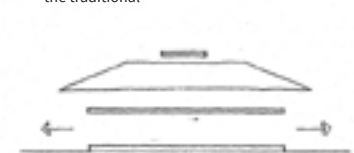
[v] The static square form of the generic is stretched to give the house horizontal emphasis



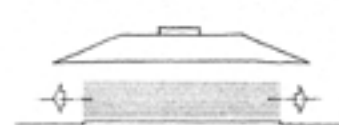
[vi] A shallow pitched roof is adopted with extended eaves. A dummy chimney replaces the traditional



[vii] Terracotta tiles build the shadow line of the roof to further emphasise the horizontal



[viii] Stone string-courses reinforce the horizontal



[ix] The resultant panel of brickwork has an horizontal form and uses special elongated bricks

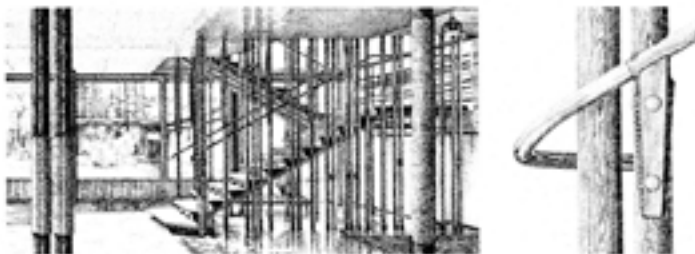
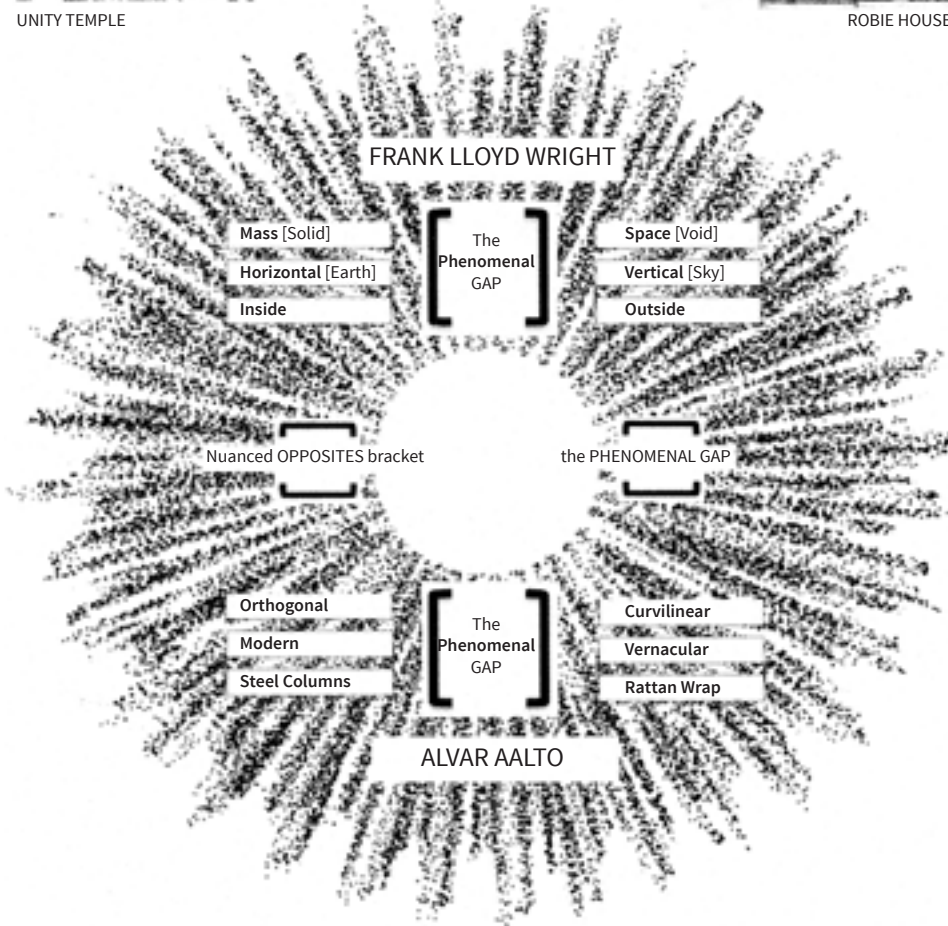


[x] Stone-lined square windows on the ground floor introduce a static element to resist the horizontal

..... **REINFORCEMENT AND REPETITION IN ARCHITECTURE**
Winslow House: River Forest, Chicago, Illinois
 *Frank Lloyd Wright 1893*

BRACKETING THE PHENOMENAL GAP

- Since the noumenal realm is without qualities we cannot represent it in phenomenal world
- Delicately balanced opposites can however 'bracket' the near noumenal realm
- Near noumenal realms can therefore be framed by artists who are able to operate with precision within those realms
- In crude 'cartoon' like fashion this diagram suggests some of the opposites that Aalto and Wright sought to reconcile in their works



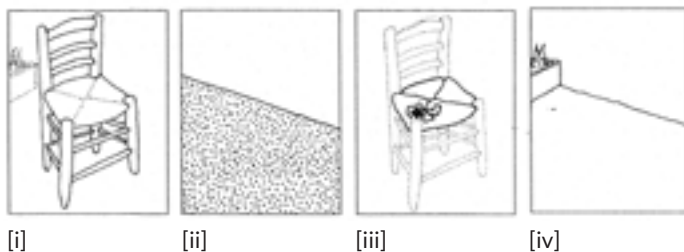
VILLA MAIREA: STAIR AND HANDRAIL DETAIL

Orders in the object are certainly shareable by different observers at a perceptual level. The same perception in the end may connect to entirely private and never shareable respective individual meanings for different observers. Nevertheless, if there is a certain zone of perception; where the [aesthetic] logic of the form and the immediate structure of real acts ['tasks' for Lyons!] emerging out from a wider cultural milieu are sensed to exist engaged in a reconciliation, that zone could then be an objective ground even for inter personal and inter-cultural communication. Lyons is perhaps calling this a 'form-content' amalgamation. Coming via philosopher Wittgenstein's work, Lyons' one thesis is; appreciation of work of art is objective and successful when it is limited to this shared zone. Expecting that there is a unique meaning which everyone will understand only takes us in into arguments of subjectivity. This is a strong critique of the practice of art appreciation. It is therefore obvious that if quality and beauty are achieved at this level, it will be objectively recognized as a gateway towards noumenon by protagonists of diverse cultures, who may enjoy it while connecting to their own diverse worlds of meanings.

Table Chair



To elucidate this Lyons uses the common idea of 'table' as a simple artefact that is present in different cultures as a convergent locale for Orders of form and Content. Now, tables of one culture may not have been seen by people of another culture, so their full perceptions and meanings are not shared. However, the very acts of putting a thing on the table and the table receiving the contact and the weight of the thing, that are released from your hand, together makes an idea of a 'table-ness' in operation, that should be shareable as an identical experience by any cultures in its own terms. He then, leaving the ordinary tables behind, rather wonderfully, goes after a 'chair'! but a very special one that is, the famous painting of a peasant's chair by Van Gogh who could make one perceive condition of man by some exquisite order of form in the painting embodying complex orders of content. Here, the 'chair-ness' extends from the sense of sitting to a fuller sense of living without demanding a training in art appreciation from the observer. Lyons wants work of architecture to have that quality.



CHAIR, ARLES: VAN GOGH 1889

Sketch after Van Gogh

- i The form of the chair stands clearly forward of the background
- ii The floor and wall create a diagonal division of the background
- iii The empty seat is placed in the centre of the composition.
Pipe and tobacco suggest emptiness
- iv A box containing sprouting onions and bearing Vincent's name stands on the diagonal

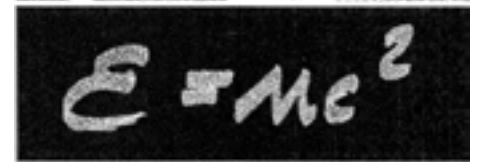
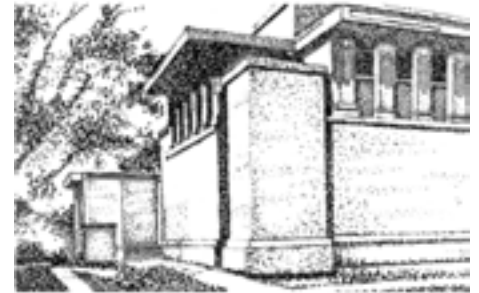
Works of Architecture

The author embeds analysis of important buildings by his own framework within his text at suitable places. They are complemented by a form analysis by an excellent graphic method. He had already underlined ‘retractability’ as an important aspect of architectural work [perhaps of most art work]. It is possible to backtrack and detect the initiation and the array of operations for achieving the resultant form by mindful observation and even graphically represent it. Retractability offers the opportunity of engaging with the work, and that engagement with a work of high quality itself can be very rewarding when the ‘engineering’ of the symbiosis is revealed by this act. And those are some of the ‘ah-ha’ moments of Lyons.

He has chosen classic works of some modern architects for close investigation starting with Farnsworth House of Mies Van der Rohe. In spite of all its much-celebrated form-al qualities, it fails in the author’s ‘litmus’ test for its ‘shortcoming on the order of content side’ due to which it fails as a basic wholesome house. In Frank Lloyd Wright’s Winslow house, Robbie House, Barnsdall House and Unity Temple Lyons finds very high quality of orders of form-content that create experience of deep engagement. No wonder Wright’s work is hailed as ‘organic’. In Corbusier’s case Lyons would argue that Villa Savoy demands communication of ideology through intellect and imaginations; while his Ronchamp church is perceptually connected to larger orders. From a paternalistic approach of providing metaphorical roof garden, even Corbusier later moved to reconciliation with nature! In Alvar Alto’s Villa Mairea and the Synatsalo Town hall Lyons finds his greatest modern icon; beautiful cultural form- space creations with multilevel perceptible reconciliation with nature through Orders of Form and Orders of content. Simple combination of rigid forms is not good enough, within the conjunction of orders there may even be room for some inexactness that actually adds some spice of naturalness to the act of engagement.

In this context would I be permitted by the author to risk a small ‘divertimento’! In decaying architecture within the ‘Picturesque’^[4] rather than ‘Beauty’, it appears, that the normal orders of content seem to be giving way to an order of memory of content in symbiosis with order of form succumbing to a strong order of living nature, objectively perceived in the order of the ‘Ruin’. Work of Architecture does not die, unless violently destroyed, it slowly returns to nature.

Lyons’ own architectural projects surely reflect Aalto’s sensibilities. They seem to have a sense of invitation to the outsider rather than some awe-inspiring monumentality or any repulsive gesture. And they take you inside to a world of comfortable and wonderful engagement. His work still belongs to modernist architecture and averse to, so-called Post-Modern play of meanings and symbolism, but he is critical of High modern rationalism, a gift of **Humanism**. He rejects those intellectual sternness and also the rather plain and lifeless and merely utilitarian expressions. By metaphysical inspiration he speaks a compassionate **Humane** language.



THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF EQUIVALENT RELATIONSHIPS, EACH CONCERNED WITH A UNITY BETWEEN MASS AND SPACE

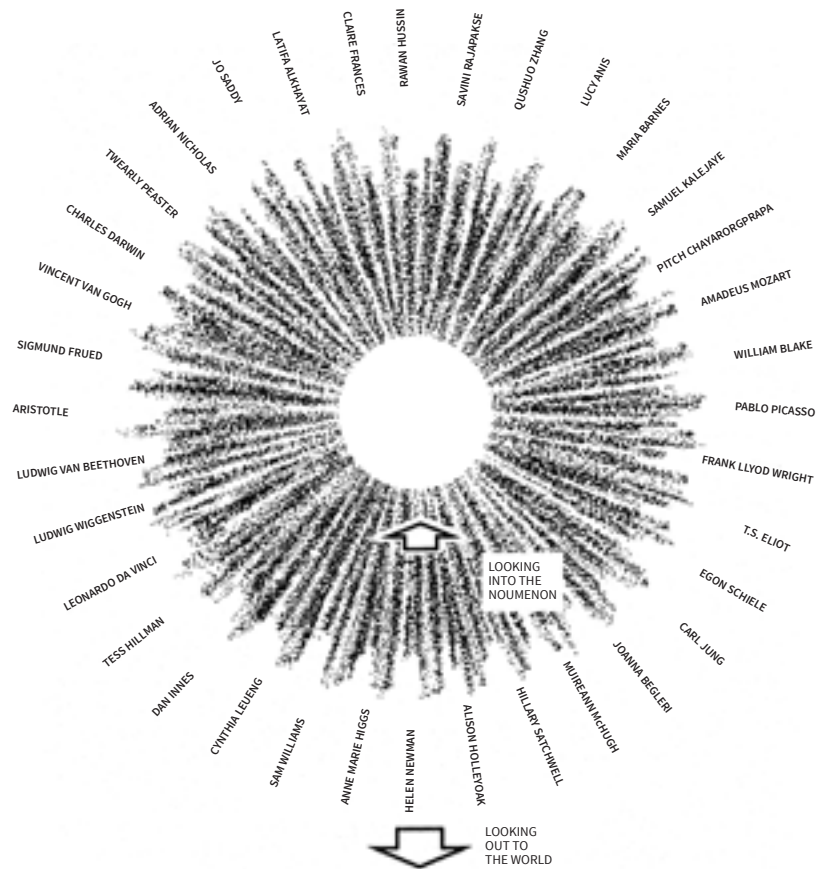
- i *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright 1905-06.*
- ii *The theory of relativity, Albert Einstein, 1905.*
- iii *Les Femmes d'Alger. [Sketch after Picasso], Pablo Picasso 1906-07. © Succession Picasso/DACS, London 2018.*

INDIVIDUALLY AND THE NOUMENON

If the noumenal aspect of reality exists in all parts of the phenomenal world then it must also exist in ourselves.

KEY POINTS:

- Separateness, distinction and individuality are qualities that can only exist in the phenomenal realm.
- Since space, time and causality do not exist outside the phenomenal world, the noumenal realm just IS, pure 'isness', boundless, infinite and by definition shared by all.
- Each of us therefore, from my students and friends, to the greatest scientists, artists and musicians, must each have equal access to the noumenon.



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- [2] See Steil. Lucien, 'Imitation, Copy and Pastiche' and the Traditional Western Articulation of the Concept Quatrmere de Quincy onwards
- [3] Carapetyan, Armen. *op. cit*
- [4] See Ruskin. John. 'Seven Lamps of Architecture'
- [5] Huntingdon, C.W. Jr. 'Emptiness of Emptiness' An introduction to early Indian Madhymika. Indian Edition, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1992

Rituals & 'Darshan'

The intellectual Indian modern architect may be excited. But before jumping to connect it to that esoteric austere Vedantic wisdom, or perhaps to Nagarjuna's 'Emptiness' [5], one may look at the easily perceptible regular life-world at hand. In our tradition here it is governed by a plethora of elaborate, or even simple, **rituals** that tightly structure the orders of its content and the orders of its form. All the physical vital and mental energy rallies toward and converges at one single point or a Centre, and, is 'bracketed!' – almost literally so – by thick walls enclosing a tight dark room, the *Grava Griha* [womb chamber]. All the toil of the disciplined, spiritual or even a playful journey or procession culminates there at the doorway with the striking view of the **idol** inside. In that idol flourishes a rich, often ornate and garlanded order of form, and in that dwells a highly concentrated divine order of content, in a fragrant symbiosis, a body of beauty, the *Murti*; and an eye-to-eye engagement with her, transcends one to the noumenon, by the divine "Darshan". Alternatively, you could just look at the holy basil plant on a pedestal in the **centre** of the courtyard, bracketed by a colonnade. And then ... close your eyes.



All sketches by Alicja Andreasik Lyons & Frank Lyons from their book 'The Architecture of Nothingness'



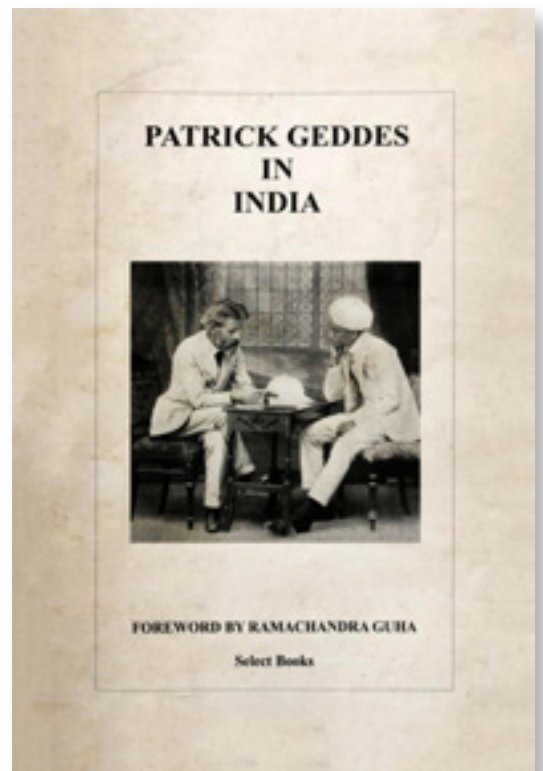
Review by Prashanta Bhat, Landscape Architect
| pbhat@TLCarch.in

THE FIRST PRACTITIONER OF LANDSCAPE URBANISM

The works of *Patrick Geddes*, Scottish geographer and town planner who was invited by British to study and propose redevelopment and improvement plans for more than fifteen Indian towns in the early decades of 20th century hold a special significance in the urban design and planning discourse in India. Envisioning processes of repair, renewal, and rebirth as natural phenomena of development and his many path breaking ideas including “diagnostic survey” and “conservation surgery” in regard to improvement of old areas have universal value in contemporary times.

If landscape architects are termed as ‘generalists’ and the profession is multi-disciplinary, then Patrick Geddes, as an individual, can be called a polymath as he was a trained biologist, planner, sociologist, voice for the forgotten, etc.

The original 1947 edition of *Patrick Geddes in India*, edited by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and a foreword by Lewis Mumford, is a rare and out of print book that was re-published by Select Books, Bengaluru in 2007. This reprint, which has a foreword by historian Ramchandra Guha, is a collection of Geddes’ ‘reports’ that were written at various points during his consultancy to Indian rulers and British Government. The book also includes some unique photographs, and sketches of plans of Geddes’ proposals and ideas.



PATRICK GEDDES IN INDIA

Edited by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt

Originally Published by Lund Humphries, London, 1947

2007 Edition Published by Select Books, Bengaluru

Size 150 x 222 mm, 102 Pages

Hardcover

This Scottish sociologist-planner was first invited to India by the then Governor of Madras - Lord Pentland, to address the 'public improvement' given Geddes' success in ameliorating conditions in ghettos of Edinburgh.^[1] Once here, many princely states who aspired the 'modern' social standards, sought his advice too – though not always adhering to his recommendations,^[2] as Geddes rejected western, anti-civic and non-local alternatives.

Geddes worked on the town plans of Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Guntur, Konkana, Lucknow, Madura, Kapurthala, Indore, Balrampur and many more. In each of these towns, he opposed large scale demolitions, or “drawing board plans.” Instead, he preferred to study the town and improvise, based on the needs of the people. Agreeing with Tagore's criticism of the West being disjointed with nature, Geddes promoted the need for man and the city to be in touch with nature and argued that the future survival and health [he classified health as that of body and mind] depended on this connection.

In a sense, Patrick Geddes could well be described as one of the first practitioners of landscape urbanism – taking people, ecology, built environment, government policies and the economy into consideration while designing. It is clear, his starting point was always ‘The Diagnostic Survey,’ proposing a thorough study of existing conditions including vegetation, current living conditions and the prevalent culture before planning. Many years later, a similar technique of site analysis was advocated by another Scotsman, and landscape architect, Ian McHarg. [Incidentally, Lewis Mumford wrote the Introduction to both *Patrick Geddes in India* and McHarg's *Design with Nature*.]

In *Patrick Geddes in India*, Geddes argues that there is a better process to remodel a city than just looking at monuments to preserve, and space to “provide”. Geddes states, “[The Diagnostic Survey] seeks to undo as little as possible, while planning to increase the well-being of the people at all levels, from the humblest to the highest. City improvements of this kind are both less expensive.....and [more] productive.” The biologist in Geddes is obvious when he compares the organic growth of a city to ‘evolutionary science’ as if the city were a living cell.

Geddes' planning style is termed by Ramachandra Guha as having “Respect for Democracy,” as Geddes was supportive of the voiceless. He sympathized with manual scavengers – proposing to improve their condition by eliminating the ‘by-lane’ or ‘conservancy lanes’ that were in practice then. Geddes' also appreciated the “housewife” as more knowledgeable than an office-holding planner, for her respect for nature and pride of the house and its cleanliness.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The passages in this book represent a fraction of the writings of Patrick Geddes between 1915 and 1919, drawn from reports that he made on eighteen Indian cities. His work was commissioned both by British Governors and by Indian Rulers. Many more reports are known to have been written, some of which are said to remain, still in typescript, in the pigeon-holes of India.

The first selection of material was made by Dr. H. V. Lanchester. The task was then to choose passages that clearly illustrated the practical application of those town planning principles for which Patrick Geddes stood.

Particular places are not deliberately identified with any particular comment, unless necessary to illustrate the general argument – as in the plans illustrating methods of conservative surgery.

Patrick Geddes wrote as he thought and the actual wording of many passages could only be understood with difficulty, especially after they had been uprooted from their context. With the approval and assistance of Dr. Arthur Geddes, his son, these passages have been edited, but Patrick Geddes's picturesque style has not been willfully altered.

The illustrations were taken by Anthony Denney, on war service in India, and show that persistent loveliness and vitality Patrick Geddes so much admired.

Association for Planning and
Regional Reconstruction

Jaqueline Tyrwhitt
February 1, 1947

EDITOR'S NOTE

Jaqueline Tyrwhitt's note in the original 1947 edition of the book

Geddes uses a medical term “Conservative Surgery” when he suggests that the redevelopment of a city be moderate rather than revamping it based on expectations or aesthetics. He writes that this “requires long and patient study. The work cannot be done in the office with ruler and parallels” suggesting that ‘walking’ around the city is a must before prescribing any change. He is critical of the modernistic obsession to geometry for the sake of straight roads, or unnecessary demolition or clearing. He continues later, “This destructive impatience is, indeed, an old vice of beginners in a position of authority; and their chance of learning the real game is, of course, spoiled by such an abuse of it.” With such thoughts, Geddes would have most definitely objected to the Central Vista project given his civic sensibilities and dislike for haste, undemocratic ideas.

The point to note is Geddes travelled to British India when WW1 had just started, and pandemic plague was threatening lives. His *modus operandi* was critical observation and then questioning popular responses to prevailing problems. His solutions were always simple: better ventilation and open spaces, and he proposed proper disposal of waste to control the breeding of rats. He questioned the need to remove a tree for the sake of a straight road, and suggested converting a vacant lot in a dense neighbourhood into a public garden – connecting residents to nature, and such solutions also improved citizen health.

Patrick Geddes arrived in India in 1914. Coming to India at an age of 60, an age when people retire or slow down, his work and travels in the sub-continent were expansive and vigorous. His expert ideas that even now seem appropriate for Indian cities were written even before Indian independence – before Indian cities expanded and imploded into what they are today. And one wonders, why were his sage suggestions not considered by current planners or politicians? [Nehru was highly appreciative of Geddes’ intellect and compassion for humanity^[5]]. Geddes’ comments on town planning, social justice, public health – including that of the pandemic [the plague at his time of writing] – still seem pertinent to India today.

Geddes’ influence in India has been so relevant that on a cursory search on this Scotsman, I was able to find him quoted in historical texts and records as well as recent essays. From reports by Mirza Ismail – the Diwan of Mysore to the PhD thesis of Prof. Chandan Gowda – a modern sociologist, from town and country planning reports to Shiv Visvanathan’s newspaper opinions^[4] – all have references to Geddes. And a search for his books reveals his writings on sex, biology, sociology, planning, etc. I was fortunate to purchase a copy of *Patrick Geddes in India* when I visited Select Books years ago. Later, in 2009, a client asked that I read a portion of this book before pitching for a housing project. That Patrick Geddes was important to a builder demonstrates the weight of Geddes’ words and his relevance even today.



“Conservative Surgery” of a city “requires long and patient study. The work cannot be done in the office with ruler and parallels” ...and ‘walking’ around the city is a must before prescribing any change.

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- [3] *Making Indian Cities Habitable: The Legacy of Patrick Geddes* by Ramachandra Guha on *The India Forum* website <https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/making-indian-cities-habitable>
- [4] *In Praise of Walking* by Shiv Visvanathan in *The Hindu*, April 23, 2014

FOLLOWING PAGE |

TEMPLE OF STEPS

NANDYALA, ANDHRA PRADESH

ARCHITECT: SP+A Architects

PHOTO CREDIT: Edmund Sumner



ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE



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ARCHITECTURE AS A LANDSCAPE EXPERIENCE

READING THROUGH AN INDIAN WORLDVIEW

Reading architecture within a larger framework of an Indian thought world, beyond the confines of material, tectonic, programmatic and geographic realities of the project, seeks to expand understanding of architecture. The discussion navigates three modes of exploring architecture as a landscape experience within the Indian Worldview: **Architecture as landscape**, **Architecture interpenetrating landscape**, and **Architecture articulating landscape**.

Relationship between land and architecture is the foremost inquiry preceding, indeed pervading the design process. Be it contoured terracing of Machu Picchu in Peru, or underground houses of Luoyang in China, both famously dubbed as ‘Architecture Without Architects’ by Bernard Rudofsky, these cradles of civilisations exemplify the most primordial act of space making. Through addition, subtraction, and varied manipulation of land, an organic landscape is created, at times even indistinguishable from the original landscape.

Alternate approaches to addressing the relationship between land and architecture are: The **empirical approach** where survey becomes a technically precise tool for architecture to accommodate trees, streams, or other geographic features of the site, giving rise to siting of projects. As seen in Palmyra House in Alibaug by Bijoy Jain, and Jetavan in Sakharwadi by Sameep Padora, the dense plantation prompts the placement of the blocks to retain all existing trees; The **ecological approach**, where topographic realities are augmented with architectural resolution, demonstrated by Govardhan Eco-Village in Palghar by Biome Environmental Solutions. Measures like mud block made from site, water management systems deploy architecture as a solution to reduce energy impact. The third approach is the **schismatic** inside-outside or object-background relationship widely demonstrated by projects since Modernism like the Farnsworth House in Plano by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

In the above cases, the imagination of the site is confined to a physical, natural, mostly botanical phenomenon or resource to be preserved, sustained, or controlled. While the architecture addresses the exigencies of the site and project, it does not amount to a 'landscape experience'. 'Landscape experience', here, implies the ideal when land or site as a physical reality transcends through the act of architecture to create an immersive experience, often evoking enduring references from collective cultural consciousness and having an affective quality. Two examples illustrating this quality, also widely acknowledged as primal archetypes of Indian space-making, are – Fatehpur Sikri near Agra for its labyrinthine network of pavilions and courts, celebrated for its layering of spaces and Kailasa Temple, Ellora for additive, subtractive and scooped out complex of *mandapas* and caves, renowned for its interpenetrating spaces. The essay proposes three overlapping modes of conceptualising architecture as a landscape experience: 1. Architecture as landscape 2. Architecture interpenetrating landscape, and 3. Architecture articulating landscape. The examples are situated within an Indian thought world and the mode of conceptualization is conjectured. While, the study is not suggestive of the architect's original intent, the projects however lend themselves to such a reading.

Architecture as Landscape

Here, landscape alludes to both, a physical orchestration of landforms as well as invocation of an imaginary ideal, much like the Buddhist landscapes. According to Gregory Schopen, while the terms "...monasteries" or "cloisters" .. invoke a vision of an isolated, ...ascetic, and austere space, Buddhist monks, however, called such places *viharas* or *aramas*... In Classical Sanskrit ... *vihara* meant...'walking or touring for pleasure'... *aramas*... referred to...a 'place of pleasure, a garden,'...both terms would have been associated with gardens lush with flowers and fruit trees in bloom, filled with bird-song and the cries of peacocks and the sound of bees..."

ROYAL COMPLEX
FATEHPUR SIKRI, AGRA
PHOTO CREDIT: BSD



This quality is illustrated by Sangath in Ahmedabad by B.V. Doshi. Akin to a series of 'hill-vaults' surrounding a valley, replete with habitable terraces and roofs of varying scales, the vaults rise and fall over the cavernous, partially sunken masses. Channels and gutters carry water, like rivulets flowing over contours eventually meeting a waterbody. The spatial progression is full of surprises – an unsuspecting entrance leads to a diagonal which shifts the axis, accentuated by ascending steps. The itinerary is traversed through varying sense of enclosures; visually haptic articulations of material and form – smooth mosaic, textured grass, voluptuous vaults, and hard concrete planes, all coming together to create a celebratory unravelling of spaces, representing an ecosystem. The result is an intensely orchestrated landscape experience – resplendent, complete with flowing water, luscious trees, and peacocks. Doshi actualises this landscape through a fertile re-imagination of that which has always existed – the quintessential poetic idyll of Indian literature. While the building does not mimic nature, it evokes a primordial image of landforms thus forming an ambiguous middle-ground as a 'built landscape'.



Architecture Interpenetrating Landscape

One of the recurring themes in landscape traditions of South India in the Bhakti period is captured by the image of a *bhakta* in a *nandavanam*, a cultivated sacred garden associated with Hindu temples, prevalent in Tamil Nadu. Typical of Tamil *Aham* poetic conventions, *Andal*, a *bhakta* experiences the landscape

THIS PAGE |
SANGATH | AHMEDABAD
PHOTOS CREDIT:
Immanuel Nicholas Iyadurai



at times as the body of Krishna, is the landscape for him to experience and is simultaneously in the landscape. This interpenetration of space, time and bodies and use of nature as an allusive trope for referring to self, divine and the prosaic interchangeably is a potent imaginative device. Vastly different from *Andal* is one of Jane Austen's protagonist strolling by an empirically correct, visually pleasurable, pruned English garden, presenting landscape as a spectacle where the viewer is distinctly different and separated from the viewed.



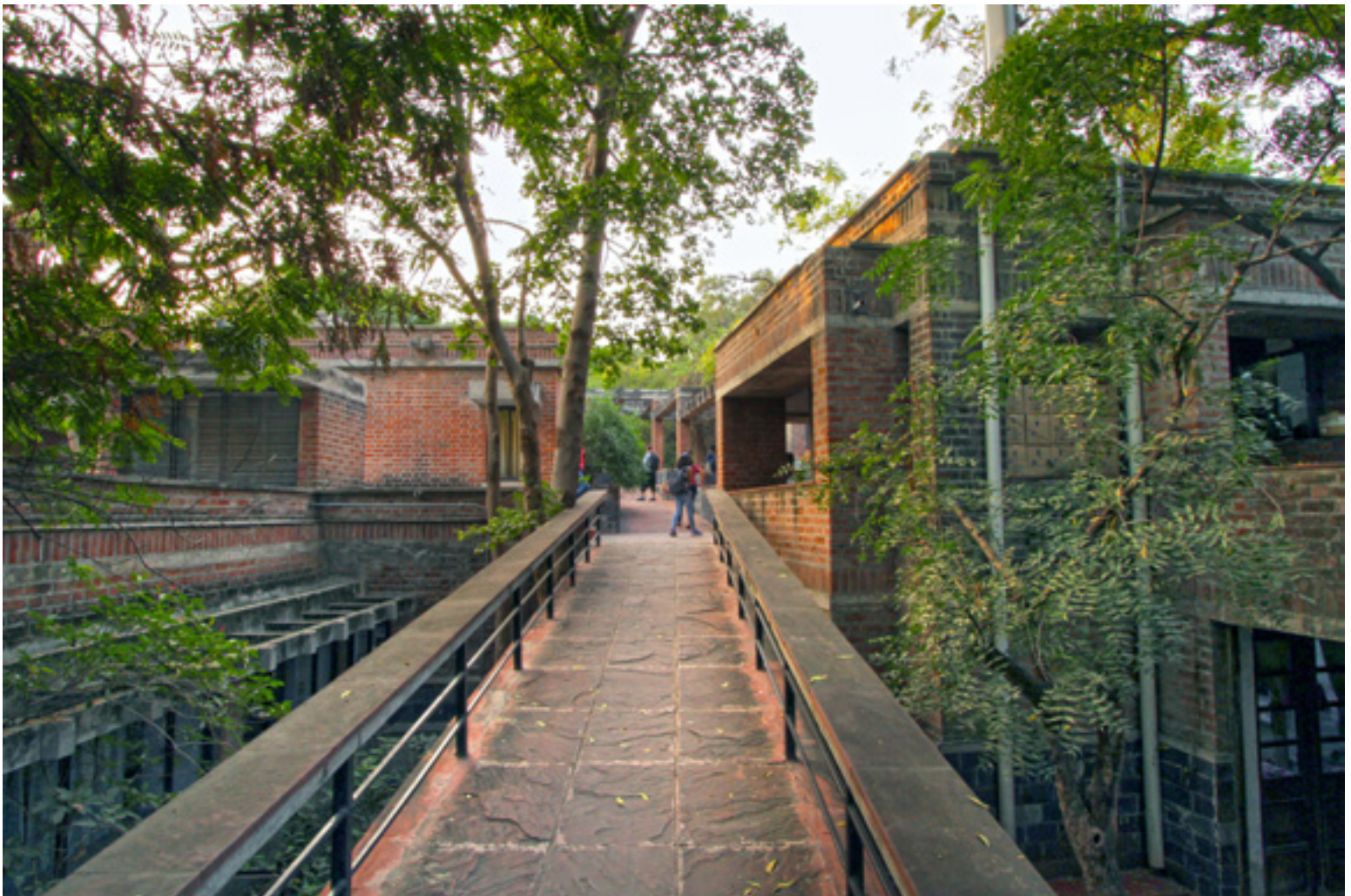
Idea of interpenetration and non-linear improvisation is a recurring motif in Indic thought, also resonating in the design of Center for Environmental Education [CEE] in Ahmedabad by Neelkanth Chhaya. Negotiating a contoured land, the architecture intersperses an order, prompted by the prevailing order of the site. Dense, dark, and cool canopies alternate with moments of light sifting through; partially subterranean structures embrace pergola pavilions. The architectural act is akin to the literary tropes of *Bhakti*, of *Andal* in the *nandavanam* where the nonhegemonic relationship between the various agents is indistinguishable from the scene. In CEE, the built, unbuilt and the wild vegetation interpenetrate with varying degrees of tensions, release, and proximity, enmeshed within the natural context, unravelling like a labyrinth. Instead of the modernist inside-outside relationship, Chhaya proposes an "inside-inside relationship" – an interiority and an interiorised landscape evident in CEE.

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CEE | AHMEDABAD

PHOTOS CREDIT:

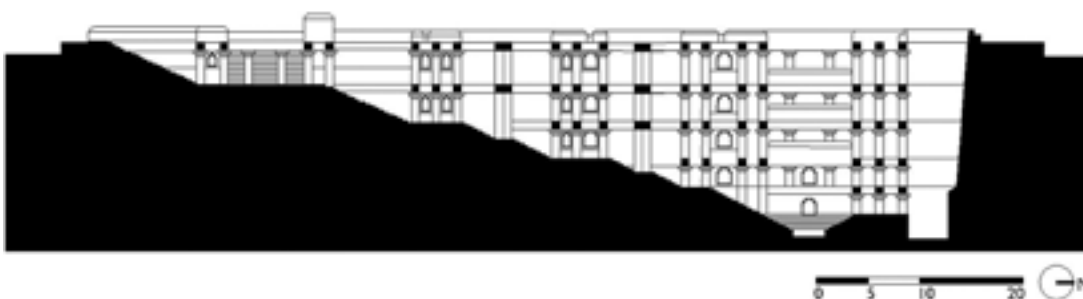
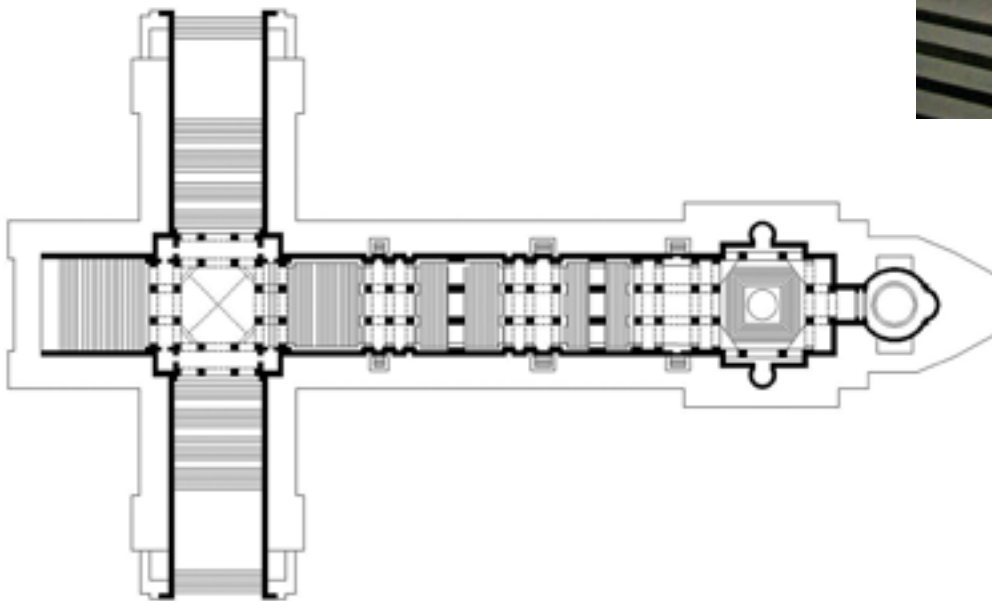
Sanket Mhatre



Architecture Articulating Landscape

Ecstatic articulation of the everyday, to render it as precious, is central to *Bhakti*. Friedhelm Hardy points to the two central themes of *Bhakti* as “a] the absence of a clear awareness of ‘transcendence’, which allowed for a visualisation of the divine within the confines of earthly reality, and b] the sensual character of worship”. In *Bhakti*, the medium of worship itself becomes an impassioned offering to the divinity. This is manifested widely in the realm of music, poetry, and arts.

An extension of this quality is manifested in the sophisticated architectonic articulation of stepwells which venerate water. Stepwell in Adalaj demonstrates an explosive imagination of the same trope in varying scales, akin to *mano dharma* in Indian classical music, also referred to as “imaginative improvisation” by David Schulman. The steps and series of pavilions in section allowing for going down as well as going through, motifs of the sections repeating as aedicules which burst forth, renders a sensuous architecture. Here architecture as an impassioned medium becomes an offering, if you will, to the precious resource.



RUDABAI VAV STEPWELL
ADALAJ, GUJARAT

PAGE TOP |

SECTION

PHOTO CREDIT: Nikhil Udupa

LEFT |

PLAN & SECTION

DRAWING CREDIT:

Surabhi Shingarey

TEMPLE OF STEPS

NANDYALA, ANDHRA PRADESH

BELOW |

SECTION

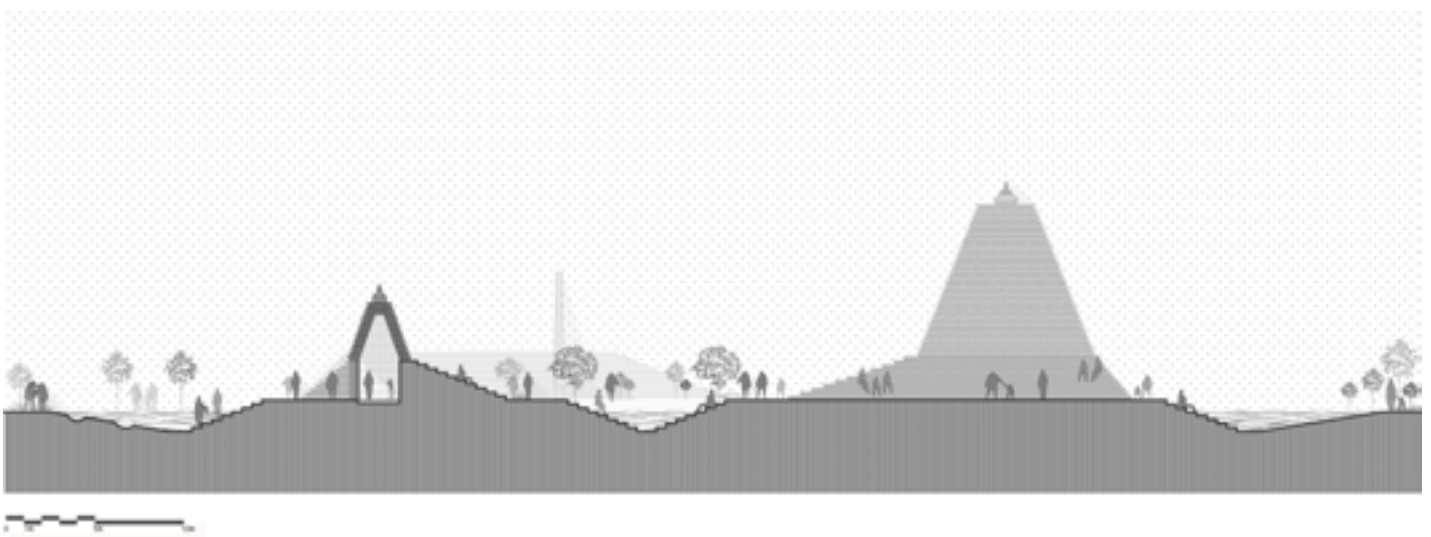
DRAWING CREDIT: SP+A Architects

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VIEW OF THE TEMPLE COMPLEX

PHOTO CREDIT: Edmund Sumner

In recent times, the Temple of Steps in Nandyala by Sameep Padora exhibits such a landscape attempt. The moat-like water harvesting body, echoes the in-undated fields around. Landscape is articulated at two edges: at the grassy stepped-plinth rising to become the temple mound, and the ghat-like steps which diminish beyond water. The former allows for an easy occupation, a spillover; the latter requires a purposeful approach. Though, Padora's abstract response distills rather than improvises the idea of a temple along ghats, it is nevertheless a formal attempt at articulating architecture as a landscape experience. In comparison, the Sabarmati Riverfront project in Ahmedabad by Bimal Patel demonstrates a disengaged land-water edge treatment while Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur by Charles Correa transposes the image of a *kund* as an object rather than an experience.



Architecture and Indian Worldview

A.K. Ramanujam identifies 'context-free' and 'context-sensitive' behaviors and rules in societies. In light of this idea, one could propose that, Modernism subscribes to the 'context-free', while Critical Regionalism to the 'context sensitive'. Situating and ideating architecture in a 'context sensitive' framework of worldviews, beyond narrow confines of tectonics, geographic and material realities, shifts the goalposts of the project, from superficial uniqueness to search for an interpretation of the familiar. Reading of architecture also shifts from only evaluating a solution driven response to also reviewing projects as a reflexive mediation. The resultant architecture demonstrates the ability to resonate across critical discourses, vacillating between the universal and the particular – as seen in Sangath, CEE and stepwell in Adalaj. While the projects are disparate in their manifestations, they bear qualitative likeness in that, all the examples: 1. lend themselves to be identified within the larger context/worldview 2. exhibit Indian modes of imagination – characterised by an attempt to create a haptic rather than a picturesque experience; giving primacy to interpenetration instead of juxtaposition and articulation over ornamentation; 3. are architectural responses, theoretically indivisible into silos as empirical, ecological or experiential gestures. When such a positioning, ideation and coherence come together, architecture becomes a 'landscape experience' – an embodiment of a cultural consciousness.



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LEFT |

RUDABAI VAV STEPWELL

ADALAJ, GUJARAT

PHOTO CREDIT: Mitul Gajera on Unsplash



FOLLOWING PAGE |

Buta Kola ritual folk dance from the coastal districts and parts of Malenadu, Karnataka

PHOTO CREDIT: Sreejit Shashi on Unsplash



HERITAGE,
CULTURE AND
LOCAL TRADITIONS



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LANDSCAPE AND FAITH

SHRINES OF RURAL RAJASTHAN

Many cultural and religious traditions of rural communities based in different geographical regions across the country have played an important role in conservation of natural resources of land, water and vegetation. *Devras*, the sites of nature worship, located across Rajasthan, are one such example.





D*evras* [a term used to address places of worship by the pastoral communities that practice various versions of nature worship in rural settlements of the Aravalli mountain range] are found across Rajasthan with deities and practices varying from region to region, based on local belief systems and folk tales. The deities found in these sites seem to have evolved with the faith of their devotees. A pictorial description of a *devra*, would be an enclosed shrine, that is usually found in and around rural settlements that houses either one or several folk gods and goddesses. To understand faith and practices in relation to a *devra*, we must delve a little into the deities that inhabit these *devras*.

Devras in Mewar [Southern Rajasthan] are worshipped by pastoral communities that had settled here many years ago. These communities mainly include *Gujjars*, *Ghairis*, and the *Gametis*.

Folk gods and goddesses are often called *lok devatas* and *lok devis* in Hindi and the various regional Rajasthani languages. They are worshiped in the form of clay icons or shapeless stones, which are placed in shrines or on platforms set up under a village tree, and inside simply enclosed structures. As Rustom Bharucha explains, “a god who possesses the power to intervene in the problems of everyday life, faced by nomadic pastoral communities like the *Rabaris*, *Ghairis* and *Gujjars*, is a folk god. For example, if a cow owned by a member of the *Rabari* community is ill and is unable to give birth to a calf, neither Krishna nor Lord Shiva is likely to be approached to solve this problem. Likewise, if there is a family problem related to childbirth or a mental illness attributed to an evil spirit, it is assumed the greater gods are not likely to solve such a problem.” In such instances, the rural communities turn to folk deities.



PREVIOUS PAGE |

AARTI

Saturday evening service at a *devra*, Devra Udaipur

PHOTO CREDIT: Abhijeet Karwa

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PREPARATIONS

Jagran and preparations for a 'meethi prasadi', Devra Udaipur

PHOTO CREDIT: Hiteshree Das

Devras in the region host a combination of *Vaishnav* and *Shaivite* deities, which reveal the diversity and inclusivity of faith in the settlements around such shrines. Dev Narayan Ji and Dharamraj Ji, who are represented as warriors and *Tanka Ji*, who is illustrated through various versions of the *Shesha Naga*, are considered manifestations of lord Vishnu. In some *devras*, *Tanka ji's* idols are also perceived as representations of lord *Shiva*, since the *naga* iconography is also attributed to Shiva. Idols of *Bhairon Ji* and *Kala Ji*, *Gora Ji Bhairon* are clearly venerated as incarnations of *Shiva*, and are worshipped by almost all communities including the *Rajputs*, *Gujjars*, *Ghairis*, *Gametis*, *Kumhars* and even a few *Brahmins*.

Central to any shrine is the *bhopa* or head priest who in most cases belongs to a pastoral tribal community. The *bhopa*, serves as an oracle and is answerable to god on one hand and to people on the other. How one becomes a *bhopa* is not very clear though it is generally believed that a spirit or deity takes possession of a person without his knowledge. *Bhopas* serve as intermediaries between humankind, supernatural entities and energies, communicating with and often channeling both malign and benevolent spirits for the benefit of the community. Along with the *bhopa*, the devotees who have faith in the shrine are equally important.

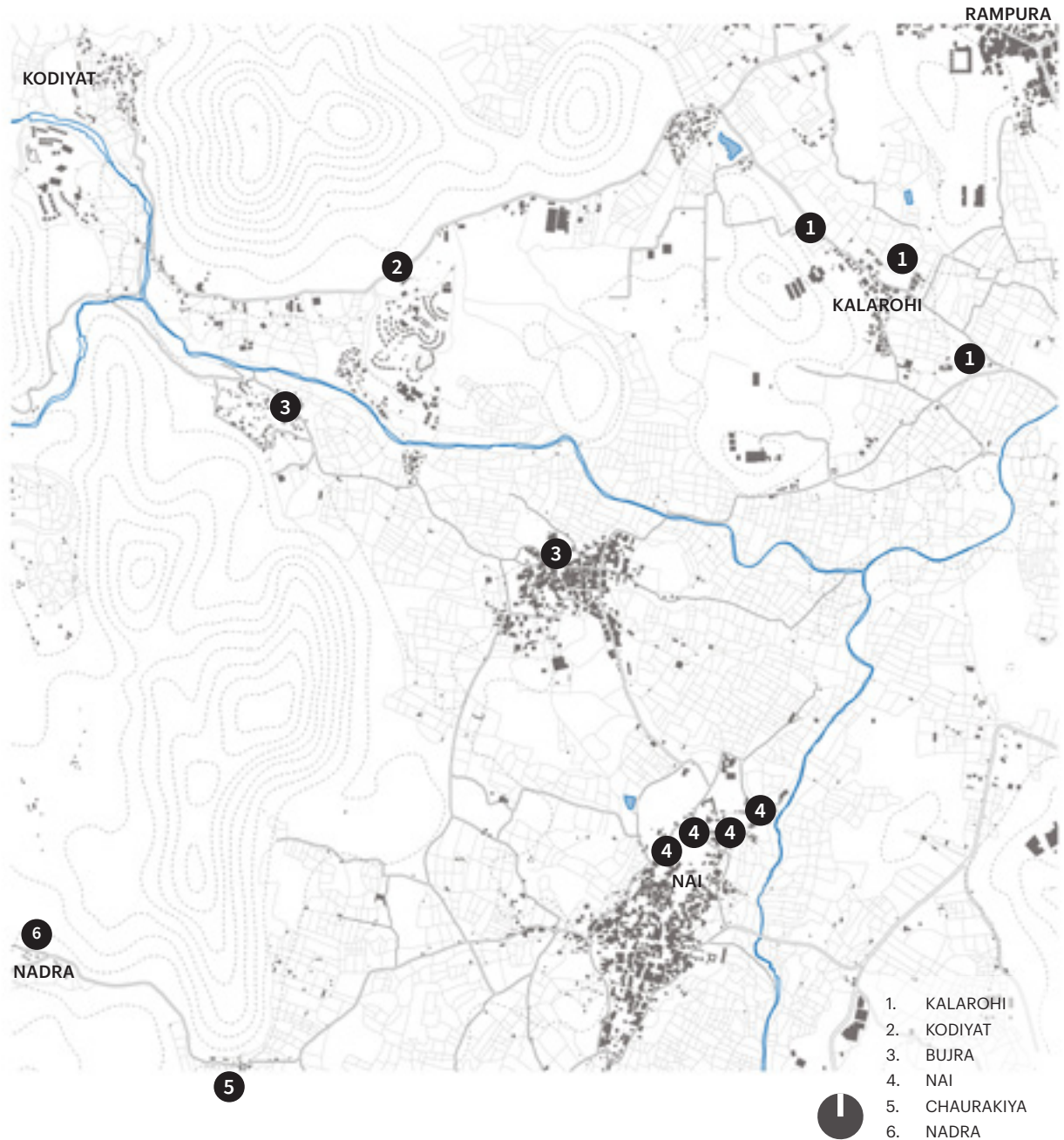
Devras are situated near settlements. Settlements strategically thrive by clearing some forests near perennial water bodies. This implies the availability of fire-wood, local forest produce, medicinal plants and fertile cultivable land around. Consequently, *devras* are found near important water bodies and sacred groves.

BHOPA JI

Bhopa Ji at a devra in Udaipur

PHOTO CREDIT: Abhijeet Karwa





DEVRAS OF UDAIPUR
 Map indicating contours,
 water bodies, settlements,
 roads, farmlands and devras,
 west of Udaipur
 DRAWING CREDIT:
 The Udaipur Collaborative

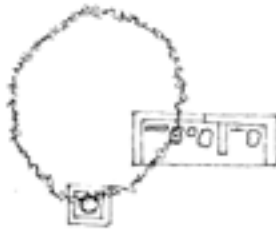
In the context of the Mewar region, most settlements are positioned on relatively flatter grounds, in valleys between foothills of the Aravallis. The area between two ridges as established through the maps, has been selected as the area of study of *Devras* in this region. The non-perennial *Sisarma* river along with multiple other rivulets are the main sources of water for the lakes of Udaipur. Small water bodies are formed naturally within the region during the monsoons acting as additional sources of water. Hamlets around the region are believed to be older than the city of Udaipur, owing to the fertile land and availability of water.



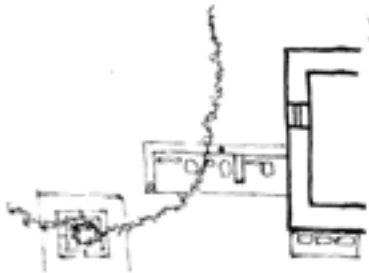
Chabutra



Than



Dham



Devra



PLAN

SECTION

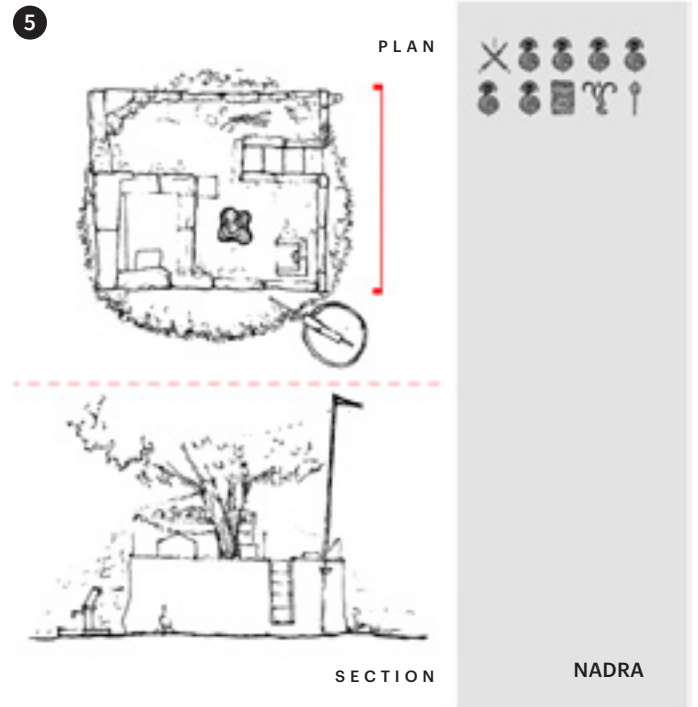
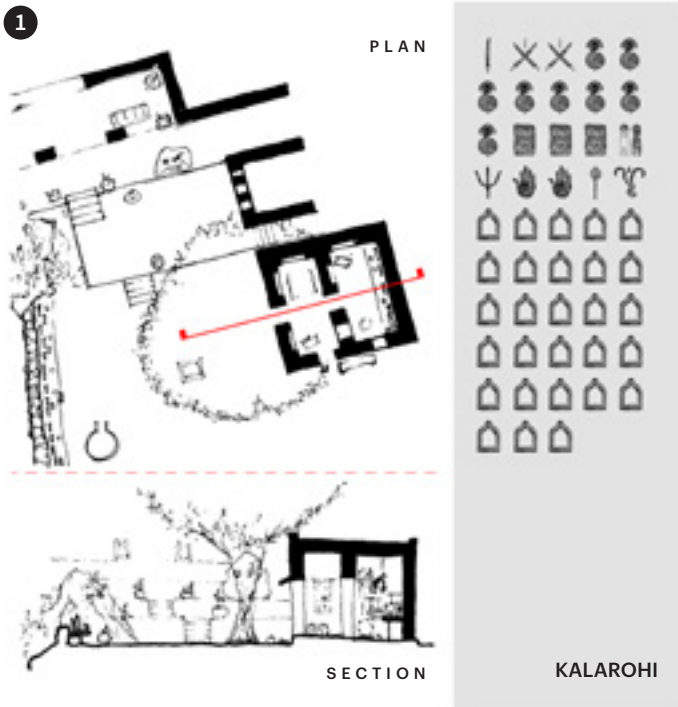
EVOLUTION OF A DEVRA

Generally, there is a platform (*chabutra*), which may be constructed in various ways. In most villages, it is made using a stack of local stones which is coated with mud and cow dung. "Open air shrines located in fields or under trees are called *than*. If the *than* is associated with some sort of miracle, the shrine is called a *dham*. Shrines located within the interiors of rooms and huts are called *devras*." [Quoted from Bharucha, Rajasthan, An oral history: Conversations with Komal Kothari, 119-136].

One can systematically trace the evolution of *devras* – from their birth as open-air thans, to gradually becoming enclosed shrines within hut-like structures, and to becoming ornamented concrete structures, almost mimicking conventional temples of the 'greater gods'.

Architectural illustration, Ink on paper
SKETCH CREDIT: The Udaipur Collaborative

Devras and local shrines play an important role in preserving the natural ecosystem, since they are primarily sites of nature worship. By marking certain trees and forest groves as sacred, these sites prevented the felling of trees to a large extent. However, in more recent times most sacred groves have been cleared to develop farmland in order to serve the needs of the growing population and also generate income. Since most plants termed sacred, possess a medicinal value, these plants such as *Neem*, *Peepal* and *Tulsi* are deliberately not uprooted. *Devras* today seem to have grown around them and include them in their premises.



DEVRAS

TOP LEFT |

Devra at Nadra is an example of a devra near an intact sacred grove and natural water sources. Even its plinth is made out of stone rammed in earth.

TOP RIGHT |

Devra near Kalarohi village. This devra shares walls with a popular homestay, making it a truly unique space.

SKETCH CREDIT:

The Udaipur Collaborative

ABOVE |

SACRED PLANTS

Three sacred plants surrounding a devra, West of Udaipur, Udaipur

PHOTO CREDIT:
Hiteshree Das

Sacred groves or large trees and natural or man-made water sources are the two main geographic signifiers of these religious sites. Sacred groves in the Aravallis are an important resource for fodder, fruits, dry fallen wood, medicinal plants and water for traditional irrigation systems. These sacred groves are located near villages and close to a water source. Such groves are also perched atop small hillocks of the Aravallis range, where most communities worship their ancestors and gods such as *Bhairon ji*, *Dharamraj ji* and *Mataji*.



Dev Narayan Ji, a Gurjar warrior, who is worshipped as an incarnation of lord Vishnu. Depicted seated on his horse Leelagar, with a sword in hand and a naga near him. Dev Narayan statues are found both in terracotta and in a local black porous stone.



Bhairon, who's popularly known as Bhairav in northern India, is a Shaivite deity with various manifestations. Bhairon ji is traditionally portrayed by applying layers of filigree foil sheets and vermillion on a tall rectangular rock, with two eyes embellished over it. The filigree foils have now been replaced with colourful silver foils and cellophane sheets.



Eito Ka Sham or Niya Ji is depicted by engraving an open palm on a flat piece of stone with a pair of illustrated eyes placed right above, as if he were bestowing blessings onto the devotee.



Mata ji [mother goddess Devi], is worshipped in the form of Durga. She is associated with protection, strength, motherhood and destruction. She is shown riding on her mount, a lion or a tiger with four to eight hands stretching outwards, each holding a weapon to destroy and create. These include a chakra, a conch, a bow and arrow, a sword, a javelin, a trishul, a shield and a noose.

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IDOLS & ICONOGRAPHY

Various idols worshipped at devras in and around the area of documentation: Sculptures and reference icons. West of Udaipur, Udaipur

CREDIT: Abhijeet Karwa



Worshipped as a manifestation of Vishnu's Shesha Naga [Nagaraja], Tanka Ji shown in a very realistic iconography—either a nine, five, three, two or even a single-headed serpent; unlike the common thousand-headed, or five thousand-headed Shesha Nagas in Vishnu temples. As a part of shringaar, each of the Tanka Jis are adorned with a chhatri for the weekly Saturday services.



One of Bhairon's avatars, the twins Kala and Gora Bhairon – one black and ferocious, and the other white and compassionate. These are mostly depicted in painted terracotta, with one in a shade of light brown and another in a shade of dark blue.



As per the local legend, Dharamraj Ji is an incarnation of lord Krishna, who favours and protects the Gametis [pastoral community]. He is represented by two warrior-like men seated on two identical horses facing each other with swords and a Shesha Naga in between.



Very similar to the rustic depictions of Hanuman and Bhairon ji, Ganesha too is represented by wide and squarish stone, covered in vermillion and filigree foil sheets. Sometimes, one can notice a carved statue behind the filigree sheets, which depicts Ganesha in a sitting pose, with the head of an elephant and a large belly.



Hanuman is depicted using a small rounded stone covered in vermillion and filigree foil sheets. In a few devras, a carved marble Hanuman statue is planted near the original formless stone, showing him carrying a gada [mace], a vraja [thunderbolt] and a saffron flag in service of the Goddess Durga and Bhairon.



Not all but some bhopas turn into divinties after their passing, while some devotees of the devra also gain divine energies after death, and are therefore worshiped. The duties and traits of these ancestors or Purvaj are carved onto locally available stones, in order to honour them.



A *devra* acts as an important centre for interaction based on its location and approach. For example, a *devra* in a village named *Kalarohi*, is situated on a small hillock in a private property which runs as a homestay called Devra Udaipur—named after the shrine. In order to avoid the disruption of the shrine’s age-old cultural practices, the owners of the property have granted access to its devotees to come in and pay their respects to the deities. With ease of access to the place of worship, the *devra* continues to thrive and also becomes an important platform for interaction between villagers, visitors and urban travellers from across the world.



ABOVE |
IDOLS

Various idols worshipped at *devras* in and around the area of documentation, Loyra, Udaipur
PHOTO CREDIT: Abhijeet Karwa

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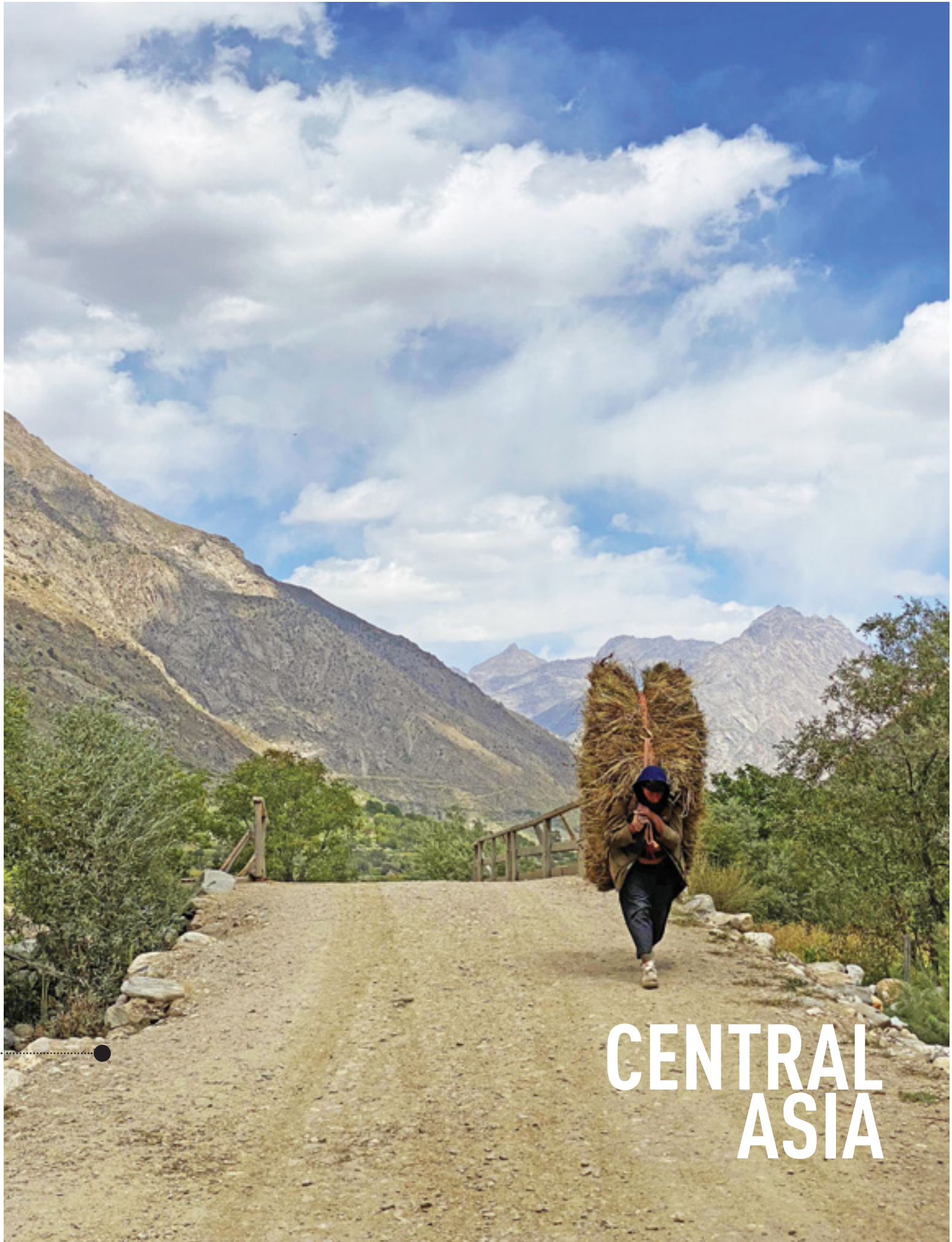
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FOLLOWING PAGE |

Parun, Nuristan, Afghanistan

PHOTO CREDIT: Sohaib Ghyasi on Unsplash

The photo shows a labourer transporting bushwood cooking fuel. While needed for survival, the practice of cutting is very destructive ecologically. These shrubs are very slow growing and their extensive root systems are essential in binding the soil on steep slopes. Over cutting soon leads to erosion which is nearly impossible to reverse. So, UNEP’s programs of planting poplar woodlots along water courses and using willow as natural checkdams provide lumber for construction and sale, and the branches and twigs provide cooking fuel and leaves and twigs become animal fodder and, eventually, manure for crops.



**CENTRAL
ASIA**

Jon Coe, landscape architect
| jon@joncoedesign.com

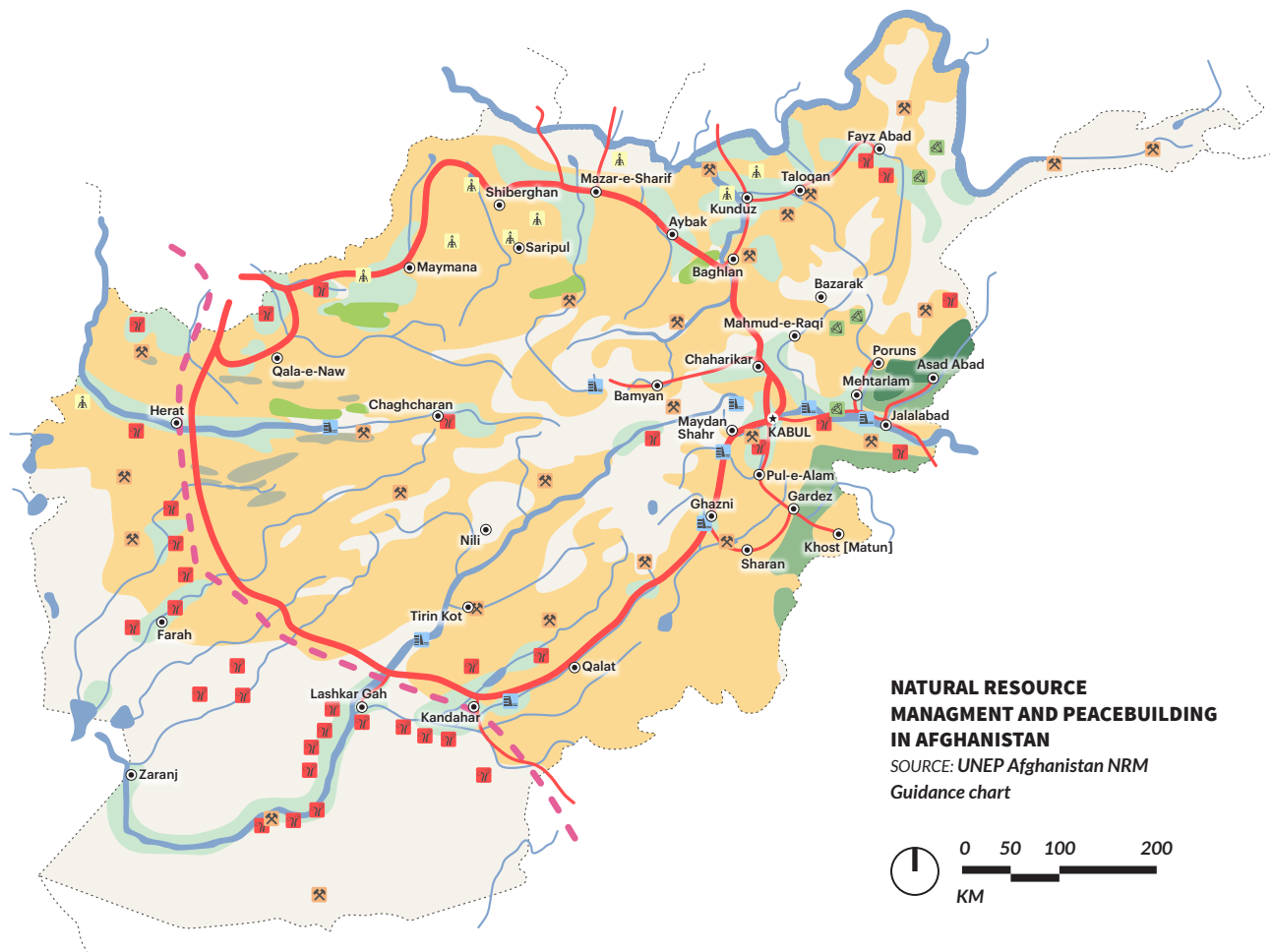
افغانستان COMMUNITY-BASED ECO-PLANNING IN HIGH DRY REGIONS

THE UNEP AFGHANISTAN MODEL

A special feature profiles work of United Nations Environment Programme UNEP [now nearly two decades old] in parts of Afghanistan, one of the most active conflict zones of the world. Various initiatives of the organization are geared towards sustainable natural resource management in a largely rural land with the objectives of improving the environmental health of the region and the social and economic status of the communities. Facilitated by a landscape architect, they include formulation of various resource management policies and executing demonstration projects to showcase climate and culture responsive interventions on selected sites for developing sustainable ways of engaging with nature for productive uses like agriculture, crops and forestation. These are also examples of a modern blending of old and new – modern GIS survey methods with walking surveys and maps drawn by village elders. Learning from local communities about their traditional practices and local wisdom and empowering them with new ideas and knowledge for envisioning a self reliant sustainable future is an integral part of the work.

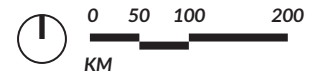
Jon Coe, landscape architect who has been working as environment management and design consultant for UNEP in the country shares the strategy of the mission along with some of the works, both at policy and design levels in a two part series feature – *Context & Strategy*, and *Practical Applications*.





**NATURAL RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT AND PEACEBUILDING
IN AFGHANISTAN**

SOURCE: UNEP Afghanistan NRM
Guidance chart



- Poppy Fields
- Gem Stones
- Minerals and Metals
- Oil and Gas
- Water Dams
- Capital
- Provincial Capitals
- Proposed TAPI Gasline
- Major Roads
- Rivers and Lakes
- Juniper
- Pistachio
- Closed Forest
- Degenerated Forest
- Potentially Irrigated Areas
- Rangeland and Dry Farming
- Sparse Vegetation

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

1 CONTEXT & STRATEGY

Today the magnificent people and landscapes of Afghanistan face an uncertain future. Their political and financial uncertainty, massive refugee crisis, drought, food shortages and lack of experienced government service providers combine to challenge even the most resilient of people. Yet Afghans have been defined by their resilience for millennia. Most Afghans live in rural pre-modern and self-sufficient communities. They can teach our over-developed world lessons in sustainable lifestyles.

In 2009 I began the first of eleven missions to Afghanistan as a landscape architect and environmental planning consultant, work which continued through 2016. These twice-yearly missions were between three to four weeks in length. Nine of them were working with the Afghanistan office of the United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] and the Afghanistan National Environmental Protection Agency [NEPA]. While many members of the UNEP team at international, national, and provincial levels contributed to and later



supported the funding and implementation of this work, my main direction and collaboration came from Mr Andrew Scanlon, who became Afghanistan Country Director during this period. Our shared ethos of respect for traditional knowledge and community-based decision making [bottom-up programs with top-down support] and ecologically based, regenerative, restorative, and self-sufficient programs was fundamental to the work which followed. I found my work was to continuously suggest ideas and examples from my over fifty years of international project experience, while Andrew sorted and selected the most useful for the needs at hand based upon his organizational understanding of the vast UN and international donor system, while constantly linking ideas for multiple benefits at all levels.

Community-based programs like this are needed because semi-arid mountainous regions like Afghanistan face age old threats: earthquake, rockfall, avalanche, flood, and drought, now made worse by climate change. Remote villages are far from government help and must be able to look after themselves.

Landscape degradation from over grazing and fuel wood harvesting is caused by more recent over population and results in increased runoff, flooding and erosion. Loss of traditional knowledge is caused by movement to urban areas, and decades of conflict resulting in very large numbers of deaths and surviving refugees. These are presently at crisis levels and often are forced to settle in marginal, hazardous locations.

While challenges in these regions are considerable, they are not insurmountable. Afghan highland and range land communities always have survived by self-reliance. Most crop, livestock and craft work products are consumed locally. Survival depends upon deep knowledge of useful indigenous plants, as well

ABOVE LEFT |

The author describing the community planning process to a mountain village gathering in 2010. American winter tourism expert Ms Laura Ashley is shown with red scarf. I've hidden the face of my interpreter in this photo in fear of reprisals by Taliban fighters to local citizens for working with foreigners like the UN. Names of local photographers are with held for the same reason

ABOVE RIGHT |

Avalanches like this may close access roads for a month or more

as traditional crops such as wheat, potatoes, orchards, and livestock [plant and animal species originally domesticated in this or similar regions]. What could be more sustainable? Both fertile and hazardous locations were avoided when selecting building sites. Local construction materials were effectively used. Critical resources such as water and range land were managed collectively. While livelihoods are spare and difficult, people have a notable degree of autonomy and resilience.

Instead of a “big is better” approach, we proposed multiple interlinked small-scale self-managed programs based upon both local knowledge and examples found in other indigenous populations living in similar high dry environments. These technologies were blended with modern restorative philosophies and techniques such as permaculture.

Our work

Our work can be considered in two stages, the strategic and the practical. While it is important to remember that both areas are functionally inseparable, each stage informing the other, for this report I will focus on the strategic aspect and present examples of practical applications in the next issue.

Our strategic objectives were to:

- [1] Increase community resilience in a changing world by providing useful and easily accessible information
- [2] Provide both a “why to” and “how to” dimension to environmental policy documents for related ministries, community master plans and local field projects
- [3] Develop a practical framework for Ministry, UN and NGO staff and community leaders to plan and develop their own field projects
- [4] Assist field staff in communicating design intent and construction methods to local workers
- [5] Provide attractive and result-oriented frameworks for international funding.

The strategies we developed for community-based eco-planning had four main elements:

- [1] Supporting community-based natural resource management
- [2] Development of “proof of concept” test projects with rural communities and evaluating the results.
- [3] Teaching these strategies and practical methods to colleagues in related Afghan government departments at the federal, provincial, and community levels. These included NEPA, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Land [MAIL] and several other agencies to a lesser extent. The first applications were in Bamyan Province. Later these strategies were expanded to Kabul, Daikundi, Badakshan, Balk, and Nangarhar Provinces and collaborations organized with several international non-governmental aid groups. Implementation of these stage two programs was initiated during my period of involvement.



View looking north to the remains of the 1400-year-old Bamyan Buddhas [destroyed by the Taliban] along the ancient Silk Road with the Hindu Kush range beyond



View of Shah Foladi Mountain in the Koi Baba Range looking south from about the same location as the previous view. These are called “water tower mountains.” Nearly all local water comes from upland snowmelt

Two foundations of ecology are the twin principles: *everything is connected*, and *everything changes*. Development projects are too often undertaken in isolation. However, eco-planning strategy begins at the global level, understanding international and regional threats and opportunities, trends, resources, and legally binding agreements effecting local needs. These interact with national laws, policies, and priorities as well as natural, cultural, economic, and environmental resource and security conditions. National policies, programs, and resources are often implemented through provincial ministries and governor's offices and on to city governments, Community Development Councils and *Shuras* [elder's councils]. This flow should then be reversed with knowledge learned through monitoring and evaluation at each level affecting policy and programs at higher levels. Everything is connected. And if constant improvement of policies and outcomes are sought in a rapidly changing world, everything also changes.

Simply stated, our planning process was to develop a flexible chain of communication, understanding and action connecting all levels of stakeholders from international donors and government service providers to elders at the community level and back again.

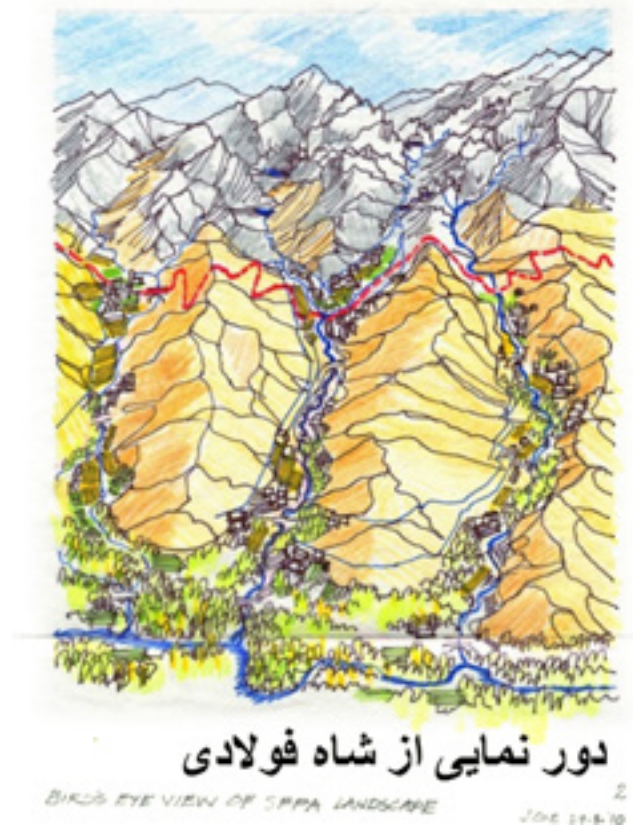
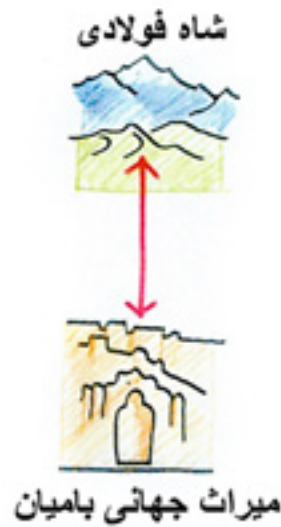
First steps

The UNEP was requested by the General Secretary of NEPA to develop a management plan for a proposed Koi-Baba National Park in the mountains above Bamyan town in the central highlands. In 2009 I was recruited by Andrew Scanlon because I had worked under him in planning for Jiuzhaigou National Park in Sichuan, China and I had helped to plan national and nature parks in the US, Canada, and Brazil, as well as China. This was to be an IUCN category five "human landscapes" protected area incorporating existing villages and livelihoods. We began by developing an understanding of the larger landscape of the Bamyan River Valley and drainages between the Hindu Kush and Koi Baba [Grandfather] Mountains and of course the amazing cultural and natural history of the region.

However, in visiting many gateway villages to the proposed national park with our local Afghan guides it became clear that the most urgent need was to help these poor mountain communities along the 3000-meter elevation contour develop sustainable livelihoods while implementing climate change and disaster risk mitigation strategies. Our hope was to gradually build trust through supporting projects they wanted and needed before discussing ideas about potential alpine tourism, a concept largely foreign and potentially threatening to many. We also wanted to counter the common short-term gain and long-term frustration of the international development process in which foreign technicians insert foreign technology such as a mini-hydro power station, installed by outside specialists and then leave, providing almost no local jobs and no means of long-term maintenance or parts replacement. We also sought to avoid competing local demands and unrelated improvements through use of a shared and unifying planning process. It is my belief that participatory planning also strengthens a sense of agency among participants. Poor rural communities

the most urgent need was to help these poor mountain communities along the 3000-meter elevation contour develop sustainable livelihoods while implementing climate change and disaster risk mitigation strategies

after developing an understanding of the international, national and region context, our in-situ process began by inviting village delegates to prepare their own community master plan



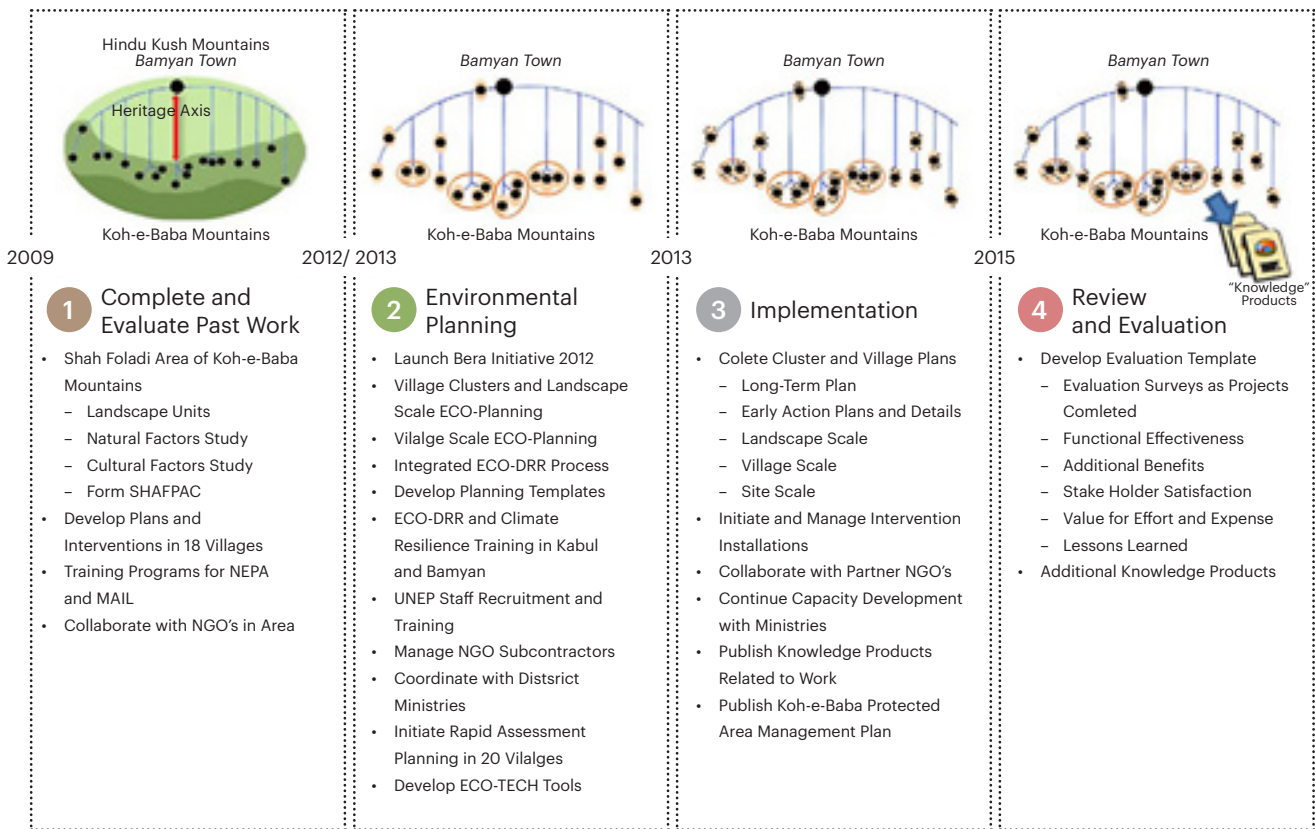
ABOVE |

Two examples of my early cartoons exploring the axial relationship of the culturally iconic Giant Buddhas and the visually, geologically, and ecologically iconic Shah Foladi Mountain in the proposed Koi Baba National Park. My second cartoon shows the river valleys connecting Banyan River to the high "gateway villages" providing eventual access to the proposed Koi Baba National Park. Our proposed alpine "Sky Trail" is shown in red

may believe that the future is simply something that happens to them. Hopefully, the experience of a practical planning process followed by tangible, beneficial outcomes, will encourage the belief that their future is something they themselves can shape.

After developing an understanding of the international, national and region context, our in-situ process began by inviting village delegates to prepare their own community master plan. The first step was to visit each community with our Afghan UNEP and NEPA advisors and translators who were already known and respected in the community. After sharing tea with community elders, we joined them in walking surveys. We would ask elders questions like, "What was the highest level this stream has flooded since your grandfathers time?" "Please show us where two of your village women were killed by an avalanche while collecting water three years ago." "If you were going to build a community reforestation and fruit tree nursery, where would you locate it and who would look after it?"

While walking the village openly with local children following, we dutifully marked aerial photos [good surveys were never available] helping the community themselves develop what landscape architects call "opportunity and constraint maps". While we later verified many of these environmental threats using the excellent Geographic Information System [GIS] facilities provided by UNEP colleagues in Europe, it was important to receive this information directly from the community because of the depth of knowledge they shared and because it demonstrated our respect for their agency. We also took many photos and I occasionally made sketches of important features of special scenic interest.



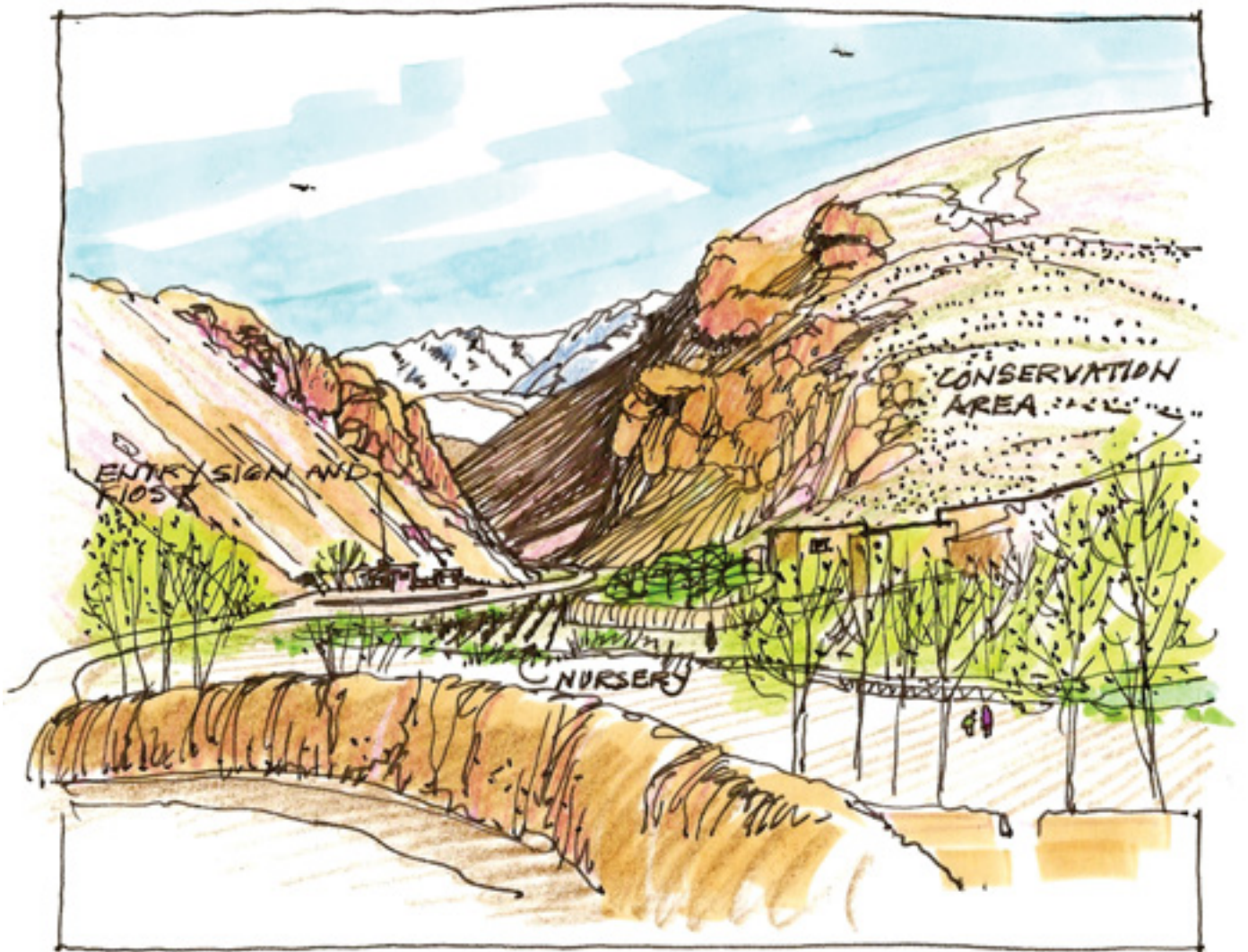
Female UNEP staff met with community women and, once trust was established, were able to survey information about their needs and aspirations as well as diet and nutrition, infant mortality, educational opportunities, women's crafts such as carpet making and other essential information.

After developing a shared understanding of the land and community, we convened planning workshops. These were sometimes held in Bamyan town on market days when community members were likely to come to town. There we treated them to a midday meal from the bazaar. The workshops had introductions, break-out groups with markers and flip charts, teams reporting back to the group, and summary sessions. These were exactly like planning workshops landscape architects hold in major world cities. Many community members were literate and recorded suggestions and findings, and discussions were lively and often eloquent.

The focus of the workshop was brainstorming what development and protection needs the community wanted. These were discussed and prioritized, and early action projects identified. Physical developments would be built by the community, sometimes with funding for local labour and materials provided through UNEP or other agencies and fully audited. Projects were to be sustainable using traditional designs, materials, and labour. Supporting ecologically based notions included working with rather than against stream dynamics, returning

ABOVE | **KOH-E-BABA INTEGRATED WATERSHED AND PROTECTED AREAS MASTER PLANNING PROCESS**

This overall schedule outlines our many combined NEPA and UNEP planning and implementation initiatives in Bamyan Valley within which local eco-tech projects and programs were managed

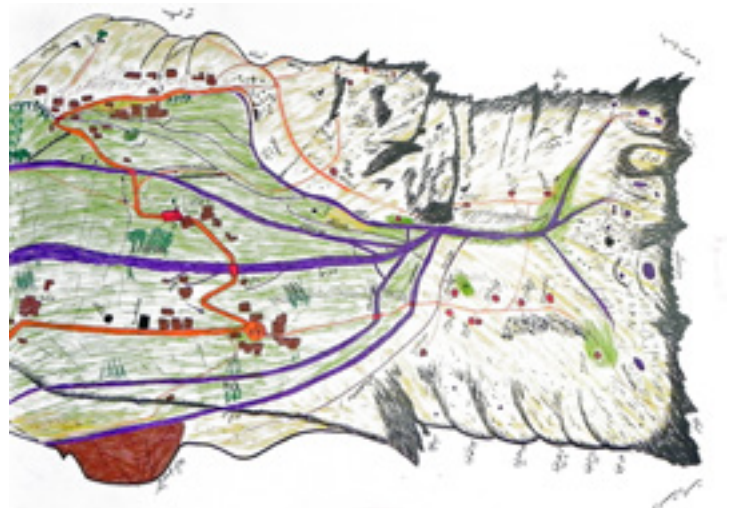


ABOVE |

A sketch made by the author recording a highly scenic natural gateway to an especially beautiful upper valley area

RIGHT |

Some village participants drew maps of their community and upland grazing lands. Their interpretation of scale was based upon walking time rather than physical distance, so these maps did not correlate to the spatial scale of aerial photographs or GIS maps. They record a deep understanding of their lands as seen by the communities themselves



dangerous flooding surface water to safe dependable underground flow and suggesting installation of hundreds of small, easily repaired check dams rather than single large, ridged structures of high embedded energy imported materials. Regenerative programs such as riparian tree plantings would provide lumber for construction and sale and cooking fuel and would help to stabilize stream banks. Eventually these native poplars and willows would reseed gallery forests along the entire downstream watercourse. Programs such as training in orchard management or food preserving would be taught by Afghan experts provided by local government agencies or universities. We developed an extensive catalogue of what we called “ecotech” design ideas, many based upon centuries old regional practice which also helped reduce disaster risk and impact of predicted climate warming and drying. These will be the subject of next month’s article.



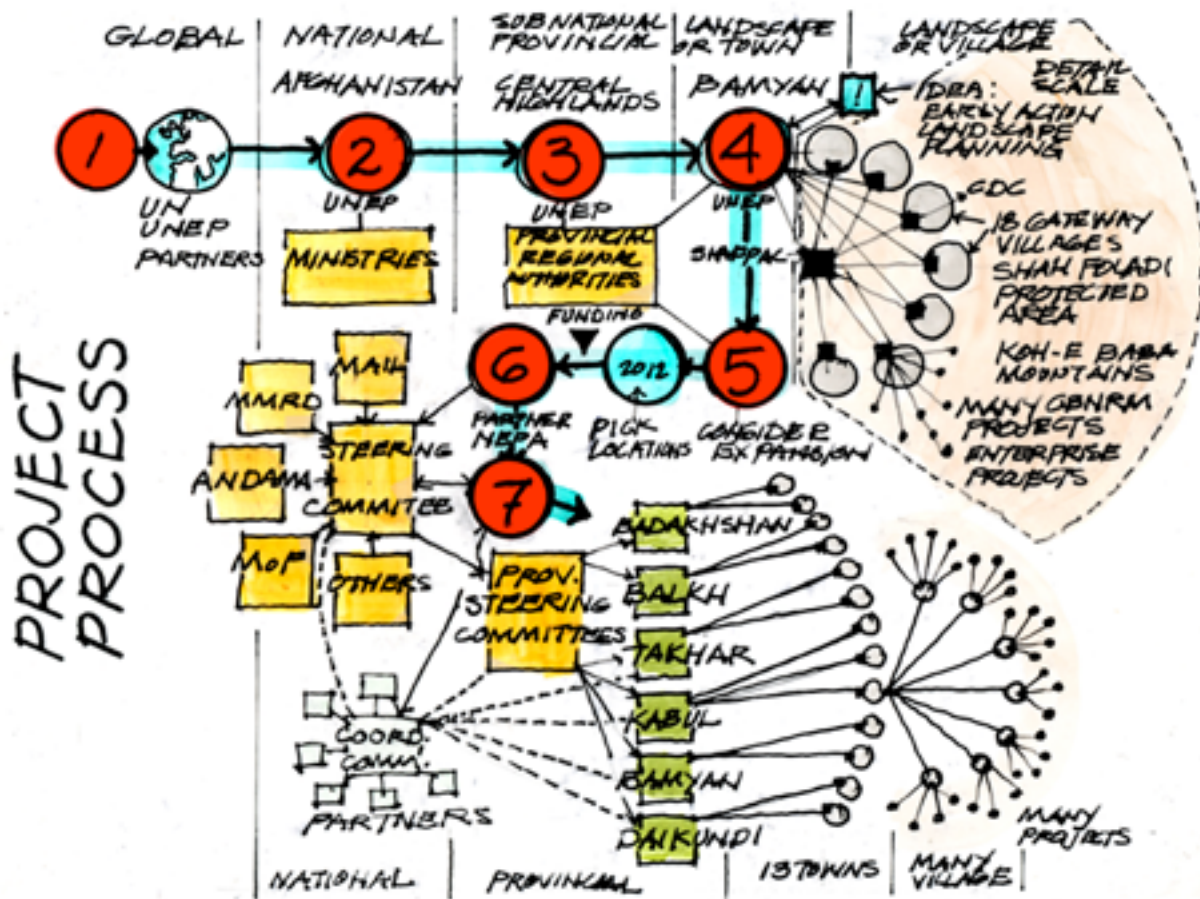
Eventually nineteen communities in the Bamyan area developed their own unique master plans followed by many successful eco-tech-based improvements including community nurseries and improved livelihoods through reforestation of wood lots. I even observed some wildlife returning to the area.

ABOVE |
An active break-out brainstorming session after a delicious lunch

Implementation Methods: NEPA and UNEP partnered in implementing these policies and practices through an integrated process, including on site training of ministry staff from national and provincial levels, implementing community-based landscape scale and village planning, Disaster Risk Reduction [Eco-DRR] construction, training, and mobilization initiatives. Climate Change Adaption [CCA] programs and projects included environmental and climate monitoring and publishing useful guides and training curricula were also successfully implemented. Very fortunately, the twin global concerns for CCA and DDR were well funded by foreign aid programs in countries like United Kingdom, Estonia, Finland, and Japan.

During my final year with this program, we returned to our first goal, completion of what began as the Koi Baba National Park Management Plan and resulted a year later in the 2017 dedication of the 2,700 square kilometre Shah Foladi National Protected Area.

It is important that such programs and projects be integrated within a larger planning framework to avoid conflicts and duplication and optimizing multiple benefits. Therefore, after successful starts and proof of concept in the nineteen Bamyan test villages, UNEP was requested to extend this program to five additional provinces, as shown in my illustration ahead.



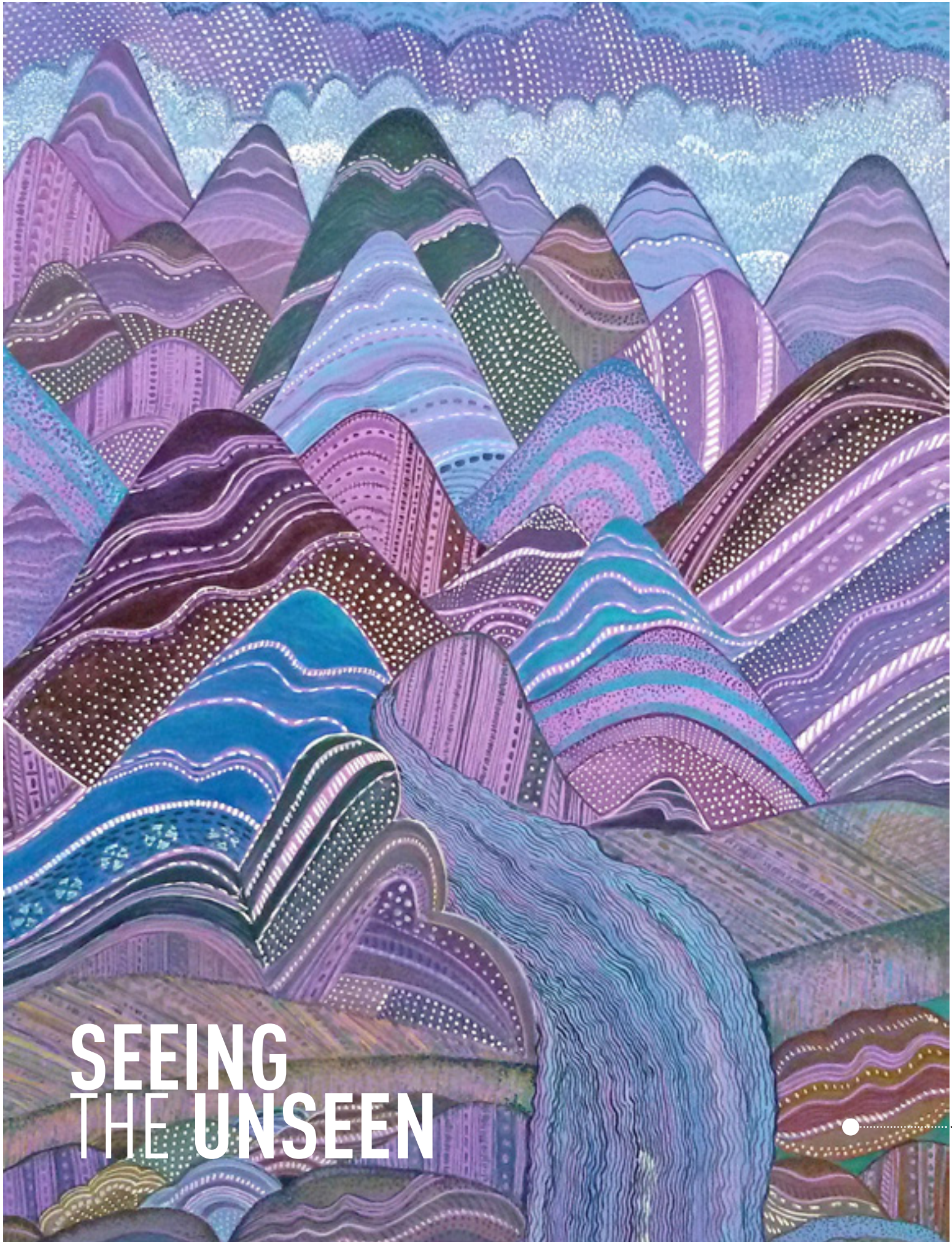
What's next?

With the Afghan elected government gone and key departments like NEPA most likely disbanded, top-down support for community-based planning and ecotech regenerative programs will not continue. If the UN is invited back, it will only be to deliver urgent humanitarian aid. I know of some previous UNEP Afghan colleagues now fleeing Taliban death threats. National protected areas will no longer be protected, unless by local leaders. Many of the mountain communities we worked with are from the historically persecuted Hazara ethnic and religious minority. Will they receive promised protection from the new Taliban government or a return to the persecution visited upon them by the previous Taliban government? My hope is that the villages we worked with, and their observant neighbours, having benefited from their community-led and ecologically based accomplishments, will continue this work spontaneously, as needs and opportunities arise, building upon their deep strengths for hard toil, self-reliance, improvisation, and resilience.

ABOVE | UNEP Planning and Development Process. Items 1-4 show information, knowledge, and resource flow from global to local. Items 4-5 illustrate test cases in the Bamyan area. Based upon broad local acceptance 5-7 show the process extended to additional provinces. The information return loop is not shown in this diagram but involved evaluation of village level planning and development initiatives, reports and training session delivered to higher levels of national government, detailed reports to international donors and UNEP strategy documents published at the international level



All images and drawings courtesy of the Author



SEEING THE UNSEEN



Indranil Garai, Principle Associate, IGA
| www.igastudios.com



classmates



An online art exhibition curated by IGA Galleria showcases work of six women artists who studied at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan – the school of art nestled in nature, and later pursued their individual journeys. They are reunited through ‘Classmates’ with their connecting thread remaining nature and landscapes. The works, conceptualized in diverse set of mediums showcase various creative imaginations including fascinating natural world, the region and environmental concerns, while imbibing a deep sense of place and time.

PREVIOUS PAGE |

WINTER MOUNTAINS

11.6" x 16.6" | *Mixed media on paper*

ARTIST: *Mitali Ghosh*

THIS PAGE [TOP RIGHT] |

MAPPING IDENTITIES IV

15.5" x 15.5" | *Watercolour, drawing
and paper pulp on acid-free paper*

ARTIST: *Shweta P. Raina*

Priyanka Bardiya

“The flux of life and its elusiveness is what interests me as artist and the line and colour narrates its story, a universal story. The incidental elements – trees, plants, birds, cats, sky, flowers and occasional human figure carry this story of growth [life] and decay of our existence and everything intermediate.”



RED SKY BLUE MOON
8.5" x 12" | Water color, pen and ink
ARTIST: Priyanka Bardiya

Madhumati Manda

“I am inspired by the light and hues of the surrounding landscape and moody weather of the West Coast of Scotland, Ayr where I presently reside. They attempt to communicate a strong sense of atmosphere and emotional engagement.”

SPRING

12" x 12" | Oil on canvas

ARTIST: Madhumati Manda



Mitali Ghosh

"I am a trained textile designer. Thus, the elements and sensibilities of the textile design reflect in my works. I like to paint landscapes using motifs from nature and weaving them into beautiful fairytale-like narratives – my experience of painting and practice of fabric merge to give enchanting imageries in my work. Things that I see in my daily life, take shape in my painting, through lines, colours, texture, and space. I do not feel restricted to a particular medium and so my works are a collage of acrylics, watercolor, poster colour,

pastels, and pen and ink. I like to work on small intimate-size pieces as I feel more connected with them, usually creating one piece over a number of days adding at times miniature-like details.



WINDY SPRING DAY

11.6" x 16.6" | Mixed media on paper

ARTIST: Mitali Ghosh

Hemlata Pradhan

“I aim to highlight the fragile ecosystems of orchids, as important subjects for conservation, immortalize them on paper for all times to come, assist the conservation biologists in their works, help bridge the gap between art and science and raise public awareness of our flora and fauna while bringing joy and kindle and foster the interest in these irreplaceable plant treasures.”

**CALANTHE MASUCA
IN NATURAL HABITAT**
28.34" x 20.8"
Giclée archival-quality print
ARTIST: Hemlata Pradhan

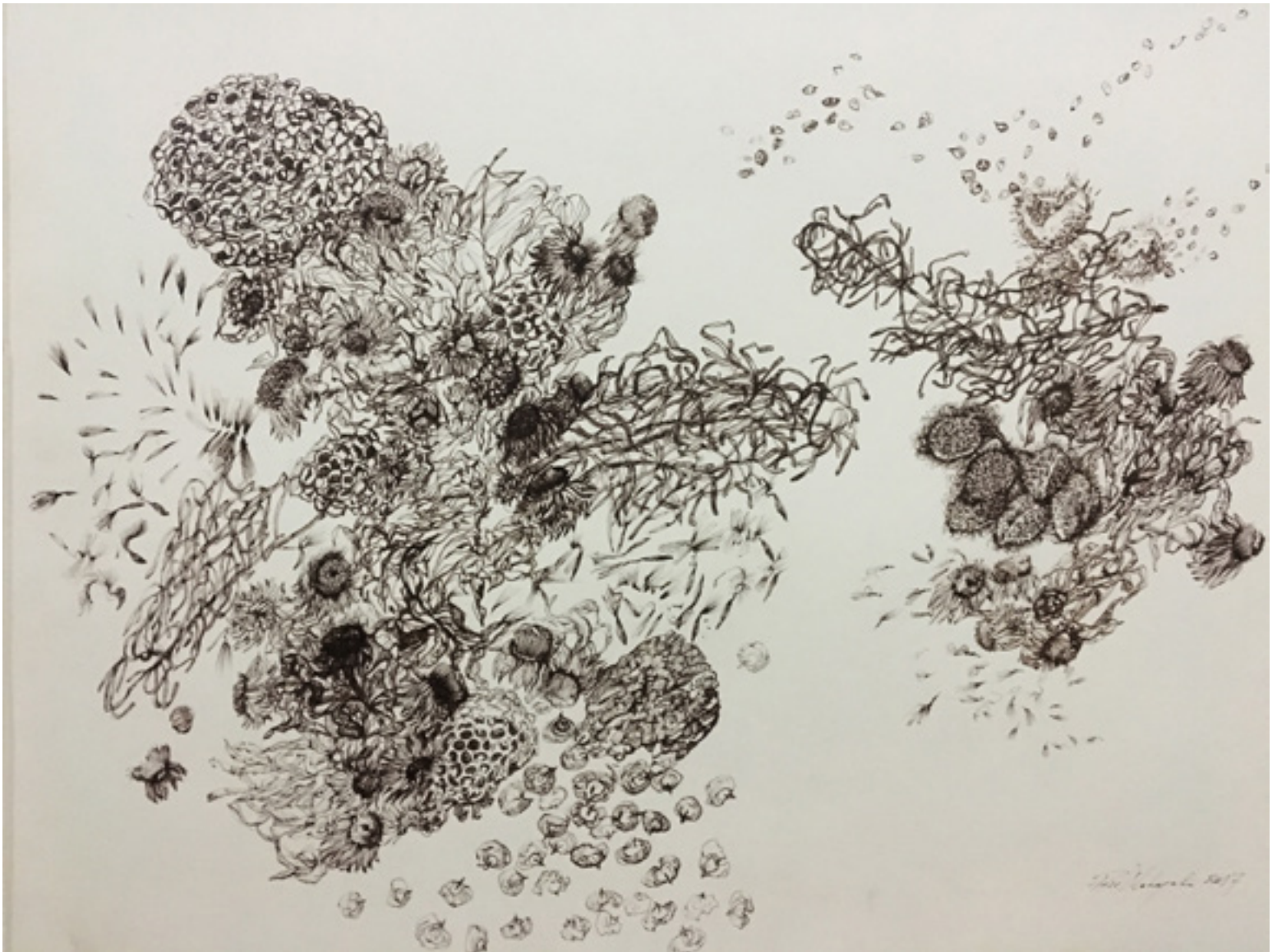


Piu Mahapatra

"The further we are pushed away from nature, the stronger the pull is to return. I gather my inspirations from our natural world, the forest floor, which is often filled with fleeting beauties, intricate designs, mysterious webs and often remains hidden. The brittle beauties captured mostly in pen are like reminders of life which is also brittle and yet stunning."

UNDER THE TASMANIA SUN

24" x 18" | Micron pen and water color on Strathmore paper
ARTIST: Piu Mahapatra



Shweta P. Raina

“The paradox between the tangible and the intangible, the real and the abstract, imagination and truth lends life its necessary melodrama, and, as an artist drawn towards these idiosyncrasies of existence, my works are reflections of my emotional responses to the flow of life through the passages of time and circumstance, collectively addressed as experiences and identities.”

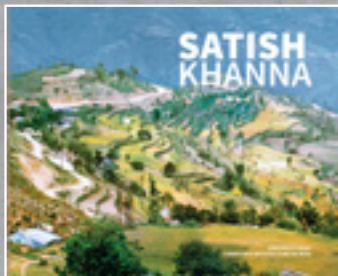
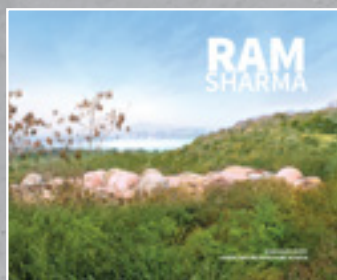
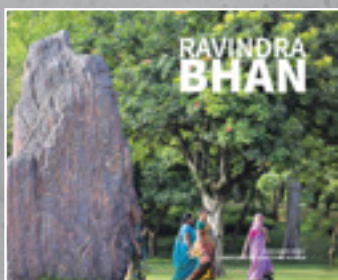
FRAGMENTED EMOTIONS

43.5" x 30" | Books, pen and ink, paper-cut collage on acid-free paper

ARTIST: Shweta P. Raina



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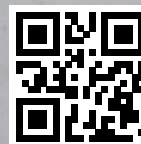
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