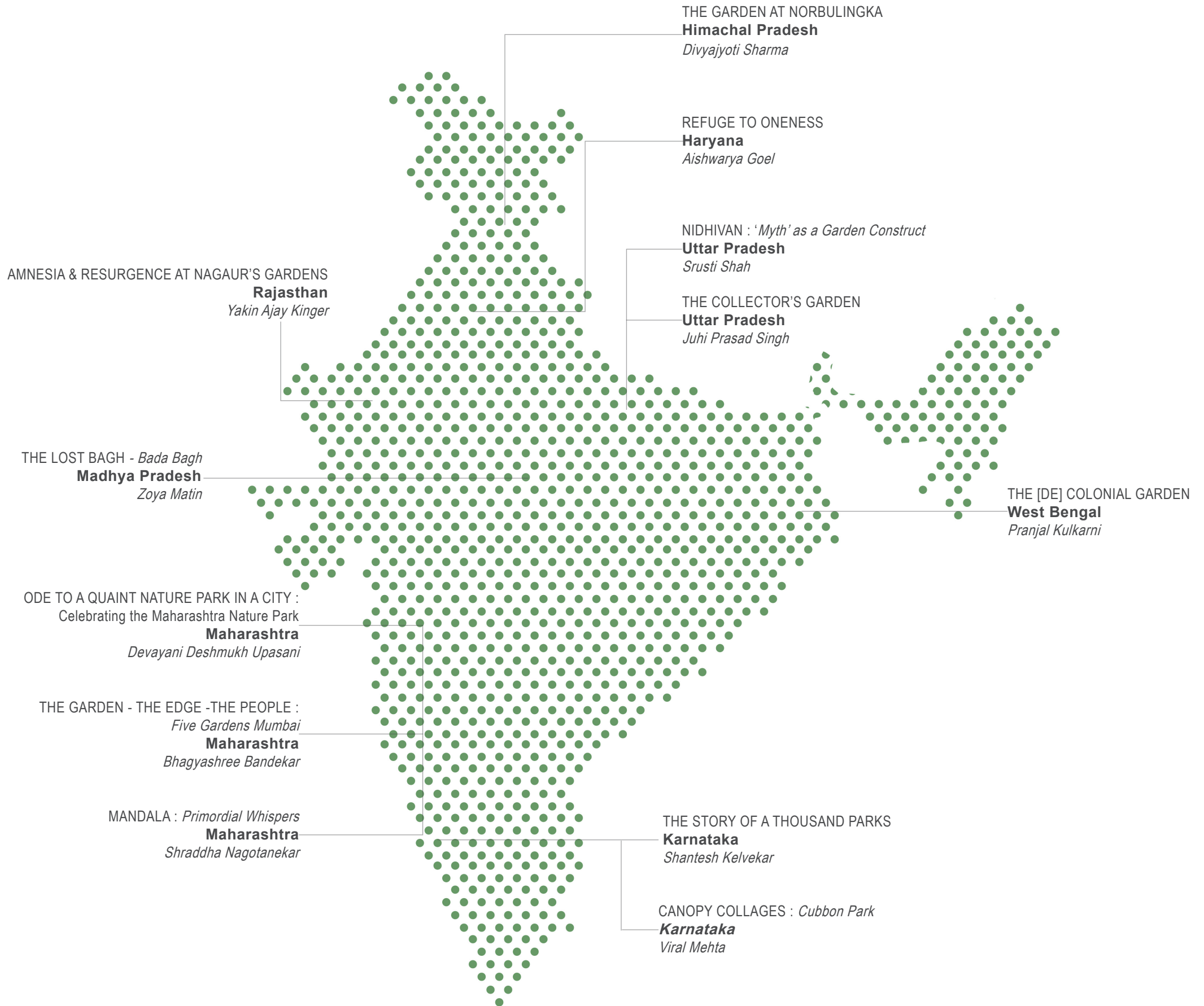




WITHIN  
THE  
GARDENS  
WE  
WALK





# CONTENTS

01	NIDHIVAN : ‘Myth’ as a Garden Construct <i>Srusti Shah</i>	8
----	---	---

02	THE LOST BAGH - Bada Bagh <i>Zoya Matin</i>	16
----	--	----

03	THE [DE] COLONIAL GARDEN <i>Pranjal Kulkarni</i>	24
----	---	----

04	THE GARDEN AT NORBULINGKA <i>Divyajyoti Sharma</i>	32
----	---	----

05	AMNESIA & RESURGENCE AT NAGAUUR’S GARDENS <i>Yakin Ajay Kinger</i>	39
----	---	----

06	REFUGE TO ONENESS <i>Aishwarya Goel</i>	42
----	--	----

07	ODE TO A QUIANT NATURE PARK IN A CITY : <i>Celebrating the Maharashtra Nature Park</i> <i>Devayani Deshmukh Upasani</i>	50
----	--	----

08	THE GARDEN - THE EDGE - THE PEOPLE : <i>Five Gardens Mumbai</i> <i>Bhagyashree Bandekar</i>	58
----	--	----

09	THE STORY OF A THOUSAND PARKS <i>Shantesh Kelvekar</i>	66
----	---	----

10	CANOPY COLLAGES : <i>Cubbon Park</i> <i>Viral Mehta</i>	74
----	--	----

11	MANDALA : <i>Primordial Whispers</i> <i>Shraddha Nagotaneekar</i>	82
----	--	----

12	THE COLLECTOR’S GARDEN <i>Juhi Prasad Singh</i>	91
----	--	----

13	EPILOGUE	100
----	----------	-----

14	MEET THE AUTHORS	102
----	------------------	-----

15	MEET THE JURORS	105
----	-----------------	-----

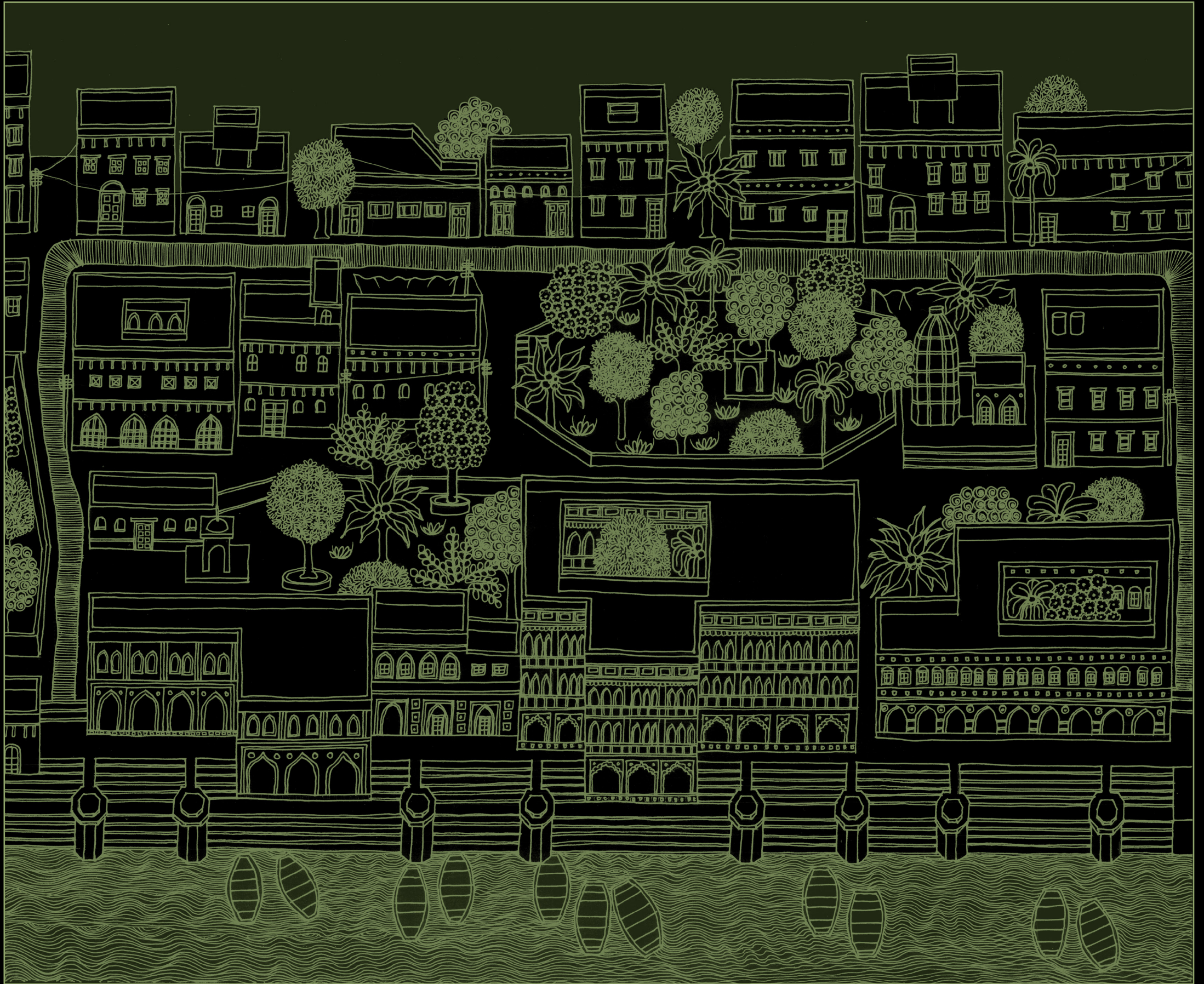
16	BIBLIOGRAPHY	106
----	--------------	-----

17	THE OTHER LENSES	110
----	------------------	-----



# NIDHIVAN: 'MYTH' AS A GARDEN CONSTRUCT

SRUSTI SHAH



The City of Vrindavan



# THE LOST BAGH-BADA BAGH

Z O Y A M A T I N

## ABSTRACT

One of our deepest needs is a sense of identity and belonging. A common denominator in this is, human attachment to landscape, and how we find identity in landscape and its history. Landscape, therefore, is not simply what we see but a way of seeing: we see it with our eyes, but interpret it with our mind, relate it to the past and ascribe values to landscape for intangible – spiritual — reasons.

The identity of the landscape changes with its users, and time.

## BHOPAL STATE

The present city of Bhopal was founded by one of Emperor Aurangzeb's Afghan soldiers Dost Mohammed Khan, who took advantage of the chaos that followed Aurangzeb's death in 1707, and managed to establish his small kingdom in Bhopal.

Although the kingdom was small, it survived several wars and became a princely state in British India in 1818. Bhopal reached its height of culture, arts and public works under the enlightened rule of the Begums, a 19<sup>th</sup> century dynasty of Muslim women. The accepted rule of the Begums dates back to the accession of the 18-year-old Qudsia Begum (1819-37), who seized control after the assassination of her husband. Qudsia carefully prepared her daughter Sikandar to rule, laying the foundations for what would become Bhopal's golden age.

## PRESENT BHOPAL

Bhopal is a city full of culture, heritage, and history. With its lakes, nawabs, and begums, the capital city of Bhopal has been historically deemed the jewel of the state of Madhya Pradesh. Like most cities, the old city of Bhopal sprawled to weave into the new city, linking the old and the new. The quintessential traditional city grew and changed in ways that were distinctly untraditional, yet co-existed in perfect harmony. The old city with its market places, magnificent mosques and palaces, lakes and the new city with its verdant, exquisitely laid out parks and gardens, broad avenues and streamlined modern buildings, all add to the charm of this city.

The walled city of old Bhopal was planned inside the six impressive *darwazas* (gates), confining the religious area (*Taj-ul-Masajid* – one of the largest mosques in India), the cascading lake system to ensure proper water distribution, and to control micro-climate, market places exclusively for women (*Chowk Bazaar* and *Pari Bazaar*) and various palaces and hammams, adding to the heritage and culture of the city.

These old streets of Bhopal are now home to fancy building facades. However, once you dwell into the narrow alleys of the old city, nothing prepares you for the intense smells, the chaos that ensues when a herd of cows decides to take a stroll along a busy road, the crazy traffic and the constant honking, the homeless people sleeping on sidewalks and the various vendors selling their foods. All these play a part in creating a frenzied landscape for the on-looker. Exploring one such street leads to an encounter with Bada Bagh, built by the Begum of Bhopal in 1816 as a tomb garden in memory of her father-in-law, which now acts as the royal family burial ground. The site contains a three storied Baoli - a beautiful example of step-well architecture which catered to the garden. It covers an area of 32.23 acres. Near the mosque of Bada Bagh there are the tombs of Wazir Muhammad Khan, Nawab Nazar Mohammad Khan, Nawab Qudsia Begum, Nawab Siddiqui Hassan Khan, Begum Shah Bano, Mehmoona Sultan, Begum of Nawab Hamidullah Khan, the last ruler.

Due to the cultural discontinuity of the regime of the nawabs of Bhopal, this garden faces the pressure, and a continuous threat of encroachment.

## INTRODUCTION

The old walled city of Bhopal and its rich heritage presents a plethora of typologies as a result of planning by the powerful Begums of Bhopal. The *Baghs* (gardens) are one such typology. These gardens followed the principality of Mughal/Persian gardens. Most of them were orchards with fruit bearing trees, as the name suggests - *Char Iml*i (orchard of Tamarindus indica), *Bagh Mughaliya* (orchard of Mangifera indica), *Rizwaan Bagh* (orchard of Mangifera indica) etc. The rich heritage of these gardens has dissolved, and disappeared in the dense urban fabric of the city, although, remains of some gardens can be found in deteriorating conditions.

One such example is *Bada Bagh*, the garden with a social and heritage value so strong in the past, that its deterioration has direct implications on social factors, and issues. The centred ground of this garden shows the glory of Nawabs and their lifestyle creating a landscape that can be visualized in terms of layers of history.

Throughout the timeline of this garden, there have been a lot of folk literature and oral records associated with it that have not been explored or documented. The change in the landscape of Bada Bagh throughout these past years has impacted the engagement of people with the space, and activities acting as anchors for identities. Our purpose is to trace the lost history of this garden, understand it's chronological development, and the associated memories with it.

## LOCATION

The Bagh is adjacent to a low-income group settlement; more than half of the garden is encroached upon by temporary shops. The neighbourhood surrounds a busy crowd bulging out from the central railway station and old market area. *Taj-ul-Masajid*, *Benazir Palace*, *Benazir darwaza* (gate), *Bab-i-Ali stadium*, *Hamidia Hospital* (Government) are all prominent cultural landmarks that guide the location of Bada Bagh. With time, this Bagh itself has become an important cultural landmark for the people of this city.

## CHANGE WITH TIME

The Bada Bagh was one of the many existing gardens in ancient time built by the prosperous Begums; but this was also the very first tomb garden. As time passed, different activities harboured here with respect to the urban settings and development. These activities acted as anchors for identity.

Over time, this garden has faced numerous changes leading to an eruption of isolated functional patterns with respect to usage, significance, time, people, and requirements.

This is an exploration of these various changes that have been documented through oral history and folk literature and drawing parallels to the present condition of the site. This will help to understand how this garden has helped to transform and reform the cultural meaning of this space.

WAZIR BAGH      —————>      NAZAR BAGH      —————>      BADA BAGH

The repetitive typology of the Bagh with tombs and step wells was in widespread physical presence in the region in olden times, however, the domain of green patch presently has shrunk to a vulnerable extent and exists as an object of memory.

The intention is to extract and re-assemble the essence of this historic garden from folklore and literature throughout the timeline to develop strategies that can commemorate this garden as a cohesive landscape.



# THE (DE)COLONIAL GARDEN

PRANJAL KULKARNI

*Amidst life and death,  
lies our subsistence*



Some things are always left behind: belongings, bones and memories



# THE GARDEN AT NORBULINGKA

DIVYAJYOTI SHARMA

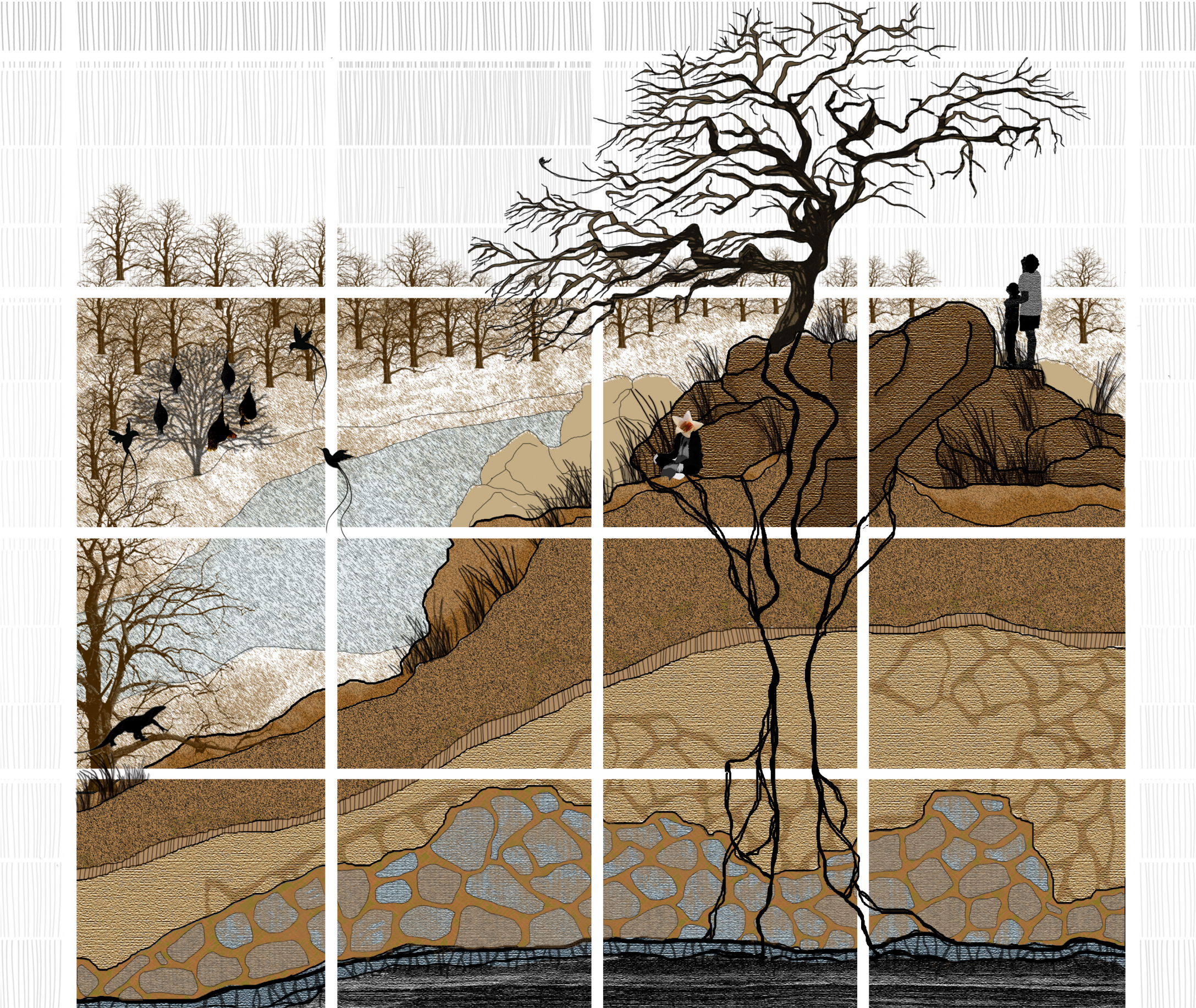


Figure 1: Outside the entrance of Norbulingka



# REFUGE TO ONENESS

AISHWARYA GOEL



Aravali Biodiversity Park nestled on a 3 billion year old range is a home to multiple beings in the city of Gurgaon. A place for all the beings of the city to find their refuge to oneness.

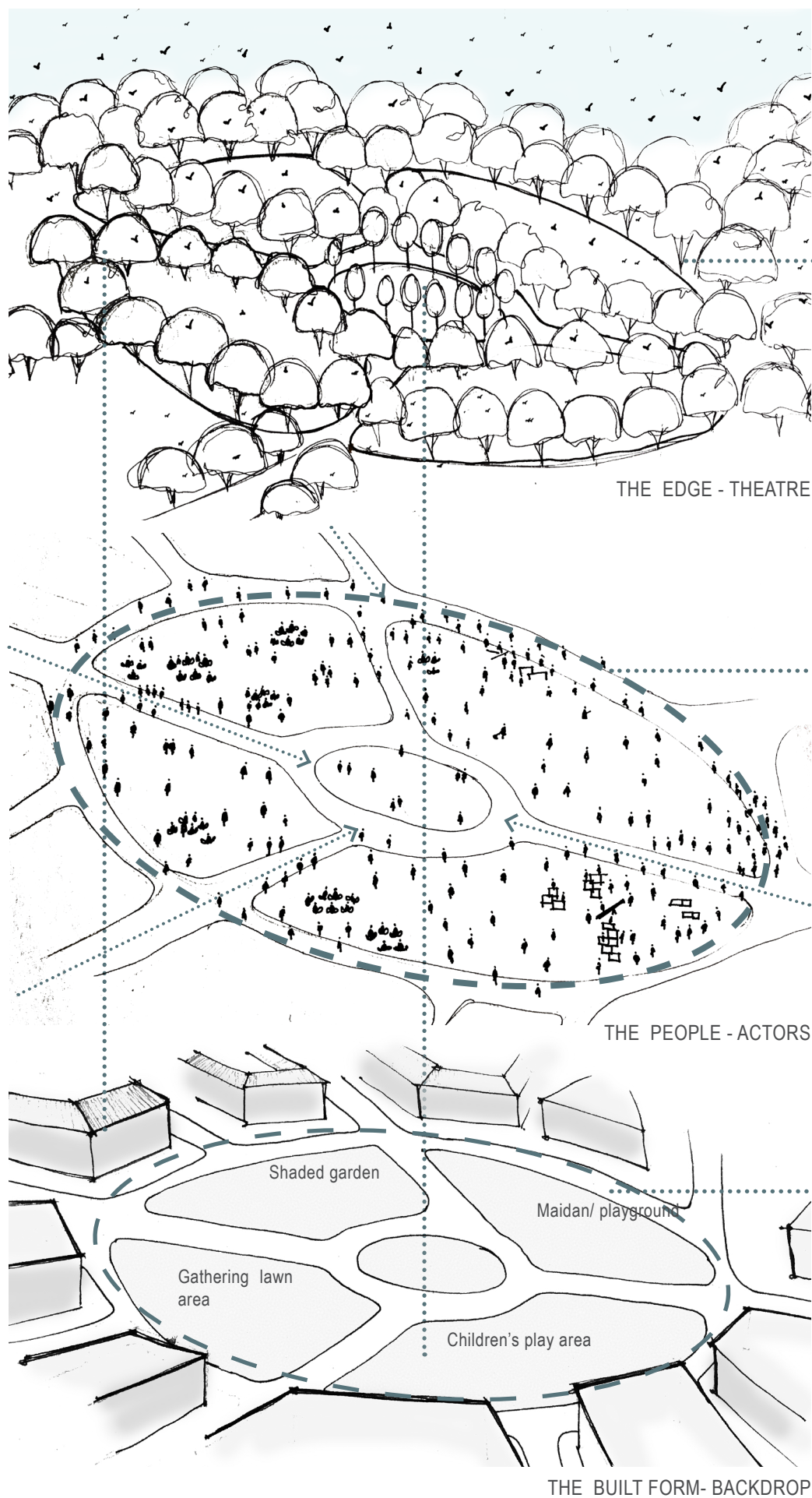


ODE TO A QUAINAT NATURE PARK IN A CITY CELEBRATING THE MAHARASHTRA NATURE PARK  
DEVAYANI DESHMUKH UPASANI



Setting of MNP in the larger urban fabric (Source: Google Earth, Adapted by Author)





## THE PRESENT:

Over the years the garden gained its identity as an urban green within the city. From the time of its inception to date, it has catered to various activities however what remains constant is the edge and its character. The edge of the garden is one of the most salient features of the five gardens. It acts as a theatre where, with the changing actors and the constant backdrop, it moulds itself.

## THE THEATRE:

Five gardens is lined with large shade trees which form a canopy over the walkways. It transports the visitor to another world within the heart of the city. The shaded space supports a variety of birds and acts as a respite for the travellers. The space is lined with majorly *Peltophorum pterocarpum* (commonly known as copper pod) which forms a large canopy over the walkways and the grounds, and sheds its flowers, lacing the ground in a carpet of yellow. This theatre allows the actors to experience various seasons with ease and generates curiosity. Apart from *Peltophorum* the streets are also lined with large rain trees which create specific nodes due to their canopy which in turn act as smaller performance spaces for the user. All streets around the garden form a welcoming edge to the Theatre and invites the user inside the gardens. These trees provide shade throughout the day with only patches of light penetrating through, forming distinct shadow patterns on the floor, thus creating a porous edge to the gardens.

## THE ACTORS:

The people have appropriated the spaces according to their needs thus creating various smaller areas within the gardens. The gardens are divided by roads and thus divided by use with years of use. These spaces have transformed from a larger Maidan space to four distinct spaces for various activities. They are divided according to the activity it supports based on its form and area. The largest garden among the five is used as a Maidan/ playground with a soft dusty floor. This garden is mostly used for playing cricket during the day and a relaxing space in the evening. The second largest area constitutes the kids play area with play equipment and playground. The other smaller parks form the meeting space for the young and the elderly alike, while the central park among the five is partially accessible and sports a fountain in the centre to attract the user. The edges of all these areas are modified by the actors during the course of the day. These edges support various roadside vendors throughout the day. The larger periphery is used as a regular morning and evening walk route alike. The traffic on these streets is minimal due to the play of the actors throughout the day. All these activities have actors from all walks of life. Due to its location and its characteristic nature of being without a boundary, the actors are from all strata of the society thus making it a unique public space.

## THE BACKGROUND:

Apart from the few redevelopment projects, the built form adjoining the gardens has remained unchanged. The built form merges with the landscape in the foreground. It thus acts as a backdrop, creating an enclosure to the space. Some of the pitched roof buildings, still stand strong, provide a backdrop to all the drama that unfolds in the theatre. The larger setbacks help in merging the built and the unbuilt. The various balconies which face the gardens create a visual connect with the gardens for the user. The uniform nature of the built form adds to the character of the space. However, with changing Development Control Regulations these are bound to change in the near future.

# THE STORY OF A THOUSAND PARKS

SHANTESH KELVEKAR

## INTRODUCTION

It's 2021, just after the lock-down. As I take a stroll through a park in Bangalore, I wonder how this landscape would have been about three decades ago. I've been in this neighbourhood even when I was a little kid, and I do have vague memories of the time.

The park that I'm taking a leisurely stroll through is one of the over thousand such parks maintained by Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or BBMP – the administrative body responsible for civic amenities and some infrastructural assets of the Greater Bangalore Metropolitan Area.

I'm currently researching on these parks of Bengaluru, and trying to find the common thread amongst them to develop a simple model that will activate these fairly inactive landscapes. These parks form a substantial percentage of green cover within the Bengaluru City limits. These parks constitute a diverse set of flora – which is not only planted by officials but even by residents living around these parks. It is, in most cases, the residents around who come together to maintain the park. It is maintained by an association, which usually is run by retired employees and senior citizens from the vicinity.

I wonder, if these parks form a substantial proportion of green cover of Bengaluru City, then shouldn't Bengaluru be called a park city instead of a garden city? What is the distinction between a park and a garden, anyway? While what the city is identified as (with a garden or a park) doesn't matter much, in the present time, it is important that the landscape is preserved. It is imperative that the citizens acknowledge the presence of the intimately woven landscape within the city. It is also vital that we allow ourselves to acknowledge the presence of a diverse set of individuals within this ever-growing city, and make this landscape available to all.

This paper is nothing but a simple story that runs in parallel with simple diagrams and side-notes that complement the spatial instances within the story. The idea here is to generate a park typology for this new Bengaluru that welcomes all with open arms.

*Illustrations by  
Preetanshi Singh*

## ABSTRACT

Bengaluru – often referred to as the garden city has its green per-capita reduced from 20 sq.m. to about 2 sq.m. in a little over four decades. It is on a constant decline, and the projected scenario suggests that the trend would continue at least for the next couple of decades – if not more.

While Lalbagh and Cubbon Park primarily contributed to the city's identity, what many are unaware of is that the city is dotted with over a thousand little BBMP parks. An estimate suggests that these seemingly insignificant parks account for over 70% of Bengaluru's green cover. On the other hand, Bengaluru is currently short of almost 68 square kilometres of green space.

Of the 1,115 BBMP Parks, 21% are inaccessible, 40% have basic infrastructure, and (quite literally) a handful\* of these parks have a decent infrastructure (*R, Arpita. "21% of Bengaluru's parks and playgrounds inaccessible: Survey." The Times Of India [Bengaluru], December 02, 2017*). Almost all the accessible parks are only open for a few hours in the morning and likewise in the evening. The rest of the time, the gates are shut as the residents around these parks feel that their little green square is unsafe.

The imagination of a park here is reduced to strolling around its perimeter and slides, swings and see-saws for kids! Therefore, they are underutilised. As one moves away from the city centre, the green per-capita drastically reduces. Not just that, the new proposed parks are often situated in the most inaccessible corners and that makes them naturally unsafe for children and women and therefore are seldom used.

Amidst all of this, however, there is a silver lining. The handful of these well-managed parks provide a great kit of parts. This helps in easily replicating such parks across the city. With minor tweaks to their planning scheme, these parks can be activated and be designed as democratic spaces that invite all. The strategy aims to develop a consistent language of these parks. This will, therefore, help reclaim the green spaces of the city and make them safer for better civic engagement.

This is a promising solution towards bringing back Bengaluru's "Garden City" identity. Beyond that, the spinal intent is to widen and make a wise utilisation of civic greens - thereby, promoting and recognizing more such pockets of little parks. These little parks will allow for a greater network of micro-habitats as well as connected safer parks for the citizens of Bengaluru.

This research, therefore, will focus on three basic points:

- To relook at the existing neighbourhood park and open it for a better and diversified human engagement.
- Amend a policy that brings civic inclusivity.
- Reclaim the city's green spaces.

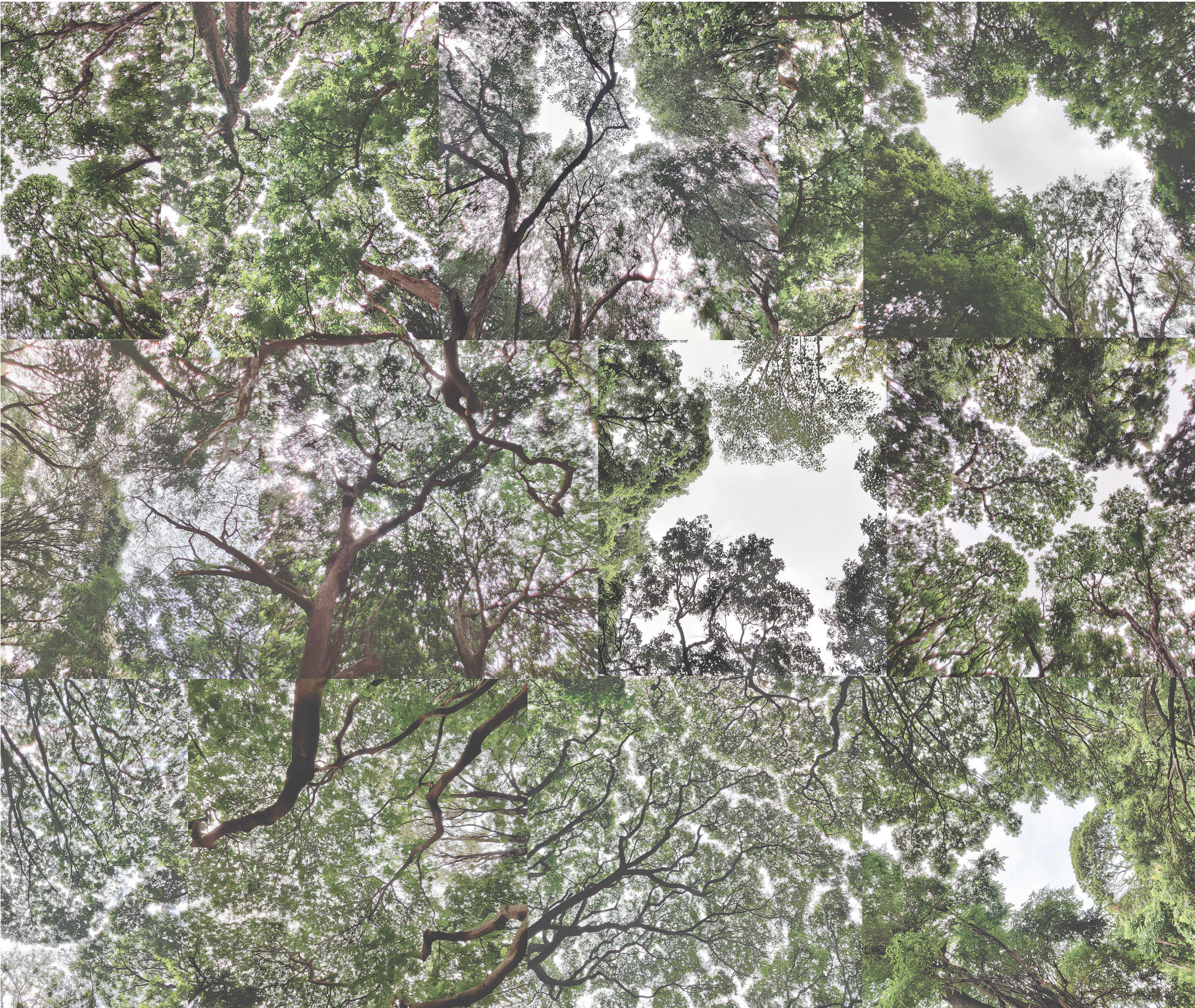
The outcome, I hope, will be a solution that encapsulates and brings forth the essence of the Garden City. This strategy can become a model for taking basic measures to retain green spaces amidst the pressures of future urban agglomeration.

\* Only 7 of the 1,115 parks had proper landscape furniture, adequate green cover, irrigation facility, paved surfaces, play equipment, waste management, ample illumination, and drinking water and toilet facilities.



# CANOPY COLLAGES - CUBBON PARK

VIRAL MEHTA





MANDALA: PRIMORDIAL WHISPERS

SHRADDHA NAGOTANEKAR



WADIS OF MANDALA



## THE COLLECTOR'S GARDEN

JUHI PRASAD SINGH



### Mood map of the garden