

## Once upon a Garden City ...

*All children grow up in families  
I grew up in gardens  
There were many  
Large, small, manicured, and wild  
Practical mini-orchards, vegetable farms  
And unkempt grass with beautiful snakes  
My grandmother's was typical, traditional Bangalore  
Coconut trees for, um, coconuts  
I was more interested in the fronds, the bracts, the inflorescences  
They were building materials, they were boats, they were miniature trees  
Curry leaf! The soul of our cuisine  
Aromas that come from the bruising  
Tart, sweet, and astringent berries that left a strange aftertaste  
And the trunk led up to the terrace, the only way to get there  
Guava and sapota, to climb and pluck,  
stomachaches from childish impatience gorging on unripe ones  
Sitaphal bowed down with stony fruit  
Was there a mango tree? I don't quite remember  
No, those were other gardens  
Hibiscus and Kanigle for the puja room  
Kanakambra and Mallige for the girls' hair  
The bougainvilleas were generous with blooms and thorns  
In equal measure  
And there was mud, glorious, glorious mud  
What more could I ask for? A bucket of water, naturally  
Streams, dams, villages to fashion or just mud pies and fights  
Why would anyone call it dirt?  
Your footprint was what you left in the soil,  
Soon to be obliterated  
The innocence was staggering  
No talk of circular economies  
Or sustainability  
No vocal for local  
Or carbon credits  
It just was*

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