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Bengaluru as Palimpsest





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From the Editorial Board

We are pleased to introduce the first edition of our annual academic journal **sub:version** with the theme 'Bengaluru as Palimpsest'. As home to R V College of Architecture (RVCA), it is befitting to dedicate the inaugural edition of sub:version to the city of Bengaluru – as it was, is and can be.

At RVCA, the discipline of architecture is explored as a multi-pronged process of critical thinking, crafting creative solutions, and empowerment of self and society at large. This online journal provides a forum for interdisciplinary reflections and dialogues on space, place and time in the Indian subcontinent.

The journal's name sub:version - sub: (the Hindi term for 'all') + version (point of view), emerges from two compelling goals - to reflect the multidisciplinary nature of architecture, and to highlight narratives, practices and representations that subvert the status quo in our built and unbuilt environments.

In this first edition, we feel privileged to present the work of researchers, academics and professionals from diverse backgrounds on topics that are in alignment with this year's theme. We thank the Guest Editor Ms. Aliyeh Rizvi for her unstinting guidance and contributions at every stage of the process, from setting the theme to bringing it together as a completed manuscript. We extend our thanks to all our contributors for sharing their unique and varied perspectives of 'Bengaluru as Palimpsest'.

Finally, we acknowledge the support and encouragement extended by our esteemed management, Rashtriya Shikshana Samiti Trust, in our endeavour to bring out RVCA's first academic journal.

Prof. O P Bawane
Chairman, Editorial Board.

Editor's Note



'...Urban forms are made out of not only materials and things but out of meanings, language and symbols. It can be relatively easy to knock down a building but it is much harder to demolish a space which is composed around memory, experience or imagination.'

- Tonkiss (2005:3)

This first edition of sub:version is dedicated to the city of its birth, Bangalore-Bengaluru, its multiple meanings, arrangements and identities. The journal may perhaps be the first attempt in print media to provide a common platform for city-makers of all hues, experts and learners, theorists and practitioners to explore Bengaluru through varied lenses and mediums, as it transitioned from its proto and prehistory into various versions – a planned fortified settlement in the 16th century; a Maratha provincial outpost; a 17th century technological and horticultural innovation centre in the days of Haider Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan; a prominent British cantonment in the 1800s and the administrative capital of a progressive princely Mysore state under the Wadiyar dynasty and unified Karnataka thereafter. In the years to come, Bengaluru would also be seen as Nehru's 'City of the Future'; a verdant Garden City; quiet 'Pensioner's Paradise'; a fast-paced Pub City; Start-Up City, Fastest Growing City in the Asia-Pacific, and even India's 'youngest' city.

Bengaluru has been all of this and much more ever since, and long before its establishment as a fortified urban settlement in the sixteenth century. The excavation of prehistoric objects and artefacts, coins minted during the reign of Roman Emperor Tiberius (between 14-37 CE) and inscription stones found in and around what we now consider to be the 'city' confirm that its antiquity as a settlement, trading site and even battlefield (referencing the ninth century Begur stone inscription, E.C., Vol.IX, Bn 83) predates this period. This physical evidence challenges the various urban legends attributed to its name and origins, as well as the popular, one dimensional view of the city as just a modern-tech hub with a relatively recent history. It also points to the layers of percolated meanings, ancient memories and stories that gradually came to be embedded in its substrata. They now constitute the invisible bedrock of the city, and endure, despite the cycles of change that have irrevocably altered it at eye level.

The journal therefore hopes to explore the trajectory of visions and challenges as Bangalore went from a Garden City to Information City in the post-Independence years, where even as the *pete* (market) grew, *kere* (lake) and *thota* (gardens) shrank, reflecting its changing fortunes and political economy. Villages are still being drawn into city boundaries, migrant populations arrive daily, and new, altered demographic patterns have emerged to influence and modify not only the urban landscape but also perceptions of the city's yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Accounts of change, transformation, displacement and disparity are not unique to Bengaluru. But what is

unique is how they unfold locally in the city's complex and contentious terrain of narratives and counter narratives to create new layers of meaning and memory.

Theme Bengaluru is a shape-shifter that is rarely seen for itself. It continuously rearranges its identities to accommodate projected aspirations and fantasies, dissolves into other forms, or allows for new forms to emerge to fit its inhabitant's imaginations. It is all at once, a mythic space and a site of lived experiences, of ambivalence, uncertainty, alienation and accommodation, fragmentation and juxtapositions, emplacement and displacement, disorder and new possible orders, erasure and reconstruction, conflict and contestation, both accessible and impenetrable in parts, and a vast patchwork of heterotopias. Through all this and much more, it lives on - sentient, dynamic and in constant dialogue with its inhabitants, continuously producing and superimposing various versions of itself, on itself - a palimpsest.

A palimpsest is composite and layered. A palimpsest is both addition and effacement, where the new replaces, omits, conceals, overruns, denies, but cannot completely hide the old. Seeing the city as a palimpsest reflects our acknowledgement that the city is never *tabula rasa*. There was always something before the next thing arrived, and the next. The *kere*, *thota, kote, pete* spatial arrangements of the sixteenth century urban settlement remain central actors in Bangalore's origin tales and current imaginaries. Yet, these myths and fables are but a few chapters in the endless story of a city that ceaselessly remakes, reinvents and rebuilds. For, the city IS process, with no beginning and no end.

As a curatorial approach, invoking the poly-semantic city as a palimpsest emerged from a process that also chose to view it through the lens of the temporal (ephemeral and perceptions), social (transactions and intersections), and the spatial (transitions and trajectories). In order to place the contributor's responses to the city - articles, photo stories, essays, project case studies, graphic stories and poetry - in a manner that offers context, meaning and relevance to the reader, the curatorial approach and framework looked to the spatial arrangements and their symbolic meanings that defined the early urban settlement of Bengaluru - the city as a nurturing, nourishing waterbody or *kere*, a garden/grove or *thota* where dreams and desires come to life, take root and blossom, the market-town or *pete* that offers the promise of possibilities and future potential (for instance, Bengaluru as a global-tech marketplace) and the *kote* or mud fort, a representation of protection, safety, solidity and security that goes beyond its essentially military purpose (What is safe and protected in the city today?) Several centuries later, these invisible layers of symbolic meanings still constitute a vision for the city. They are a bridge between Bengaluru's tangible past and present intangible identities.

Therefore, the invisible underlay of this issue pays homage to the *kere-thota-pete-kote* as sections, wherein the focus area of the contributor's work is placed contextually, with colours assigned as codes/ differentiators. An attempt has also been made to view the contributions differently, both in terms of information and experience design. Interactive elements (in the form of hyperlinks) take us away to external experiences and information and then return us to these pages. The 'Book in Question' presents book reviews as unique, reflective first-person responses to the work from the authors themselves.

Finally, the city is its people. In the city, people converse, connect and conflict in shared stories, encounters and spatial practices. In doing so, they all make up the city. The journal is an endeavour to provide a shared, interactive space for contributors and readers to peel/ unveil/ reveal the layers under layers, cities within the CITY, histories long past, the unfolding present, and futures unseen. We thank and acknowledge all those who have contributed to these pages in different ways for their time and trust in this, the first inaugural issue of sub:version.

Aliyeh Rizvi
(Guest Editor)



Aliyeh Rizvi is a history-writer, Expressive Arts Therapy practitioner and founder of Native Place, a place-making studio that works in the area of urban internal displacement and connects people to place through place-based storytelling. Her publications include 'Another World: a Social History of the Bangalore Cantonment' (an institutional history), 'Building Legacies' (a family history) and 'A Saga of Needle and Thread' (a business history). She has written on travel, culture, craft and design in the National Geographic Traveller, The Hindu, Design Today, and a weekly column on local history and culture, as the 'Resident Rendezvoyeur' for Bangalore Mirror. She is also the co-founder of The Memory Maps Project, a psycho-geographic exploration.





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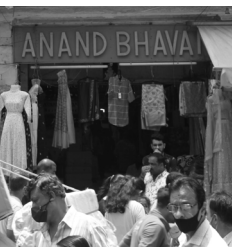

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(EXTRA)ORDINARY CULTURAL HERITAGE(S) - BRIDGING THE EVERYDAY AND THE ICONIC

Krupa Rajangam



Google search string:
What is the culture of Bangalore?
Top answers: Tech-hub, cosmopolitan, open mindedness

Google search string:
What is the culture of Mysore?
Top answers:
Rich heritage and culture, serene and peaceful

In general, I am not in favour of comparisons but it makes for a useful way to enter the theme I wish to address in this essay - two cultures and by extension, two heritages - one iconic and the other everyday. The opening remarks above are indicative of popular understanding that sees Mysore (Mysuru) as representing 'extraordinary culture' and Bangalore (Bengaluru) as representing 'ordinary or popular culture'. Such comparisons are not limited to the level of the city or region but operate across scales. For instance, a similar Google search string result on neighbourhoods of Bangalore notes the areas of Malleshwaram and Basavanagudi as cultural, historic and heritage areas, and Indiranagar and Koramangala as cosmopolitan areas. I have no problem with such labels per se but *only* when they are seen as useful as organising rather than defining or conceptual categories. I take issue with such labels when they are believed to completely describe or characterise a location. Yes, Mysuru is a heritage city (Figure 1) but it is so much more than that. Much as Bengaluru is more than IT (Figure 2), or Indiranagar is more than a 'happening location' and Basavanagudi has a lot more to offer than only iconic temples, masala dosa and filter coffee.

In this reflective essay, I attempt to explicate some of the (ethical) dilemmas foregrounded by decades of grounded professional practice and academic research. As a humanities-based, community-engaged conservation architect and heritage scholar, I work interdisciplinarily, through the lens of heritage and culture, to engage with the lived experiences of diverse groups and individuals. I draw on the learnings from my steady engagement with various residents of Bengaluru[1] through various personal initiatives, including Neighbourhood Diaries, Nakshay, Anglo-Indian archives, Malleshwaram Accessibility Project, Bangalore City Project and other sporadic engagements, to present my insights. The key argument I make is that - yes, the city is a palimpsest of multiple spatio-temporal-material layers, but even if we scratch the surface, all the layers do not become visible. Nor do the visible layers constantly live in a state of harmonious coexistence.

Some of the city's many layers are either invisibilised or set aside as a result of our own lenses and





Figure 1. An iconic image of Mysuru - the Palace
(Source: Kashish Shishodia)

Figure 2. An iconic image of Bengaluru - Ascendas ITPB
(Source: Brochure cover of Ascendas International Tech Park)

standpoints. Their becoming visible depends on the nature of our engagements with them. By 'our' I mean the various individuals, groups, experts, enthusiasts, citizens and advocacy organisations of the city that are actively interested in and working with culture, history, heritage, place and identity. Secondly, which layer we each choose to foreground and when, where and how, impacts other layers, as the numerous layers are imbricated and not isolated entities. Besides bringing up vignettes and incidents from the field, I also draw on critical interpretive scholarship to discuss the complex realities foregrounded by long-standing engagements with cultural-place identity/ies of diverse locations.

Over a century ago, sociologist Emile Durkheim (2001[1912]), convincingly argued that all groups (people) tend to classify their culture into two categories, 'sacred' and 'profane'. The key point here is that each group has its own understanding of what constitutes both - what is sacred to one group may be profane to another and vice versa. Additionally, sacred in this context does not imply religious significance but more broadly, it means something special and extraordinary. Similarly, profane here does not mean irreligious or disrespectful but secular; something that is worldly, everyday, ordinary, routine, banal. For the purpose of the argument in this essay, I broadly correspond 'extraordinary' with 'sacred' and 'ordinary' with 'secular'. In an attempt to bridge these two extremes, heritage has sometimes been referred to as 'secular sacred' or common to everyone yet outstanding. Before getting deeper into the tendency of some groups and individuals, including myself, to



Figure 3. Shree Dandu Mariamman temple, Shivajinagar Circle, Bangalore (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)

use binary comparisons as a way to: first, define or characterise the cultural-place identity of locations and second, exclusively tie-in such identities with extraordinary events or landmarks, I discuss the words 'culture' and 'heritage'. And by binary I mean framing two parts of something as absolute opposites, by exaggerating the differences between them, such that it is either seen as black or white with no room for any greys in between.

Culture is broadly understood as the ways of life of a particular group of individuals, certain characteristic ways they have of doing things and recurring patterns that are unique to that group. Culture contains meanings; it is a way for groups to make sense of the world around them (Inglis, 2005: 6). It is learned and transmitted from one generation to the next, but to the degree that it seems to be the natural order of things. This is to say that it is naturalised to such an extent that it seems to be the way certain things have been done forever; it no longer appears to be learned behaviour. Delving a bit deeper into culture, cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1980 [1961]: 66) argues that culture possesses three interrelated levels. One, the lived culture of a particular time and place that is fully accessible only to those living in that time and place. This does not mean the aspect cannot be represented or understood by others. Two, recorded culture, of every kind, from art to the most everyday facts defined as the culture of a period and three, the culture of the selective tradition. The last is typically seen as 'the factor connecting lived culture and period cultures' (Inglis, 2005: 12) and is popularly known as 'high culture'. It continues to be seen as a way to understand the 'best' of a particular group's lived culture (Inglis, 2005: 12).

Each of the three concepts related to culture, introduced above, have been further broken down and critiqued. But for the purpose of this essay their varied complex meanings are not so relevant as what these concepts do to people and places. For, it is observable that culture has an effect on day-to-day life much as day-to-day life has an effect on culture. I have observed residents of Bengaluru's urbanised villages[2] often describe or personify their *ooru devathas* (also known as *grama devathas*), say Maramma or Sapalamma, to the city's urban residents as Durga (Figure 3). This is so that dominant (though I prefer the word hegemonic as defined by cultural theorist Stuart Hall) groups can relate to and understand such deities and not perceive them as either exotic or unknown. Such gradual adaptation of the socio-cultural identities of local deities is observable in other locations regionally, including in and around the Hampi and Pattadakal World Heritage Sites. Malaprabha valley residents would describe Konamma as Durga to visitors (Chittiraibalan, 2022) while Hampi region residents would simplify Eeranna as Shiva or Kalamma as Durga to outsiders (Rajangam, 2020a). In effect, culture is a complex word that carries multiple meanings and interpretations, depending on who is describing it and in what context. Similarly, the word 'heritage' is



Figure 4. Janatha Bazaar, Majestic. (Source: Dinesh Rao)



Figure 5. Johnson Market, Hosur Road. (Source: Salila Vanka)

equally complex as it too is a social construct. Both culture and heritage do not exist in and of themselves but are so-defined by people, groups, individuals. To emphasise, heritage and culture are made and not found. Popular understanding largely sees heritage as representative of a particular culture, whether in the form of a tangible structure or object or intangible values and meanings. Connecting such understanding to the three cultures noted above, iconic structures and sites, seemingly 'the best of a period' would represent 'high culture' whereas 'lived culture' would struggle to find an equivalent representation. This is because lived culture encompasses a whole range of cultures within it. For instance, the lived culture of Bengaluru or even lower-in scale-of-contemporary Whitefield suburb would not merely consist of the past cultural memories of the Anglo-Indian settlement that gave the area its name (Rajangam, 2011) but also the past and present cultural memories of Ramagondanahalli, Immadihalli, Nallurhalli and other such locations. These settlements were once administratively independent of Bengaluru but are now considered to be a part of Whitefield suburb, both popularly and to some extent, administratively (Rajangam, 2022). Additionally, the suburb's lived culture would encompass the collective and individual memories of the many layouts and labour colonies of the area, both old and new. So how can one seek to represent the layered cultural histories of contemporary Whitefield through a singular exceptional structure or ritual or tradition?

Where does the tendency to exceptionalise locations come from? Why do we get caught up with defining the essence of locations to such an extent that we are unable to see more to them beyond their popular label? Why do we continue to define the complex cultural identities of locations in terms of a simple binary? And most importantly why do these questions matter? In a different context but germane to the discussion in this essay, science historian Dhruv Raina argued that 'civilisational and national exceptionalisms oppose ever more radically the concept of a shared, common heritage' and that 'adherents of exceptionalist views reject some of those practices as less valuable or even irrelevant' (2016: 30). The latter argument is the key. In the process of defining the cultural place-identities of locations, whether that of Bengaluru or Malleshwaram or Indiranagar as exceptional, certain practices that also define the cultural place-identities tend to be discounted or remain unrecognised because they are seen to be ordinary, mundane, unexceptional.

But what if it is these ordinary practices that give that location its cultural-place identity in the eyes of its residents and some outsiders? For instance, long-term residents of Immadihalli resent their settlement's identity being subsumed within Whitefield's identity. They are emphatic over not being seen as part of



Figure 6. Doddamavalli Ooru Habba near Lalbagh (Source: Peevee)

Whitefield. They consider their cultural-historical trajectory to be different from that of Whitefield as their settlement traces its origins to the Kempegowda period, unlike the colonial period Anglo-Indian settlement. However, I question if this is the right path for us to traverse, as socially-responsible citizens and advocacy groups seeking to further democratise our engagement with the pluralistic cultural historic environment. How far back do we let exceptionalism take us? For instance, would we agree that maybe Immadihalli and other such settlements were once the grazing grounds of semi-nomadic sheep-herding tribes?

There is a flipside to the lens of exceptionalism. Much of the ordinary/everyday city or neighbourhood/region necessarily has to (re)define itself as an exceptional monument in order for it to be deemed worthy of restoration, conservation, legal protection or to even be legitimised by legal and administrative mechanisms. Effectively, then Janatha Bazaar in Majestic (Figure 4) is not considered worth saving unless concerned citizens and advocacy groups reframe it as exceptional in some way. Is it not a seemingly 'ordinary' bazaar used by so-called ordinary people worth saving? Why do we need to define it as the '1st Janatha Bazaar' (Bangalore Mirror Bureau, 2018) of the city to rescue it? What if it was the city's 2nd or 3rd Janatha Bazaar; would it not be worth rescuing? What arguments can engaged citizens and advocacy groups put forward to prevent Johnson Market (Figure 5) or Jayanagar Shopping Complex (Bora, 2012; Ravi, 2012) from being demolished if they can only use the criterion of exceptionalism? Would Johnson Market's stakeholders necessarily need to state that it is a historic colonial period structure, the *only* such market of Richmond Town much as Russell Market stakeholders would then need to state that it is the *only* such market of the Cantonment Bazaar (Shivajinagar)?

By marking moments in history rather than processes, the lens of exceptionalism tends to become a trap. For instance, the inevitable museumisation of such locations that follows from their being seen as exceptional or one-of-a-kind and therefore to be kept as-is. Moreover, the hierarchical ranking of such locations as locally or regionally significant inevitably influences resource allocation towards their upkeep and potentially their rescue. As custodians of the city's many layers, now is the time for us to question the type of cultural-place values and meanings we are trying to safeguard - for whom and why in the case of such apparently ordinary structures, sites, and locations? Is it exclusively their past historic, aesthetic and age value? Or is it also their present everyday value as socio-cultural economic hubs for certain sections of society who might find it difficult to enter the rarified atmosphere of malls that some of us tend to take for granted?

Continuing this line of argument, I am not concerned with just markets - although cultural-place binaries stand out more starkly in markets by virtue of the space attracting diverse users - but with the varied aspects of our everyday life that some of us care to designate as cultural heritage exclusively on the basis of exceptional value. Looking on the various *jathre*s and *habba*s of the city's many urbanised villages (Figure 6) - whether Sarakki in the south or Ramagondanalli in the east or Diwanarapalya in the north - from the outside, we may consider them attractive because they seem to be picturesque and quaint events that hark back to 'good ole Bangalore'. The complex reality though is that such festivals are very much a part of the present-day fabric of the city. They are not exclusively cultural events that represent a bygone time, appealing though that line of reasoning may seem to some of us. An unforeseen outcome of such romanticisation is the tendency to imagine not just the events but also their participants and locations to represent past ways of life.

Such 'othering' is akin to the much critiqued tendency of the so-called West to romanticise the so-called East as representative of a distant past (Said, 1977). The *jathre* is as much a social gathering for today's inhabitants as it is a cultural gathering that represents seemingly unchanging tradition. The further reality is that such traditions do change, they are dynamic, and they morph. Take Basavanagudi's *Kadlekai Parishe*, for example. Would any of us be able to state that it is being conducted exactly how it was hundred or even fifty years ago? Has it not become more of a socio-cultural spectacle (The New Indian Express, 2018; Warrier, 2019) which somewhat retains aspects of its origin as a religious event that marked the offering of the first harvest to the deity Basavanna?

Marking moments or events in history is one method to engage with culture and heritage but not the only method. A similar divide marks the labels 'tangible' and 'intangible' heritage where the former is seen to be about products and/or locations and the latter about processes and/or people. One could make the counterargument that more individuals and groups now accept that heritage is not just about age value but also social and cultural values. However, the issue I raise is with exceptionalising all forms of heritage and socio-cultural values, whether they are labelled tangible or intangible or historical-architectural or cultural-social. 'Culture is ordinary' (Williams, 1957). Although Raymond Williams, one of the first cultural theorists, made this argument decades ago to highlight the reality that culture was not the exclusive preserve of the English social elite but also relevant to the working classes, the line of reasoning resonates.

Culture is not *just about objectifying* things, people, places of the past but also about *being habituated* to them in today's context. 'What makes these sites [and expressions] especially relevant is the fact that they are always present in people's everyday routine. Unlike other types of heritage, we do not have to go anywhere to see them (e.g., to a museum), for they are already there, shaping our quotidian experience' (Giombini, 2020: 54, discussing everyday heritage, Iyer, 2020). It might be useful at this point to note the potential trap of believing everyday heritage as a conceptual category that marks the 'other' of iconic heritage. In explicating the syncretic religious traditions of so-called ordinary people (in northern Karnataka), cultural critic Rahamat Tarikere[3] states that such cultural-religious-social expressions defy labels but because they need to be called something he uses the label people's religion to serve as a placeholder (personal communication).

Victorian-era poet, Mathew Arnold[4] believed in a high culture that was superior to everyday culture, 'the best of what has been thought and said'. I bring up the name as his idealistic vision of culture as something to strive for continues to influence how many of us see culture and its material representations today - as separate from and above everyday life. Here I qualify that though I believe in a high culture and its material representations as heritage, I do not believe in its intrinsic superiority or the supposed inferiority of so-called everyday culture. Each has relevance in a particular context. Bourdieu (1992) argues that the 'distinction between "high" and "low" culture is based on the distinction between classes, between dominant and dominated, rulers and ruled, people who are defined as being "refined" and those defined as being "crude"'(Inglis, 2005: 67). Such sharp distinctions would not only further the binaries I am

arguing against but would also be unfair. The various social actors who engage with culture, heritage and conservation in their own ways, whether through recording, documentation, interpretation or advocacy are well-intended; they proactively seek ways to bridge the gaps between (different forms of) heritage and (different groups of) society. I further qualify that I am not arguing for a bottom-up approach over a top-down one. For that would be another binary trap. On many occasions, I have observed seemingly top-down actors who are close to power centres, advocating for bottom-up approaches despite being constrained by the institutions they serve or represent (Rajangam, 2020b).

One way then to move forward beyond the lens of exceptionalism might be to look at our cities, neighbourhoods and regions as 'networks of inter-related systems' (Lamprakos, 2014: 10 drawing on Hewitt, 1994 and Matero & Teutonico, 2001) and question how we seek to protect such systems '... through legal instruments and institutions that had been developed for [individual] art objects and monuments' by 'drawing on archaeology' (Lamprakos, 2014: 21 drawing on Guido Zucconi). Cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai's work offers a reasonable explanation to the related question raised above on our tendency to fall into the trap of binary comparisons. In attempting to seek a productive relationship between culture and development, he argued that culture also has a future orientation; as the 'capacity to aspire'. In ignoring which, culture as the past has come to be seen in firm opposition to development as the future.

Consequently, things, locations, and people connected with culture are seen as exclusively to do with the past while things, locations, people connected with development, understood as economic progress, are seen exclusively to be part of the future. Therefore, culture (and by extension, heritage) continues to be seen as opposed to development and 'tradition opposed to newness' (Appadurai, 2013: 180). Referring back to the opening lines of the essay, the problematic with popular representation would be seeing Mysuru or Basavanagudi as exclusively representing past iconic culture, therefore to be frozen as-is and Bengaluru or Indiranagar as exclusively representing future (also iconic) development, therefore can be transformed willy-nilly. Besides such short-term consequences, the long-term cost of exclusively exceptionalising cultural-place identities would be that we either continue to negate certain ways of life that remain relevant to some groups and individuals *in the contemporary moment* or put them on a pedestal and treat them as tangible or intangible aspects of *a past that has happened*.

'A dying culture, and ignorant masses, are not what I have known and seen.' (Williams, 1957)

[1] Elsewhere, I have engaged with diverse resident groups and individuals of the Hampi region and of settlements along the upper reaches of the Tamirabarani river basin in southern Tamil Nadu.

[2] by which I mean the settlements that have been engulfed by the city's never-ending sprawl.

[3] See Indian Cultural Forum for some of his works: https://indianculturalforum.in/author/rahamath-tarikere/

[4] for more on his work see BRANCH: https://branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=peter-logan-on-culture-matthew-arnolds-culture-and-anarchy-1869

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Bengaluru *Pete Karaga*, April 2012 (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)
The *Karaga*-bearer's visit to the shrine of Sufi saint Hazrat Tawakkal Mastan Saheb Sohrawardy in Cottonpete, on the ninth night of the *Karagashaktiyotsava*, an annual festival dedicated to the goddess Draupadi and celebrated across the Bengaluru *Pete*.

Oota Aaita?

Meera Vasudev

'*Oota Aaita*?' (Have you eaten?) is a quintessential Bengaluru phrase often used as a way of greeting, a conversation starter, an expression as mundane or exciting as enquiring about the weather. One uses it to either greet an acquaintance or to establish a sense of familiarity with a stranger - the enquiry is simultaneously intimate and universal.

Oota. Bengaluru revolves around the idea of food. The sleepy little town that catapulted itself into becoming a booming metropolis, earned the moniker of 'Pub City' and suchlike with the advent of the information technology revolution. The once Pensioner's Paradise took on a more cosmopolitan outlook, ushering in a spate of pubs as the quintessential hang-out spaces. In addition, the freshly minted global citizens that made Bangalore their home, brought in many high-end restaurants catering cuisines from across the globe, making the city a gastronome's heaven. The pubs and restaurants however are introverted spaces and cater to a niche crowd. These spaces are detached from the city - passive and distant observers, neither engaging with the city nor its communities.

However, at its very core the city still thrives on a different kind of epicurean journey. One that is both intimate and collective at the same time, in the same space. Where food pushes one to explore and discover the city in the quest for the local yet is about one's territorial identity. Food for the soul, food of the city.

The Ephemeral Epicurean City. The Epicurean City illustrated here is more about an elevation of the everyday through a reclamation of the city while one goes about one's everyday life. The Oxford dictionary defines the word 'epicure' as 'a person who enjoys food and drink of high quality and knows a lot about it'. Here, the ephemeral epicurean city is about the idea of everyday luxury that everybody - right



Figures 1-2. Food Street, V V Puram
(Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)

from locals to migrants enjoy. It celebrates the act of everyday living, including the daily worker's commute through the bustling metropolis, by creating moments of pause that allow one to acknowledge and commemorate the city. It provides the luxury of fresh food, drinking water and temporary shelter in the middle of the busy workday. Further, the epicurean city is not just about the built form that governs these eating establishments. It is the negotiation of these establishments with diverse communities and interstitial areas of the city, with food as the glue that holds them together.

The epicurean city is local and temporal in nature and defined by the intangible - smells, sounds, sights, and the tangible - crowds, queues, flora, and fauna (Figures 1-4). Bangalore, the epicurean city, is about small pockets of food paradise that punctuate the day at varying times in distinctive ways that are one with a specific locality and its people. While the diverse eateries collectively function as one epicurean city, each individual eatery is a subculture that appropriates the city differently. Morning walkers and joggers are sure to be confronted with the first form of the ephemeral epicurean experience - 'the juice shots'. Next in line is the humble *darshini* and Iyengar bakeries that dot the city. A busy day ends at





Figure 3-4. Food Street Nagarathpete
(Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)

one of the many *thindi beedis* or *bajji* stalls lining the city streets. The juice stands vanish just as swiftly as they appear, while some others become anchors in the everchanging urban milieu. In doing so, they become tools for placemaking.

The contemporary city is defined by spatial pluralism through its multiplicity of uses. A bland pavement by day becomes a bustling space for conversation by night. Busy streets by day segue into placid spaces of pause in the wee hours of the night. These temporal spaces exist and coexist - the ephemeral offspring in a symbiotic relationship with the parent city. Here, ephemerality emerges as an important condition in sustaining the city's built form and is governed by several factors - the social, political, cultural, history and memory.

What makes the ephemeral epicurean city tick? The various identities of Bangalore's epicurean paradise are influenced by local inhabitants. Bangalore is inhabited by multiple communities in different parts. Malleshwaram and Basavanagudi are among the city's oldest pin codes with a population that is predominantly Kannadiga, Konkani and Tamilian - all largely Hindu communities. Further north, the areas of Frazer Town and Benson Town have a large Muslim population. Central areas like Chikpete, Nagarathpete and Shivajinagar are hubs of activity for skilled workers including blacksmiths, weavers, and carpenters. These areas are peppered with a transient populace from across the country - from Orissa, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh to name a few. The areas and their inhabitants, imbue the city with the wonderful flavours - territorial identity makes way for a bonhomie that comes through food and sets up the infrastructure that celebrates cultural identity.

Food practices are tied to cultural memory. One could be eating a meaty *kabab*, while being engulfed by the fragrance of a *ghee tadka dal* to be transported to another geography. Familiar food and food smells trigger a sense of belonging and cultural continuity, especially when people are away from home. In addition, urban food practices act as social signifiers of people across the city. Cases in point are Bangalore's *thindi beedis*. Predominant amongst them are the ones at Visveswarapuram (VV Puram), Nagarathpete, Rajajinagar, Johnson Market and Shivajinagar, to name a few. Each of these food streets thrive as they showcase subcultures of their makers and consumers. These eating stalls become indexical of the many migrant and transient communities they represent and indicate the nature of work that brings the migrants to the city.

Nagarathpete, located in central Bangalore is where the Nagarta traders came and settled to do trade in silk and cotton. As the area grew, it attracted other skilled workers - die-cutting and jewellery-makers from West Bengal and artisans from Hyderabad, among many others. Here the Davanagere *benne dosa* rubs shoulders with Kolkota *kababs* and Bombay vegetable sandwiches. After dusk, the street takes on a different *avatar*, becoming a community space to meet, eat and socialise. After 11pm, these pop-up stores wind down, and the edible street goes back to its original function as a thoroughfare. These cyclical changes create an ephemeral city where food and language become markers for cultural identity, and in turn the identity of the city. The ephemeral city becomes a locus for the city at night and a thoroughfare for the city by day; a dynamic datum that caters to both economic and socio-cultural needs of the city (Figures 5 & 6).

Though there are epicurean instances that appear and disappear daily, the city is further defined by the seasonal-cultural edible city like the food spaces on Mosque Road during the holy month of Ramzan and the *avarekai (*hyacinth beans) *parishe* in VV Puram, where the street itself transforms into a site of festivities. Much like the Kinetic City, these points 'create a temporal articulation and occupation of space which not only creates a richer sensibility of spatial occupation but also





Figures 5 & 6. Street in Nagarathpete before and after dusk where people occupy it to partake in the Ephemeral Epicurean City

suggests how spatial limits are expanded to include formally unimagined situations in dense conditions' (Mehrotra, 2008) (Figure 7).

Mosque Road in Fraser Town is the venue of Hajee Sir Ismail Sait Masjid and several smaller satellite mosques that dot the area which is home to a large Muslim population. During the holy month of Ramzan,



Figure 7. Temporal occupation of space in dense conditions

the entire street transforms into a food festival where, in contrast to the daylong fast, the night brings a riot of culinary smells, tastes and experiences. From the humble *suleimani chai* to *haleem* and meaty *kabab*s of different kinds ending with *meetha* like *halwa* and *gulab jamun*s, the street transforms into a party catering to not just the Muslim community but the entire city, disappearing in the morning, only to reappear every night all through Ramzan.

In contrast, in the VV Puram's *thindi beedi*, ephemerality is much the same all year long, where pushcarts roll in after shop shutters go down after 6pm and people from different parts of Bangalore roll in to sample local delicacies such as masala *dosas*, *obattu* or the famed curd *kodubale*. In addition, there is the famous VB Bakery and its fare including Congress *kadalekai* buns and vegetable puffs. VV Puram *thindi beedi* is a part of old Bengaluru with a largely Brahminical heritage, hence the fare is vegetarian and South Indian. Much like in Malleshwaram, another old area in Bangalore, the local populace is resistant to change and finds comfort in the familiar.

The seasonal ephemeral condition of VV Puram with the *avarekai* festival that started several years ago holds significance in the christening of Bengaluru itself - Bendakalooru, the town of boiled beans with *avarekai* being the star of the show. Starting with *avarekai saaru* (curry) to *avarekai* ice cream - the gamut is endless. The Avarekai Mela is held on VV Puram road where the everyday *thindi beedi* transforms in January to host a food festival with various offerings like the *nippat* and *dosa*, among other delicacies.

In the city, food acts as a semiotic force, carrying distinctly political mileage. The politics of spatial occupation where each space presents multiple dialogues with its context, tangible and intangible, are seen across these informal occupation areas.

Traditional communities resist the influx of newer eating joints that do not cater to their cultural values. Case in point are old localities such as Malleshwaram and Basavanagudi that are also home to several Brahmin vegetarian communities. These areas see minimal influx of food spaces that cater to other cultures or communities, with any 'infiltration' being limited to the edges. However, these areas are peppered with eateries that appeal to the local palate - the *darshinis* and Iyengar bakeries.

Darshinis are rooted in history as places of pause for travelling Brahmins, largely travelling to the city from surrounding villages for trade. Local lore has it that these pure vegetarian places sprang up during the plague of 1896-99, when men sent their wives and children back to the villages and were unable to feed themselves in the city. The *darshini* is rumoured to be one of the first restaurants of Bengaluru that catered to the common working man, unlike other establishments of the time that catered largely to the British.

The modern avatar of the *darshini* has ideological roots dating back to 1965. The idea of the quick eating place was started in 1965 with the Brahmin's Coffee Bar in Basavanagudi, while the ubiquitous commercial model which took off in 1983, was the brainchild of R. Prabhakar, a pioneer of the fast-food movement in Bangalore. He was inspired by the corner delicatessen in Western cities that offered quick, affordable, and wholesome meals. The *darshini* uses a very limited footprint (approximately 100 square metres) with the cooking space in the rear and fronted by a self-service counter. *Darshini* eating is an exercise in minimalism where there are pre-cooked standard 'meals' that are more about satiating the appetite than about gastronomic delight.

These eateries open at around 7am, offering a predominantly South Indian menu of *idli-vada*, *dosas* and variations of mixed rice specialties which carry on well into lunch with the famous *bisibelebath* (a rice, lentil and vegetable Karnataka specialty) or *thali* meals. Afternoon snacks include fried goodies like *bajji-bonda* (deep-fried vegetables coated in gram flour batter) with the signature filter coffee. The day winds up for a *darshini* around 9pm as they serve *tiffin* (snacks). The humble *darshini* is a culture unto itself - a momentary landing pad for people from all walks of life. There are approximately five thousand *darshinis* in Bangalore that punctuate the city at regular intervals - dichotomous spaces that act both as pause points and extensions to the bustling street.

Urban living rooms. The *darshini* serves as a vantage point where one steps out of the 'frame of the city' to view it from a distance. Tall tables are set up in the leftover area on the pavement adjacent to the interior. This change in focal length allows one to simultaneously introspect and participate in the larger urban milieu (Figure 8). The exterior edge of the space acts as a soft threshold, where the line between the interior and exterior becomes ambiguous and blurred, inviting the street into the interior realm and vice versa.



Figure 8. Blurred boundaries between the street and food joint

The Iyengar Bakery is another element of the edible city. These bakeries were envisioned by a sect of Brahmins hailing from Hassan. Chefs and temple cooks for generations, members of this community migrated to Bangalore in search of livelihood, in the days of post-independence turmoil. The needs of local vegetarian communities combined with British culinary influences led to the creation of eggless cakes, butter biscuits, *palya* buns, vegetable puffs, toasts and honey cake. The oldest bakeries were started by HS Thirumalachar, with an Iyengar Bakery named Bengaluru Brothers Bakery (BB Bakery) way back in 1898 in Chickpet. Thirumalachar is said to have learnt the art of baking from an Englishman, and eventually the bakery was renamed Bengaluru Brahmins bakery in the 1970s. These bakeries have now become the place for one to grab a quick bite on the way to work at all times of the day. They serve as a haven for labourers, travelling salesmen and businessmen in need of an inexpensive and tasty bite. One stands right on the pavement with the edible served on a piece of newspaper. Both the bakeries and *darshinis* epitomise the epicurean city where the pavement becomes an ephemeral

place-making space through this shared experience of eating. Once food is received by the patrons, neighbouring steps, tree canopies, adjacent platforms all become flexible in terms of use - reappropriated to become places of pause and seating, communication and rest. The distinction between the eating joint as anchor and the dynamic street elements, blur as they become one (Figures 9 & 10).

While the *darshinis* and Iyengar bakeries address the needs of certain communities, the morning healthy juice shots are a contemporary invention in the bustling city. The little 'stalls' are set up under tree canopies adjacent to pavements or steps outside unopened stores. As one walks through the city suburbs in the early hours of the day, one will find foldable tables set up at street corners. Utensils containing health drinks made of wheat grass and aloe vera lure the morning fitness enthusiast to take a break and indulge in some quick health benefits. These instances of the edible city indicate how, in the South Asian context, food acts as a signifier of rank, caste, community and identity. The act of standing while eating and the queues in some places become immediate social levellers (Figure 11). The ephemeral epicurean city caters to the subaltern and the elite alike. The pedestrian walkway becomes a democratic space where everyone jostles for a bite of the same puff or *dosa*.





Figures 9 & 10. Pavement and steps become spaces to appropriate for seating and socialising

Richard Sennett writes, 'Physically, too much urban design is homogeneous and rigid in form; socially modern built forms frequently take only a faint imprint of personal and shared experience' (2012:x). The epicurean city enunciates Sennett's ideas of cooperation and community. The physical city becomes the backdrop, the stage that the epicurean city manipulates through social practices and shared experience. The edible city is at the same time individualistic and of the community.

To summarise, the Ephemeral Epicurean City transforms the rigidity of the built environment, giving significance to interstitial forgotten nooks and crannies, and creating a sense of place that the community occupies and makes their own. These temporal as well as long-rooted spaces act as loci within the city that create new spatial trajectories. The city becomes an assemblage of cuisines, memories and people, transforming from the mundane into an everyday carnival that imbibes physical spaces with new meanings and memories. One could say that these ephemeral 'edible' spaces make the city tick as they go about their day enquiring after random strangers with a sense of intimacy - *"Oota Aaita?"*



Figure 11. Street as a democratic place of pause

Glossary of local terms

Oota (Food) *Aaita* (Over) - Colloquial form of asking someone if they have eaten, and as a greeting
Thindi - Breakfast but also refers to an evening or tea time snack
Beedi - Street
Dosa - South Indian crepe
Haleem - Stew made of meat, wheat and barley.
Suleimani chai - fragrant spiced tea without milk
Meetha - sweet
Halwa - Dessert with grain, sugar and milk

Gulab jamuns - Deep-fried dough in rose sugar syrup
Obattu - Flatbread of flour, yellow gram and jaggery
Kodubale - Spicy crisp snack shaped like a bangle
Bendakalooru - An apocryphal story states that the twelfth-century Hoysala king Veera Ballala-II, while on a hunting expedition, lost his way in the forest. Tired and hungry, he came across a poor old woman who served him boiled beans. The grateful king named the place '*Benda-Kaal-uru*' (town of boiled beans), which is know today as 'Bengalūru'. (Source: Wikipedia)
Avarekai Parishe - Food festival celebrating the harvest of hyacinth beans
Nippat - Deep-fried or baked savoury
Palya bun - Bun stuffed with cooked vegetables
Bajji-bonda - Deep-fried vegetable fritters

Note: All pictures in this article, unless otherwise mentioned, are taken by the author

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KHICHDI CENTRAL

Gayatri Ganesh & Abu Bakr Shaikh



9:00 am | Another Monday Morning

Another day to escape from a busy office, exchange numerous 'hi-hellos' and 'what did you have for breakfast?' on pavement eateries and crowded *darshinis* - hopefully today there are free chairs available. Maybe today, the restaurant steps will not become tables, and maybe upturned benches can remain in their resting positions. Maybe today is, surprise - a Food Carnival! Or maybe it is a day when cows take over our public spaces. Maybe today, tarpaulin will not be the primary shelter, and maybe, just maybe, the request *'please swalpa extra haaki'* (please serve me some extra food) will not be needed to get a bigger helping.

'అన్న! రెండు चाय కొడి!'

No matter the language, what is expected of this call is still a piping hot cup of beverage that transports us - to a humble *dhaba* (Hindi term for roadside eatery) in a trip to the hills; the little bakery outside our college campus; the memory of *'ghar ka chai'* (homemade tea) from one's childhood; clinks of high tea with dainty little sandwiches in the pretty outdoor cafe - really anything but the loud and angry vehicle-dominated Monday morning roads.



Hop, skip, jump over loose, tangled wires and waterlogged monsoon roads. It is not too long until the cars and autos dwindle, and the road hits a foot-friendly 'Welcome aboard!' note. When you get there, what catches your attention is not the presence of seemingly identical Iyengar Bakeries or Juice Junctions, but giant hands that visibly control nearly everything on the street - the invisible hands (hidden economic forces as coined by Adam Smith) where internal streets allow for temporary appropriation as well as opportunities to stop, connect and carpe diem. A space that accommodates a 'I have a lot to say about current trends in the stock markets' as well as a *'dooradinda bandidvi, swalpa extra kodi sir'* (we have come from afar, please give us a bit extra)!

Hosting a heady mix of sights, sounds and smells - a space of diverse voices, species and trades - a mixture, a *khichdi* of sorts - is one that makes a lasting impression. Smelling a Kolkata *kathi* roll while eating honeycake outside an Iyengar Bakery, sitting on a *katte* under a tree canopy drinking coffee at a *darshini*, salivating over a fellow customer's buttery *masala dosa* goodness; crossing a crowded vehicular road alongside cows and goats whilst holding onto a piping hot *shawarma* roll; hearing the whistles of pressure cookers and incessant chatter over vegetable puffs served on little squares of old question papers; passing neat arrays of Congress buns, *bajjis* and *holige*, the thoroughfare morphs into a *Thindi Beedi* that celebrates food everyday. Tarpaulin roofs, asbestos walls, wooden planks, and *thela* umbrellas. Stools, upturned buckets, drums, flag post bases, boxes - what is a chair for when really anything can be sat on?


TODAY I MUST CHOOSE A LITTLE HEALTHY
SO, I WILL JUMP FROM HERE TO THERE TO HERE TO THERE TO HERE TO THERE!
TODAY, IM A DONUT... TOMORROW, IM A VADA... WHAT'S IN THE GAZE ANYWAY
ಉಲ್ಟಾ SCAN ಮಾಡಿ, CHILLRE ಕ್ಯಾ
ELLARIGU, SWALPA ADJUST MADBEKU.. ALSO THIS BENCH IS FALLING
HEAVY RAINS !! PREDICTED IN 8 STATES!! ALSO MAYBE I SHOULD BUY MY OWN NEWSPAPERS...
Maaaa



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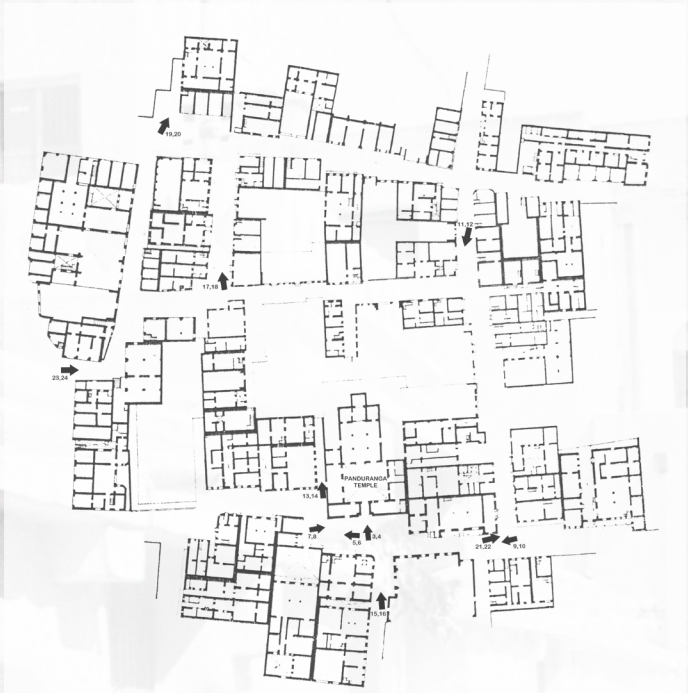
Avenue Road, Bengaluru *Pete* (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)

Continuity and Change in Santhusapete

Dinesh Rao



Pre-liberalisation Bengaluru was a very different city, with no mobile phones, internet, and software industry. There were no pubs, big-box retail, malls, or home delivery. The Pete was where we went for clothes, footwear, appliances, or anything besides daily groceries.

Everyone walked, cycled, or took the bus. The privileged few had scooters or cars. Santhusapete, where I took these pictures in 1987, was traditionally a silk-weaving community, with a commercial periphery, and a residential core, arrayed around the Sri Panduranga Vittala temple. Buildings were one or two stories tall, with lime-plastered brick walls, Madras-terraced or Mangalore-tiled roofs. Wooden or cast-iron columned verandas identified the older structures. Social life was in the streets, and tight-knit communities ensured safety and security.

Revisiting this precinct thirty-five years later in 2022, I find that changes are simultaneously very little and very extensive. Trying to identify structures for this ‘before’ and ‘after’ pairing was difficult, and the surprising constants proved to be locations of electrical junction boxes, lamp posts, and the parking of garbage handcarts.

Building lines are largely intact, but most are now concrete-framed structures of three to six floors. Streams of two-wheelers and three-wheelers flow through the lanes, and once clear communal spaces are now stagnant pools of parked vehicles, and concrete has replaced the granite flagstones. It remains a well-integrated society with Hindus, Jains and Muslims, Kannadigas, Marwaris and Gujaratis, but there is a lot of flux too, and few of the older residents remain. It is demonstrably a vibrant, well-socialised, harmonious and prosperous piece of urbanity.





The iconic Anand Bhavan building remains on the main Chickpet road, a constant landmark, though the lodge has moved elsewhere. Some shops have stayed on, with newer, larger back-lit graphics & signage. The ornamental balustrades & metal grillwork are mostly gone, with 'modernisation' taking the forms of sliding windows & aircon.



Sri Panduranga Vittala temple is unrecognisable, in contrast. A simple, stucco-finished oasis of white calm at the heart of Santhusapete has been replaced by vast slabs of dressed granite, carved panels, and polished teakwood. The post-and-beam granite structure is covered up with a 'classical' layered plinth, wall and entablature, with elaborate plinth, *chajja* (sunshade) and parapet mouldings. Prosperity and faith go hand in hand.





This little pocket of urban space housed the shelter for the temple chariot, a doctor's clinic, and the entrance to the priest's house, buffered with a small courtyard. *Jaglis* (raised platform) served as the doctor's waiting room. Now it is just a space for the innumerable two-wheelers. Mannequins add a touch of colour, though.







The original blank peripheral walls of the temple created a sense of mystery that was resolved when one saw the entrance, with the courtyard and s*thamba* (flag post) beyond. Now, the temple announces its presence loudly and clearly. The absence of the plinth was an invitation to enter and walk on the cool flagstones inside, while the new, raised entrance is a perceptual hurdle, to be humbly negotiated.







This once grand mansion, opposite the temple, now stands abandoned. Absentee owners and legal disputes cause holes in the urban fabric. Whenever these are infilled, the new buildings will still respect the building lines and the integrity of urban space, however different their architectural expression and material may be.

In less frenetic times, the local tea stall was an important place – meeting point, discussion room, bonding and sharing for the men of the neighbourhood. News, viewpoints, advice and help were sought and found here. Now a lack of time, mobile phones and the internet have made these irrelevant and unsustainable. Here, the typology of shop/residence has replaced the local institution.









Traditionally, the ‘space’ of the house extended into the street or lane, and the *jagli* or bench was a legitimate expression of this. Used for sunlight and socialising, drying *papads* or hair, this cultural signature is dying. New forms of communication and entertainment, new notions of privacy, propriety and property lines, communities that are dispersing and dissolving, have confined life to the interiors. Oh, and pollution too.

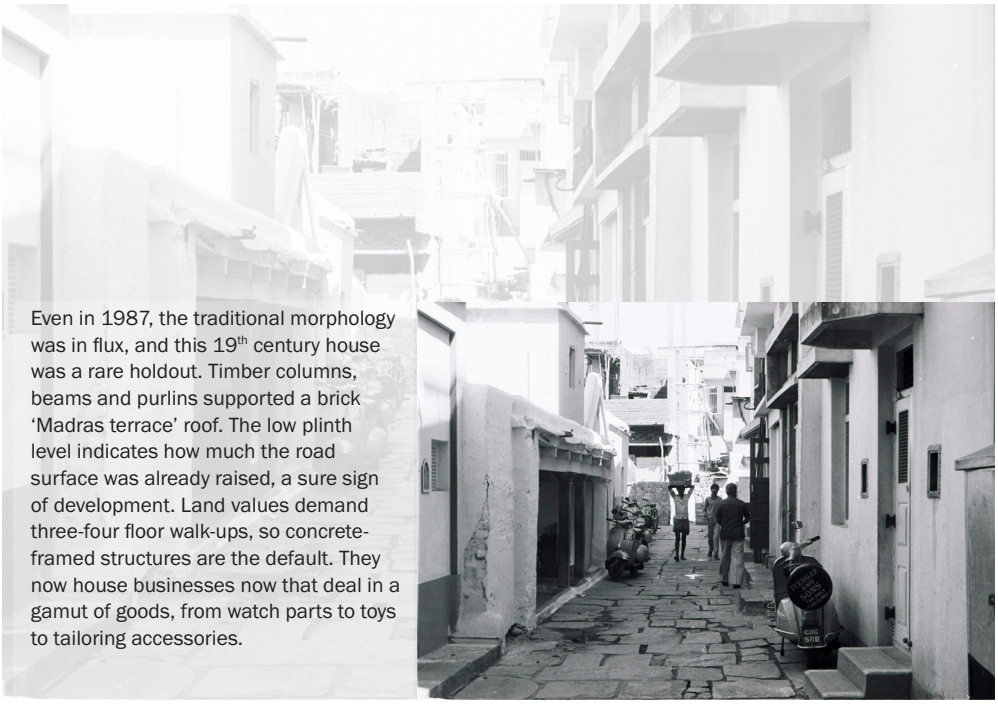




Increasing land values, extended families, and suburban aspirations see residences being converted into shops and godowns. Privacy needs now irrelevant, windows are larger, to invite retail traffic. The ‘clickety-clack’ of looms is gone forever.

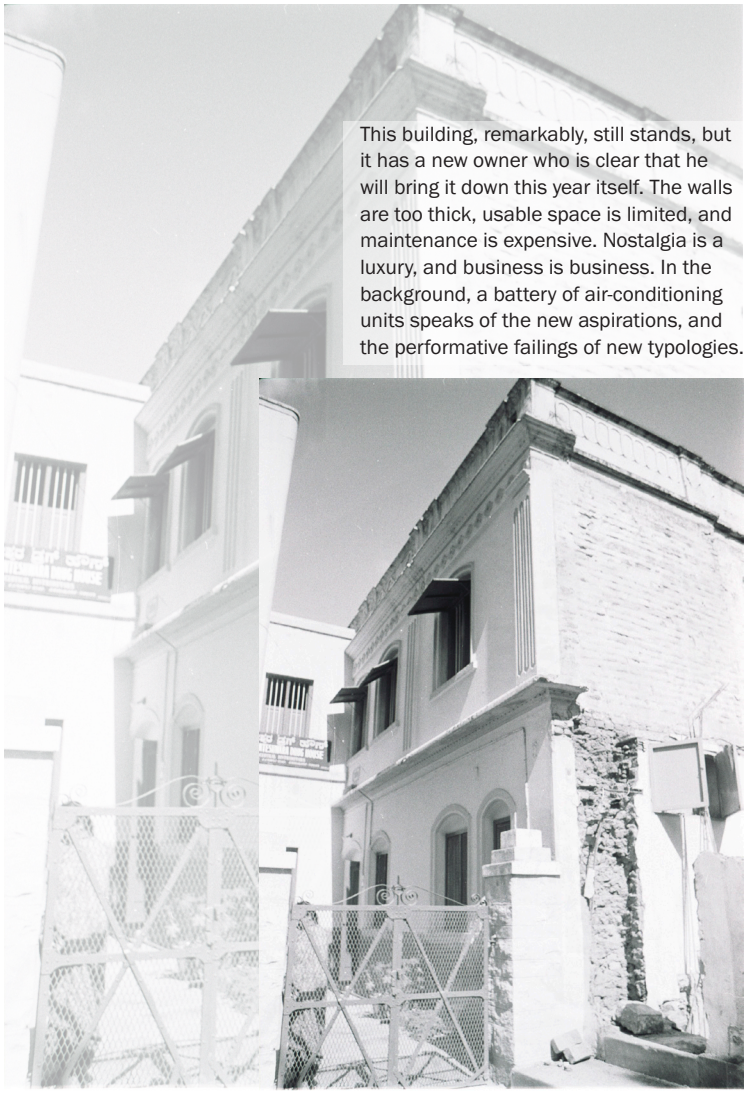






Even in 1987, the traditional morphology was in flux, and this 19th century house was a rare holdout. Timber columns, beams and purlins supported a brick 'Madras terrace' roof. The low plinth level indicates how much the road surface was already raised, a sure sign of development. Land values demand three-four floor walk-ups, so concrete-framed structures are the default. They now house businesses now that deal in a gamut of goods, from watch parts to toys to tailoring accessories.





This building, remarkably, still stands, but it has a new owner who is clear that he will bring it down this year itself. The walls are too thick, usable space is limited, and maintenance is expensive. Nostalgia is a luxury, and business is business. In the background, a battery of air-conditioning units speaks of the new aspirations, and the performative failings of new typologies.







These residents are still in the neighbourhood, but decided to monetise the value of the properties their families owned, and lived in, for generations. When shown my pictures of their houses from thirty five years ago, they were excited and even amused, but not at all regretful. It is just practical to build as much as possible. Those houses were too dark and cramped, they leaked, and were just plain old.

With continuity and change...





Note: All images, both black and white and colour, are taken by, and belong to the author. Black and white photos were part of an unpublished dissertation, 'Building Typology & Urban Morphology: A Study' at the School of Architecture (now Faculty of Architecture), Centre for Environmental Planning & Technology, Ahmedabad, by the author, 1989.

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DIRECTION

‘The Hanuman temple street is one way now
come from the old pond side, its right opposite
the big Banyan tree’

Chandru wanted his mother to close down
the old house and move with him to America,
she wanted to give me
a pair of traditional brass lamps,
a heirloom piece, so come and take it

It was not the old familiar place any more
In less than two kilometres I had lost my way
four times. Asking for directions is
a woman’s preoccupation they say

The auto driver was quick,
‘Oh, it’s right next to the next road hump,
just slow down and you will hit it’ *
What gym?

I missed it.

The traffic police was more helpful,
` Just go back and it’s at the first signals’

It was the same one I had passed

The doctor in a fancy car was more specific
`Take a right. It’s right next to the superspeciality
diagnostic centre, you can’t miss it’

His right was my left.

Surely they were on a weekend picnic
the SUV was full of sweat shirts and football
` It’s behind the gym auntie, just drive on’

*

The postman, I thought would lead
` I am going on the other beat, this is the old number,
now all that has changed, 88 comes after 97, ask anyone’

The priest, aha, he will definitely know the Banyan tree,
there must be a temple and the old pond near the tree
`What pond? There is no pond here, all water has dried up.
I take my holy dip under a tap, it doesn’t even wet me whole,
this is the house next to the Xerox shop, the old lady rents out a
portion of the garage for my son, he will show, tell him
his father is going to the market, will come later.’

I just stood there wondering which way to turn

Someone was frantically waving out from a window.
It was grandmother. I looked around.
The asbestos sheet roof super speciality diagnostic centre,
next to a corner called gym, behind number 97,
opposite to the signal without lights turning right to the hump,
a small tree sort of a trunk cut into half, an old temple
hiding behind a giant billboard calling out freshness,
my old ancestral home that was going to be pulled down
to make way for a mall.

Prathibha Nandakumar

Prathibha Nandakumar is a poet, writer, journalist, playwright, and documentary filmmaker. More information about her writing can be found at https://www.poemhunter.com/prathibha-nandakumar/. Email: prathibhanandakumar@gmail.com

The Case of the Women Sufis

Chandan Gowda

Mastani Maa, a Sufi saint, was usually found praying or meditating or doing *zikr* (a devotional exercise of rhythmic repetition of God's name or a short prayer). Her love of God was boundless. When Mastani Maa's visitors found her doing *zikr*, they often seated themselves opposite her and started meditating upon God themselves.

One day, a group of men, women and children dropped by to see her. Finding her engaged in *zikr*, they sat down opposite her and began to meditate. They did not break for food or water. Around midnight, Mastani Maa opened her eyes. She was moved to see that her visitors had waited this late, without having food or water, to meet her. Asking them to put the empty earthen pot lying in a corner on the stove, she directed them to fill it with the leaves, stones and soil from the courtyard and cook them in water. She then beseeched God for help. Soon afterwards, rice was seen boiling inside the pot. Mastani Maa's visitors looked at her questioningly. She reassured them, 'There is nothing unique about this. It is all God's love. He provides food through stones, soil and leaves, doesn't he?'

Mastani Maa lived in Bengaluru. It is not clear when she lived here or where she came from. Since she belonged to the Majzoob Sufi order, she wore thick iron bangles and anklets. She gave her blessings to all, irrespective of the communities they belonged to.

Hazrath Khwaja Qaseer, a famous contemporary Sufi saint in Bangalore, had sent his disciples to attend her funeral. When they let him know that her face had



Figure 1. Mastani Maa *Dargah* (also known as *Dargah* Hazrath Mastani Amma) (Source: Rana Kauser)

turned yellow after her death, he felt certain that she was a great Sufi. Her tomb, which is in a side alley of Tannery Road, continues to attract many of the faithful in the present (Figures 1 & 2).

I learnt about Mastani Maa and her miracle in writer Fakir Muhammad Katpadi's *Sufi Mahileyaru* (Women Sufis, Navakarnataka Publications, 2010). Katpadi's account offered a new slice of Bangalore's history. While little is known about the two dozen Sufi saints whose *dargahs* exist in different parts of the city, the lack of an adequate account of Mastani Maa, or of Saiyada Bibi and Saiyadani Maa, the other women Sufis from Bangalore, whose *dargahs* exist, respectively, in City Market and in Richmond Town, is to be regretted a bit more since the official annals do not easily recognize women as Sufi Saints. Indeed, the Sufi is usually imagined as a male saint.

The leadership of the various Sufi orders, where disciples learnt the techniques of attaining the mystical experiences of the divine, have usually resided in men. When women did become, on a rare occasion, the heads of any Sufi order, their powers were curtailed in various ways. For instance, they could teach but not initiate disciples, or, they were allowed to initiate only female disciples. The Bektashi order in Ottoman Turkey was the lone exception: men and women had equal rights of spiritual apprenticeship and organisational leadership.

Women Sufi saints are found all over the Islamic world, including the Middle East, North Africa, the Indian sub-continent and South-East Asia. Not all of them, though, had had formal training within a Sufi order. While some women Sufis remained unmarried, several of them achieved sainthood alongside fulfilling familial obligations, as mothers, sisters, daughters.

Rabia al-Adawiyya, who lived in Basra, Iraq, in the eighth century and whose powers of devotion freed

her from slavery, is perhaps the most well-known among women Sufi saints. Like Rabia, several women Sufis gained local recognition for their spiritual merits and came to be later venerated as saints. Annemarie Schimmel, the famous scholar of Sufism, mentions a delightful example. Lalla Mimunah, a poor woman in Western North Africa, asked the captain of a boat to teach her the ritual prayer. But she forgot what he taught her soon afterwards. To relearn it from him, she ran back to reach the departing boat, praying throughout, 'Mimunah knows God, and God knows Mimunah.' Her faith had let her run on water. She is revered as a saint in North Africa.

Besides North Africa, Schimmel notes, Anatolia and Iran have a large number of shrines of women saints. Women devotees visit there for help in resolving family problems. But the largest number of women Sufi saints, she adds, are found in India and Pakistan, especially in the regions of Sindh and Punjab. Men are not admitted to many of the shrines that have been built for these saints. Legends on the lives and deeds of these saints are very many. Schimmel records an unforgettable one: 'As elsewhere in the Muslim world, we find in Sind whole groups of women saints, like the *haft afifa*, "the Seven Chaste," who escaped a group of attacking soldiers and were swallowed by the earth before their virtue could be touched.'



Figure 2. Devotees at Mastani Maa *Dargah* (Source: Rana Kauser)

In his major study, *Karnatakada Sufigalu* (The Sufis of Karnataka, Kannada University Press, 1998), Rahamath Tarikere, the literary critic, identifies several women Sufi saints in the state: Saidaani Bibi of Mangalore; Niyaamatbi of Gauribidanur; Zarinaabi of Kadur; Bibi Fatima of Gulbarga; Saidaniamma of Ramadurga; Mustanimaa of Harapanahalli and Bagur. Their *dargahs* continue to be living spaces in the present. The policemen of Mangalore are fond of Saidaani Bibi. They celebrate her *Urs* (the death anniversary of a Sufi Saint).

On occasion, Tarikere notes, women who cannot be traced to any specific Sufi order, have come to be regarded as Sufi saints. Mastani Maa of Bagur exemplifies such an instance. While walking her way home, she accidentally encountered the man she had been betrothed to. She was deeply embarrassed at this chance encounter. After looking around desperately for a place to hide, she jumped into a well to avoid facing him and lost her life. The local people built a tomb for her right beside the well. Worship continues to be offered to her here. It is easy, Tarikere cautions, to merely conclude that the myth around her serves patriarchal ideals, but why people create and worship deities is hard to understand. A sense of mystery will need to find space in our interpretive efforts.

Tarikere writes, 'No "history" of the achievements of these women saints from Karnataka exists. But their influence on the places they lived in is large.' Getting a sense of this influence is to touch on the other lineages of our moral worlds.

Note: A previous version of this article appeared in Bangalore Mirror, May 20, 2016, and is republished here with the author's permission.

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Chandan Gowda holds the Ramakrishna Hegde Chair in Decentralization at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru. To think without using the categories: social, economic and political, that would be the thing.

Guardians of the Sacred Public

Aparna Nori



The Devi is a fierce feminine energy whose shrines are found all across Bangalore



The *Grama devate* or *devis* are almost always female, and often have a protective male attendant



The *Devi*'s colours are red (life) and yellow (healing) that point to her role as a divine guardian of the village

When Bengaluru became home nineteen years ago, I remember wandering around neighbourhoods and markets all the time, visiting every local festival and fair on weekends. On these walks, some alone and some with friends, I stumbled upon many invisible treasures that the city was built around or over. Starting in the 1980's with what was a cluster of *petes* (markets), *hallis* (villages) and cantonment settlements, Bengaluru started expanding into a technology and software hub and continues to grow. The city then saw high rises, illegal construction and haphazard urban planning to accommodate the thousands who were moving into the city in search of better opportunities. In the process, the visual markers of the city's history slowly became obscured, leaving very few traces of her earlier life.

The physical erasure of the city's memory happened slowly and deliberately over time. *Viragallu (*inscription stones) buried under construction rubble, sacred spaces and fort walls broken down to create tech parks, lakes reclaimed to built houses in the sky, centuries old trees and village *kattes* uprooted for road expansion, vibrant village *jatres* squeezed under poorly constructed flyovers, seasonal harvest fairs like the *Kadlekai Parishe* (groundnut fair) losing their audience. The emotional erasure however is far more subtle.
But cities are made of people and for people. People from different social strata, celebrating different ways of life, religious, culinary and cultural practices, holding on to our place within this endless transition. Over the years Bangalore has shuffled between its urban and rural identity, the rural sometimes getting lost within the more visible and louder urban fabric; that the city prefers to be draped in now. Nowhere is this more evident than in the city's sacred spaces that blur the boundaries between the private and the public, the urban and the rural.

This work is a small part of a larger visual documentation of Bangalore's neighbourhoods, their people and cultural practices, forgotten architectural and geographical markers of the city's history. This work was started in 2009 as a way to forge a connection, to understand the city's personality and pulse and to seek a sense of belonging. Within the images I look for the meaning of some of the city's place-based practices.

The images in this essay document the *grama devate* (village deities) that reside within a warren of narrow lanes and cultural practices associated with them. Many of them are known to have been brought to the city by their migrant devotees, only to take up permanent residence in shrines and temples. These rural goddesses are revered as protectors of their communities, and as healers of various diseases like smallpox, plague and measles. They keep the believer safe from evil spirits.

As history-writer and city documentarian, Aliyeh Rizvi writes on her blog, *"...Mariamma's healing powers are seen in her symbols-the colour yellow from turmeric and lemons, neem leaves that possess healing-antiseptic properties, 'cooling' curds, and peppercorns to ward off the evil eye, much like her sisters Gangammā and Mutyālammā."* These then, are the divine protectoresses of the city.



Locals consider the Sri Yellamma Devi shrine located at a street corner in Aralepete, a site of powerful healing



Sri Patalamma Devi Temple is located in the heart of Kankanpalya, a long-gone village that now sits in the modern suburb of Jayanagar



The Goddess is also seen with the trident, a symbol of her feminine power and energy. The bowl in her hand positions her as a nourisher-nurturer



Peppercorn packets are often stashed at the entrance of a shrine and bought by devotees as an offering to the Goddess whose blessings are as powerful as her wrath



Sacred thread tied around trees as a mark of veneration



Devotees offer curds and other 'cooling' substances such as lemons, neem leaves and turmeric to the Goddess Bisilu-Mariamman who is placed at the entrance of Sri-Annamadevi's shrine in the Majestic area



Lemons are powerful votive offerings because they are considered to have properties that are essential to maintaining good health



The Grama *devate and devis* are solicited for the wellbeing of the home, happy marriages and healthy children



Devotees take home votive objects such as the thread and bangles as a mark of her protection



Symbolic offerings of salt, turmeric and vermillion at the entrance to the shrine



Traditionally, livestock and fowl were once offered as a gift to the Goddess to appease her or seek her blessings

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Several rural deities from neighbouring shrines in the Ulsoor area and beyond, are brought to the city to witness the divine nuptials between Lord Shiva as Someshwara and his consort Kamakshi, during the Ulsoor *Poo Pallakki* (flower palanquin) festival. They sit here juxtaposed against the Metro line as reminder that the rural will continue to find its own place in the urban

Fragmented Memories of Urban Landscapes

Sareena Khemka

My practice explores urban spaces through dichotomous ideas of construction and destruction, preservation and regeneration through built and organic environments. Mapping cityscapes through narratives of the past, present and future, my preoccupation with building a research-based practice on the subject has led me to work with several mediums that started with drawing and painting and now include sculpture and found objects. Having lived in several large metropolitan cities such as Chicago, Kolkata, Bombay and now Bengaluru, I am drawn towards the architecture of spaces and its contradictory nature. My artwork questions the permanence and temporality of urban spaces, using objects and landscapes in the city that are going through forms of ruin and decay, by preserving or regenerating them or building new ones that resemble modern ruins.



Figure 1. *Fragments (1),* mixed media painting with casted concrete, copper leaf and resin," 12" x 9" x 14", 2022

Modern ruins that we can date from the 19th century still hold the romanticism of the recent past that is absent in our own age, that of the promise of an alternative future. These are ruins that constitute abandoned and broken buildings, urban decay, desolate cities and architecture that no longer serve a purpose, where our imagination completes the images in our minds to what came before. They are rubble-infused urban endings that are demolished or fragmented, reflecting the transience of a city through its material decay and inherent flux.

Fragments (1) & (2) are inspired by broken walls of historical sites or monuments and caves destroyed as a part of urbanisation or political and violent acts in history (Figures 1 & 2). They are indicative of a lost heritage, with impressions, marks, fissures and air pockets embedded in the cast, to now exist only as artefacts like those displayed in a museum.

Deep Map is a term that William Least Heat-Moon (1991) in his book 'PrairyErth: A Deep Map' coined for multiple ways of perceiving a place through all its layers. Using the method of deep mapping, I explore layered narratives that are specific to actual geographical areas. My work merges the multiple metropolises I have inhabited, and is rearranged in diverse configurations, making it adaptable to multiple ways of seeing. In doing so, I build connections with complex and unforgiving materials to create composite works that call for speculation and reflection.

Fragmented Landscapes (1), (2), and (3) were conceived as the aftermath of a site that has been destroyed, akin to a man-made disaster such as an earthquake or a demolished old house (Figures 3-5). These works were inspired by the transforming city of Bengaluru, as witness to a city constantly under the process of being built and rebuilt. The physical act of breaking the roofing tiles, replacement by concrete, or the shattering of the cement to create broken organic shapes, are a comment on the changing landscape of Bengaluru. Reassembling the pieces like a puzzle resembles a staged archaeological site that could have been fragments unearthed from the dust as in an archaeological dig.

In Between the Nooks & Crannies was created as a 'deep map' of a fictional landscape that existed in a liminal space of the real and imaginary, amalgamating natural and urban forms seen from an aerial perspective (Figure 10). Drawn during the onset of the pandemic, the work is an intuitive deep dive of traversing physical and metaphysical spaces through its curves and bends, triggering memories of known and unknown spaces, subconsciously drawing from the landscapes of Bengaluru and Bombay to create a liminal space.





Figure 2. *Fragments (2),* mixed media painting with casted concrete, bronze oil pigment and resin, 9"x11.5"x1", 2022

Figure 3. *Fragmented Landscapes (1),* mixed media painting on casted concrete, roofing terracotta tile and resin, 10" x 6.5" x 7," 2022



Figure 4. *Fragmented Landscapes (2)*, mixed media painting and metal dust on casted concrete,roofing terracotta tiles and resin, 9" x 9" x 7" x 1", 2022

Organic forms of drawing that flow across the surfaces are derived from studies of decaying material that I developed while visiting dumping grounds and seeing piles of rubbish lying in heaps by the side of the road, that now seep through all of my works forming stylised patterns of unrecognisable traces of material objects, that fuse into the natural landscapes creating new terrains.

Copper as a colour reoccurs as lustrous facades, with the ability to tarnish and decay over time just like cities do if not preserved. Experimenting with a range of industrial and artistic materials over the years has led me to create a lab of recipes for my work with interventions of cement, papercrete, home-grown crystals, found tiles, scrap metal and resin amongst others (Figures 6-9). The process involves breaking, repurposing, casting, growing and preserving objects as well as layering and collaging of paper, using the materiality to physically direct the perception of metaphorical, inhabited and abandoned spaces.

Cities form a network of patterns, where architectural spaces compress, collapse, overlap, merge, build and rebuild in a non-linear pattern like time. They reflect the history and the heritage of a culture, portraying immense complexity that can never be pinned down; whether they are decaying in ruins or rising to new heights, they are constantly evolving.

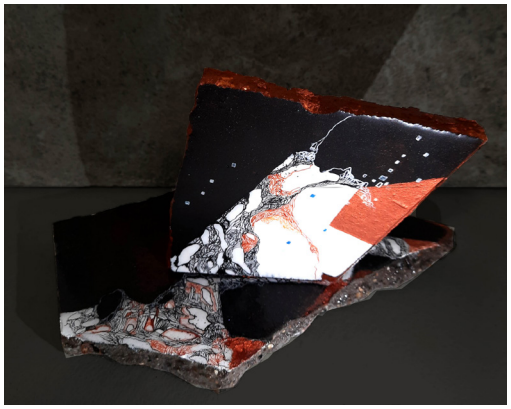

Figure 5. *Fragmented Landscapes (3)*, mixed media painting on casted concrete, roofing terracotta tiles with resin, 7" x 4" x 6," 2022

Rocks, facades and stones - both natural and man-made - are markers of time past, akin to tree rings. Fragments of spaces and buildings, the remains of geological forms, bricks extracted from a demolished house or a prehistoric cave, and construction sites that lie abandoned in the hopes of being completed someday, remind us of the loss of perfection. In some cases, the stones are chiselled, carved, and pressed like stamps with tools leaving grooves, indentations, and marks on the surface much like petroglyphs. In other instances, they are remnants of painted, layered and gilded forms.

Robert Smithson (1996), an American artist, wrote that ruins are 'dynamic' calling them '*dialectical landscapes*' that are deep-rooted in the 'geological past and a catastrophic future'. These landscapes are stuck somewhere in the middle of building and disintegrating, hence creating modern relics that do not follow a specific chronological time. Similarly all objects, even if they hold no inherent value in our present, eventually evolve to new versions of themselves, becoming relics, begging the question of what is of vital significance in our present-day to preserve and what is to be left to take its natural course. In an ever-expanding metropolis, these works are not only reminiscent of the loss and the pathos of decay and desolation but also give the hope of growth and regeneration.

In the era of the Anthropocene where the nature of landscapes is dictated by human impact, my current concerns are borne of studying the natural rock and stone formations found in and around Bengaluru and other parts of Karnataka, such as the peninsular gneiss, megaliths and stone circles.

My practice now explores the liminal memories of rock formations, historical sites and rock crystals that remind me of a microcosm and petroglyphs that are made by human and natural forces and how they co-exist with or are encroached or replaced by their urban counterparts. These may include man-made excavation sites such as abandoned buildings, quarries and under construction areas, buildings that replace megaliths and piles of rubbish that heap to form hills and mountains. The dichotomy of both these terrains and the way they intersperse, break through, overlap and overtake each other, is something that I am interested in exploring within my practice.



We live in an age of an 'inheritance of loss', as these ruined landscapes determine the age of a city, serving as necessary reminders of what came before, that are being erased from physical and public memory and replaced by newer facades. At times such as these, there are natural disasters that forcibly reveal the contours beneath the cityscapes through cracks and fissures, and the entropy of the built. The trauma or discontinuity associated with the displaced memory of these ruins is necessary on a collective level, serving as powerful metaphors of absence and loss that lead to reflection and restoration.





Figure 6. Detail of a stone from the series *Fragments of Earth (1)*, mixed media with ink, metal dust, scrap metal and resin, " 9.5" x 7" x 2", 2018

Figure 7. Detail of a stone from the series *Fragmented Landscapes (5)*, mixed media drawing on casted concrete and resin, 6" x 4" x 1", 2022

Figure 8. Work in progress - experiments with making miniature sized paper stones, mixed media collage with graphite on paper (variable sizes)



Figure 9. *In between the Cracks & Fissures*, mixed media painting on cotton rag paper, 27" x 17", 2022

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Figure 10. *In Between the Nooks & Crannies,* mixed media drawing on paper, 48" x 36," (9 panels), 2020

Exploring the Art of Deep Mapping

Neeti Sivakumar



‘Deep maps are not confined to the tangible or material, but include the discursiveness and ideological dimensions of place, the dreams, hopes, and fears of residents – they are, in short, positioned between matter and meaning.’ (Bodenhamer, Corrigan and Harris, 2015)

Deep mapping, while subjective, is a tool to record anecdotal information. Different formats of narratives - for example, sound, smell, conversations - can be layered for a more holistic and expansive take on a location. In my project, *Kaygari Kaaran* (pronounced *kaiguri kaa-ran*, meaning vegetable vendor in Tamil), interviews, photographs, and maps were the building blocks to understand how deep mapping through citizen sensing might be a possible solution to mapping street vendors in the city. The intent was to build a map through a collection of narratives shared by vendors.

Street vendors form a small distribution network of goods and services throughout the city - from individuals who have permanent set-ups along the pavement, to those who traverse the city. Through conversations, much of the vendors’ daily work routine in the city is captured. For this project, the context studied was Domlur locality in Bengaluru. Domlur is primarily a residential area with a software park at its centre. The residential area is a mix of single housing and paying-guest houses. As the neighbourhood is well-connected due to a six-lane road that stretches for 10 kilometres, the footfall and traffic increases drastically at rush hour, from 10am to 11am and 8pm to 9pm. The peak traffic is helpful for the vendors moving by foot, as well as for the pop-up and fixed set-ups that are located all along the street.



Figure 1. Charcoal rubbings of a sidewalk in Indiranagar locality, Bengaluru

Mapping Domlur. Vendors’ calls give context to theneighbourhoods that they visit daily through their language, vegetables sold, and points at which they sell goods. For example, this is a translated excerpt from a vendor’s call in Ashok Nagar, Chennai, ‘Greens, greens. Mint, coriander, green chillies, lime, ginger, green plantain, plantain flower, plantain stem. Greens, greens.’ This vocal call was distinct from those heard across Domlur where calls are now automated and played over speakers. But what does a vendor’s call have to do with the city? In fact, how do observations around daily life reflect the spatiality of a place?

‘Human action and meaning do not straightforwardly occur within space; space is co-constitutive of those very actions. Space is multiple and complex, already inscribed with meaning, and generates relations as much as it “houses” them’ (Engel, 2018 : 217). Deep mapping is something that architects do regularly in their professional work. Some of the questions that architects routinely engage with include - What does a plan convey? How can activity be depicted? If every piece of information about an experience of a place is collected and declared relevant to the study of a place, how does one classify and express this data on a map?

How does one capture the intangible? A deep map simply uses the format of a map (a two-dimensional diagrammatic representation of physical features) to showcase contextual spatial narratives. Deep mapping starts with the most basic questions - Did something happen here? What do people do here? How do I feel when I walk around this location? How do the answers to these questions correlate?

A deep map can be used to capture minute details about a place, compiling its frequency of occurrence, the spatiality of the detail, and its correlation to other details and the place. The intent of the map is to share such happenings and layer them to understand the place better. Intentionally, the map should convey more than the popular narratives of the location. Drawing from personal anecdotes and encounters, deep mapping can be an act of recounting the mundane. Thereafter, drawing and layering conclusions is done by creatively diagramming these observations on a map. The maps do not come to a conclusive end. The more perspectives added to the map, the more holistic understanding of a place.

Techniques. In this case, the study of Domlur did not begin with sound, nor did it end with it. It was a project whose focus became the street vendor and their experience of the city. They spend most of their time on the streets, weaving through traffic and potholes.

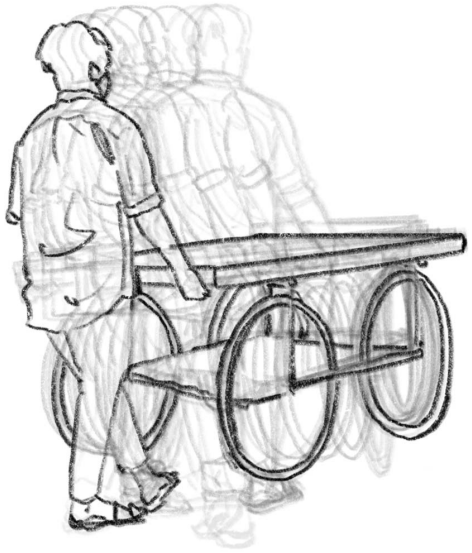

Figure 2. Street vendor parking his pushcart

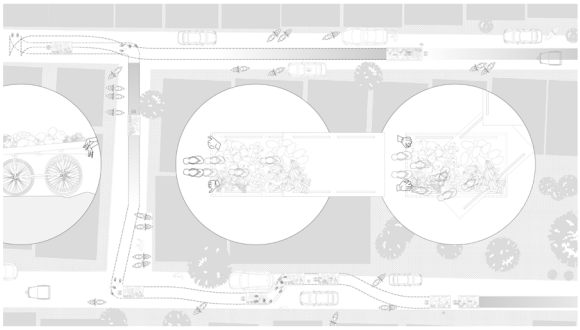

Figure 3. Mapping the movement of vendors in Domlur, Bengaluru. The street vendor's pushcart allows him to behave both as a vehicle and a pedestrian. The speed and flexibility of movement depends on the nature and location of the street

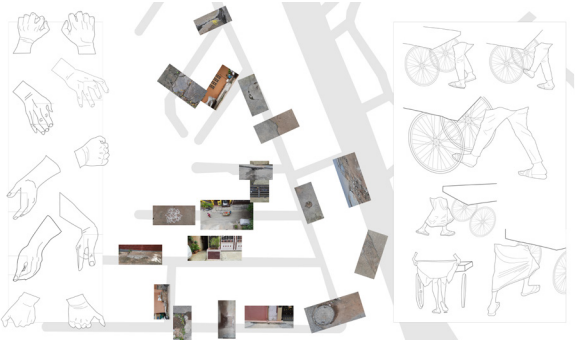

Figure 4. Mapping urban textures in Domlur, Bengaluru. The diagram represents the correlation of gestures to the landscape experienced by the wheel of the pushcart. It documents features of the road and highlights current conditions faced by vendors on foot

As footwear is the point of contact during the act of walking, the pushcart's wheel becomes an extension of their body. The push and pull of the cart is a method to navigate the city. The initial step taken for this project involved creating GIFs of the vendors parking their cart, making turns, and mapping the landscape of the wheel.

The Domlur deep mapping project took into account urban textures and infrastructure, gestures and movement patterns, sound and conversation, commodities and their daily routes to understand the larger narrative. Using a variety of techniques, creative mapping became a tool to better understand the location. When observing their routes and movements with their pushcart, the available urban infrastructure came to light. Potholes and slopes along their routes establish distances and effort taken by vendors to move through streets. Their daily routine was also peppered with chats at tea stalls and breaks during sales leaving the existing sidewalks and makeshift vendor setups perfect as a refuge. Further documentation of permanent vendors led to a visual dictionary of appropriated, temporary objects used to set up a small stall.

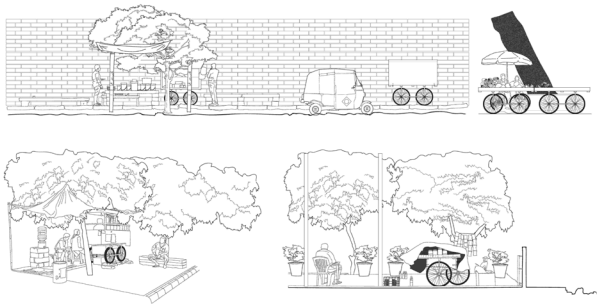

Figure 5. Permanent street vendors in Domlur, Bengaluru. The documented setups call attention to the temporal nature of the objects used. While useful in the scenario of shifting location, it has repercussions like theft. However, while a number of infrastructural solutions could be made, a turning point arrived during conversations with the street vendors. There are many moving parts to a vendors' interactions with their neighbourhood – the rain, rotting fruit, the community – forcing them to change how they navigate the city. In a conversation with Meena, a permanent vendor, she highlighted specific problems with regards to theft, vendor licence, and obstructions from the police. As a vendor's livelihood is reliant on their commodity and visibility, day-to-day interactions with the city are dynamic. 'Some days I do well, some days I do not. Today people did not come out due to the rain.' - Excerpt from translated transcript of an interview with a street vendor.

Outcomes. There can be further potential in collaborative deep mapping and citizen sensing that can provide a foundation for placemaking. During a workshop by Sensing Local, an urban design studio based in Bengaluru, the possibilities of GIS mapping were explored with the same data points that I had previously collected. The conversations with the vendors themselves held enough significance for a more focused participative mapping system. Using qGIS, an interactive map was created to document possible spots that have either an infrastructural or non-infrastructural problem. For example, public amenities, road conditions, seating, etcetera. Such data can be shared via SMS for use by vendors who can then navigate around possible problems in the neighbourhood.

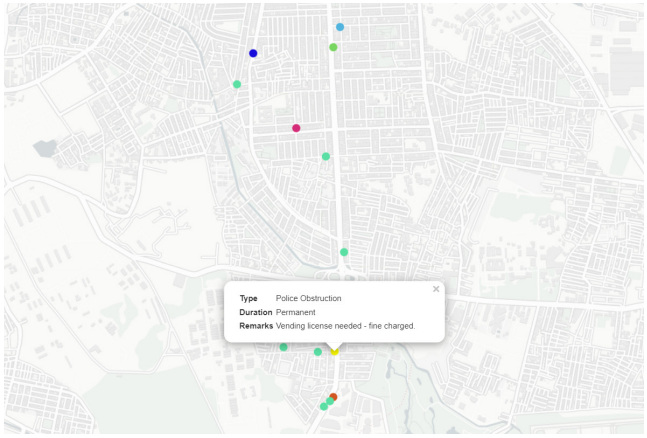

Figure 6. GIS map of Indiranagar and Domlur, Bengaluru. The map highlights specific problems such as road conditions, traffic, police obstruction, theft, shaded areas, infrastructure (street lights, surveillance equipment), public amenities (public toilets, drinking water, seating)

The Karnataka Street Vendors' Association have faced a number of problems with issuing vendor licence, misinformation, and police intervention. In order for this system to have an effect, it needs vendors to share information with other vendors. As long-term solutions involve decision-making by development authorities, funding, infrastructural and urban design resolution, simple interventions through citizen sensing can offer quick relief.

Problem points are plotted at a neighbourhood scale. They are time-bound issues for certain categories like police obstruction, traffic and theft. This information is offered as an SMS/ text-to-speech subscription from the database that is created through qGIS and linked to city ward information so as to make subscription to specific locations possible.

Moving Forward. Deep mapping is flexible with an open and iterative process. No observation is too small, and no perspective is irrelevant. However, it is clear that on a personal level, the craft may be subject to biases. As seen earlier, deep mapping is reflections of personal experiences of a location. The activity may shed light on vulnerable and invisible narratives that are not heard over the dominant narrative of place. The act of relaying occurrences may also invite a sense of intimacy with the community and help develop deeper connections with the place.

'Deep maps will be unstable, fragile and temporary. They will be a conversation and not a statement'.

Clifford McLucas 'Deep Mapping', 2022

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Mookajjiya Kanasugalu

Transections of aspirations and pragmatic realities of a city

Samhitha Bydar Shubhashchandra & Sandhya Rao

'In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy.'
— John Swahill

This essay is an ode to noted Kannada litterateur and *Jnanapeeta* awardee Dr. Kota Shivarama Karanth's 1968 classic novel *Mookajjiya Kanasugalu* (Dreams of the Silent Grandma) and the city of Bengaluru. Focusing on the contrasts and contradictions between Bengaluru's historical core (*pete*) and the city's new extensions, the essay is a literary comparative between a fictional character's life and a city. The central argument is built as an analogy between '*Mookajjiya Kanasugalu*' (Figure 1) and architect-urbanist Aldo Rossi's (1966) treatise 'The Architecture of the City', which is 'a protest against functionalism and the Modern Movement' (The MIT Press, 2023).

In the novel, Karanth critically examines Indian urban society's take on modernity through the conversations between Mookajji and her grandson Subbaraya interspersed with her musings (Kamat, 2005). In 'Architecture of the City', Rossi (1966) looks at the city as an artefact whose permanence is not something to be preserved and mummified, but a timeless quality that can still be experienced in the present. This quality of the city is powerfully articulated in the writings of Karanth and Rossi who are motivated by concerns of quality of life and thus challenge dominant trends at societal and city level. *Mookajjiya Kanasugalu* celebrates the social order, belief systems, traditions and customs that society has artfully woven with place, events, objects and time. It revolves around Mookajji, a grandmother whose narrative moves back and forth in time explaining events, beliefs and systems established within our society. Subbaraya, grandson of Mookajji, relies on his grandmother's perception and logic for the present events and the future.

The discourse of the pragmatic city, Bengaluru, is developed by characterising the city as an actor, drawing analogy to the life cycle of a man and the intricate relationships he establishes with his peers, spaces and the city's architecture. The protagonist Mookajji, refers to the native city of Bengaluru (physical) and Subbaraya (metaphysical), as the voices of the evanescent city. The conversation between the characters is used as a tool to unravel the subtle nuances of a city in evolution. Here, Mookajji represents the Indian ethos; expressed through a man's political, social, cultural and economic life. The grandmother, despite her lifetime suffering through her seventy years of widowhood, has not lost faith in life and yearns to adapt to the new generation. Subbaraya, on the other hand, with his naïveté and limited encounters with reality, continually relies on his grandmother to accept society's multitudinous voices.

Rossi's (1966) writings critically view the city and its layers of development as 'collective memory' that withstands the passage of time. In the course of its construction, the original theme continues to persist and modifies to render itself to newer themes of development. When seen through the lens of collective memory, history is never considered a museum specimen that is decorated and celebrated, but rather as a living organism.

In this essay, the city is treated as a system of 'urban artefacts' (Rossi, 1966). The city as a system of urban artefacts refers to both its physical form and as an embodiment of events, growth, and experiences that

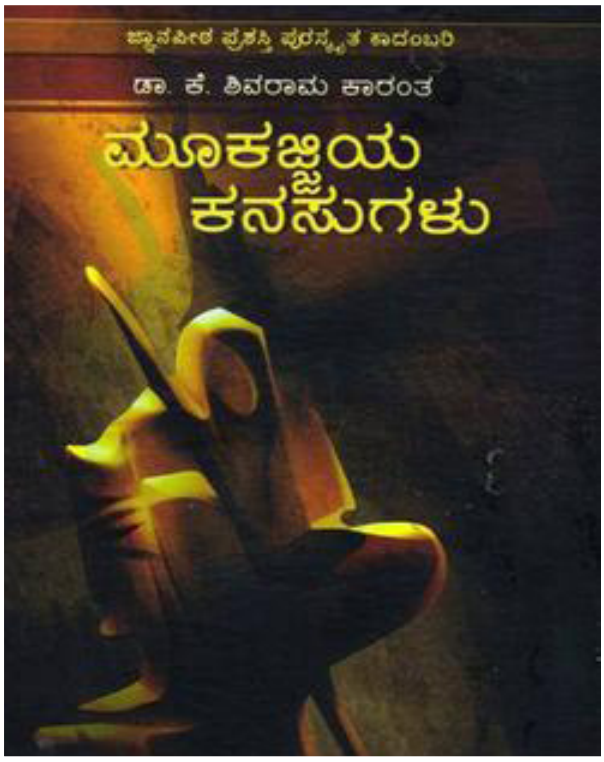

Figure 1. Cover page of Kannada novel '*Mookajjiya Kanasugalu*' by Dr. Kota Shivarama Karanth (Source: Wikipedia)

have nurtured its character in time and space. When a city evolves, the interaction between a series of smaller structuring elements over time evolves into complex forms and patterns at spatial and social scales. The urban artefact manifests into deeper systems where human experiences transform into visible symbols, signs and patterns. The urban artefact prescribes systems of order, preserving a memory of the past and visions of the future. Architecture is thus a mirror of those transformations, an embodiment of urban stories.

Karanth and Rossi, through their individual lenses, emphasise that the past must be acknowledged in the present, in order to understand resilience, adaptation and mutation in the city. The clues to be taken from the analogy indicate the dichotomy of Mookajji and her aspirations versus Subbaraya's position on pragmatic realities. Mookajji is compared to *'pettah'* or *'pete'*[3]. The cityscape of Bengaluru cannot be understood without tying it to its geography, that includes the *pettah* (native town), *kote* (fort), *kere* (lakes and tanks) and *tota* (gardens and parks). These four artefacts form the functional system (Hillier, 2007) or the syntax of the city (Bydar Shubhashchandra & Rao, 2020).

The syntax is one powerful determinant that configures the lay of the land; a rule for spatial organisation. This framework bears the imprints of the past and the course of actions that could take place in the future. It stands as a yardstick to measure events in time and space and as a critical generator of activities at a micro level, where the communities carefully align themselves to the syntax as cultural imprints. Hence, the urban artefacts of the syntax positively influenced the socio-economic, political, and religious practices of communities, therefore defining the cultural landscape of Bengaluru.

Kempe Gowda I, a chieftain under the Vijayanagar kingdom, gave Bengaluru a new spatial order, superimposing a new syntax on the land in the late 1500s. The new market-fort town was planned as a trading centre of the South that strategically connected surrounding towns. The Bengaluru map of 1791 shows the *pete*, the main trading centre surrounded by a mud fort and moat and the settlement with the *pete* as the epicentre. Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan added to the second oval fort to the south, along with a summer palace to operate as a military garrison, thus emphasising the city centre further as the primary core.

Subsequently, the Wodeyars and East India Company adopted this well-established framework of a planned city, thus aligning their alterations with established systems and interdependencies. Up until the formation of the first formal planning boundary in the mid-nineteenth century, each succession gave new impetus to the city's growth, emphasising the *pete*'s centrality, despite intense growth. This matrix of the market, fort and settlement as an imposing urban artefact known as Bangalore, are embedded in the cognitive memory of natives and visitors alike.

The first deviation from the indigenous planning. system was observed during the 1850s when the British colonists built their military Cantonment in clear separation from the *pete*. The segregation between the two towns was deliberate and is recognisable to date. The divide was not only evident as lines marked on land and in maps but also in the planning systems that were alien to the existing landscape. The new urban artefacts that were typologically driven, added two main typologies to the city - new residential types and recreational spaces. They established a formal tradition, an idea borrowed from the British Raj, which is reflected in the way people interacted with space and built form. The typologically driven urban artefact as a part of the new extension, distinguishes it from the primary element of the city, the syntax, in character, identity and aesthetics.

The use of Eurocentric planning principles was further heightened during the 1900s, post-famine and plague-breakout, when new extensions were created to the city outside the *pete* area. Recognisable grid lines, wide avenues, and rigidly segregated land-use zones

became the new language of the city. The modernist polycentric approach heightened the segregation between the native and the new extensions, and there arose the conflict between historicism and modernism.



Figure 2. Overlay of Bangalore Fort on the contemporary city reflects the urban artefacts' resilience. (Source: Bydar Shubhashchandra & Rao, 2020)

The *pete* at this point was engulfed by a gamut of systems and city networks only reinforcing its position as the historic centre and a fixed point in the urban dynamic. *Pete* became an unperturbed, unapologetic, rigid centre of the city, which continued to grow beyond. Hence, the community-based urban form ceded to the efficiency-driven mechanical shell of the city. In the process of coming together in imposing a pragmatic socio-cultural organisation, people grew dissociated from the urban artefacts created by their predecessors. The antagonist of our narrative, Subbaraya[4], is compared to Bengaluru's new extensions.

Mookajji for us, in short, is the urban milieu (Mumford, 1970). She is living heritage, depicted through human imagination and faith in human endeavour that shapes the culture of the city and later gets translated into a collective of urban artefacts, a tangible form that makes our city visible. Her optimism, her survival skills and accommodating nature are the unique characteristics that have strengthened her resilient nature that has survived changes and become the everyday vocabulary of Bengaluru's inhabitants (Bydar Shubhashchandra & Rao, 2020). This has impacted the city's physical and social dimensions to what it has evolved today.

If we begin to rethink the urban process as not making radical changes but carefully synthesising the old to accommodate sensitive responses, would we not empower the old and systemically connect the old with the new? Are the urban artefacts just nostalgic remnants of an obsolete pre-modern era? Or do they offer symbolic lessons for designers today? This could be a parallel approach where we can be responsible carriers of past learnings. Narratives from the past can be used carefully to construct and formulate the basis for our pragmatic realities. While there are certainly theories that support the nostalgic remnant proposition, the idea is not to immortalise the city as a symbolic object that we hold onto forever, but immortalise her value systems and legacy through the intangible layers.

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Group Photo

The fingers write a letter on the dust-covered bus.
The bus is both the space and shelter, takes care of
reaching it to the unaddressed destination.

The vacant wedding hall compels to act out alone
the scenes from a film on the lucky daughter-in-law.
The absent fire keeps the clothes pressed without burning.

The steps of the huge mall that was never set foot on
become a nightstand with chappals as a head rest. The mannequins
in the show window prevent expensive dreams.

Like penance, the dried cloths, whatever the family is left with,
must be taken off the line, folded neatly. The soft touch of each
ignites once again an unlit clay hearth.

Like the kid riding an imaginary toy car, complete with all
gestures and sound, the existence must be lifted
with abundant imagination and agitation.

When we stand together, at least once, staring at the reflection in the row of plastic framed mirrors in roadside shops selling household articles,
the mirror clicks a group photo, the street providing the magical flashlight.

Jayant Kaikini

'Group photo' from Jayant Kaikini's 'Vichitra Senana Vaikhari', 2021
(Translated from Kannada by Pratibha Nandakumar)
Click here to listen to the poet's Kannada rendition

Jayant Kaikini is a popular Kannada poet, short story writer, and scriptwriter for television and movies. He won the first of four Karnataka Sahitya Academy awards for his writing at the age of nineteen.
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Policing the Urban Space

THE CASE OF THE GROUNDNUT FAIR IN BASAVANAGUDI

Kiran Keswani



In the Indian context, an urban space often becomes a temporal marketplace or a festival location and the city administrators assess whether it will be a safe place for the public or if things may go 'out of control'. If they anticipate unsafe conditions, they ensure that the police will be present there when they are needed. This essay shares findings from researching one such urban space in Bangalore - Bull Temple Road which is pedestrianised for two days in a year for a Groundnut Fair around the temple at Basavanagudi. Here, as elsewhere, there are social, cultural, religious and economic practices that make the street a 'container' of these everyday practices, in addition to being a 'connector' for people and cars to move (Keswani & Bhagavatula, 2020). The research finds that during the Fair, police exercise control in different ways and urban spaces such as the Bull Temple Road can often extend from being 'spaces as container' to becoming 'spaces of power'.



Figure 1. The Bull Temple Road in Basavanagudi is pedestrianised during the annual groundnut fair

The Groundnut Fair, colloquially called the *Kadlekai Parishe* is both a cultural festival and a periodic marketplace. It takes place once a year in the Basavanagudi neighbourhood, in close proximity to Gandhi Bazaar. Every year during November-December, over two hundred vendors come to the city of Bangalore offering for sale tonnes of groundnuts or peanuts. The legend goes that for some years, on every full moon day, a bull would charge into the groundnut fields located here and damage the crop. The farmers then offered prayers to the sacred bull Nandi to stop this and pledged to offer their first crop. Ever since, farmers and traders come here from the neighbouring villages and towns and there are visitors who come here from within the city as well as from outside. The Fair has been organised year after year by the growers themselves and is now also supported by two government institutions - the Department of Religious Endowment (*Muzrai* department) and the Municipal Corporation of Bengaluru (BBMP). During this time, the entire stretch of Bull Temple Road is pedestrianised, vehicular traffic is reorganised and security arrangements are made.

In order to understand the space from an urban design perspective, we conducted research investigations of the precinct from 2012-2015. The first component of the research had attempted to answer the question: How do vendors mark and defend territory at the Groundnut Fair? In this component, which was later published as a book chapter, we had found that social capital and collective memory play an important role in how vendors territorialise urban space (Keswani & Bhagavatula, 2014 & 2020). In the second component, shared in this essay, the focus has been on analysing the data to understand how the Groundnut Fair whilst being an informal marketplace receives substantial facilitative support from the government including 'police surveillance'. During the days of the Fair, there are several police on duty here to ensure that the Fair operates within a safe environment. The police have found over the years that the excessive crowds become a site for petty crimes like chain snatching as well as the stealing of vehicles. The purpose of the police surveillance is three-fold: to manage the excessive crowds, to prevent petty crimes and to pay heed to any untoward incidents resulting from overcrowding. This research examines the routine of surveillance which through exercising control and discipline also becomes an exercise of power.

Typically, on an Indian street, the 'eyes on the street' concept proposed by Jane Jacobs (1961) as a way of 'natural surveillance' works well since the pedestrian and vendor densities are high. However, during the Groundnut Fair, the excessive crowding makes it easier for miscreants to escape and therefore, control or 'police surveillance' becomes necessary. While



Figure 2. The police surveillance deployed during the Fair ensuring safety of the public

the Groundnut Fair has had 'human surveillance' in other parts of Bengaluru, on an everyday basis traffic authorities are increasingly adopting 'video surveillance' as a way to maintain law and order. In other parts of the world, it is found that the number of cameras and spaces under surveillance have grown immensely in recent decades (Koskela, 2000).

For this research, the methodology included participant observations and interviews with the groundnut vendors, temple priests, residents of Basavanagudi, traffic police and formal shop owners in the neighbourhood. The interviews were conducted in Kannada, the local language of the state. It was found that during the days of the Fair, approximately 200-300 police officers are present. Some of them are in uniform and others are in *mufti* or plain clothes. The duties of the police officers include keeping a check on the crowds coming in and out of the temple and also making the movement of people on the Bull Temple Road easier. In case of fire emergencies, they get the fire department to respond immediately. In case someone gets hurt, they ensure that they are taken to the hospital quickly and safely. The officers who are deputed here are from the three subdivisions of the South Division of the Bengaluru Police Department. There is the Jayanagar subdivision, Chamarajpet subdivision and Banashankari sub-division. Each of these subdivisions has seven stations under it. There are officers from about 21 stations here for the two days of the Groundnut festival.

The work distribution of the police personnel consists of involvement from both the 'traffic police' and the 'law and order police'. The traffic police supervise the Bull Temple Road and ensure that it is a pedestrian zone for these two days, not permitting vehicular traffic to enter from any of the connecting roads or from either ends of Bull Temple Road. The law and order police look after the internal movement of people and their safety, between these two ends. The



Figure 3. The excessive crowding during the Fair necessitates the policing of the urban space

arrangements made by the police department for the Fair include putting up barricades so that there is no vehicle interference where the pedestrians need to walk. The barricades are provided in a way that there is a clear demarcation of zones for supervision. For instance, if there is a line of barricades at one place, then from the next barricade another police station branch takes over the responsibility. Further, separate teams of officers are deputed on the sub-arterial roads that feed into the Bull Temple Road.



Figure 4. There is a strong power equation between the temple authorities and the vendors, with the vendors who have been coming here for generations being given precedence over the others

It is interesting to note that while surveillance of the Bull Temple Road through deploying a team of police personnel generates power relationships of a certain kind, there are other players as well who exercise control within this urban space. The Department of Religious Endowment also plays a role in organising the *Parishe*, sending extra staff to the Bull Temple in order to handle the crowds at the temple entrance. The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Religious Endowment determines the nature of support needed. He writes out letters to other departments including the police force, municipal corporation, ambulance and medicine, generator and emergency power supply and so on. They are all expected to cooperate and work together. The local politicians direct the police force to coordinate the event. The municipal authority BBMP plays its role in cleaning of the streets during and after the Fair.

While the street becomes a space where power relationships are generated between the police and anyone who interferes with order, it is also a space where power relationships emerge due to the economic activities that take place here. The allocation of space for the vendors on the entire stretch of road is done by the temple authorities. The spots that are closer to the temple entrance tend to have higher footfalls and hence are priced higher.

The contract for collecting the rent for the spot on the footpath is given out as a tender. Often, it is the groundnut grower families who have been coming here for many generations who are given precedence over the others. Although the Fair is seen as a place for religious and cultural practices of people, the study reveals that economic activities play an important role. While there is spatial appropriation to enable these activities and the physical space is in a dynamic mode, as some vendor families draw upon collective memory to ensure a better spot, the social space also begins to work dynamically. Both the physical and the social spaces are embedded within the 'space of power' since they are controlled by the police and also the temple authorities.

There is the 'seen' and the 'unseen' within the Fair's public space, where what is visible is the power relationship between the police and the public. However, what remains unseen is that there is a strong power equation between the temple authorities and the vendors. This research through a closer investigation finds that what is less evident is that there are state players such as the *Muzrai* department and the non-state players such as the temple priests and local store owners are also involved. There is social influence and memory that play a role in order to access the spaces that are higher on the economic scale. In the larger context, there is a policing of urban space with surveillance being exercised for controlling law and order. However, there is also a subtle 'policing' where fellow vendors take care of each other's spaces for the brief absences during the Fair. Finally, one may say that at different times during the Fair, there are varying seen and unseen actors who play a role – the police, temple priests, vendors and so on as well as varying factors such as the need for order, memory or economy that impact the spatial appropriation. Hence, in understanding public spaces, it becomes important to study the everyday through ethnographic investigations so that both the seen and the unseen are made visible to us.

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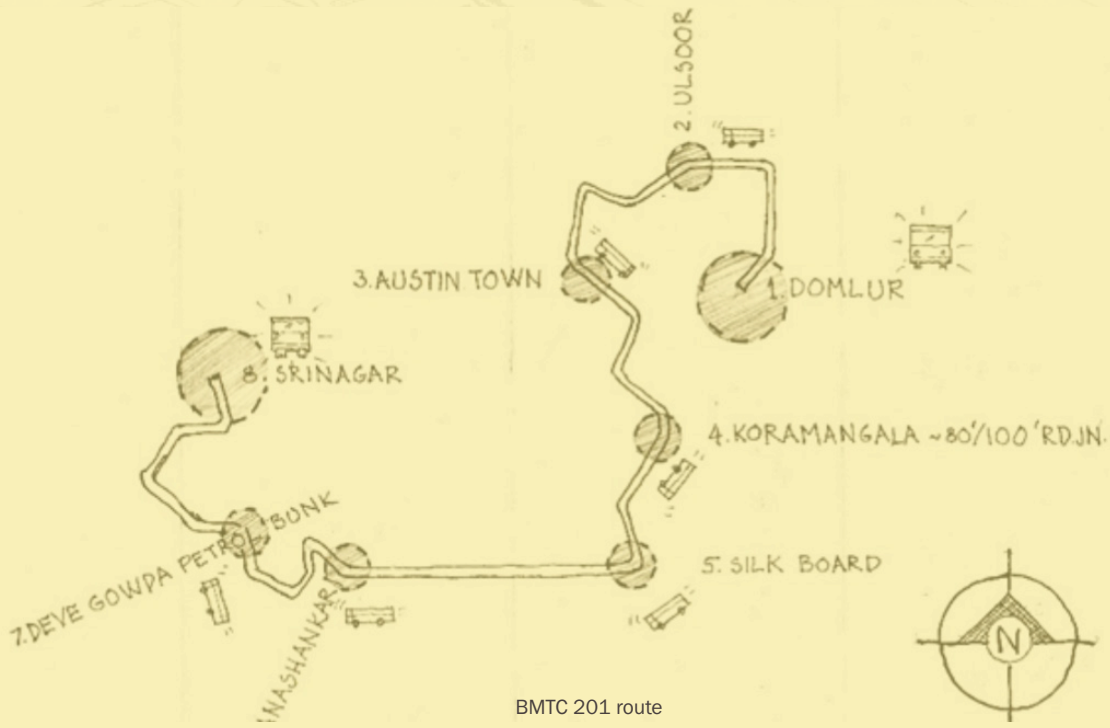
All pictures in this article, unless otherwise mentioned, are taken by the author.

Being Together Apart on Route 201

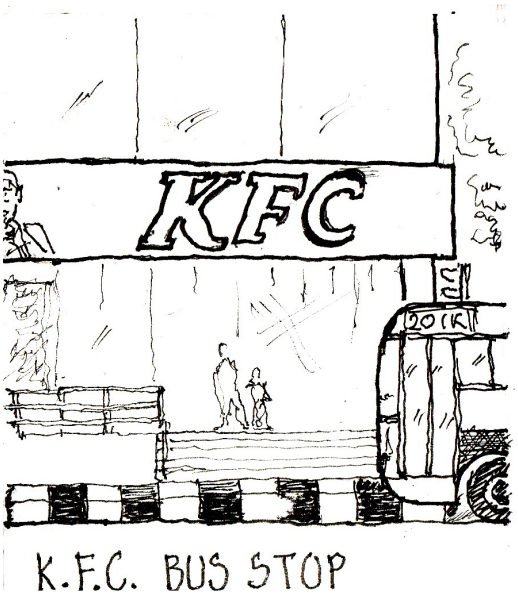
Rukmini Swaminathan



BMTC 201 route

This article is based on the *201 Bus Project*, a research project I started in 2020, with support of the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), Bengaluru. Having experienced the first lockdown of the pandemic, the project became an outlet for me to reconnect with the city of Bengaluru and its everydayness by mapping one particular bus route through the medium of sound. It resulted in the creation of a sound map, album and a set of illustrations that reflected the dialectical relationship between the personal/private vis-à-vis the shared/public. This essay will describe the details of the project in the context of how cities are always in flux - adapting and evolving. Using sound to record the moments between the individual and collective, the 201 Bus Project navigates between existing publics and those that are yet to arrive. The recordings have been used to create a sound map and album which archive the city in its everyday form. Furthermore, the interactive map demonstrates the opportunities to foster new publics through shared experiences of travelling on the city bus.

During the first lockdown in 2020, the lack of movement left me yearning for a sense of city life, which I associated with the route of Bengaluru Metropolitan Transportation Corporation's (BMTC) bus No.201. The 201 bus travels on roads passing through the east and south of Bengaluru. My first journeys on the bus began with the purpose of going to flute class in South Bengaluru early in the morning. I would fall asleep to the sound of old trees swaying in the distance and wake up every once in a while, as people flowed in and out of the bus. For many commuters like me, the buses initiated their journey of familiarising themselves with the city.



Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) junction, Indiranagar

In the book 'Emancipated Spectator', the author explores the phrase 'being together apart' (Rancière, 2009) using a poem by Mallarme that describes a man's encounter with a mysterious woman. The subject, present in the same space as the woman, preserves the moment by not acting further on it. He leaves without being seen or having seen her, creating a rupture in their togetherness. In 'being together apart', Rancière (2009) elaborates on the creation of a community at a primary level; connected through their senses such as sounds, rhythm and their reaction to space. However, the paradoxical nature of 'being together apart' creates a dissonance and redistribution of the senses which gives scope to look at things anew in terms of building a new form of community (Rancière, 2009). The phrase acts as the keystone of the project informing the context and process of its creation. The tensions between togetherness and solitude can be experienced in the setting of the bus and in the larger context of the pandemic. In each, our journey is unique, yet there is familiarity and a common understanding of the circumstances.



Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) Complex, Koramangala

Started in 1940 under the Mysore government, the Bengaluru Transport Company operated in a small capacity connecting major parts of the city such as Malleshwaram, Cantonment, Majestic and Ulsoor (Petlee, 2016). In the mid-20th century the organisation was nationalised and took the name Bengaluru Transport Services which later became Bengaluru Metropolitan Transportation Corporation in 1997. Since then, the BMTC buses have been a part of the socio-cultural fabric of Bengaluru with an average of 35 lakh commuters per day. These numbers decreased drastically to less than 10 lakhs per day after the first lockdown in 2020 (The Hindu, 2020). The 201 Bus Project started as a way of preserving

the present in real time, a way to not only counteract a personal fear of losing a daily habit, but also to take cognisance of the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic had enforced on the city and its citizens.



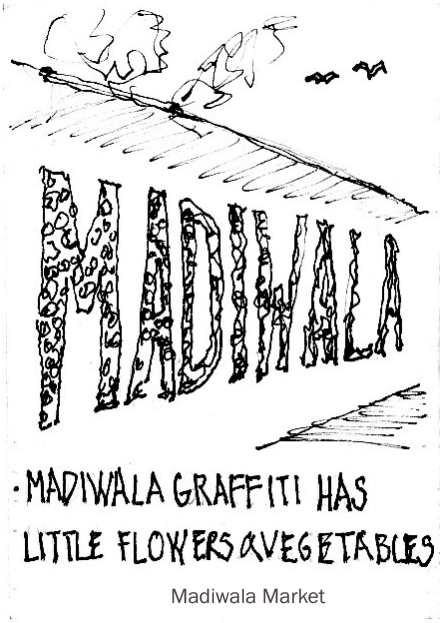
Kudremukh Iron Ore Company (KIOCL), Koramangala

Between October 2020 and June 2021, I recorded eight 201 bus journeys using my phone. Given that the frequency of these buses was less, it was difficult to find a variety of 201 buses. However, the recordings provide glimpses of the journeys, stops and spaces along the route such as the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) stop in Indiranagar, Kudremukh Iron Ore Company at Koramangala, Madiwala market, Silk Board and Banashankari bus depot. While travelling on the bus, I journaled my observations about the scenes outside and the interactions inside the bus. The journal became a source of inspiration to create a collection of booklets that narrate the multiplicity of stories that emerged from the 201 bus journeys.

The illustrations in the booklets are drawn from the vantage point of an individual's observations from the bus window. Through the window, we witness the constant flow of people and places. The fluidity resonates with the pulse of a cityscape that thrives on action juxtaposed against the stillness imposed by the pandemic. Designed in a concertina fashion to reflect the motion and fluidity, all the booklets begin with the front facade of the bus, then include landmarks and anecdotes from my travels and experiences.

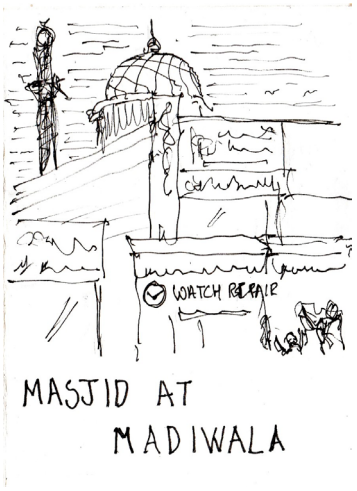
To accompany the visual narratives of the 201 bus journeys, I developed a sound album. (Click here to listen to the album), to capture the auditory aspect of travelling on the busy streets of a throbbing metropolis. Comprising 15 tracks, the album is choreographed to reflect the commonalities of bus journeys. It begins with waiting for the bus, the sound of the engine, doors opening and closing, the creaking windows and alarming honks of the bus horn. Towards the middle, the album shifts to human sounds that breathe life to it - the voice of the conductor. Across the bus journeys, I heard conductors saying, 'ticket, ticket!' in different ways, using a variety of tones. Sometimes, you would get to know a little more about the conductor through his customised ringtones and choice of music that played on his phone. The album tracks do not aim to be musical compositions but instead are snippets of sounds recorded as they emanate in and outside the bus, thus archiving the sounds of the journey in real time.

I further explored repetition and uniqueness of sounds as a reflection of singular and shared narratives of bus journeys with an interactive audiovisual map. The map invites the user to join my 201 bus experience and layer it with their own. By choosing their own start and end points of the journey, different parts of the audio is played as the bus commences, creating a different combination of sounds to simulate the uniqueness of every journey. The interactive map acts as the final step of 'being together apart' and creates a new public that connects the home (private) and the world (shared) through layered mediums. The interactive map can be found in the link here.



Madiwala Market

The sound map was created as an ode to the BMTC buses because of its integral role in shaping the daily commuter's imagination of Bengaluru, but I realised it would be inaccessible to daily commuters. Most digital archives and information portals face such issues and yet, the use of mobile phones has increased our participation in the creation and consumption of media, forming a dialectical situation where the



Masjid, Madiwala

public shapes us, and we in turn shape the public. While recording the bus journeys for the project, I also grappled with questions of ownership. Is it okay to record a journey in a bus, a shared space filled with many individuals? To what extent can an individual make private claims to the city's public spaces even though the latter are meant for the city's publics?

The BMTC No.201 bus embodies the meaning of a 'public space' when it is in movement. The transient aspect of the bus journey negates the concept of private ownership during the daily commute carrying a sense of ordinariness along with people moving in and out of the bus. In the book 'An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris', the author documents the everyday non-essential happenings at one particular café (Perec, 2010). In its afterword, the book suggests that the observations were an act of preservation as if Perec knew what he associated with the everyday would vanish someday. The 201 Bus Project began as a personal practice of preserving the everyday. Today, it stands as an archive of a moment of everydayness that reflects the subjective-collective identity of a city dealing with uncertain times, where people and spaces relearn to adapt with one another.



Silk Board



Banashankari Depot

Notes: All the illustrations in this article were done by Bengaluru-based architect Arun Swaminathan. The IFA 201 Bus Project can be viewed at http://bus201project.herokuapp.com/.

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Bengaluru and Kannada Cinema

MK Raghavendra

When Puneeth Rajkumar, the Kannada film star passed away recently, his family made a request to Bengaluru's (formerly Bangalore) public to maintain peace at least as a gesture towards Puneeth. The star, like his father Rajkumar, Kannada cinema's greatest star, had died of natural causes but violence was still feared. When Rajkumar passed away in 2006, sorrowful fans went on the rampage in the city. A police constable was beaten to death by frenzied mobs and several people were killed in the police firing. The same actor Rajkumar's kidnapping by Veerappan led to arson and looting in 2000, the disturbances continuing sporadically for several months. The action of the Kannada film industry calling for a ban on non-Kannada films - in 2004 - also led to violence. In most cases, the violence is restricted to Bengaluru city and the other towns in Karnataka remain peaceful. It nonetheless tends to get out of hand in every instance and various agencies are blamed but there is no effort to enquire into the causes - perhaps because the disturbances are not 'instigated' but sociological. The question here is whether there is any relationship between Kannada film fandom and the city of Bengaluru that elicits the response. For that we have to understand what the 'constituency' of Kannada cinema is.

The constituency of a film. It is now accepted that popular texts intent on reaching a large audience are 'co-authored' by these audiences. What this means is that if the film is dependent on a public, it must tailor itself to address the concerns of that public, mirror its views on key matters; that public becomes the film's 'constituency'. When a film is successful there is a tendency by other films to repeat certain motifs that made it popular, which means that examining popular film texts of any period helps us understand the public concerns of that moment. That is also why the different cinemas in India are so different from each other: regional films address local audiences while mainstream Hindi cinema addresses a more widely distributed 'pan-national' audience. Within Hindi cinema there is a largely anglophone public addressed by certain films (often with English-sounding titles like *3 Idiots*) while Salman Khan's films (like *Dabangg*) largely target non-English speakers. The star hence plays characters who do not speak English, very different from a film like *3 Idiots*, where the English plays a bigger role. Kannada cinema, in this context, is not a pan-Kannada cinema but largely addressing the Kannada speakers of former Princely Mysore - until recently when Mangalorean cinema from directors like Rakshit Shetty arrived. This leads us to examine Kannada cinema's relationship with Bengaluru as reflected in its films.

Bengaluru and Kannada. Bengaluru is in the territory that was once Princely Mysore, under indirect British rule but in 1834, when the Wadiyars were deposed, the British ruled the state for 50 years from Bengaluru beginning with Sir Mark Cubbon. The Wadiyars were placed back on the throne but the character

of Bengaluru had transformed by then since the British brought in service providers from the Madras Presidency (Tamil, Telugu and Urdu speakers) and created the Cantonment area. Bengaluru and its Cantonment became like two different cities (*Peté* and Cantonment) separated by the 'Cubbon Park.' In the area still unofficially called 'Cantonment' a large number of people still do not speak Kannada in areas like Ulsoor and Shivajinagar. The English were also instrumental in establishing a large number of English-medium schools in the same areas and this ultimately helped create a cosmopolitan culture for Bengaluru. The English language is perhaps more at home in Bengaluru than in any other Indian metropolis. After 1947, when public sector investment found Bengaluru suitable, many of those recruited were non-Kannada speakers, creating some resentment among Kannada speakers. Kannada cinema has taken note of this and films are rarely shot in the Cantonment area although much of it is very up-market. In addition, we have to recognise that Princely Mysore regarded itself as a 'nation within a nation' since it was under indirect rule. By and large there are few fruitful romances in Kannada cinema between Mysore Kannadigas and Kannadigas from places like Gulbarga or Raichur which are outside old Mysore since the latter would be 'foreigners'. This is comparable to Aamir Khan not marrying the foreign girl who loves him in *Rang De Basanti*.

Kannada cinema and Mysore. On scrutinising Kannada cinema today, we still notice a distinction between being 'Kannadiga' (those with their roots in Mysore, mainly) and being Indian and often, Bengaluru is with India rather than with the Kannada people. When the territory feels close to India, Bengaluru is viewed well, but not at all times. During the period when Devaraj Urs was Chief Minister and close to Mrs. Gandhi, Bengaluru was more favourably viewed by Kannada cinema, but that changed later. Bengaluru has however grown enormously after 2000, as a result of which there was mass migration and it is virtually impossible for anyone in Karnataka not to have dealings with the city. I will demonstrate how this manifests itself in the new millennium in the proliferation of a genre of gangster films focussed on a migrant from rural Karnataka (usually former Princely Mysore) who lives in squalor in the *peté* area and becomes a dreaded gangster, to be eventually killed by the police - who could be seen as emblems of the Central State. The films that I have in mind are those like *Majestic* (2002), *Durgi* (2004), *Kitti* (2004), *Jogi* (2005), *Duniya* (2007) and *Kaddipudi* (2013).

The gangster genre of the new millennium. There are an enormous number of films that fit the pattern and I am only citing a handful. The genre has since died out but, at one point, films like these were successful, and most of their posters featured the protagonist holding a hatchet or chopper in his hand (termed a 'long' in local parlance) smeared with blood, but the films that promised such brutality were milder than one might suppose and the policeman liquidating the dreaded gangster was not even high-ranking. Here are some frequently noticed characteristics of these films in terms of the motifs they exhibit:

· The protagonist is a migrant from a part of Karnataka that came under Princely Mysore, like Mandya or Shimoga, or Tumkur. It would not be Mangalore or Gulbarga. He is poor and finds shelter sleeping on the pavement in an area like Srirampura, eating in the humblest of eateries. In *Jogi*, he is a tribal from MM Hills in Mysore district. In *Duniya*, he is a Dalit from Tumkur who worked in a quarry, cutting stone.
· He has a mother back at home to whom he is devoted. His separation from his mother causes him pain. The mother in popular cinema is a site of virtue which gives the protagonist a moral position. This is like the policeman in *Deewar* having his mother stay with him.
· In Bengaluru, he meets a younger woman who is from a higher social class and they fall in love.
· There is often a rich Bangalorean who lives in a palatial house in an up-market area who is unsympathetic to the poor migrant.
· Due to no fault of his own, he falls foul of some powerful criminal elements and demonstrates his valour as a consequence of which he becomes a dreaded rowdy.
· This brings him into conflict with the police, and his enemy is a relatively low-ranking police officer like Deputy Superintendent of Police.
· There is often an instance of police torture where the bare-bodied protagonist is thrashed by the policeman when he refuses to talk. The policeman's jacket is wet with sweat to indicate the degree of resistance put up by the protagonist to the brutal methods of state authority.
· Eventually the conflict between the protagonist and the police makes it necessary for the police to kill the protagonist.

An aspect of the representations requiring attention is the law being present only in Bengaluru. Even in *Durgi*, which has a village police inspector, the inspector behaves as an agent of Bengaluru's interests. A meaning that can be derived is that the local state authority not only has its headquarters in Bengaluru but also functions, by and large, in its interest. A charge made against the former Karnataka Chief Minister SM Krishna was that he was administering only Bengaluru. Krishna later shifted his constituency

from small-town Mandya to middle-class Bengaluru. The sense of the police being with those from outside because they have economic power is a key motif. It ties in with police vehicles and policemen being targeted in film fan-related violence as after Rajkumar's death. Coming to the adopted viewpoint, not only do the films identify with an outsider or the first-generation migrant, but they also regard his/her complete integration with the city as impossible. The protagonists of *Durgi* take up residence in Bengaluru in a colony named after a woman from a small town ('Mandya Mangamma') and become part of the community there. Migrants in temporary dwellings constitute a special community to Jogi from *Jogi* even when he rules gangland. I also find the impossibility of romance between the migrant and the city girl significant, signifying an unbridgeable gap. More importantly, only rarely as in *Kitty* is the romance taken to a happy conclusion, the girl being from the same village as the male protagonist - sharing his status as a migrant, as it were.

Bengaluru is also designated through its 'city' parts associated with the Kannada rather than with the cosmopolitan population. 'Majestic' is a nerve centre of the city area (as opposed to the showier Cantonment area) and so are Kalasipalyam and Mavalli (which also feature in the titles of Kannada films). Kalasipalyam was a bus terminus catering to private buses going to small towns nearby while Mavalli is nearby. Bengaluru has a population of people speaking every language but language differences within the city are not problematised. One could say that, rather than the conflict being between the Kannada and non-Kannada people within Bengaluru, it is between the entrenched Bangalorean and the migrant, with the possibility of the latter integrating always downplayed. 'Bengaluru', in effect, appears unattainable. Where city films emphasise lavish lifestyles (*Gajini*, Tamil, 2006), the Kannada films also show little interest in conspicuous consumption - as though that might be distasteful to those unable to attain it - and play up the disarray. One traces it to the sense among Kannada film audiences of outsiders having done better economically in Bengaluru than 'sons of the soil' who have often sold farmland cheap to house offices.

Bengaluru alienated. Bengaluru has been represented in different ways in Kannada cinema and its first use was perhaps in *Schoolmaster* (1958) when it became the space facilitating romance between Kannada speaking people. This was after the linguistic reorganisation of the states and Bengaluru represented the coming together of various Kannada territories with Bengaluru as the centre. In films like *Raja Nanna Raja* (1976) an outsider moves smoothly into a romance with a city girl with only the differences in their wealth being problematised while in *Mayor Muthanna* (1969), a migrant becomes Bengaluru's mayor. Given these representations, Bengaluru's portrayal in the above Kannada films has transformed conspicuously. Some years ago, an IT tycoon created a furore when he suggested that the city should be governed from New Delhi - as a Union Territory - to preserve its industrial advantage. The constituency addressed by Kannada cinema was not his concern but this constituency also appears to regard Bengaluru as 'lost'. The city seems unattainable to those from the hinterland, as a space with which migrants might never integrate.

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Kannada movie hoarding (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)

‘Movie’-ng on in Bengaluru

Kiran Natarajan



Old movie ticket stubs for some of Bengaluru’s iconic single screen cinema halls
(Source: Ravishankar Neelam {personal collection})

During my years of work, life and travel, particularly in Europe, my observation of the smallest of towns and cities being celebrated officially on set dates (for instance, the anniversary of Picasso’s residency in the village of Vallauris or the Bastille Day across towns in France), often prompted sympathetic thoughts for my home city whose value and significance for locals and visitors alike remains unacknowledged. After returning to Bengaluru, interactions with several practitioners in history and culture led me to appreciate varied viewpoints of the city’s existence and evolution that became relevant for their different priorities and perspectives - for some, the closer-to-heart areas were historic buildings, for some others, natural heritage and for even others, traditional rituals and festivals. In the process, it also set off my collecting of city-based memorabilia and ephemera. This initial exercise in curiosity developed into an interest to conserve and engage with an online group of like-minded individuals focused on archiving nostalgic memories and images of Bengaluru.

As a collector, and curator of the aforementioned social media group, I find that among the topics for such (usually pleasant) recollections, several revolve around food and drink, sports and quite surprisingly, movies! This came to mind when I was invited to contribute my understanding of cinema halls in Bengaluru, their transformation over time, and associated nostalgia as places of recreation and recalled memory. It was also interesting to reflect on how different categories of places find nostalgic value and retention with different generations and audiences over time.

We use 'cinema hall' as the generally accepted Indian English term for a venue that screens films, the more popular term being 'theatre' (widely pronounced as 'thay-tar'). These are adaptations of other usages - the American 'movie theatre' and the British 'cinema'. Perhaps the vagaries of social and linguistic evolution caused the addition of 'hall' to the British English 'cinema' and the dropping of 'movie' from the American 'movie theatre', to refer to the same type of venue. Nevertheless, Indians instinctively know what someone means when they say 'thay-tar'.

Bengaluru's cinema halls have had a varied evolution and no particular historical narrative. So, this essay attempts to understand them from the key perspectives of (1) Zones & Genres, (2) Styles & Habits, and (3) Architecture & Transformation.

In the first perspective of Zones & Genres, it is necessary to introduce the 'Cantonment' and the 'City'. Cantonment refers to the military and residential area that grew around the initial space created for the British garrison stationed in Bengaluru as early as 1806. City refers to the largely commercial and residential space that grew around the old fort and market zone (Bengaluru *Pete*) established by Kempegowda I around 1537. The Cantonment was directly under the administration of the British Government, while the City was under the jurisdiction of the Maharaja of Mysore until the post-Independence administrative mergers of 1947. However, the terms 'Cantonment' and 'City' (Pete) were in popular usage and continue to date.
Until recently, a majority of the cinema halls in the Cantonment zone typically screened English films. A few also screened Tamil films - a direct reflection of the zone's history, where the initial British and Anglo-Indian residents were served by a largely Tamil-speaking migrant populace. Many of them arrived from towns in the erstwhile Madras Presidency which Bengaluru was then a part of. This became a known pattern, drawing English movie-seeking audiences across the city to the Cantonment zone. Famous theatres in this zone (mainly around the South Parade of yore that comprises today's MG Road and Brigade Road) included BRV (a military-owned theatre), Empire, Liberty, Plaza, the twin cinemas Blu Moon and Blu Diamond, Rex, Symphony, Galaxy, Lido, New Opera and Imperial - in somewhat of a walking order as one traversed MG Road from West to East, with a short segue onto Brigade Road. The oldest theatre in this zone was the Elgin which was located in the old 'New Market' (today's Shivajinagar) area.

With time these cinema halls came to represent distinct genres and fame (and infamy). For example, Lido became the screen of choice for new James Bond releases; Blu Moon and Plaza for action and classics; Rex for family and rom-com entertainers; Galaxy for annual blockbusters such as Superman and one-off hits such as 'The Exorcist' and 'Mr. India'. On the other hand, New Opera and Imperial gradually took on the darker flavour of B-Grade movies.

In the City zone, an interesting parallel emerged in the form of the 'Movie Strip' of Kempegowda Road (KG Road) in Gandhinagar (popularly known as 'Majestic'), which was (and remains) an important transportation hub comprising the City Bus Stand and Railway Station. The densely populated area also had many travellers' lodges that catered to interstate visitors and commuters from outside Bengaluru. As a result, the cinema halls in the Majestic zone screened mainly Kannada and Hindi films, while a few halls catered to fans of other South Indian languages. Majestic was also a centre for local movie distribution and film trade. So, while the Cantonment cinema halls had a Hollywood quality and upmarket factor, the Majestic zone's cinema halls were the nerve centre of local movie fandom and pop culture for the City.

Halls of yore in Majestic included Santosh, Sapna, Nartaki, Alankar, Kalpana, Kempegowda, Sagar, States and Prabhat that could be seen as one traversed from the western end to the east of KG Road. There were also the 'branch offices' off 'Movie Main' - Sangam, Aparna & Triveni just across the Bus Station, and Himalaya, Kapali and Movieland near the travellers' lodges. As one drove away from KG Road, there were Geetha and the iconic Majestic which lent its name to the entire zone. Standalone sentinels like Menaka, Abhinay, Kailash and Tribhuvan had particular production house partnerships and patronage. Not to forget off-zone mavericks like Vijayalakshmi in Chickpete. And

Bharat and Shivaji on JC Road, which (along with Sangam) introduced innovative offers like cheaper reruns and student discounts.

Every new film release at these cinema halls triggered fan fervour that brought together multiple classes of people as one. Movies of legendary stars such as Dr. Rajkumar and Amitabh Bachchan set the benchmark for waiting time - even days ahead - to buy tickets, as well as black-market prices for the precious entry tickets. In the heydays of the standalone cinema halls, release days meant that the entire zone was covered with tall cutouts of film stars, banners and twinkling lights. Entertainment permeated piety with the garlanding of banners and painted cutouts; well-wishing ***pujas*** (religious ceremonies) performed for divine blessings, and distribution of *prasadam* (religious food offerings) among the film-fanatic crowds. Landmark runs of movies meant further celebrations; this time accompanied by members of the film community. These collective, yet intimate, practices that merged screen space and audience space, are surely what most set apart the single screen cinema hall from its contemporary counterpart, the multiplex.

From the second perspective of Style & Habits, some obvious patterns can be highlighted. It was common knowledge that the 'movie-going and later hanging-around' crowd in the Cantonment were the self-appointed trendsetters for fashions (hairstyles, clothes, accessories and even mannerisms) that then spread around the city. And so it came to be that people from across Bengaluru visited cinema halls in this fashion-forward zone for more than just the movie. The visits took shape as truant outings with classmates or recreational time with friends or family, that included the whole experience of film, fashion, food and beverages. In time, the 'beverage' part went on to evolve from dine-in restaurants and standalone bars to Bengaluru's famed pub culture - a wide variety of pubs and craft beer outlets and eventually, micro-breweries.

Apart from the movies, some cinema halls offered other attractions that had a fierce fan following in themselves. For instance, the small but popular snacks stalls on-premises or nearby (the popcorn or Softy at Plaza; the cutlet and burger stalls at Rex and Galaxy) were conveniently - and hastily - consumed before heading in for the movie. Evening and night shows sent out hungry nocturnal diners who contributed to a new gastronomic subculture of late night restaurants that began to stay open after midnight. This magical mix of facilities ensured that the average citizen had a good day out, in different budget buckets, regardless of the movie watched!

On the other hand, the Majestic zone lent itself to a different type of movie-watching experience - a potent combination of household shopping, food and movies, since Majestic was not just a transportation terminus and hub, but also Bengaluru's wholesale and retail centre. Therefore, for many movie-goers, visiting Majestic with friends or family, buying weekly essentials from Janatha Bazaar or impulse purchases in retail outlets was the norm; as was satiating hunger and taste-buds in popular local restaurants (some of which have unfortunately disappeared with the cinema halls).

The last perspective of Architecture & Transformation is a widely discussed topic today as a growing number of single screen cinema halls give way to malls, arcades, offices or hotels. With the advent of multiplexes and growing real estate pressures, financially unviable cinema halls on large plots are easy targets of commercial demands for prime urban land. In parallel, the onslaught of Internet streaming technologies, DTH and OTT platforms in recent years have become newer competitors to venue screenings. There still remain a few spaces such as consulate auditoriums, independent film societies and clubs that do not face direct and imminent commercial pressures, but the survival of single screen cinema halls in the prevalent socio-cultural milieu is debatable.

Very rarely do we come across an example of the reverse, but Doddanna Hall in Kalasipalayam, started out in the early 1900s as a public / community structure and was later converted into one (Paramount), and later two (Pradeep and Parimala) film theatres. This was where India's first silent film *Raja Harishchandra* was screened and later, *Sati Sulochana,* the first Kannada 'talkie' film was shown here in 1934 for the first time in Mysore State. Like many counterparts, these theatres eventually succumbed to commercial pressure.

It is also worthwhile to remember the role that some of Bengaluru's cinema halls played in the city's architectural evolution. Early cinema halls in the pre-Independence and post-WWII decade were inspired by colonial architectural styles such as the Indo-Gothic, or the more flamboyant Art Deco. Things changed during Bengaluru's 'expansion era' in the 1960s when cinema halls opened in the suburbs - here we may recall names such as Nanda, Shanti and Swagath in Jayanagar (South); Uma and Sanjaya

in Chamarajpet (Central); and Sampige, Swastik and Navrang in Malleshwaram and Rajajinagar (North/ West).

Many cinema halls that were constructed in the 1970s adopted innovative materials, newer layouts, features and design. Be it the expansive gardens of Sanjaya, the swooping carpeted ramps of Urvashi and Galaxy, or the impressive plain wall façade of Nanda - each tried to outdo the other in aesthetics and grandeur, thus playing their own niche role in informing the personal design sense of patrons who sometimes adopted the same in their homes and other properties. Some of the cinema halls also became landmarks and meeting points ('Meet me at Rex'; 'turn next to Symphony'), thus becoming familiar household names. These continue today - in name if not in actual physical presence - as some have been transformed to spaces of different use, but retain the memory of the older venue in the new name. Examples include 'Bagmane Pallavi' or 'Jayanagar Nanda' which are office complexes that replaced Pallavi Theatre and Nanda Talkies respectively, or Lido Mall where Lido Theatre once stood.

In summary, there was a period in the past century when Bengaluru was reputed to have the highest number of single screen cinema halls theatres in the world (according to the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, there were about 190 cinema halls in Bengaluru in the first decade of the 2000s). As integral components of the city's social, cultural and spatial fabric, Bengaluru's single screen cinema halls have witnessed generations of patrons go through life events and cycles. Today, some halls have survived, while others have not ... and yet, they all remain an intrinsic part of Bengaluru's identity.

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Standing Alone

Screenshots of Bengaluru's Single Screen Theatres

R V College of Architecture

First day, first show! Silver jubilee! Housefull!! Familiar, and likely universal, slogans for pre-OTT (over-the-top) cinema aficionados. For movie enthusiasts, theatre-going was serious business indeed. Planning and preparing to watch a movie in the cinema theatre, waiting in the ticket counter line for those coveted seats (balcony to front row, depending on the time of arrival at theatre and purse). Anticipation for those who got tickets, disappointment for those who did not. Walking into the popcorn-scented lobby. The dramatic unfolding of the velvet screen curtains. The advertisements and documentaries - a window for latecomers to enter the movie hall relatively uncensured. And then the movie - to the accompaniment of cheers, whistles and hoots. The interval which also signalled a quick stop at the crowded snack counter. Animated post-movie discussions and plans for the next destination on the way out. Arguably the thrill and excitement of the cinema theatre experience equaled, or even surpassed, watching the movie.

In the urban quotidian, the single screen cinema theatre was a meeting place; a pause point; a destination. A quasi-public space of individual and collective urban life that allowed a varied audience to blend (box, balcony, first- and second-class distinctions notwithstanding) and participate as viewers and creators of a spectacle. Standing alone or holding its own amidst competitors, the single screen theatre building added to the drama of urban public life, dotting intersections, corners and edges of busy streets. Ranging in appearance and impact from the unremarkable to the flamboyant, Bengaluru's cinema theatres, in their heyday, drew crowds from opening day through jubilee celebrations and special celebrity-studded events. They were also local markers of the city's varied socioeconomic, linguistic and political terrain. Theatres in different localities played (and came to be associated with) different language movies and became, on occasion, contested sites of language and identity politics.

The forces of time, technology and urbanisation have not been kind to the urban single screen theatre. In our times of multiplex theatres and online streaming platforms, the single screen theatre is rapidly becoming an obsolete and vanishing cultural space in Bengaluru, as in other Indian cities. Dependent on the whims and means of their owners, real estate pressures and fickle audiences spoilt for choice, single screen theatres today are either 'modernising' in appearance and technology, or getting replaced by trending spaces of collective consumption. A selected compilation of pictures taken by invited contributors and RVCA's students and faculty, this photo essay provides glimpses of Bengaluru's iconic single screen theatres - some gone, some still standing alone.



Uma Theatre, Bull Temple Road, Chamarajapete (Source: Salila Vanka)



Elgin Talkies, Hazrath Kambal Posh Road, Shivajinagar (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)



Renuka Theatre, Quadrant Road, Shivajinagar (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)



Shivaji Talkies, JC Road, Kalasipalya (Source: Ravikumar Kashi)



Triveni Theatre, Subedar Chatram Road, Gandhi Nagar (Source: Salila Vanka)



Sri Siddeshwara Theatre, JP Nagar 6th Phase (Source: Pratham Rathi)



Urvashi Theatre, Doddamavalli, Sudhama Nagar (Source: Sachet Ullal)



Sampige & Savitha Theatres, Malleshwaram (Source: Salila Vanka)



Ajanta Theatre, Annaswamy Mudaliar Road, Ulsoor (Source: Salila Vanka)



Renuka Prasanna Theatre, JP Nagar (Source: Likhith Rajesh & Sania Jain)



Nataraj Theatre, Sampige Road, Seshadripuram (Source: Salila Vanka)



Shankar Nag Swagath Chitramandira, MG Road (Source: Sachin N.Mane & Jennis J. Varghese)



Navrang Theatre, Dr Rajkumar Road, Rajajinagar 2nd Block (Source: Ravikumar Kashi)

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Ticket Counter, Movieland Theatre, SC Road, Gandhi Nagar (Source: Salila Vanka)

Managing Cultural Practices

The case of Venkatappa Art Gallery

Shreya Pillai

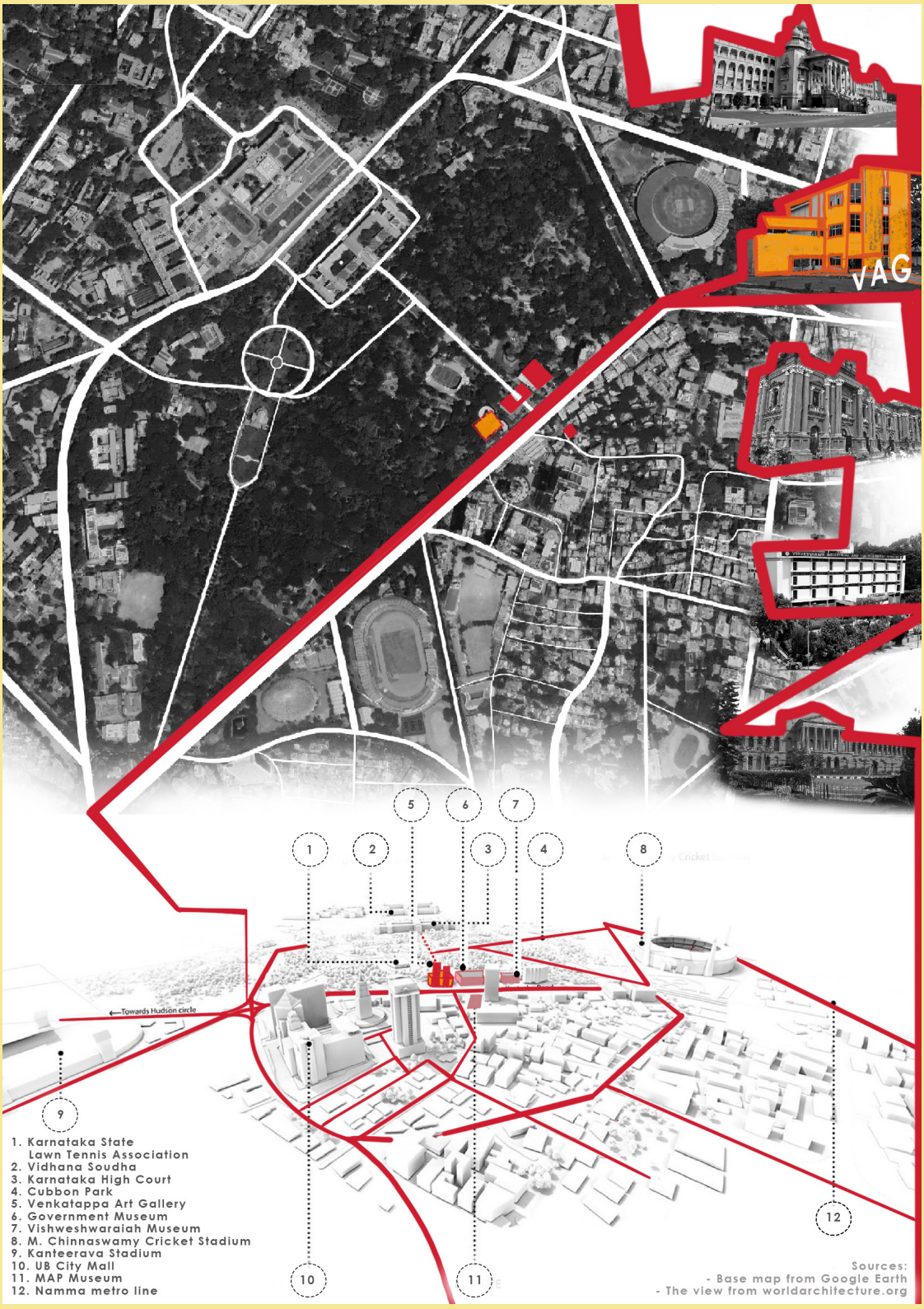

Figure 1. Locating Venkatappa Art Gallery in Bengaluru's cultural district. (Illustrators: Shakshi Sharda & Shivani Goud)

In May 2016, I wrote an article titled 'Managing Cultural Practices' in Economic and Political Weekly, documenting issues related to the state government proposed redevelopment of Venkatappa Art Gallery (Figures 1-4), a small but culturally significant government museum located near Cubbon Park in the heart of Bangalore (Pillai, 2016). This article is a follow-up piece. The potential redevelopment had caused significant anger in the local artist community. Activists and community fora took shape across the state to oppose the project and eventually succeeded in stopping it.

Under the Karnataka Department of Tourism, a private art gallery/foundation, the Tasveer Foundation was selected to renovate the existing building and 'adopt' the Gallery. The agreement allowed all curatorial, exhibition and programming decisions to be taken by the Foundation. The artist community of Bangalore felt that this initiative to promote tourism, in the garb of adoption, was a move to grab the property located at a prime location in the city. Others felt that the Gallery, a long-time supporter of Karnataka's struggling and poorer artists would be commercialised and no longer act as a democratic and affordable platform for the local art community (Pushpamala, 2016).



Figure 2. Walkway to entrance of Venkatappa Art Gallery



Figure 3. View of Venkatappa Art Gallery from Museum Road



Figure 4. Venkatappa Art Gallery with UB City in the backdrop across Museum Road

The article raised bigger questions about Karnataka State Government's decision. Was allowing a private foundation to adopt Venkatappa Art Gallery (VAG) a workable model in India? Was there a workable model for participation from corporates in museums and art galleries that could ensure research and conservation of cultural assets and foster art for all strata of society?

The Gallery was not witnessing something new, since before the 1990s, the government had, in conjunction with large business houses, engaged in the restoration and renovation of the arts and culture of the country. Internationally, the steady devolution of funding to the arts has necessitated a greater engagement with industry. All of this has come at a price. Financial restructuring has led to abandoning cultural support and funding for nonprofit-making activities like research and the conservation of cultural assets, and fostering art for all strata of society is becoming rarer across the world. The situation at VAG was only a precursor to what could happen in the rest of India; that while the issue meant very little to everyday people caught up in their daily struggles in the city, it was a harbinger of things to come, of how we, as a society, view, curate, engage and manage art and culture. This essay revisits the VAG issue to investigate what has happened since the 2016 contestations for the museum and to discuss the implications of the fracas on the art and culture scene in India.

So, what happened at VAG and what has been happening since then? In 2016, the proposed adoption of Bangalore's VAG by the Tasveer Foundation (a local foundation established by businessman Abhishek Poddar that showcases art collections from across the world) had the city's art community on opposing sides. On one side was a group of nearly 300 artists, writers and theatre persons (Murali, 2016) protesting the adoption and on

the other side another group, also comprising artists, writers and theatre persons supporting the plans. Marches and protests were held on the streets of central Bangalore in 2016.

The 40-year-old VAG is part of a central Bangalore complex comprising the Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum (VITM) and the Government Museum, and is managed by the State Government. The VAG was established as an exhibition space for local artists in 1971. It houses the works of artists like KK Hebbar and sculptor Rajaram, and started the careers of contemporary artists like Pushpmala N and Sheela Gowda. It also hosts student and artist shows for nominal rates.

In 2013, the Karnataka Tourism Vision Group (KTVG), a multi-agency body that included prominent citizens of Bangalore (including Poddar) was set up by the State Government to provide recommendations regarding tourism for the state. The group suggested a museum district around the centrally located Cubbon Park be managed by an autonomous body with representation from various Cubbon Park stakeholders. This autonomous body would be built along the lines of English Heritage/National Trust in the United Kingdom (UK) and work on a self-sustainable model (with initial /annual grants from the state government).

In 2014, the State Department of Tourism promulgated the '*Adopt a tourist destination*' policy and forty-six tourism sites in Karnataka were nominated for adoption. Of these, six, including VAG, were 'adopted' by private organisations. By March 2016, the State Government signed memorandums of understanding (MoU) with the Tasveer Foundation for VAG, with the food franchise Cafe Coffee Day for the iconic Belur and Halebid temple complexes and with the corporate charity Jindal Foundation for the Government Museum.

Within days of the public notification of the MoUs, artists in the city were up in arms. The VAG Forum (vagforum on Facebook, 2016) was established by artists to protest the move and it claimed that the initiative to promote tourism was an attempt to grab prime property. Assertions were made that Tasveer and Poddar were elitists and art dealers (Pushpmala, 2016) and would profit off the gallery, and that local Karnataka artists would not have access to the gallery to exhibit their art and that the gallery would be aimed at only corporates (vagforum on Facebook, 2016). Proponents argued that the VAG building was in poor shape and needed to be managed and that Tasveer would provide a world class art gallery for the city (Jaishankar, 2016). Others asserted that the protest was an artificial one, motivated by resentment and that the gallery was needed to promote art in Karnataka (ibid).

On 14 March 2016, Poddar responded to the protests with a Facebook post *'Why plans for a new museum in Bangalore puts the public first' saying, 'The proposed redevelopment of VAG is a significant step forward for Bangalore to have a modern museum facility. At the center of our plans is the belief that art should be for everyone, and to create an inclusive, accessible space to rejuvenate interest in art and culture … we are bringing in expertise, thought and funding to improve the approach to museums, exhibition programming and education in the visual arts in Karnataka, and are dedicated to building a new, broader, more democratic and inclusive audience for art'* (Poddar, 2016). Poddar followed the post, detailing the plans for the new public museum.

The protests intensified. Five months after the protests, Poddar and Tasveer Foundation withdrew from the project. The VAG Forum continues today as an informal artists' collective. It has gone on to curate collectives and events in the last few years. The Forum hosts 'celebratory' shows to include artists from diverse backgrounds attracting diverse audiences such as housewives, young students and NGOs (Madhukar, 2018). Some say that the protests have rejuvenated the art community in Bangalore in a small way, especially given the rapid urbanisation and loss of accessible venues for the arts in the city. Others bemoan the fact that the protests have stopped private companies from investing in and improving the quality of infrastructure for the arts.

Interestingly though, many private companies are investing in public art across the city, such as G Ravinder Reddy's large-scale sculptures, Subodh Gupta's 'Dreams Overflowing', Jayashri Burman's 'Dharitri' and Paresh Maity's 'The Force' at RMZ Ecopark, Bellandur. The Tasveer Foundation has since established the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), a private art collection in 2022 across the road from VAG. Propelled by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this primarily digital collection, hosts over 18,000 artworks, predominantly from the Indian subcontinent 10th century onwards, and has networks with museums around the world. The privately funded Indian Music Experience Museum also opened just before COVID-19.

What has happened since 2016 to other projects in Karnataka under the Adopt a Tourist Destination Policy? In 2016, in addition to the MoU for VAG with Tasveer Foundation, MoUs were signed for the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary with Sandur Manganese

and Iron Ores Ltd., Belur Halebid with Coffee Day Resorts and Hotel, Kavala caves near Dandeli with The West Coast Paper Mills, Bengaluru Government Museum with Jindal Foundation, and Lalbagh with Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC). With exception of the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, none of the adopted destinations has seen any redevelopment since 2016 (Niranjan, 2018). The adopters assert that permission from central government agencies (environmental, etc.) are pending and that local protests are preventing work on the projects. The State Government has agreed with the assertion (ibid).

The BCIC requested the annulment of the MoU with the Government (ibid). In October 2019, under the National Strategy of *Adopt a Heritage Scheme*, it was announced that three firms from Hampi (Orange County and Resorts, Hotel Malligi and Heritage Hotel) would manage six monuments (Lotus Mahal, Kodandarama Temple, Krishna Temple, Elephant Stable, Badavilinga Temple and Ugra Narasimha Temple) in Hampi (Upadhye, 2019). The firms would ensure basic amenities like toilets, drinking water, signage, illuminations and internet. While there are no real signs of redevelopment in Hampi, it is still under the *Monument Mitra* scheme (Singh, 2021).

What has been happening at the National Level? Historically, the Government of India (GoI) has been involved in redeveloping heritage for almost a decade. In 2001, the UPA government facilitated the National Culture Fund (NCF) program which revitalised Humayun's Tomb with private sector funding, among other projects (Agha and Kumar, 2018).

In September 2017, the GoI issued a policy, the *Adopt a Heritage Scheme* (*Apni Dharohar Apni Pehchan* Project) to allow private and public sector corporations to adopt some of India's heritage sites. Private and public sector companies and corporate individuals were *'invited to adopt heritage sites and to take up responsibility for making them and promote sustainable tourism through conservation and development under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. The companies will be responsible for building, operating and maintaining tourism infrastructure in exchange for brand visibility at the monuments'* (Ministry of Tourism, 2018).

Under the scheme, the company becomes a *Monument Mitra*. So far, the Ministry has drafted thirty-one agencies as *Monument Mitras* for ninety-five monuments across India. Some of the monuments 'adopted' include Mt. Stok Kangri in Ladakh, the Gaumukh trail in Uttarakhand, Red Fort in Delhi, and Gandikota Fort in Andhra Pradesh.

On April 24, 2018, the Dalmia Group, a large Indian corporation, announced that it had signed an MoU committing Rs.25 crores over a five-year period for the upkeep of the iconic Red Fort/ *Laal Quila*. It is believed that corporate giants GMR and ITC have submitted a letter of intent to adopt the Taj Mahal in Agra. In 2019, the GoI announced that an MoU had been signed with 11 private parties (Ministry of Tourism, 2019). This includes an agreement with Yatra Online for Hampi in Karnataka.

This caused anger and protests from experts and political parties across the country. The *Adopt a Heritage* scheme was rolled out across the country but has faced opposition in other states too. In Goa, the government had shortlisted companies to adopt the old Goa Church complex, Aguada Cabo de Rama, Chapora fort, a lighthouse, Morjim beach and the Basilica of Bom Jesus Church (Ajmal and Saxena, 2018). In Assam, the Tourism Ministry had identified three Ahom-era monuments in Sivsagar district - the Rang Ghar, Kareng-Ghar, Shiva Doul, and the Kaziranga National Park for adoption. In both Goa and Assam, the Tourism Ministry has had to backtrack on the '*Adopt a Heritage*' scheme because of violent protests (Ajmal and Saxena, 2018).

Interestingly, the last few years have seen a sharp increase in the establishment of private museums across the country (Lall, 2016). These include the MAP museum and the interactive Indian Music Experience Museum in Bangalore, Piramal Museum of Art in Mumbai, and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in Delhi. These museums are typically managed by individuals or trusts, built faster and have more control on the quality, cataloguing, conservation, restoration and archiving of exhibits. They are mostly funded by corporate houses and philanthropies. These new museums are designed as experiences rather than as a collection of objects reflecting the current technology-driven, social media age. Criticisms include the fact that private museums are usually a reflection of the promoter's taste and are often inaccessible to the average Indian because of entrance fees (although many are free) and intimidating architecture.

What does the current situation say about the management of art and culture in India? The machinery of the welfare state in Europe promotes culture as a fundamental right and an essential part of personal and collective growth along with other rights such as education, health and social security (Menger, 2010). UNESCO (2001) describes culture as concerning '*all the specific features, spiritual, material, intellectual or affective, that characterise a society or human group. Culture includes, besides art*

and literature, way of life, basic human rights, system of value, tradition and religions'. In its 10th Five Year Plan, the Indian Planning Commission (now Niti Aayog) recognizes culture as one of the basic concepts to be integrated with all development activities and as a sector, necessary to spur economic growth, and strengthen the expression of the creative urges of Indians.

In India today, most cities are in a state of rapid transition - with much of the private heritage (i.e. monkey top houses in Bangalore being replaced by apartment blocks) vanishing swiftly. Unlike in the West, where they are rediscovering and retrofitting their cities in terms of art and culture, the Indian State and Indian cities are still primarily dealing with providing basic needs such as food, housing, transport, health (also of interest to culture and community). The issues of conservation, art and culture at the level of the city take a back seat to everyday living and commuting. There is little time to debate the state of art and culture, spatial mobility, personal care, and domestic services in the city. And yet, whether we like it or not, it is critical to the discourse on Indian cities. And maybe this discussion should include more sections of society than just academics and the government.

Currently, under government schemes such as the Smart City Mission, too many Indian cities are being developed within a technology-focused urban engineering paradigm as distinct from creative, cultural and inclusive cities. India has a long and distinct history that is marked by historical monuments and cultural spaces, many of which are located in cities. These monuments and spaces provide cities with strong cultural markers and public space for people, especially the poor, to interact with the cities on terms beyond just being workers, guards or cleaners for the wealthier populations. Additionally, our cities have a strong local culture that can be harnessed to provide distinctiveness of place and involve citizens (including migrants) in an act of co-creation in making and shaping the urban milieu.

Perhaps this is where the lessons from the VAG and its broader context come into play. To maintain the city's attractiveness, vibrancy and opportunities, the state has to renew and revitalise its socio-cultural economic base incorporating citizens' wishes. In the case of VAG, the state government and specifically the Department of Tourism took on this mandate. While discussions with the city were held through the KTVG, this endeavour was too elitist and top-down. Policy was driven by powerful business and government voices in the state and city and did not involve public participation in the real sense. In the light of the 74th CAA, meaningful public participation is critical, especially for urban governance. The absence of diverse voices in this discourse brings up questions of whether art and culture in the city are only the domain of the rich, elite and leisured classes?

The issue of access arises in multiple forms - the assertion that Tasveer's curation was aimed at the Western collector and tourist potentially disregarding local and poorer artists; the potential loss of access to exhibition space for the local struggling artist and the potential increase in entrance fees reducing access to art for the poor. Despite Poddar's assertion to the contrary, the current subscription model does exclude large masses of our society. Again, with the *Adopt a Heritage Scheme* in Hampi, it shows that the government is slow to learn any lessons. The decisions are still being made in a top-down elitist fashion and ad hoc manner by politicians and bureaucrats.

The right to the city is being abrogated at every stage in both the Bangalore and national discourse. Significant in this fracas is the distinction between what political scientist Partha Chatterjee calls the voting poor versus tax paying rich. While the struggling Kannada artist is active in the VAG forum, little is heard from the 'voting poor' of Bangalore. Perhaps, they are so busy struggling to survive that they do not have the time to be involved. But then a platform for their involvement needs to be created. The only place that the voting poor appear to have acquired a voice is in the violent protests over the *Adopt a Heritage* scheme in Assam.

While it is generally accepted that the conservation of cultural heritage requires the involvement of multiple players across the public, private and non-governmental sectors, it is important to understand what constitutes successful partnerships and that other factors such as equity, inclusivity and access need to be in place to facilitate success. It is critical to understand that in India, the current urban renewal agenda is to improve water, sanitation, transport, health and housing infrastructure. It is incumbent on us to realise that we are lucky to be able to learn from the missteps of the techno-engineering approach of Western cities. We have the opportunity to adopt a more humanistic and inclusive approach to urban development before too late. The wealth of our history, represented in the monuments, museums and art galleries in our cities need to be identified, protected and made accessible to all.

The Indian City is no longer just an economic hub. With a burgeoning middle-class and increasing incomes, it is very much a place for art and culture

and the language of government policy. The actions of the state need to reflect that. While the new private museums provide a platform for a section of society and are, to some extent, better and more equipped at exhibiting art and culture, the state is probably the only agency that can facilitate equity and equal access. The Government and cultural administration need to engage with the private sector, communities and other stakeholders in participatory ways to define changing needs; to engage with the existing culture of knowledge-creation and transmitting-traditions; and and to facilitate and assist local authorities in creating libraries, museums, performing arts venues, art and music schools, and theatre companies. Simultaneously, local authorities need to broaden the definition of culture that they are willing to support, moving it towards a more anthropological definition of cultural identity and diversity, and by linking cultural policy to education, urban and social policy.

Note: All pictures in this article are by Salila Vanka.

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A Child's Play

Making Theatre for Children

Mayura Baweja

The third bell rings and the house lights go down signalling the start of a show. Sounds of Shsh...shush can be heard over the excited voices of the children. Parents and teachers alike try to quiet the children with little success. As darkness engulfs the audience, the booming voice of Girish Karnad does the trick. Adults are reminded that mobile phones must be switched off. The children settle into their seats breathing into the space just as my fellow actor swings into action with his kazoo. Claps, squeals and laughter follow. The show has begun.

(Chippi, the Chipkali, Ranga Shankara, 2018)

Purpose-built spaces for children are a part of a city's overtures towards its young citizens. In Bangalore, these spaces include school compounds, children's libraries, bookshops, play areas in city municipal (BBMP) parks and residential complexes. In addition, Bal Bhavan in Cubbon Park and *Makkala Koota* in Chamarajpet are examples of larger spaces in the city which were dedicated to children and childhood.

Public or private, indoor or outdoor, these bright painted spaces are part of the city's invitation to its children. Children's theatre can be described as a large umbrella with diverse activities including theatre performances (theatre primarily for an audience of children whether performed by children or adults), workshops, storytelling, school performances, puppet shows, pantomimes and more. Conducted in English, Kannada, Hindi or a mix of these and other dialects and languages, they are expressions of the multicultural character often attributed to the city. In the face of significant odds, children's theatre is sustained by a small group of theatre practitioners passionate about theatre and its transformative possibilities for children. Uppermost amongst the challenges that theatre makers face, is the absence of affordable spaces for performances.

Purpose-built public spaces for children, which might be thought of as the natural home for theatre performances with regular programming, have fallen into a state of disuse over the years. Added to this, purpose-built *theatre* spaces in the city offer limited programming for their young patrons. Young audiences are not factored in when these spaces are designed, making them unsuitable for a range of performances. Hence, theatre performances for children in the city are infrequent and accessible to few children. And while Bangalore fares better than most other Indian cities, it is far from providing a majority of its children a consistent and regular fare of theatre experiences.

Children's theatre productions, by which (for the purposes of this essay) I mean theatre productions designed and performed by adults exclusively for children below 12 years, have steadily grown in number over the past decade and half in Bangalore (excluding the past two pandemic years). In 2004, Ranga Shankara in J.P. Nagar, opened its doors with the promise of a play a day. A performance space dedicated to theatre, Ranga Shankar was set up to cultivate the theatrical life of the city by Sanket Trust, a non-profit organisation established in 1992 by a group of eminent theatre personalities in Bangalore.



Figure 1. A buzzing bee mesmerizes Chippi
(Source: Ranga Shankara)

Recognising the challenges for children's theatre, Ranga Shankara launched its AHA *Theatre Festival for Children* in 2006. Spanning two weeks each year, performing troupes from all over the country and across the world, arrive in Bangalore to introduce the city's children to rich theatrical traditions. The shows are for a range of audiences - from toddlers to young adults.



Figure 2. Does the Piggy tail look good on Chippi?
(Source: Ranga Shankara)

For the two pandemic years, the festival was held online, providing a different experience, but in June 2022 the festival returned to the familiar physical spaces at Ranga Shankara. And with the start of 2023, Ranga Shankara has committed to having theatre performances for children two Sundays each month for the entire year.

In this essay, I look at two performances - *Tsuuiinnn Tapak* (2018) and *Chippi, the Chipkali* (2018) , that I was part of as theatremaker and performer respectively to examine the nature of children's theatre performance. *Tssuuinn Tapak* (hereafter *TT*) was devised by Ashish D'abreo, Bhamini Nagaraju, Mario Jerome, Mayura Baweja, Mirra, Samudyatha Jayanthi, and Anish Victor (Director). *Chippi, the Chipkali* (hereafter *Chippi*) was a culmination of a puppetry and performance workshop with guest director and puppeteer, Gertrude Trobinger, held at Ranga Shankara in 2018. Anil B, Mario Jerome, Mayura Baweja, Punith and Surabhi Vasisht were the participants.

These two performances share some commonalities - they are devised, non-verbal and incorporate elements of participatory theatre and live music. These choices have allowed children from diverse backgrounds with varying language abilities to enjoy them. Although



Figure 3. Queue for an 11am school show (Source: Ranga Shankara)



Figure 4. *Ee Gida Aa Mara* - for the youngest audience
(Source: Ranga Shankara)

considered best suited for children between ages of four and six years, older children have also found them to be engaging.

My understanding is that specific programming for children signals to its young audience that theatre space and time belongs to them which in turn constitutes the child audience (with the accompanying adults) as a specific entity with its own rhythms and responses.

The foyer, the café and the stairways leading up to the theatre - the young audience fills these spaces like cake batter. Conversations and memories of previous theatre shows mingle with the anticipation of what to expect. Five performers weave their way in and out of the gathered guests, inviting children to play a game, solve a puzzle or marvel at a magic trick. Multiple posters of upcoming shows for children, artwork from the summer camps with children and installations that speak the child's language free the children as they explore the multiple spaces as their own. (TT, 2018)

An awareness of this extended space and time, where little happenings can unfold and small bites of theatre magic foreground what follows after, is essential for creating theatre for children. Early discussions amongst the devising group for *TT* led to choices that focused on creating a whole experience of the event, rather than the defined beginning and end of the show in the designated performance space. These playful encounters might have appeared disruptive as children ignored the calls of accompanying adults to stay in line or quiet down.

Yet the smaller group of children and adults arrived at their own rules for engaging with the performers and each other. In addition to the usual rituals of gathering, waiting, finding one's seat and other theatrical conventions, the children also learned to regulate themselves around others. In my view, this sets the dynamic for participatory elements of the performance.

While these early experiences are useful in anticipation of young patrons' return to theatre in the years ahead, it also reconfigures the expectations of the spectator/ audience and their relationship with the performers and the theatre performance.

The performers flow into the theatre with the audience and seat themselves amongst them. On stage is a box of different colours with a light focused on it. The announcement to switch off mobile phones is heard. The house lights come on unexpectedly. Could this be a mistake? A few children gasp as one of the performers rises from his seat from amongst them and points to the box on stage. He makes his way towards the stage with a gesture and a sound to express his excitement at having discovered this mystery box. Other performers follow suit repeating their distinctive gestures and sounds of surprise, glee and wonder, and stop when they reach the box. What happens next? (TT, 2018)

One of the challenges facing children's theatre is the need for identifiable 'takeaways' from the experience. Children's theatre often points to the familiar benefits of educational and/or moral learning and entertainment as justification for the deployment of resources that a production entails. The early exposure of children to television, film and online media means that theatre productions must bring more to the table than the retelling of familiar stories and fairy tales. As a live encounter between the performers and audience in an actual physical space, children's theatre provides opportunities that are unique and irreplicable. This understanding led the *TT* devising group to discard the idea of creating a piece based on story, plot and character. Focusing instead on the child's experience, the group decided to put together a set of encounters which would serve as invitations to its young spectators to be part of the action.

A paper plane lands in the midst of the audience. A child picks it up and throws it back. The performers gather round the plane and look at it. They look up at



Figure 5. Foyer and cafe, Ranga Shankara (Source: Salila Vanka)



Figure 6. Entrance to Ranga Shankara (Source: Salila Vanka)

the children. A game has been set up without any words being spoken. Magically, the mats are opened and tens of paper planes fly across from the stage into the audience space. The children pick up the planes and throw them back. The barrier demarcating the performers from the spectators has been broken. (TT, 2018)

The imagining of the theatre space as live and contiguous with the physical presence of both spectators and performers underlies the setting up of this and other encounters throughout the performance. It is a choice that embraces uncertainty and the possibility of improvisation on the part of performers in some situations. The composition of the audience and their seating often plays a part in how long sequences like the paper planes play out. The airplanes and other play experiences that are part of the show sometimes go on for a longer time as children resist settling down when prompted by the lead performer of the sequence. When this resistance is felt by the performers, they allow the children some time by continuing the play. Eventually, the children arrive at shared understanding and come to a place of pause. This pause and restraint is, I believe, an extension of the dynamic that emerged earlier in the small encounters in the foyer.

Chippi, the baby lizard and the Girl are both terrified when they discover each other. The Girl chases Chippi who finds refuge in a box. The Girl continues to beat on the box where Chippi is hiding and Chippi's tail falls off in fright. She screams in horror and runs away. Screams and laughter are heard in the audience as Chippi emerges slowly from the box and looks around for the Girl. The children are quiet as they watch her looking around fearfully. They wait for her to find out what they already know - that she has lost a vital part which has consequences for her survival. (Chippi, 2018)

Amongst the many things children learn from theatre performance - theatrical literacy, the understanding of dramatic convention and a specialised vocabulary are well known, but added to these is the ability to sit and watch a performance without distraction. This is a

laudable objective given the short attention spans that are frequently ascribed to children growing up with technology.

The tail market is bathed in colourful lights. Many animals appear to beckon Chippi to try out their tails. A cow, a tiger, a horse, a fish (yes!), a pig and a magnificent peacock tail allow her to become something/someone else. (Chippi, 2018)

This setting ignites the imagination and curiosity of the young audience. The animal is represented through its tail on stage but the image that arises in the mind is whole. Animal sounds and movement allow the children to complete the image of the animal that Chippi encounters in the market. The children embark on a journey of exploration and adventure with Chippi in the hope that she will find a way to become whole again. Unlike *TT*, *Chippi* follows a linear narrative with a story, plot and protagonist. However, the shifting of roles of the two performers, as travelling entertainers and actor-puppeteers (assuming multiple roles) stretch the conventional bounds of realistic representation in the theatre and fire an artistic impulse in the audience.

Children make honest audiences. To engage these young audiences however is not a simple matter. A theatrical performance unfolds as a perceptual encounter with invitations to experience a range of feelings. A young audience is able to appreciate the nuances of this encounter to the same extent as an adult audience. As an art, theatre mimics life to the fullest extent, incorporating the material of life (gestures, action and speech) within it. Besides affording children a unique participatory experience, it has the potential to help them develop a better understanding of themselves and a world around.

The need to respect child audiences is greater than ever if theatre has to fulfil its potential as an art form for its young members. Towards this end, theatre-makers, writers and performers must dig deep to understand the complex world of the child. The creation of universes that embody and extend the magic of a child's imagination and depictions of the complexities of their worlds are likely to find resonance and reward for both the performer and the audience. It is imperative that children's theatre speak with and to children and not down at them.

This dialogue with children as active participants, must then spark the rethinking and reinvention of the city's spaces and resources. Making space for children in our cities is essential, literally and figuratively. And Bangalore's promise to its children needs fulfilling.

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A NEW ARCHITECTURE FOR ALL?

From the Consumptive to the Experiential

(Extracts from an online panel discussion hosted by RVCA on 05 May 2022)

Moderator: Edgar Demello
Panellists: Meera Iyer, M.V. Rajeev Gowda, Champaka Rajagopal, Pushpamala N., Bijoy Ramachandran
Faculty Coordinators: Salila Vanka, S. Madhuri Rao, Archana Vittal

Preface

RV College of Architecture, Bengaluru organised an online panel discussion titled '*A New Architecture for All? From the Consumptive to the Experiential*' on 05 May 2022. This event was conceptualised as a discussion between experts from different disciplines on the role of cultural spaces in shaping public life in Bengaluru. This article presents transcribed excerpts of the event. The entire panel discussion can be found on RVCA's Youtube channel. In a complementary exercise, the faculty coordinators also conducted an online survey addressed to several Bengaluru-based cultural institutions, with questions regarding the city's cultural terrain and public realm. Selected responses have been added in the form of pull-out quotes in this piece.



Excerpts

Edgar Demello

'The world is changing in front of our eyes. Physically and metaphorically. The old binaries have been reloaded. The predictable, cyclic patterns of the seasons have given way to climate change, political instability, a continuing pandemic and, once again, war. Narrow nationalism has replaced the heterogeneous and dynamic texture of our cities. Fear, anxiety and insecurity are the new emotions amongst the populace, not to speak of the mental health issues they lead to.

But, history has shown us that each time the planet was overtaken by crises, humankind has reimagined and reinvented ways to reconstruct a new socio-cultural reality. Be it in fields of science and technology, medicine, the social sciences and correspondingly in the fields of the arts and architecture. Architecture always positions itself as a go-between to bring together the best of both worlds. It must now reflect upon this new reality - almost through a *tabula rasa* - to invoke fresh, exciting and equitable spatial dimensions for the wellbeing of all its users. Buildings should now be designed, at least in part, for all and not for just a few. Yes, it's time for a new architectural reality, based on plurality.

Our cities have shown a very strong resilience in times of crisis; in part because, in principle, we are a culture of the outdoors. The streets and their thresholds, tree platforms, courts, verandahs and parks ... for all. In the same vein we now need to rethink a new tool-kit of building types that have a more participatory nature so that the extremes that exist in our cities are somehow mitigated. The city must belong to all. There are already early signs of this in our city with the various *habba*s and neighbourhood cultural centres organised and funded by private initiatives. These are pockets of reprieve that need to come centre stage, into the public view, so to speak. A complete existential overhaul, a radical paradigm shift must be in the making through private and public partnership for us all to experience a new relationship to public space.

The unique cosmopolitan quality of Bangalore's demography needs to be celebrated for what it is. Diverse and inclusive;

and architecture must become the enabler. But it is obvious that this is a role that needs more players than just architects. Architecture is, after all, an all-encompassing profession that has always needed to interface with allied disciplines.'

Meera Iyer

'What do we mean when we say an 'Architecture for All'? As one who works in the field of history and heritage, I think of how our culture and our built architectural heritage can be made more inclusive, accessible and lively. What do we mean by culture? Let me borrow a definition from ecology and adapt it to say that Culture is about the ways of living and interacting with each other and the world around us. When we think of Bangalore, you could say it is about the Spirit of the City ... An everyday experience of diversity in the city today comes in the form of the cultural differences that you can see and feel in different parts of the city. Many people have pointed out how our city has multiple centres, rather than one historic centre. Each has its own flavour. Walk around Frazer Town, Shivajinagar or Chamarajpet and you will notice each neighbourhood has a distinctive food, language, music, architecture and street life.

Meaningful involvement of youth is a must.

We all know that in India, the street is a public space. It used to be that half our lives were lived outside, on the *jagalis*, on the streets, playing, shopping, chatting. Streets as public spaces have the quality of being changeable, malleable. Anyone familiar with Ahmedabad will have experienced that malleability in Manek Chowk where a square full of jewellery shops by day becomes a buzzing food fest by night, every night. We also have similar such transformations in Bangalore. Avenue Road turns into a sea of flowers every single morning thanks to the flower market which extends halfway up the street. Avenue Road and BVK Iyengar Road both turn into street markets every Sunday morning. During the *karaga*, the densest shop-lined streets turn into communal kitchens by night. Such public spaces that lend themselves to multiple uses are characteristic of Indian cities, and Bangalore is no exception. It must be said that these malleable public spaces are usually, by their very nature, inclusive.

Educational institutions can play a key role in this aspect.

Arakali Venkatesh

... Can we encourage malleability in other kinds of built heritage, especially our everyday heritage? I take the example of Ahmedabad once again where people have organised cultural events in small chowks within markets. We do have a few such examples in Bangalore, a well-known one being the *Ramnavami* festival that takes place in the grounds of Fort High School. Other built heritage that could serve as more active public spaces are the several neighbourhood markets, many of which are languishing. Can these double up as venues where communities can organise theatre, music programmes or other cultural events? Perhaps they can become craft centres where artists and craftspeople can meet and work and sell. That could lead to such synergy.'

M V Rajeev Gowda

'My perspective is not of an architect per se, but of a policy maker, someone who is also a '*Mannina Maga*' (son of the soil), and a citizen of this city. So for me, when you talk about the architecture of Bengaluru, there are many architectures. There's the built architecture and there's the natural architecture which over the years we have substantially destroyed and manipulated in very negative

ways. But the whole idea is that we've got so much potential as a city. When you talk about 'All'; when you talk about cosmopolitan[ism], this is a city that has the potential to literally showcase so many diverse cultures including the local native cultures. And what has happened over the years is that we have not done that.

If you look at the way the city has emerged, the way the city has the newer built spaces, substantially on the outskirts, the IT sector are mostly closed spaces secured and inaccessible to anyone other than those who work there. So, you look at them from the outside, but you don't get to engage with it. Contrast that to what happens in the centre of the city, if you can think about a festival that we may all have participated in - *Chitra Santhe*. Once a year, the area around the golf course in Kumara Krupa Road is closed off and it is opened up to artists. It becomes a street fair, and it transforms people's engagement with art and artists and makes art so much more accessible. It allows more people to take part in that.

Cultural spaces are being perceived in isolation from interconnected issues in Bengaluru.

Smitha MB

That is one dimension when you see Church Street as a new example of urban design in action. You see on the weekends that it becomes a space that comes alive with various kinds of artists and others. These are the visibly engaged and accessible spaces to all of us in some ways but along with that, there is a whole spectrum of architecture that we either engage with or do not ... If you go to these villages around which the city has grown - I live in Basavanagudi, there is Mavalli, there is Siddhapura, there's so many other places just right around and we drive past and we see sometimes that there is a village festival on, and you will see the bright lights and you will hear music. You need to get off the main road and into the by-lanes and then you'll discover that there are temples, processions and festivals.

... When I was in college, there used to be rock concerts at Cubbon Park which are long forgotten possibilities and it's something that could easily be revived and give more and more people an opportunity to come and participate. Instead, we have come up with an architectural idiom of parks for older people to walk in and not necessarily using or creating enough spaces for art, theatre and dance that we do indoors mainly, but which our climate would allow us to do amazingly well outdoors as well... So, as we go forward, I would say that we need to think about inclusivity in the form of different kinds of cultural expressions, festivals, people and languages and think about the architecture of the city and how to evolve it with an open inclusive mindset which then finds a way to create platforms.'

Champaka Rajagopal
'Today I wish to share reflections on two types of dynamics of public architecture which claim democratic values in different cities across the world. (I am) going to speak about two specific types of architectural spaces - one is the Sacred Hearts Basilica in Paris and the second which is our own *Karaga* festival (in Bengaluru).

The story of the Sacred Hearts Basilica in Paris is one of how architecture can become representative of tensions between power structures like the monarchy and a highly conservative religious institution on the one hand, and people power on the other. In 1870, the rulers of France were defeated by Germany in the Franco Prussian War. The defeated monarchy attributed the cause of defeat to moral

decadence among rulers. Religious institutions proposed to build the Sacred Hearts Basilica in Paris, as a symbol of repentance by the ruler. On continued neglect by the monarchy, people of Paris waged a civil war against the monarchy and the church. Located on the Montmarte (Mount Marte), the Sacred Hearts Basilica was the site from which the civilians fought against the ruling power to reclaim democracy of, by and for the people, in Paris.

Today, we are confronted in India with several examples that are counterpoints to this and similar circumstances as well. We have no dearth of examples in public discourse where public space and architecture is violently claimed by dominant groups and resisted by minority communities.

What can we as architects do? What precedence can we garner to peacefully reclaim public space as architecture for all?

The beautiful *Karaga* festival is an interesting combination of gender sensitivity in Hindu mythology and democratisation of public space in the city. The event starts at Sampangi tank, a historically important cultural space linked to water, fire and the earth. For eleven days, a man dressed as Draupadi, who is mythologically the wife of five Pandavas in the Mahabharata navigates streets, open spaces, and traditional tanks. More importantly, the long energising procession for about 11 days resurrects democratic claims to public space in a city where environmental resources are rapidly getting depleted, open spaces are becoming more and more gated and shrines on the streets have become exclusionary spaces. Scholars such as Smriti Srinivas, Janaki Nair have studied and revealed political, cultural and social histories of these dwindling public spaces of democratic claims in Bengaluru.

Like the *Karaga* festival, an equally powerful parallel from Bengaluru is the Infant Jesus congregation at the St. Mary's Basilica at Shivajinagar where people from all religions gather. This event is a great symbol of tolerance.

The problem is that as architects and designers we've so far shied away from engaging with political strategy. So, whether as *Karaga* or the Infant Jesus Church or the story of Sacred Hearts Basilica, we as architects need to do our bit to reclaim public architecture as democratic space!'

Pushpamala N.

'I want to talk about the culture of protest as part of culture and to do with buildings... In 2016 the Karnataka Artists started a protest under the banner of Venkatappa Art Gallery Forum (VAG Forum), as the government wanted to more or less privatise the heritage structures in Karnataka. The Venkatappa Art Gallery built in the 1970s came into being because of artist protests as there was no place for us to exhibit modern Karnataka art or have a space which artists could rent cheaply for their activities. In 2016, with the idea of public-private partnerships, the government signed an MoU with the Tasveer Foundation, who would take over the entire space in Cubbon Park, rebuild it and rename it and put away the collections.

··· smaller organisations will benefit if they forge collaborations amongst themselves, through economies of scale, and ideas, by sharing resources that complement and supplement each other.

John Xaviers

... The protests were very creative and interesting and they happened in different parts of Bengaluru. It was historical, because artists, cultural figures and intellectuals from all over Karnataka were joining in the protest. This went on for about six months and though the MoU was not cancelled, people advised the foundation to drop the idea and go elsewhere.

The Kochi Biennale was started with the tourism minister M.A. Baby, who invited [artists] Bose Krishnamachari and Riyas Komu to start a Biennale ... All culture comes under government tourism departments which have the most funding ... In fact, the biennales all over the world are tourist attractions - like the Venice Biennale. But art is not only about spectacular events, you know, but there also must be consistent activity and lots of things going on. One thing is that Fort Kochi is a small town, Bengaluru is a crazy city and difficult to get around. So, maybe one should not only think about Bengaluru in terms of festivals.

... Most places have become very inimical to culture. They are not interested in anything to do with either any intellectual activity or culture at all. An earlier generation of politicians might have read books, they were all writers as well. In Karnataka for instance, and in most other states as well, because they're linguistic states, but they would also be interested in art or theatre or film. Nobody knows or thinks about architecture by the way. So, when people talk about architectural spaces and buildings, I think nobody knows about the field of architecture. By nobody, I mean most of the people, or the governments today for whom architecture has become a pastiche ... There are many excellent artists in Bengaluru, but there is not much patronage over here. So, if I insist on doing things here and having shows here, it's because I live here and I want to address the community here, and it is my context.'

Bijoy Ramachandran

'I've been in Kerala for four days now, travelling through the state, looking at architecture for the IIA State awards. There is a renaissance afoot here in Kerala ... and really the thing that strikes me is that, particularly in a place like Calicut, there is patronage from the government. So, the ex-MLA, who was here for three terms and the local IIA Chapter have transformed 20 public buildings, returning them to active public use.

Regarding your question about what makes them successful - what programming, etc. - there is a wonderful school here in Calicut that Brijesh Shaijal and his wife, Nimisha have produced. It was a defunct government school with 20 kids studying there on a large three-acre site in the heart of Calicut. With the MLA's assistance, they raised around 10 crores, partly from the government corpus that the MLAs have and they've completely rejuvenated the building. They have increased their capacity; they have 700 kids now in that school. They have made public programming essential to cross-subsidize the way the school is run.

There's a very large auditorium that has been built as part of the program which is publicly accessible and given out to the city for events. In fact, we were there on site at 12 in the night after our

Cultural places and spaces should not only be places of leisure, they have a fundamental educational role

Jean Christian Randrianampizafy

site visits to see the school and the ex-MLA himself came to see the building and was cleaning the mirrors and turning on the lights and there was this sense of ownership of this building and what it was doing in the city.

So, ... on the one hand, as architects we are waiting for the commission to arrive at our office but what I have seen here in Calicut is that it isn't really that kind of detached engagement with the city that these architects here have demonstrated. The group has gone out there and proposed things for a very long time and now suddenly, a lot of things are aligning for them, and they're able to engage with public work in a way that is meaningful for the city. And the city too now is engaging them with fees for work for the city and not *pro bono*, appreciating the value that architects bring to the imagination of what these buildings can do!

So, yes, I think the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) is a good example, primarily not so much for its architecture, but for two things. One is in the mechanics of how the money was raised to make that building through small donations to very large endowments from corporates. [Two], more importantly, I think once something is built and handed over, the stewardship of these public buildings is incredibly essential on how one imagines it, how one uses it and that's where the BIC has been successful even during the pandemic. So, it shows that the building is, in a way, incidental but it's the imagination of what that public forum needs to engage with and include in its programming that makes it a vital part of the city.'

The private NGOs are more inclusive and democratic and have diverse programmes and projects that are non-hierarchical and collaborative.

Suresh Jayaram

Edgar Demello is a Bengaluru-based architect, teacher, curator, writer, and has been in practice since the early eighties. In 2000, he started tAG&B (the Architecture Gallery & Bookshop) which later morphed into a virtual gallery space, CoLab Art+Architecture.

Meera Iyer is a Bengaluru-based writer and independent researcher with an interest in connecting people to their histories, especially through heritage.

Prof. M.V.Rajeev Gowda served as a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha from 2014-20. He is also a former Professor at the Indian Institute of Management - Bengaluru. He is currently Chairman of the Research Department of the Indian National Congress.

Champaka Rajagopal is a Bengaluru-based urban designer-planner who enjoys working in large teams, thrives on dealing with difficult problems in cities, and is committed to bringing together people with divergent goals and values to work together in public interest.

Pushpamala N. is a performance artist, sculptor, writer and curator in Bengaluru. She is one of the pioneers of conceptual art in India and a leading figure in the feminist experiments in subject, material and language.

Bijoy Ramachadran is a Bengaluru-based architect and urban designer. He is a partner at Hundredhands Design, a widely recognised design practice, and is the Design Chair at BMS College of Architecture, Bengaluru.

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On Bangalore's Cultural Spaces

'Meaningful involvement of youth is a must. Educational institutions can play a key role in this aspect.'
Arakali Venkatesh, Honorary Secretary,
The Indian Institute of World Culture

'It is obvious that there is a world of difference in how governmental and private spaces are run in Bangalore.The governmental spaces have a lot of red tape and bureaucracy and are not imaginative in their programming. The private NGOs are more inclusive and democratic, and have diverse programmes and projects that are non-hierarchical and collaborative. There is a lot of freedom and creative energy in these smaller organisations that are more contemporary. This makes Bangalore a hub for experimental arts.'
Suresh Jayaram, Visual artist, art curator & educator,
1Shanthiroad Studio/Gallery

'My suggestion is that there are many buildings owned by the government that are not in use or in good condition. These should be offered on medium-term leases to cultural organisations who are then responsible for maintaining and conserving them.'
Annapurna Garimella, Managing Trustee,
Art, Resources & Teaching Trust

'Cultural spaces are being perceived in isolation from interconnected issues in Bengaluru. The built environment and architectural context, and cultural histories are given the attention they desperately need. The social and ecological dimensions require equal attention - the economics and inclusivity of people who work in these spaces to the conversations about the type of planting, for example.'
Smitha MB, Senior Manager, Academics,
IIHS - Indian Institute for Human Settlements

'Cultural places and spaces should not only be places of leisure, they have a fundamental educational role and should also and above all give young people the open-mindedness they need to better understand their future and become good citizens. Furthermore, they must promote access to culture for all and combat inequality and exclusion.'
Jean Christian Randrianampizafy, Director,
Alliance Francaise de Bangalore.

'It would be great if funders support infrastructure and capacity building grants for smaller cultural organisations which have spaces, and continue to support them until they are autonomous and able to sustain themselves. Also smaller organisations will benefit a lot if they forge collaborations amongst themselves, through economies of scale, and economies of ideas, by sharing resources that complement and supplement each other.'
John Xaviers, Programme Officer (Arts Practice),
India Foundation for the Arts

'Bangalore has been a witness to the evolution of cultural spaces keeping up with the most advanced cities of the world from the old times. Today, a lot of these cultural spaces are largely still inaccessible to everyone. Most of the private spaces are exclusive, elitist and just not affordable for the students and under-served communities. These spaces comprising library, theatre, cinema halls, etc. run by private entities are all non-people centric, casteist and unaffordable. The inherently inaccessible nature of most such cultural spaces, especially those that are privately run not just due to fee/membership charges but also because of the kinds of elite neighbourhoods they are located in. However, there are small pockets of community-owned, community-centred cultural spaces in Bangalore that are striving to make a difference. They lack the comfort of continuous financial support but [are] run by some of the very driven individuals and groups working to create important voices and expression.'
Ravikiran Rajendran, Creative Director,
Haadibadi Community Library

'Public spaces are shrinking. The government spaces tend to be bureaucratic in their outlook and operations. Most of these spaces (barring exceptions) are also not in good shape. The private [sector] in contrast has been more engaging and [provides] vibrant spaces for the citizens. Unfortunately they are few, and the city needs a scale-up in making more public spaces available.'
V Ravichandar, Honorary Director,
Bangalore International Centre



Designuru 3.0, December 2021 (Source: Aliyeh Rizvi)

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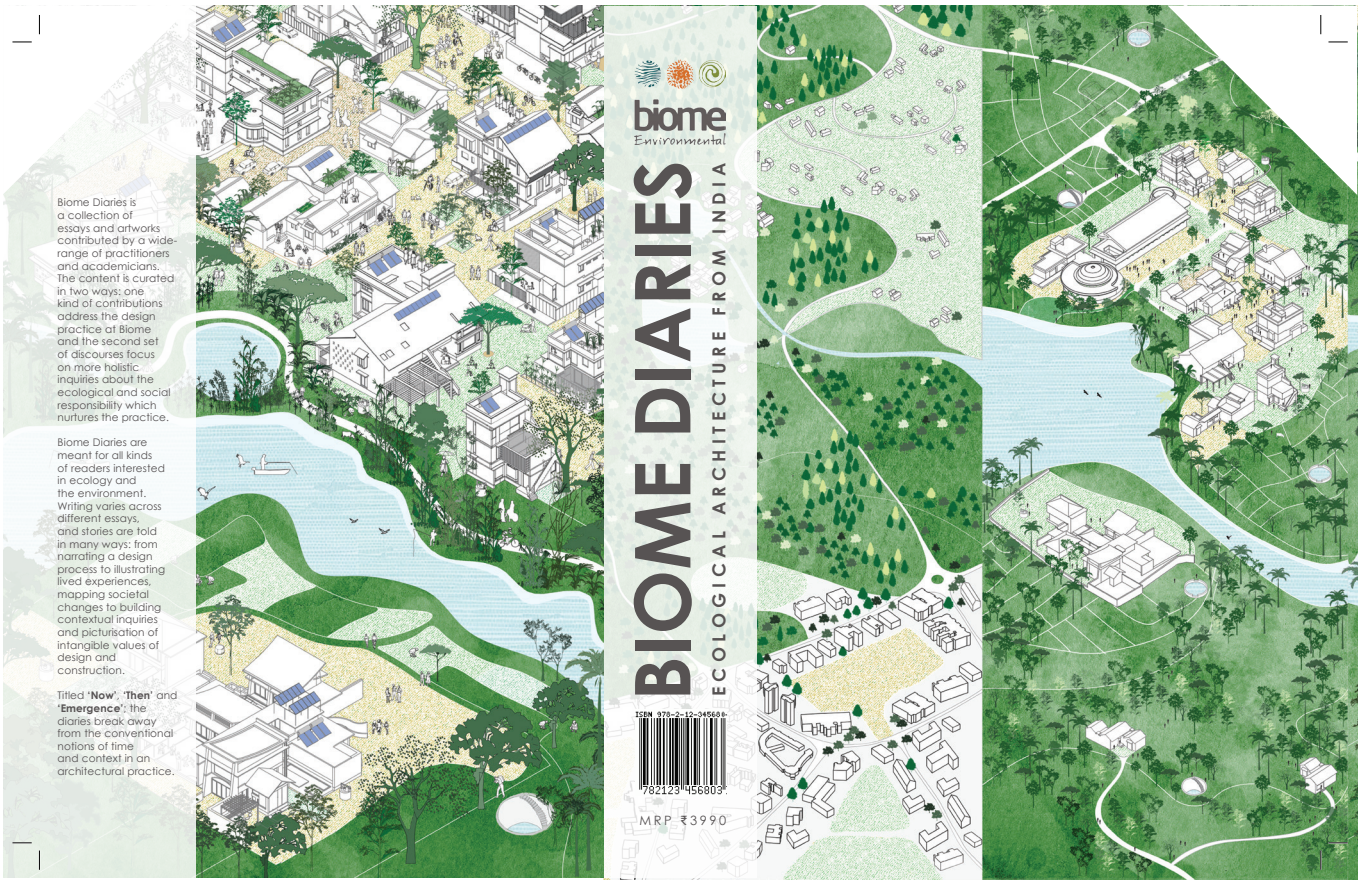
Book in Question

Biome Diaries: Ecological Architecture from India

2021, Biome Environmental Solutions Pvt. Ltd.

Ishita Shah



What were the initial thoughts, prompts and triggers for Biome Diaries?

We had started building the archives at Biome to (re)document and organise their portfolio from over three decades, and began collecting stories from the wide range of members at Biome in the form of oral histories or unstructured interviews. Initially, we were convinced that the publication should have a common thread that ties the narrative - perhaps a message that Biome has for its readers. We deliberated some critical concepts like stewardship over craftsmanship in architecture and institution building for ecological consciousness. Either way, we found that the process of arriving at a thesis statement was limiting and not encompassing the wide range of experiences that were emerging from our conversations with clients, contractors, architects, designers, artisans and other collaborators. Subsequently, we arrived at the possibility of writing and curating a diverse body of essays, which would reflect a set of values and engage with the different processes at Biome. Right from the beginning, it was also very important to all of us that the publication is easily accessible, be it the language, size, or its tactility. Adding to that, we also wanted there to be enough room for readers to make their own interpretations, make notes and sequence the essays to their own liking. Thus, the project took the form and function of something akin to a personal diary, and was titled *Biome Diaries*.

What parts of Bangalore or its identity are reflected in Biome Diaries?

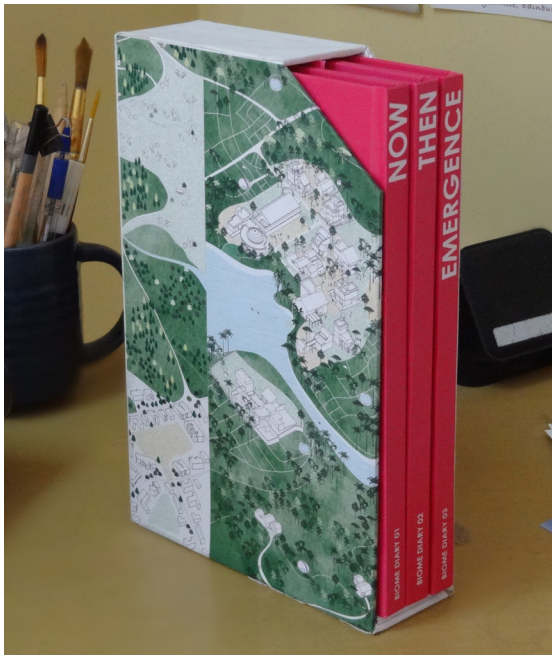
Bangalore is at the heart of curating and writing *Biome Diaries*. It all began with Chitra Vishwanath's essay in *THEN* on nurturing and receiving from her relationships to strengthen her practice, which was combined with Vishwanath Srikantaiah's continued explorations at the Biome Trust towards developing SMART systems in response to changing ecological conditions in *NOW*. Bangalore also brings along the poetics of scale,

materiality and aesthetics to *Biome Diaries*, both through the processes which are rooted at Biome and by turning the spotlight on clients, contractors and other collaborators. Today, Biome has built over 700 buildings and a majority of them are all in and around Bangalore.

Alluding to this achievement, architect Soumitro Ghosh writes, '...these may seem few and far between in a city of 12.3 million. However, it has made a difference through its relentless persistence and unadulterated view of the world. This practice could only be possible in a place where a significant mass of its population found that it filled in a gap for all their anxieties.' Just like these personal stories, the raw materials of Biome's solutions were also found in this city - the soil, the rainfall and the technology. The identity of Bangalore being intertwined with Biome and *Biome Diaries* is also reflected through the visuals created by the different artists - photographs, illustrations, maps and collages used here.

How do you see the work documented here (re)shaping aspects of Bangalore and what might they be? Where do you locate Biome Diaries in architectural discourses in the city and about the city?

I feel I must clarify at this point that *Biome Diaries* is not an uncritical praise for the city's 'elevated' and undisciplined development, but that it is rather a eulogy to the Bangalore of the past. Biome's journey may have started with finding an opportunity to experiment with alternative practices in response to the urban sprawl, and designing almost self-sustaining spaces for families or communities living on the fringes of the city. However, in its most recent endeavours, many of their solutions have been driven towards unburdening the city and its infrastructure. In both cases, the concern remains that the city requires and has been consuming more and more resources than it can afford in the longer run.



Biome Diaries attempts to situate itself at the intersection of architectural discourses in a triangulated space marked by those passionate about its ever-transforming historicity, the ones struggling to conserve its environmental diversity, and also those who are working towards innovative planning and designing. In fact, there are quite a few publications about Bangalore, composed from the stories of its people or communities but none of them (that I know of) are inviting those from the built environment agency to slow down and reflect. Perhaps, *Biome Diaries* is a form of emancipation for architectural discourses that don't align with any pre-set genres of art or a critical theory, but engages in criticality through collaborations and inclusivity of voices.

Could you elaborate on the role of people (Biome, contractors, construction workers, clients, public); place (the office, sites, city) and time (precedents, zeitgeist, futures) in Biome Diaries and their place in the post-pandemic city today?

Contractors, masons, and former architects participated in the interviews to map the journey of Biome while architects-turned artists interpreted and illustrated the different texts into intriguing visuals. If the recent pandemic has introduced us to newer uncertainties of survival and wellbeing, these dynamic ways of rekindling our relationship with our 'biomes' gives us hope. Imagine that we will be reading into these unknown encounters, evaluate them against our socio-cultural realities, design responsively and create responsibly. Many of these discussions have also hinted at the inevitable negotiations between the micro-initiatives and mega-solutions. We can then transgress the need to be excellent or unique and agree to be more symbiotic.

Describe your process of interpreting 'practice' as 'archive'. How did you restructure 'practice' thematically for the publication?

A practice is built over many years with different people interpreting and processing their relationships with place, politics and performance in their own ways. In reading of these processes and performances, there are many vistas to the changing times and relationships. In building a practice, we are building an archive or many different archives. When it comes to publishing a commentary on the practice, its own archive(s) can become the context for investigation - like in the case of *Biome Diaries*. The archive-in-formation was opened up to most of the authors for reading, interpretation and critique without

any preconceived outcome of their contributions. Even if there were underlying preferences, they were not rigidly tied to the 'success' of the publication.

The thematic lenses for engaging with the practice of Biome are a result of this constantly evolving curatorial process, and not a methodological tool of developing the publication. The answer was not found in the chronological transformation of the practice, but in the changing attitudes and associations of its people. Thus, the wide spectrum of essays engages the reader with personal quests, professional benchmarks and socio-political responsibilities of an architectural practice, striving for ecological consciousness.

What is your vision for archives and archiving in Bangalore? Are there specific projects or disciplines that require urgent attention in the context of archives and archiving in Bangalore?

My experiences with the wide range of museums in Bangalore have been significant in this journey. Across different learning expeditions, my students and I have learnt that several museums have very extensive archives, and most of these collections are not limited to the city's history. If these archives are made more accessible, they would act as great learning tools for educational programs across age groups. I am interested in documenting and archiving the wide range of citizen initiatives that have shaped and grown in the city. Apart from news coverage, it would be critical to recognise the personal experiences of citizens who have led or participated in these initiatives, record the story of the State or other bureaucratic members and look into the archives of photographers, musicians and other artists who contribute in their own creative ways to citizen-led initiatives. Another important project for documentation is situated in the suburban neighbourhoods of Bangalore surrounding the different Public Sector Units (PSUs) and campuses.

Did you encounter any hitherto unknown facets of Bangalore during the making of Biome Diaries that you would like to share with us?

I discovered new neighbourhoods and their famous local food spots while visiting clients or projects for the purpose of curating *Biome Dairies*. In this expedition, I also learnt about the stark differences in topography across the city, and thus, the effect of it on urban infrastructure and lifestyles of people. I had read about the origin stories of the water tanks (now called lakes), but it was educational to understand from Vishwanath S. that even today, rainwater harvesting can address the city's water sustainability. Similarly, I learnt from Chitra Vishwanath and through the architecture of Biome that the 'beautiful skies' of Bangalore do not necessarily offer the best light for all kinds of daily activities.

How did your own experience of the city shape/influence the way you approached Biome Diaries? How do you see yourself in the city?

I do not really live in the 'city', since Vidyaranyapura is not as much Bangalore as MG Road or Koramangala. I have learnt that Bangalore city as we see it today is formed by constant municipalisation of the villages on its periphery, and that periphery is continuously shifting. Living at the intersection of Vidyaranyapura and Thindlu village, and flanked by the satellite town of Yelahanka on one side and Sahakaranagar on the other, I am offered a layered experience of life in the metropolitan. There is a stark difference in the facilities, private and public, from where I live and to staying in Indiranagar or Whitefield. Even the social behaviour of vendors, artisans, or shoppers towards a non-Kannada speaking person is quite different from one part of the city to the other.

Note: All pictures in this article are contributed by Ishita Shah

Ishita Shah is a designer and historian. Her curatorial practice under the aegis of 'Curating for Culture' is focused on areas of cultural preservation, creative interpretation, and community engagement. She is a recipient of fellowships at Graham Foundation, Futura Tropica, and Khoj International Artist Association.
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Ulsoor Lake (Source: Madhuri Rao)

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The Chickpete Metro Station Public Art Project

Yash Bhandari & Aliyeh Rizvi

The Chickpete Metro Station is located in the historic Pete market area where the urban settlement of Bengaluru was built in 1537. In keeping with the spatial arrangements of the time, the fortified market-town was designed around the intersection of two broad thoroughfares; the Doddapete that ran from North to South and the Chickpete that went from West to East. In time, it grew into a bustling commercial centre that was occupied by several mercantile and artisanal communities from surrounding regions and even faraway Western India. It is now the largest wholesale market area in the city and also possesses a rich cultural diversity.

The Public Art Project situated at the Chickpete Metro Station, was curated by Art in Transit, a public art project and a collaboration between the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation and the Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology that sees the Metro stations as sites for creative learning and action. Helmed by Aliyeh Rizvi (Curatorial Process and Strategy), Amitabh Kumar (Co-curatorial), Yash Bhandari (Project Management), Arzu Mistry, and Niret Alva, this project was visualised as a place-based intervention that would engage with the rich socio-cultural and historical narratives of the area as a part of an ongoing creative inquiry.

The metaphor of a plant and its roots was explored to represent the metro station - extending from the platform level to the plaza, the overhead structures that mark its presence and the market area beyond. The overhead structures were seen as symbols of how the station itself is rooted in the area but the underground environment offers the opportunity to expand/spread out beyond this idea. This metaphor was used to activate the area's history, ecology, cultural diversity and economic vibrancy and gradually uncover its complex layers - all that lies at eye level and below it - ideas of conception, transformation, transactions, people and their connection to place, the relationship between identity and belonging, urbanisation, change and loss. This view also included the area's various transitions over the centuries from a densely forested area with waterbodies and rocky outcrops to its current built form.

As part of the material gathering phase, the artists (students, faculty from Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology, invited local, national and international artists and designers) followed a rigorous research process of exploration, reflection, interpretation and re-narration or translation in order to arrive at a curatorial strategy and themes for their place-based visual storytelling. In-depth interviews were conducted with local populations, sights, sounds and textures were recorded, text and visual references were collected, and the narrow streets of this crowded market were mapped during story walks. Themes were developed and a narrative flow was mapped to include the ten sites that had been identified initially. The artworks that emerged as a result were then taken to site and symbolically 'returned' to the Pete, in order to facilitate meaningful connections between people and place, bridge Bengaluru's past, present and future and build pride of place.



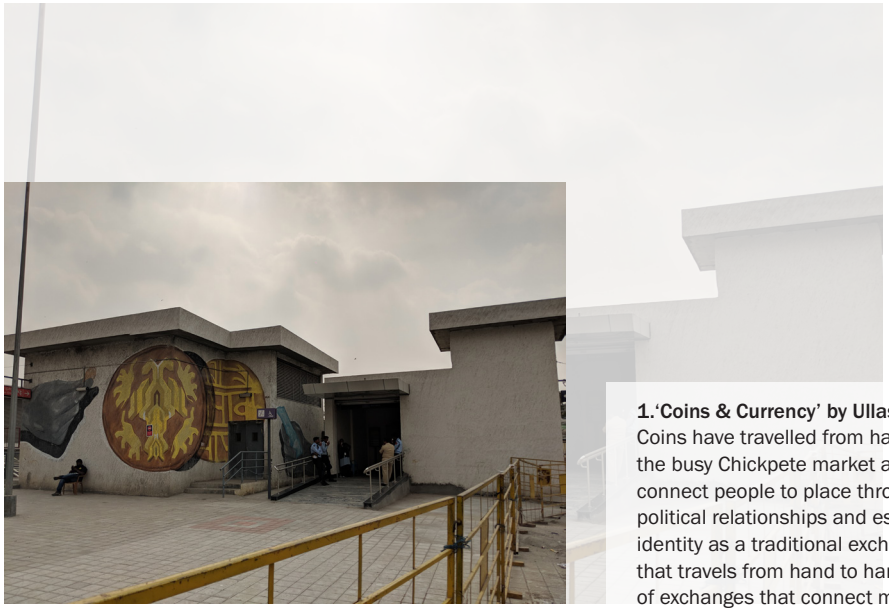


Figure 1

1.'Coins & Currency' by Ullas Hydoor
Coins have travelled from hand to hand through the busy Chickpete market area for centuries. They connect people to place through economic, socio-political relationships and establish Chickpete's identity as a traditional exchange centre. The coin that travels from hand to hand here, is the currency of exchanges that connect me to you and the city.

2.'Fragranence' by Anpu Varkey
Flowers as a social currency; the flowers that come to the market at dawn draw fragrant pathways across the city by day - in your hair, in a basket, on a cycle, as a bouquet or an offering for a God.

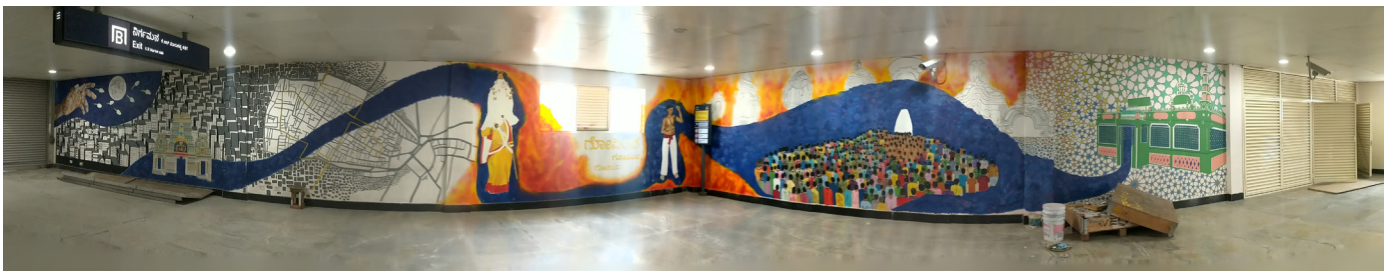
3.'Mapping the Karaga' by Yash Bhandari and Geethanjali AR
The Karaga bearer carries the jasmine flower around the Pete during the traditional *Karagashaktiyotsava*, a Pete festival dedicated to the Goddess Draupadi, thus uniting trader and artisan, house and shop, temple and *dargah*, priest and Goddess, water, earth and fire.



Figure 2



Figure 3



4. 'The Fabric of Our Times' by Osheen Gupta
A handloom weaver vanishes under the dominance of the computer-generated punch cards of the power loom, even as he is caught in a time-warp, enmeshed between traditional practices and the demands of modern-day technologies.

5. 'Pete People' by Abhimanyu Ghimiray
An exploration of form and character as seen through the migrant communities, specialised activities, goods and services that define the area and its unique identity. This multiculturalism defines the Pete even today.



Figure 4



Figure 5

6. 'Sites of Transience' by Amitabh Kumar
Can you see the forest and fruit that once grew here, being buried by the water tank and the battlefield that then gave way to the market? A comment on the changing nature of place; how form affects function, meaning and value through the ages.



Figure 6

7. 'Veeragallu' by Shreevyas
A new commemorative hero stone, or Veeragallu, embedded with stories of the city. The first part (Main Wall) depicts the story of Bengaluru. The second part depicts a map of the 'Bengaluru Pete' and the third part depicts the various markets inside the Pete.



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

8. 'Im-materiality' by Fabrice G and Valentine
Reach out and see if you can touch the flattened, fragmented shapes, colours and textures of the city. Questioning the meaning and representation of place through materials, textures and patterns. Looking at recycling systems such as the Jaali Mohalla near the Chickpete Station- what was and will be.

9. 'Layers of Movement' by Diya Pinto
The deepest is the oldest. Representing the KR Market area's layers of time - ancient tank bed, colonial battleground, modern market area, through examining a layered sense of movement, bottom to top and inside-outside that is in constant flux. It is hard to move when everything around me is moving - from the bottom to the surface, from the inside to the outside, from the lakebed to the market, from the past to the future.

10. 'Where are you coming from?' by Puia
'I come from the mountains', said the apple to the dragon fruit. 'How did you get here?' The fruit in the market is seen as a metaphor for trade, migration, new dreams and opportunity.



Figure 10

Note: All photographs are taken by Yash Bhandari.

Related Readings

Geechegalus. (n.d.). Chickpete Metro Station. https://geechugalu.wordpress.com/chickpete-metro-station/

Pendharkar, Vrushal (2021). Namma Ooru, Namma Neeru: Art that connects a metro station, groundwater conservation and traditional livelihoods.' Citizen Matters. September 1, 2021. https://bengaluru.citizenmatters.in/c'ubbon-park-metro-station-art-water-murals-66336

Srishti Manipal. 2023. 'Art in Transit.' https://srishtimanipalinstitute.in/centers-and-labs/art-in-transit com/future-relics

Yash Bhandari is a Bengaluru-based artist, sculptor and academic. More information about Yash's work can be found at https://www.mew767.com/

Talking Tigers

A Public History project about the Bangalore Fort

Dr. Indira Chowdhury in conversation with Aliyeh Rizvi



The Bangalore Fort or Bengaluru *kote*, situated in present day Kalasipalyam, was once an impressive example of eighteenth-century military architecture in South India (Figures 1 & 2). However, its provenance is still debated. Some say it was constructed in the sixteenth century by Kempegowda I, a local chieftain, while others suggest Chikkadevaraja Wadiyar, the seventeenth-century ruler of Mysuru built it. What is known is that it was renovated around 1761 by Haider Ali, a military commander and ruler of the kingdom of Mysore as a precautionary move against the East India Company that was becoming increasingly powerful in the region. The original mud fort was reinforced with heavy granite stones and incorporated broad ramparts with bastions, a faussebraye (defensive wall located outside a fortification's main walls), five cavaliers and a glacis, a deep moat and a covered (or covert) way without palisades. There were also French influences - banquettes and embrasure openings.

According to Colonel James Welsh, a British officer who passed through Bangalore with his regiment in 1809, it was '... originally shaped much like an egg' and had 'a high stone rampart and deep ditch' (Figure 3). There was ample space for storehouses, a weapons magazine or arsenal, barracks for soldiers



Figure 1. Delhi Gate, Bangalore Fort



Figure 2. Inside Bangalore Fort

and later, Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace. It had two gates - the Mysore Gate in the south and a north-facing Delhi Gate.

The *Pete* (anglicised *Pettah*) fell to British cannons during the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1790-1792); during the same war, the Fort was the site of the Battle for Bangalore, fought in March 1791 and many brave Mysorean soldiers died here in its defence. After his defeat in the war, Haidar Ali's son, Tipu Sultan, the 'Tiger of Mysore', dismantled much of the Fort to prevent its occupation by the East India Company forces. Following Tipu's death in the Fourth Anglo

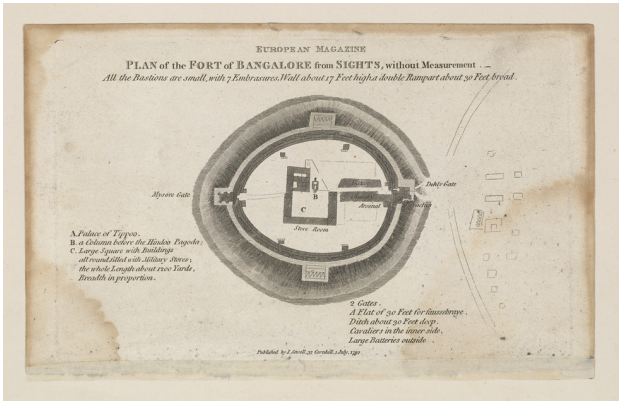


Figure 3. 'Plan of the Fort of Bangalore from sights, without measurement' (Source: Wikipedia; Claude Martin (1735-1800)

Mysore War (1799) and the installation of a young Wadiyar king on the throne of Mysuru, it was restored in parts by Diwan Purnaiah, the chief administrator of Mysuru. An English garrison came to be stationed here thereafter. In time, the area east of the Fort developed into Kalasipalayam, a busy transportation hub, Chamarajpet, a new residential suburb in the south, and the commercial areas of Tharagupete and Krishnarajendra Market in the west and north respectively. Medical, educational and charitable institutions also came up within its precincts in the early 1900s to meet the needs of a growing city. The Delhi Gate is all that remains of the Fort today.

In 2012, the Bangalore Fort became the focus of a Public History project, 'The Tiger Comes to Town', a collaboration between the Centre for Public History (CPH) at the Srishti School of Art Design and Technology (now the Srishti-Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology) and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). 'The Tiger Comes to Town' was led by Dr. Indira Chowdhury, Director at CPH, who elaborates on the project and its role in connecting an integral part of Bangalore's heritage with the city's people, in this conversation with the project's co-curator, Aliyeh Rizvi.

AR: I remember visiting the Fort with a photographer friend a few months before the project. She observed that while tourists and casual visitors walked in and out quickly, our visit took over an hour. She attributed this to my stopping continuously to point out details and lingering in some places to share contextual stories. She also noted that despite being a structure of significance for the city, there was hardly any information available onsite for visitors. No wonder then, time spent in the Fort was as insubstantial as the meaning or value it had at that time for local populations. This incident prompted reflections on what exactly is our understanding of and engagement with our heritage sites today? How can storytelling facilitate deeper engagements with city history and make our relationship with it more meaningful? How could communicating the Fort's history be made a participatory and collaborative process, easily understood and accessible to all? The 'Tiger Comes to Town', a Public History project emerged from these questions.

AR: Can you tell us more about the approach, framework and methodology chosen for the 'Tiger Comes to Town' Public History project?

IC: Our project began with the idea of reviving an interest in Tipu Sultan and in the Fort as a historical site of the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1791-1792). The year of our project - 2012, also coincided with the 150-year celebrations of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) who funded our activities and granted permission for us to use the Fort. The project was offered to students of Srishti as an opportunity to learn how to engage with a major historical monument in the city. It was challenging to interest students of a design school in history, so our strategy was to appeal to their sense of surprise - who was the Tiger? In what ways was he remembered? What were the 'lost' stories? And what did it mean for him to come to the city in which he once roamed?

We began by training students in oral history so they could tap into collective memory and see what emerged. Students studied the period and collected stories about Tipu and the Fort from the public. This had to be combined with archival research as we found that what remained in collective memory after two centuries were not necessarily historical. Besides, the Fort area had a shifting population of small traders and vegetable sellers who came there only in the last thirty to fifty years and did not know historical events that belonged to the 1790s.

The preliminary introductions to the area were made by Suresh Jayaram of 1Shantiroad Studio who conducted a Pete walk while Arun Pai of Bangalore Walks conducted a Fort Walk with students and familiarised them with its stories (Figure 4). They also studied botanical sketches available in the Lalbagh collection and guided by the artist Ramesh Kalkur of Srishti, sketched in situ, in Lalbagh which still has trees from Tipu's time. Our invited experts who trained our students in converting their historical research into stories and scripts for guided walks, and conducted workshops in storytelling techniques drawn from theatre, were Rama Lakshmi (at that time a journalist with Washington Post) and Vijay Padaki of the Bangalore Little Theatre. We then chose specific forms of dissemination.



Figure 4. Understanding the Third Anglo Mysore War with Bangalore Walks

AR: What were the forms of dissemination designed for local communities and groups, and how did they support meaning-making and the building of a relationship with this hitherto long-forgotten heritage site?

IC: Public engagements with the Fort were held over a weekend in October and December 2012. Prior to that students worked inside the Fort to explore different formats in historical storytelling for a diverse audience The fall of the Fort on the 21 of March, 1791 was dramatised in a Shadow Puppet Play about the Battle for Bangalore which appealed to children and adults (Figures 8-11). Students scripted the shadow puppet theatre inside the Fort and it was narrated in three languages - English, Urdu and Kannada. A former student of Srishti, Nikita Jain worked with the students to create laser-cut cardboard puppets for the shadow theatre. We saw this as an appropriate form that evoked traditional leather puppetry, the Togalu Gobeyaata of Karnataka. The shadow puppetry was juxtaposed with an animation film co-ordinated by our colleague Meera Sankar, that was based on Tipu's 'Dream Diaries', a document that many members of our audiences were unaware of.



Figure 5. The Delhi Gate is transformed into the venue for the Shadow Puppet Play



Figure 6. Srishti students working on the project take visitors on free guided story walks of the fort



Figure 7. The free guided story walks are conducted in multiple languages for diverse audiences



Figure 8. Scenes from the Shadow Puppet Play : Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore. (Source: Anjali Reddy)



Figure 9. Scenes from the Shadow Puppet Play : Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore. (Source: Anjali Reddy)



Figure 10. Scenes from the Shadow Puppet Play : East India Company forces prepare to lay siege to the Fort (Source: Deepa Mohan)



Figure 11. Scenes from the Shadow Puppet Play; the Battle for Bangalore (1791) (Source: Meera Sankar)

We designed an exhibition of information panels and historical images that communicated the history of Tipu and the Fort. In December 2012, the Fort housed this visual exhibition that told Tipu's story through text, contemporary sketches and photographs of artefacts. We also created a little booklet with images of historical paintings and artefacts from the time, reprinted with permission from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the National Army Museum, UK (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Pages from the booklet 'The Tiger Comes to Town'

The culminating event was a site-specific performance, a play by Dina Mehta titled 'Tiger! Tiger!' on the life of Tipu Sultan, performed by the members of the Bangalore Little Theatre and supported by Ganjam Jewellers who have a long association with the Mysore Royal family and Srirangapatna (Figures 13 & 14). It drew a large urban audience who had, perhaps, not visited the Fort in a long time. The atmosphere was magical.

Finally, a lecture series was organised on 'Science & Technology in the Eighteenth Century' in collaboration

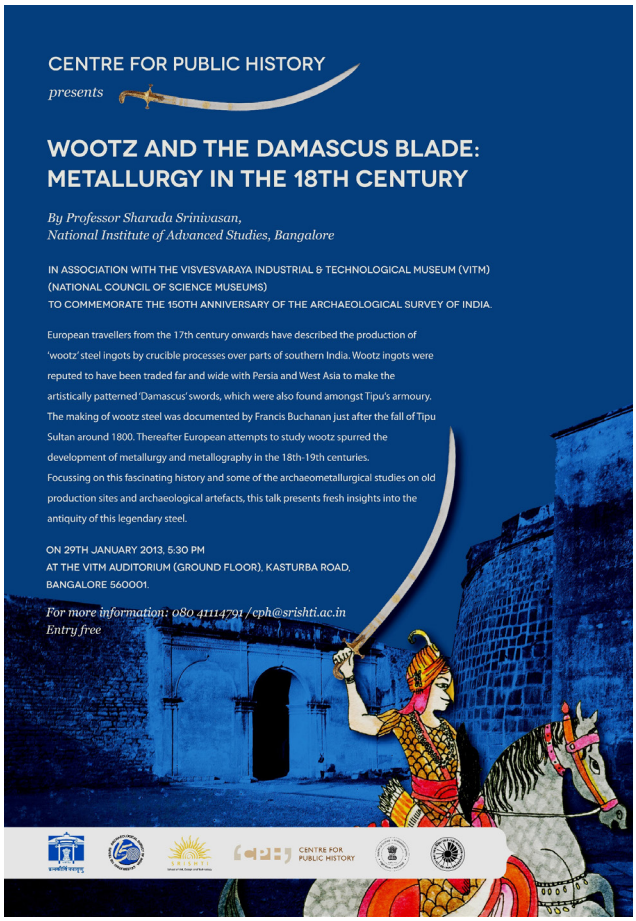




Figures 13 & 14. Scenes from Dina Mehta's play titled 'Tiger! Tiger!' on the life of Tipu Sultan, enacted by members of Bangalore Little Theatre (seen here, Sanjeev Iyer and Hamza Ali) on 23 December 2012 in the Bangalore Fort (Source: Meera Sankar)

with the Visvesvaraya Industrial & Technical Museum (VITM). It was hosted at the museum where a large, attentive audience had the opportunity to listen to the late Dr. Roddam Narasimha speak about the Mysore rockets and projectile technology in the eighteenth century (Figure 15), and Professor Sharada Srinivasan who shared her work on the legendary Wootz Steel (Figure 16).





Figures 15 & 16. Poster and e-vite for Dr. Roddam Narasimha's talk and Professor Sharada Srinivasan's talk, co-hosted by CPH and VITM.

AR: The project was imagined as an inclusive, participatory history-making process and structured as a set of collaborations with different partners and stakeholders. In order to address accessibility and relevance, the dissemination adopted an interdisciplinary, multimedia storytelling approach that integrated oral history, art, design, text, audio, video, photography and performance with technological components. It also brought together governmental bodies such as ASI and VITM, educational and cultural institutions such as Srishti Institute's CPH and Bangalore Little Theatre respectively, and a luxury business house, Ganjam Jewellers. The events were non-ticketed and free. As word spread, corporate bodies sponsored buses so children from government schools could be conveyed to the venue. Local groups stepped in as volunteers to help manage logistics at the fort. The parking attendants at the Victoria Hospital next door became self-appointed publicity and marketing agents. Visitors were often overwhelmed by a sense of nostalgia for 'my fort' as they recalled pleasant memories of school trips here in their childhood. They helped publicise the event widely on social media and it also received the full support of city newspapers. The Fort was returned to and owned by the public who now became its custodians and stakeholders.

AR: How is Oral History used as a valuable tool/ resource for deeper engagement with the public space, in this case, a heritage site such as the Bangalore Fort in Kalasipalayam?

IC: Oral history has for a long time been established as a tool of primary research which enables us to understand people's experiences in the past. But it should be seen as more than a tool as it draws attention to the role played by orality, memory and narrative in reconstructing events in contemporary history. When we focus on the dialogic nature of oral history, we also realise, as Alessandro Portelli says: 'Memory is not a passive depository of facts, it is an active process of creating meaning.' This process also involves an active dialogue between the past and the present, and turns the historian into a protagonist alongside the interviewee.

But delving into individual memory and recording an oral history interview is often not enough to create a credible public history intervention. Public historians often draw on multiple disciplines: bringing the learnings from oral history into a larger socio-cultural framework that enables us to make meaning of memory and understand collective recollections within a collective context. Public history therefore moves beyond the practice of oral history to consider

how the interpretation of memory can be understood as a social practice that draws our attention to the 'sites of memory' - what the French historian Pierre Nora has termed 'Le lieux de memoire' (Nora, 1989). But a question that all public historians struggle with is how is memory preserved beyond individual remembrance? Is memory of the past erased by the act of commemoration or through the institutional practices? While Nora sets up an opposition between history and memory, other scholars of memory studies see memory as something that is persistently reworked in response to contemporary contexts (Hamilton and Shopes, 2008). And though the questions around collective memory have not yet been resolved, memories of communities usually enable us to understand how something of the past is understood. In the case of our project, the stories we collected from the temple priest or the khidmatdar at the *dargah*, were not part of their individual memories, rather, they were stories that had been handed down and circulated, and these stories enabled the local community to make sense of their own past and the past of the place they now worked in.

We were aware from the beginning that our project, concerned as it was with events that took place in the eighteenth century, could not possibly tap into the experience or memories of those events. However, what we did manage to collect, through interviews our students did with local people, were stories about Tipu Sultan that were still recounted two centuries later. The priest of the Sri Kote Anjaneyaswamy temple opposite the Fort, for instance, recounted how the horses and elephants were blessed at this temple before a war. Although this was not specific information about any particular war, it alerted us to what the temple and the space around it meant for the priest. The *khidmatgar* of the *dargah* spoke about the saints – the Mastaans who helped Haidar Ali rebuild the Fort.

AR: The commercial area around the Fort contains an extraordinary number of Sufi shrines that blur the lines between the material and the spiritual. They are also central to Bengaluru's local culture and history. We were told that many of them house the tombs of saint-soldiers, the *Shaheed*, who died during the Battle for Bangalore. Legends about mysterious spiritual occurrences concerned with the reinforcement of the fort were also shared. They connected Haidar Ali to the *dargahs* or shrines of Hazrat Tawakkal Shah Mastan Soharwardy in Cottonpet and Hazrat Manik Mastan Shah Soharwardy on Avenue Road. Hazrat Mir Bahadur Shah Al-Maroof Syed Pacha Shaheed, who is buried in a *dargah* near the KR Market, was identified as the Fort Commander or Qilledar who died during battle while defending the breach. The priest at the seventeenth century Sri Kote Venkataramanaswamy temple also mentioned hearing stories about the performing of a special pooja and bells being rung here for the wellbeing of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan before they left for battle. This offered us new perspectives on the important role oral history, collective memory and people's stories have to play in creating new historical narratives for the city.

AR: What role can Oral History and collective memory in particular, play in assessing / contextualising Bengaluru's historical events, sites, artefacts and objects of history?

IC: Looking back, CPH's first attempt at engaging with public history through archival research, showcasing historical artefacts and curating snippets from oral history interviews did create a lively interest in the Fort and in Tipu Sultan and his times. We had large groups of students from diverse backgrounds visiting the Fort from all over the city and the Shadow Puppet play, the animation film based on Tipu's dream diary and the play, 'Tiger! Tiger!' were much appreciated. However, the site-specific performance was by invitation only (a request from the sponsors) and we had to turn away a number of local children who had turned up attracted by the lights and music and I would like to think, by the theatrical presence of 'Tipu' in the play. This was, perhaps, the unfortunate consequence of not having more dialogue with all collaborators about the importance of including audiences across the class divide. Public history, after all, is people's history and needs an audience that is diverse and not restricted to the privileged few. In hindsight, I feel we could have given more thought to this aspect of public history.

AR: The logistics and operational implications of managing events at an eighteenth-century venue that was originally built for battle proved to be a challenge. On the other hand, the 'public' nature of the Fort and its location in Kalasipalyam helped draw in a wider, walk-in audience comprising various local groups, institutions and communities in the area. We observed that the convergence of stories from different sources recorded during the oral interviews and shared in the Sound Booth, layered collective memory over the information and experience design, contributed to an increased interest in the fort and helped build pride of place. The in-depth, continuous engagement with the site over several months also created an intimate relationship between the structure and the students who said 'because we now know, we care.' This offered a valuable insight into how engagement with a heritage site through information and direct experiences, can help build context, meaning and value, as well as ownership and belonging.

AR: How is Public History defined, recognized and identified in the Indian context? How can the engagements with the Bangalore Fort in the eighteenth century be understood as a unique Public History project, perhaps one of the first of its kind, for Bengaluru?

IC: Public history works with the historical method and tools to talk about the past beyond academia. Although public history is hardly recognized or even identified as a discipline in India, it has taken different forms in our context. So, curated museum visits, public exhibitions that work with historical themes and city walks that evoke the past have been around for a while all over India. More recently, the feminist bilingual writer and activist, Sarmistha Datta Gupta and the artist Sanchayan Ghosh have brought together memory and history in an exhibition to mark hundred years of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre titled 'Ways of Remembering Jalianwala Bagh and Rabindranath Tagore's response to the Massacre' using memories that had been handed down to those who survived or stories from families that had lost their loved ones.

The engagement with the Bangalore Fort that was undertaken in 2012 by our Centre, was certainly unique and one of the first attempts in the city to reimagine history and make it more accessible. There was an active engagement with the Fort through the research process that included story-telling imaginatively using visual forms that represented the times of the Tiger of Mysore.

Note: All photographs in this article, unless otherwise mentioned, are taken by Aliyeh Rizvi.

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Contextualising museum objects through visual narratives

The Story of FHD0102

Mansi Sathyanarayan Rao

Material culture studies and the study of objects in museums have received a renewed interest that focus on the diversity of meanings embodied in objects and the numerous ways in which they can be interpreted. This research project is an attempt at studying one such object, FHD0102 in the collection of the National Maritime Museum (NMM), Greenwich, London.
What makes this object relevant to discussions of Bangalore? The museum identifies this as a part of a figurehead that adorned the Royal Navy vessel, HMS Seringapatam. It is made of wood, copper, and iron and carved to indicate a male figure sheltered under an umbrella riding a mythical bird.

Recent research on the object has resulted in the object being identified as a 'large-scale polychrome carving of an attendant bearer holding a *kittasol* (parasol/umbrella) for the figurehead from the 46-gun fifth-rate frigate HMS Seringapatam (1819)'. This information is based on an article in 'The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany' (January-June 1820; V.9) which describes the frigate Seringapatam with the following detail, 'the carving work on the prow appears chiefly designed in compliment to the natives of Hindoostan, and represents the Mysore Raja, attended by his *kittasol* bearer' (pp.306-7).

However, prior to this new research, this object has been presumed to represent the erstwhile ruler of the South Indian state of Mysore, Tipu Sultan (1751-99) himself. Known as the Tiger of Mysore for his valour in the battlefield against the British East India Company (henceforth referred to as the Company), Tipu holds a distinguished position in Indian history. This research is an enquiry into why this ascribed identity of Tipu stayed with the object for several decades. My first encounter with the figurehead was in 2017 when it was still presumed to be Tipu. Displayed on a red cuboidal pedestal in the Traders Gallery at the museum, the visitor could walk around the figurehead allowing views from different positions. The object was introduced through labels on all four sides. The first one described the object as:

'This seated figure probably represents Tipu Sultan of Mysore. He is riding a roc - a mythical bird of great strength. As the ruler of an extensive empire in Southern India, Tipu opposed the extension of Company rule in India. HMS Seringapatam, named after Tipu's capital city, was a 46-gun warship launched at the Bombay Dockyard in 1819.' (NMM, object label: FHD0102)

The label, at the onset, provides an introduction to three major associations that the object has, and these are Tipu Sultan, HMS Seringapatam and the relationship between Tipu and the Company.

The three labels introduce the visitor to (i) Tipu - the Tiger of Mysore and (ii) Tipu - the enemy of the Company. The location of the display strategically introduces the viewer to the complexity of the Company's rule in the region and the narrative that flows in the rest of the gallery.

In the introductory chapter of her book 'Museums and Biographies', art academic Katie Hill points out that 'biographies have subjects and museums have objects' (2012:1). In the case of objects like FHD0102, it is crucial to question what biographies the object can tell, not just about its own life but of the person represented and the networks they have been part of. The objective of the research lies not just in unpacking and finding factual information of the object, but also to understand what meanings it encompasses and how these meanings lend towards identities of objects. This paper aims to explore the identity and narratives of the object through two trajectories: (i) exploring a biography of the object through historiographic and symbolic approaches, and (ii) a representational narrative that attempts to establish a broader frame of reference to interpret the object.

Named after Seringapatam (now Srirangapatna), the then fortress-city of Tipu Sultan, HMS Seringapatam was a 46-gun fifth-rate frigate built for the Navy in India, at Bombay Dockyard in 1819. The HMS Seringapatam became a receiving ship in 1847 and in 1852 a coal hulk at the Cape of Good Hope, where it was broken up in 1873 (NMM). The figurehead was preserved and stored at the 5th Yard Firehouse (NMM Archives, LKY/4/22:38) in Devonport Dockyard till 1937, after which it was moved to the museum in the same year along with several other figureheads (Longair and McAleer, 2012:228).

Separated from the HMS Seringapatam and residing in a museum, what narratives does the figurehead, perceived to be Tipu Sultan, have to tell? To do this, one needs to first establish whether it is Tipu or not and the factors that led to this perceived identity. This research attempts to establish this identity through deconstructing the object with regard to symbolism associated with Tipu. With the lack of written records indicating the identity of the person, one of the ways to answer the question if it is indeed Tipu, is to analyse the complex iconography of him and the events of his reign (Forrest, 1970:346). The period saw the production of several artworks including portraits of Tipu that offer an interesting insight towards the comparison of features of the carved figurehead to that of Tipu himself.

One of the most popular portraits of Tipu Sultan is his representation in Figure 1, from the book 'The history of Hyder Shah, alias Hyder Ali Khan Bahadur, and of his son, Tippoo Sultaun, by M.M.D.L.T, General in the





Figures 1 & 2. Two portraits of Tipu Sultan (Source: Narayanan, 2018)

Army of the Mogul Empire, Revised and Corrected by His Highness Prince Gholam Mohammed [Son of Tipu Sultan]' (Narayan, 2018). While there exist several similar portraits, a more recent claim is that most of these portraits were imagined representations and the only original representation of him is the one published in Thomas Mante's 'The naval and military history of the wars of England, including, the wars of Scotland and Ireland, etc. Vol.V' (Figure 2). While this conjecture would be hard to prove, it is important to note the dichotomy that exists around his representation.

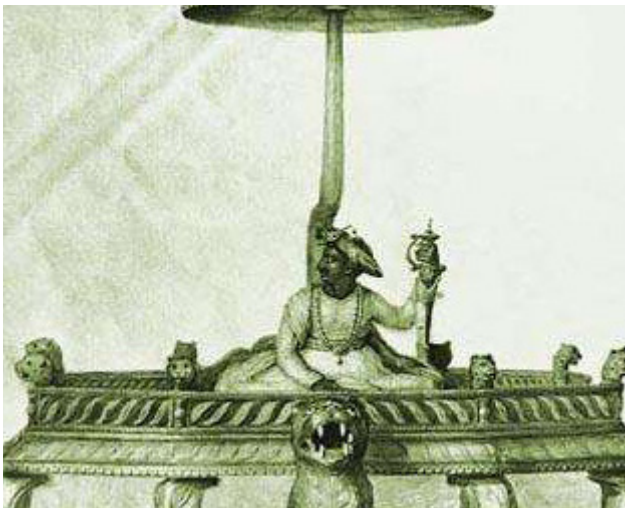

Figure 3. 'Tipu seated on throne' - Illustration by Anna Tonelli in Clive Museum, Wales (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



Figure 4. FHD0102, Figurehead of HMS Seringapatam © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (Source: Author)

In this process of identifying the figurehead's identity through visual references, the starkest resemblance of the figurehead is to a sketch made by Anna Tonelli of Tipu seated on his throne (Figures 3 & 4). Both visuals indicate a person seated on animal figures sheltered by an umbrella in almost similar positions. This representation strengthens the case of imagined constructions of the identity of Tipu, because Tipu is believed to have never sat on his throne (Olikara, 2014).

An analysis of FHD0102 reveals that the person's stance is subservient, indicated by the holding of an umbrella, which is a perceived indication of a person in a subordinate position of power. The figure is devoid of any ornaments, indicating a demeaning representation. The figurehead has been painted several times over the years; assuming that the colours have been retained as on the original, it reflects the British flag and therefore alludes to Britain. This immediately compels one to dismiss the idea that the figurehead represents Tipu, but a careful observation gives us further clues to establish otherwise.

The striped paint on the body is similar to the representation of tiger stripes on Tipu's clothes. The twisted patterned turban called the '*shumledar*', along with the waistband, are strikingly similar to what Tipu wore towards the end of his life. The other intriguing aspect of the object is the bird, identified rightly as a '*roc*' or a '*garuda*'. A conversation with Nidhin Olikara, a collector and an avid researcher on Tipu brings to light the 'legend of the *huma*' ('bird of paradise' in Persian), a mythical bird that symbolises a pinnacle of spiritual realisation that it would bestow on the one over whom it flew.

The *huma* hovered over the umbrella on Tipu's throne, which was part of the loot from his palace that made its way to England in 1799. It was presented to Queen Charlotte at Windsor, and since then has been part of the Royal Crown of England. It was often said that





Figures 5 & 6. Royal munificence - hem! by W.N.Jones, June 01,1814 (Source: Nidhin Olikara)

'the Royal Bird of Paradise had flown from Seringapatam onto Windsor' (Olikara, 2014). In addition to this legend, a pamphlet printed in England in the early 1800s lampooning Queen Charlotte indicates a bird labelled 'Tippo's dove' sitting on a shelf behind her (Figures 5 & 6). The bird being indicated as a 'dove' is an indication that the *huma* was indeed misrepresented at the time. This misrepresentation may have translated into the making of a figurehead, where a craftsperson carving it may have had only 'received knowledge' of a certain mythical bird to be carved.

Having unpacked the object to a certain extent, I am inclined to conclude that this object at the mast of a ship sailing into the sea and named after Seringapatam, could very well be a statement, and a representation of England's victory over Tipu. While this symbolic deconstruction has much to say about the object and its identity, there is more to be revealed about the larger context in which it was made. Objects like FHD0102 are a testimony to the complex history of the 'Empire'. Longair and McAleer (2012) have written about how such objects illustrate how interpretations change and are changed over time as the process of 'curating Empire' continues to preoccupy and fascinate curators and museum visitors alike. Learning and unlearning the 'Empire' is a burden we are going to be faced with for a long time to come (Longair and McAleer, 2012:226). Having said this, are there ways in which the viewer can interpret such objects in new ways to provide a context that may help in understanding the multiple identities encompassed in them?

The research so far brought to light several works of art, media representations and artefacts from the era, indicating the possibility of interpreting FHD0102 by situating it in a broader frame of representational narrative. To explore this interpretation, I rely on Appadurai's (1990) idea of 'mediascapes', which 'provide large and complex repertories of images, narratives and "ethnoscapes" to viewers throughout the world…' (299). While Appadurai (1990) situates this idea in the globalised world of the 21st century, the role of media creating imagined identities is perhaps not something new.

Tipu and the Company relied heavily on propaganda as a means of depicting their mutual hatred during the four wars they fought against each other between 1792 and 1799. Alongside these wars, they also engaged in what I would like to term as the 'war of representation'. This use of propaganda resulted in the creation of several artistic and media representations alongside the production of objects and artefacts that in turn led to the creation of imagined identities of Tipu in Britain and the British in India. This representational narrative is a way of interpreting FHD0102 to establish a broader frame of reference and understand the context in which the figurehead was made. The list of these representations and the scholarship on it over the years is endless, and for this research I have chosen a selected few that provide insights into the relationship between Tipu and the British.

The fight for power in South India goes back to the time of Haider Ali, Tipu's father. The battle of Pollilur was painted on the walls of Dariya Daulat Palace in Seringapatam (Figures 7 & 8). There are two important aspects to note in the painting. One, the representation of Tipu himself; a side profile indicates him seated on a horse with one of his men holding up a *chhatri* (umbrella) for him and bears an uncanny resemblance to the person in the object, complete with an attire with tiger stripes. The second is the grotesque representations of the British army that appear all across the painting. As Osborne (2002) highlights, 'images of the sub-continent and her peoples were consumed in Britain as readily as the textiles, dyes and spices of the East' and 'seared into the nation's collective memory' (220). Osborne also describes how Tipu Sultan came to be 'well-known in the 1780's and 1790's through his



Figures 7 & 8. Scenes from the painting of the Battle of Pollilur (Source: Battle-of-pollilur-painting.com., 2018)

appearances in cartoons and paintings accessible in London' (2002:220). One such satirical cartoon was 'The coming of the Monsoons' ridiculing Cornwallis after battlefield reversals in India (Figure 9). On one hand, it indicates a fleeing Lord Cornwallis who lost the first Anglo-Mysore War, while also depicting Tipu as a 'tyrant' on the other.

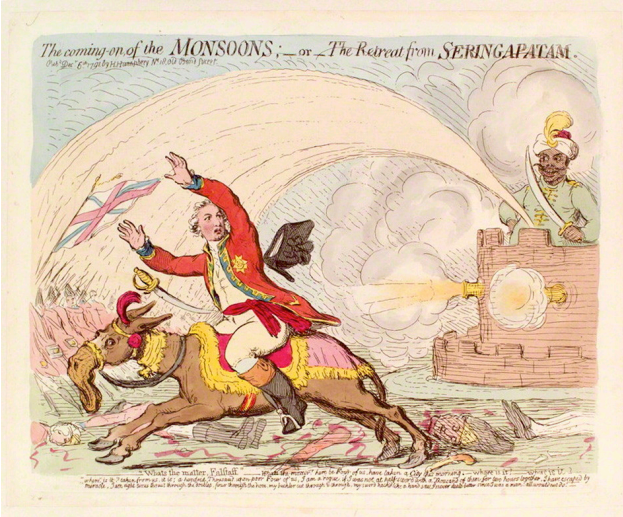

Figure 9. 'The coming of the Monsoons' or 'The Retreat from Seringapatnam' (Source:BM Satires 7929)



Figure 10. The Seringapatnam medal
(Source: Steward, 1915)

Most artworks commissioned after the defeat of Tipu indicate his supporters in a demoralised stance while the British army is depicted in a triumphant stance. The most popular object in the 'loot' from the palace of Seringapatam was Tipu's tiger, a mechanical wooden toy which now rests in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London after two centuries of shifting locations and identities.

The Seringapatam medal was one of the most important objects indicating the continued use of visual imagery by the British to represent Tipu in a disdainful light (Figure 10). One face of the medal indicates the British lion taking down Tipu's tiger, while the second face indicates the storming of



Figure 11. Imagined identities
(Source: Columbia.edu.,2018)



Figure 12. Visual constructs
(Source: Forrest, 1970)

Seringapatam with the use of Tipu's motto '*Assad Allah El Ghaleb*' ('Conquering Lion of God' in Arabic). The production of broadside ballads such as 'The Storming of Seringapatam' at the Royal Coburg Theatre in 1823, in the form of entertainment, fuelled the creation of Tipu's imagined identities (Figure 11). These visual depictions of Tipu as a barbarous tyrant continued to emerge until long after his death as indicated by this engraving from 1861 (Figure 12).

These examples prove the popularity of Tipu and the Siege of Seringapatam in the media, entertainment, and exhibitions in Britain. The figurehead FHD0102 for years that was believed to be Tipu, is now believed to be his attendant. Perhaps continuing research may lead to more detailed or different answers in the future. An object like this is testimony to the multiple identities encompassed in museum objects and the complexities of interpreting such objects. When interpreted and perceived in the broader context of how media representations create imagined identities, the figurehead perhaps encompasses the memory of a turbulent relationship between an individual (Tipu)



Figure 13. Tracing origins and identities through representational narratives (Source: Author)

and a nation (Britain)! It seems almost impossible to exhibit this complex relationship through a single object targeted for a visitor unaware of these historical narratives.

The diverse identities and imaginaries around Tipu is one of the reasons for my interest in the object. Having grown up in Mysore, a city that is about nineteen kilometres (eleven miles) from Srirangapatna, I learnt in history lessons about Tipu's greatness as a ruler, with his significant contributions to art and architecture, and his valour against Britain, the 'enemy'. In more recent years, a postcolonial revisionist approach tries to question if Tipu was indeed a hero or a villain.

In his own home country, there is a complex dichotomy around Tipu's identity more than two centuries after his death. This is perhaps an indication of the power of visuals and media in the construction of identities (Figure 13). A clear understanding of these identities may remain a question for a long time to come. With the loot from Seringapatam dispersed across the world, it becomes imperative to ask how these are represented, interpreted, and made sense in present times. In such contexts, a reflexive narrative and display practice may perhaps yield various answers. Could we then think of a display of hybridity in interpretation itself as an exhibitionary solution that may allow for exhibiting these narratives more effectively?

Notes:
1. This research is based on a project undertaken with the National Maritime Museum, London titled 'The Whole Story 2018.' This was part of a module on the author's Masters in Arts postgraduate studies in Museums, Heritage, and Material Culture Studies at SOAS, University of London.
2. For this research, the author conducted interviews with Aliyeh Rizvi (writer and historian, Bangalore), Nidhin Olikara (writer and collector, Shimoga), and Meera Iyer, INTACH, Bangalore Chapter.

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An eighteenth century Persian inscription at Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace, Bengaluru contains a date for the structure along with an interesting comparison to 'the beauty of China', that was perhaps an aesthetic aspiration for that time.

'Ta bina e mahal ba shaukat shud
Sar ba anje falak za bohjat shud
Vah che farrokh raahal bina e rafi
Bar tar az asman za rafat shud
Hast aina khaua e ba safa
Har kasash did mahave hirat shud
Go e safvat rabud az kafe charkh
Charkh zan sar niguu za khijlat shud
Vasfe in khasr ra shunid magar
Zan Faridun ba khabe ghalat shud
Justamash az hisabe Zar tarikh
Goft Hatif ke baite ishrat shud
Chun ahud in khasre taza nakhsh tamam
Surate Chin khajil za ghirat shud
Justam az khizre akhl tarikhash
Goft laraib rashke jannat shud'

Epigraphia Carnatica,
Vol.IX, Bn 7, (1905: 6-7)

'As soon as the foundations of this Palace was laid,
its head was raised to Heaven with joy.
Oh, what a lofty mansion, a home of happiness,
Its summit being above the skies.
It is a house of glass in purity, all who see it
are struck with wonder.
In magnificence, it rivals the sky, which
hangs down its head with shame.
The description alone of this place
when heard by Faridun caused him to go to his
long sleep.
I sought by computation according to Zar
for the date and an unseen angel said
—"a house of happiness", 1196 (1781 CE).
When the painting of this new Palace was finished,
It cast the beauty of China into oblivion.
I sought the date from Khizir the Wise,
Who said—"Doubtless, it is envied by Heaven'
1206 (1791 CE)

(English translation)
Annaswamy, (2003: 210-11)

sub:version Issue 01, August 2023, pp. 122-125

The Unruly Syntax

Ravikumar Kashi

I have lived most of my life in Bangalore city and have seen it changing constantly. The nature of visual markers around me have changed. Some changes manifest like waves while other transformations are incremental and slow. But when new trends appear, old visuals are not completely wiped out; they survive in pockets. Upon close observation, one can locate remnants of different times as visual markers. This palimpsest, where new visual markers are overwritten and layered on old images, is very interesting because it can reveal layers of time.

My solo show 'The Unruly Syntax', which was held from 4 December to 22 January 2022 in Gallery Sumukha in Wilson Garden is inspired by Bangalore city as Palimpsest. To achieve this sense of layering I have used hand-painted billboards seen on highways as visual references. When these billboards are left unattended, outer layers peel off revealing inner layers of fragmented images, texts and patterns. The grid seen in these billboards also becomes an ordering structure in my works. Together they become a visual metaphor for my city experience.

The changing visual culture of Bangalore that I have documented is the source of imagery for this photo essay. Digitally designed and printed posters, banners, signboards are sweeping the city, but hand-painted images have survived in many parts. Similarly hand-painted images on vehicles are seen alongside digitally generated stickers. It is not just image production methods but the changing beliefs, value systems, economic structures and politics that are visible in these images. I have tried to capture the multiple voices and intertextuality that provide rich, nuanced meanings that allude to a layered sense of time. This results in works that are not neatly sorted, orderly and simple but a complex imagery almost on the edge of chaos which creates 'The Unruly Syntax'.



'Traces 2', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 30" x 60", 2020



'Traces 3', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 30" x 60", 2020



'Traces 5', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 36" x 48", 2020



'Traces 7', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 48" x 48", 2020

'Gandhi walks away from Johnny Walker
Inky ribs lacerate a textbook blue bow-bearing Ram
An earthen pot overflows with milk
'KEEP DISTANCE OK'
Moist lips open like a Bougainvillea petal
Meet the Google God
Half-tone traces, Printing errors, Ghosts in the machine
'Dekho Magar Pyar Se'.

The city unravels in a patchwork of mismatched fragments - a heap of broken images - in Ravi Kashi's The Unruly Syntax. The paintings knot the chaos of the urban sprawl into a rag-tag band of cutouts held together with the cacophony of their difference. These are pages from a logbook, notes from a visual ethnography of the constantly changing miasma of signs that are scattered through a Bangalore suburb. They are excavations of different Bangalores from different times, disinterred, layer by layer, memory slapped onto flex, magazine clippings, stickers, wall and shop signage.

Can you tell the countenance of a city, its arcs and desires, both sacred and profane, quotidian and hyperreal, from a cross section of its plastered signs - the way you can tell the age of a tree by its rings? Can you tell which way the wind is blowing, how a community breathes, by the way it makes images?'

- Excerpt from 'The Painter of Signs' (Aranya, 2021)

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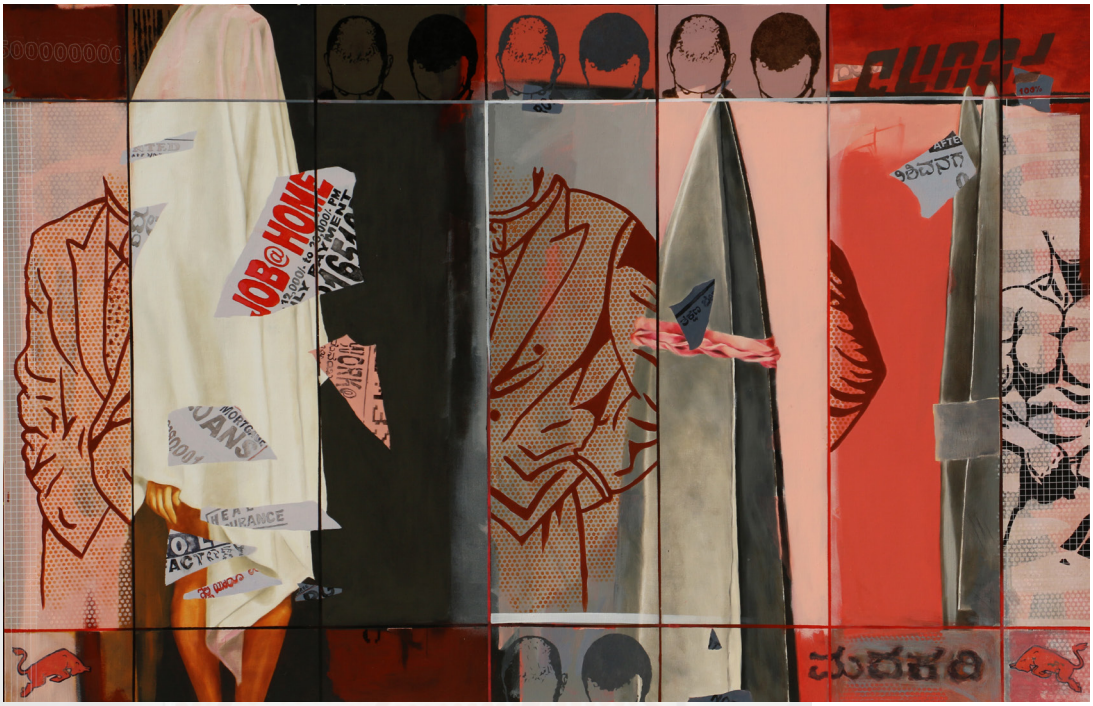
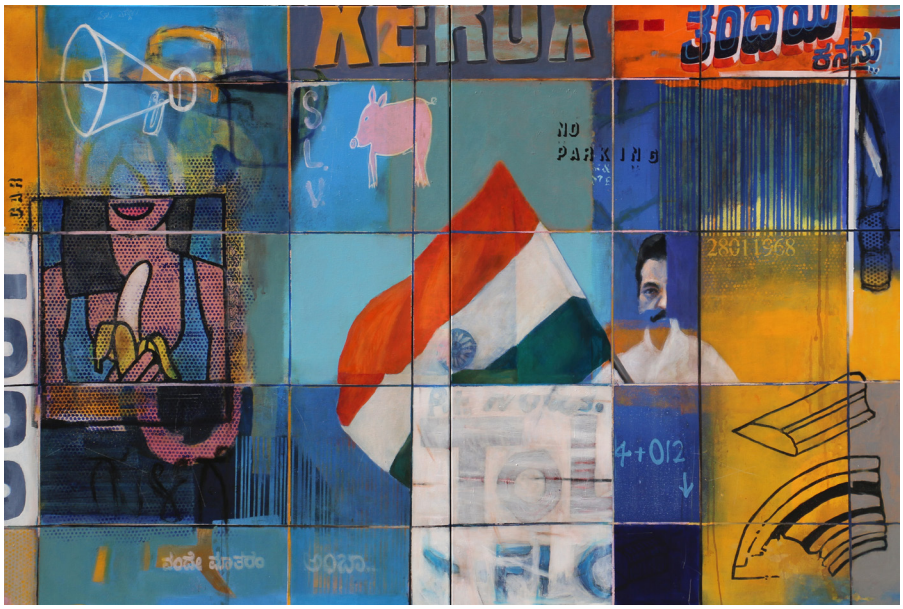


'Traces 8', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 48" x 72", 2020



'Traces 21', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 36" x 48", 2021



'Traces 15', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 48" x 72", 2020



'Traces 16', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 48" x 60", 2020



'Traces 20', Oil and Acrylic on Canvas, 48" x 72", 2021



'Traces 13', Oil & Acrylic on Canvas, 48" x 48", 2020

Ravikumar Kashi is a Bangalore-based multidisciplinary artist whose work spans painting and drawing to photography, installation and artist books among other mediums. Ravi's work articulates individual and collective experience of contemporary socio-political and cultural identities. Email: ravikumarkashi@gmail.com

City of Dins and Tongues

Deepa Suriyaprakash



Ever wondered which of our senses are put to most use? Would it not be the sense of seeing and hearing? For those of you debating whether it is the sense of touch, we are a generation that touches a digital screen more than anything else, hence let us park that consideration aside.

We may be tasting more than the generations before us, but that is because of our gluttony and shrunk-to-phone-size culinary world accessibility, backed by a compulsion to pander to our aspirations of global identity. Less said the better about the sense of smell in the context of the city, especially with the unseasonal rains of late. Since 'seeing' is already at its excessive best, let us dwell on the sense of hearing.

This sense needs to be anchored to a place. A place could be home, or where one works, socialises, commutes, thrives or all of these. A place where one's life is. Life on steroids if you will, in cities - more precisely Indian cities. We pick the young and old city of Bengaluru (the city which owns the pride of becoming a verb), that can lure and loot. To an outsider it kindles a certain image of anxiety-driven businesses, too much traffic, good weather and beer. The author, as protagonist D, becomes the anchor to walk the reader through accounts of sound, linguistics and environment of this city.

Aaamava, '03. A native of Chennai, when D first visited Bangalore (we had not reached the 'nationalist-city-renaming' spree yet in history!) in 1997 at 15 years of age - from the scorching City of Mad Rascals (colloquial reference to Chennai, formerly known as Madras). What she did not enjoy was the sound of a language she heard being spoken. It was at once throaty, dry and rude. She heard a version of her own mother tongue, Tamizh (also spelt as Tamil), that was unintelligible. Tamizh was one of the many languages that Bangalore's street vendors spoke with casual irreverence.

Newly introduced to a dialect, she went back to her land, where language, food, cinema and a generous dose of pride are served in equal portions to children with an appetite for the 'local'. Six years later, as fate would have it, D came to this city, this time as a young architect. She took the advice of her colleagues and chose to rent a paying guest (PG) accommodation in the Tamizh-speaking neighbourhood of Ulsoor/Halasuru, an erstwhile extension of Bangalore's cantonment. Then, she knew little or no Kannada and did not understand the absurd layer of influence of Kannada on Tamizh. So she often encountered Ulsoor Tamizh-speak:

Aamava (yes, is it?) instead of *Apadiya* (is it so?).
Pesa vechen (I made them/him/her converse), instead of *Pesinen* (I conversed).
Sapda vechen (I made her eat) instead of *Ootinen* (I fed her)

Every verb sounded like a forceful action.
More quirks followed.

Engaladhu ('belonging to us', not including the person in conversation)
Ungaladhu (belonging to the person in conversation without including self)
Nambaladhu (belongs to both people in conversation).

This *engaladhu* and *nambaladhu* business is unique to Tamizh, D would realise. There was subtle etiquette based on one's closeness to the subject that called for appropriate usage. In English, Hindi and Kannada - the other languages she could claim to comprehend - there is 'ours/yours*', 'hamare/tumhare' and 'namdhu/nimdhu'* respectively. Two clear conditions. Bangalore Tamizh does not bother with this distinction, mixing the *'engaladhu/nambaladhu'*. D was stumped by her PG housemate's reference to their shared house as *'engaladhu* PG' thus excluding D or her electrician asking *'nambaladha* madam *veedu?'*, referring to the work site as D's and his. Six months of the Ulsoor Tamizh meant that D was in for an adventure everyday in her neighbourhood.

With time, D moved out of Ulsoor, leaving behind the local sounds and Tamizh. The sounds in her new environs on MG Road and Indiranagar were infused with linguistic accuracy and sophistication - always a delight to the ear. But D would secretly miss the brash lightness of Ulsoor Tamizh. As resistant as she thought she was, this slang had imprinted on D, and when she went back home, and said *aaamava* for *apadiya* among many other things in the town of Mad Rascals starting with her own brother who took her for a ride of *nakkal* (sarcasm) and *nyandi* (poking fun).

Kannada Gothu, '09 to '13. Fast-forward a decade into this story - now D is married and has settled in Bengaluru (yes, by now we have reached the 'city-names-being-Indianised' part of history). She lived now in the diagonally opposite end of the city, the parts that sternly had the OG (original gangsters) locals, i.e Kannadigas in *hallis* (villages) and *paalyas* (localities), nestled between housing societies of J-Nagaras - localities starting with the alphabet 'J' and ending with the term '*nagara*' (township/ neighbourhood). She is married into an illustrious Kannadiga family, and English became the language of communication with her inlaws, until she decided to learn their language, out of desperation and boredom.

D evolved a strategy. She would watch her mother-in-law speak, and compared notes with the teleseries running in the background. She would pick words that were a mouthful and exaggerated, and use them boldly in her auto rickshaw rides making instant friends through bus journeys, part-impressing and part-confusing her co-passengers.

She amused people, who stifling their laughter, would correct her, mock her or politely excuse themselves. Every conversation was an opportunity! She deduced some simple comparisons and rules between her mother tongue and mother-in-law's tongue. Words starting with the syllable *pa* in Tamizh, began with the syllable *ha* in Kannada, e.*g. palli/halli* (village), *paal/ haalu* (milk), *poge/hoge* (smoke), *pagal/hagalu* (day). Words starting with the syllable *va* in Tamizh began with the syllable *ba* in Kannada e.g. *vaa/baa* (come), *venne/benne* (butter), *velli/belli* (silver), *vaayi/baayi* (mouth). Add a '*u*' to the end of a known Tamizh word whenever unsure, and make it seem like a Kannada word, e.g. *aval/avalu* (she/her), *magan/ maganu* (son), *magal/magalu* (daughter). With these three simple rules, she would strike a casual conversation, brimming with confidence, and hold it till her brain cells died, exhausted with working the permutations and combinations.

Rodeos, Radios, and Nogroj, '13- '19. Come to think of it, the daily commute in Bengaluru requires superpowers and many commuting Bengalureans consider their favourite radio jockeys (RJ) as a superpower. To be able to go through the mind-numbing experience that is Bengaluru traffic with zen-like patience and detachment, one needs a strong dose of distraction. The RJs of FM radio are news analysts, counsellors, opinion seekers, pacifiers, comedians and information providers, spicing their

talks with oodles of charm, sarcasm and humour to keep their audience enrapt. D has her favourite RJs too, starting with quick-witted Shraddha of Fever FM Mad Mornings fame; the easygoing evening companion Sriram Sullia from the The SuperHero Show; Disha Oberoi, the passionate voice on current affairs; Rachana of Radio Mirchi for *sakkath* (super) hot information; Kay with his casual cool approach; Prithvi who asks *Prithvi ko Hindi kyun nahi aathi* (Hindi for 'Why doesn't Prithvi know Hindi?'); and Darius Sunawala, who with his gentle personality made Sunday evenings special with deep, meaningful conversations with experts in varied fields.

Who is the *baap* (boss) of them all? Of course, our man Nogroj, one of the many avatars of Danish (parody) Sait. D would listen to The Super Hero show on 104 Fever FM, waiting for Danish's prank calls to liven the dreaded wet and long evenings in her car. Danish manages to caricature, criticise, stereotype people and get away with it all, winning hearts and laughs along the way. Is he politically correct? Absolutely not. Relatable? Absolutely yes. It is a brand of comedy that is lowbrow, popular, and representative of Bengaluru! The sounds of Bengaluru through the radio are distinctive and differ in sounds of the city and its voices, and flows of music and traffic. When D visits Chennai, still the Mad Rascals' city, and her brother turns on the car radio, she catches herself thinking, 'Isn't that too much of the same language?'

Click here to listen to the audio

Silence of Pandemic, '20. Today, D lives at Silk Board Junction, that infamous Bermuda Triangle for South Bengalureans (look it up if you are an outsider, and be astonished by the memes and literature on it). Yes. Let that sink in. After 44 days of Covid-enforced lockdown in 2020, she decided to go on a drive. She came back depressed. Going through Silk Board Junction in just seconds, she could count the cars on the road, could hear the hum of birds, and could see the clear sky, yet she came back gloomy. It must have been the 'Silk-Board-without-traffic-is-not-the-same' Syndrome.



Click on the image to watch the video



Click on the image to watch the video

Music of the language, '08-'22 - D can now speak, read (very slowly) and write (even more slowly) Kannada. Her Hindi also has improved in leaps and bounds, but will never be good enough. She loves the sound of Urdu, understands Telugu and Malayalam from movies, works and socialises in English, but always thinks in Tamizh. In the past decade-and-a-half, there are some musician friends that connected her to these languages and their beauty, antiquity and depth. In fact, the friends' work is limitless, where language becomes a mere medium to provide meaning.
So it is the sound of music overlaid with the sound of language. There is B (Bindhumalini), V (Vasu Dixit), R (Raghu Dixit), P (M.D Pallavi), V (Vedanth Bharadwaj), S (Shilpa Mudbi), G (Gurupriya Atreya) and many more who created this mellifluous sound sphere for D, that she can only associate with Bengaluru - a City of Dins and Tongues, musically so.

Click here to listen to the audio

Deepa Suriyaprakash is an architect, academic and a Trash talker (she likes to segregate waste, make compost and also teach composting to others). Email: deepa.suriyaprakash@gmail.com

as I watch the halo
neither of light nor of dark
that this city allies with
I remember all my old lives

I was a glow-worm once
knew the darkness well
being light myself
was innately lit within

I was a moth later
born after the first rain
lured by light
died learning it

having spent the Karma
of light and dark
here I am
like many others
as another worm in this city
that does not go dark
that does not know light
either

Nagaraj Vastarey
Click here to listen to the poem

Nagaraj Vasterey is an architect, academic and award-winning Kannada writer and poet. His writing has appeared in several prestigious newspapers and his books include Nineteenth Degree, Urban Panthers and Nirvaya among others. Email: vastarey@vastarey.smdc.co.in

sub:version Issue 01, August 2023, pp. 130-131

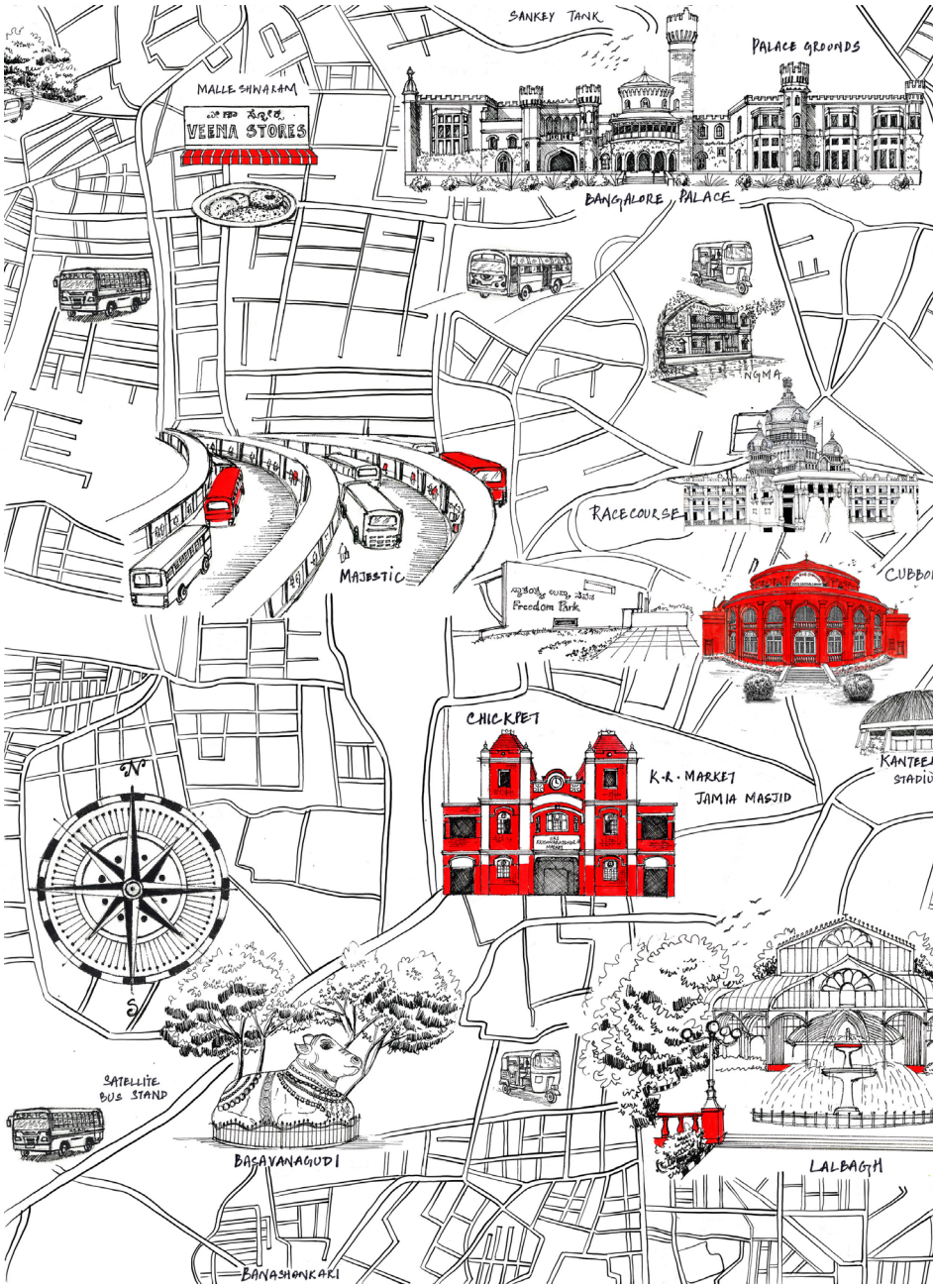
Bangalo'red'

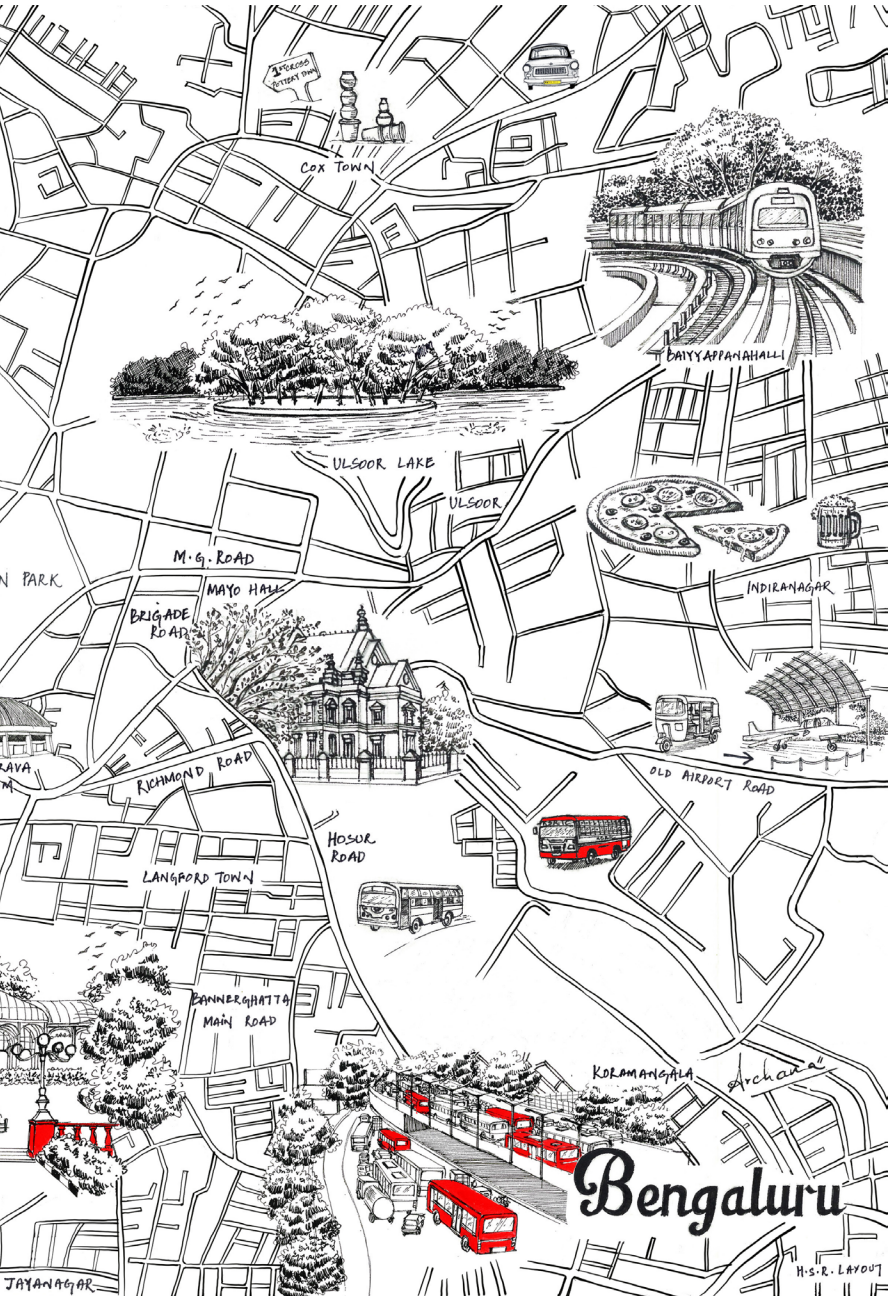
Archana Pereira

As a trained architect, I derive a lot of inspiration from cityscapes. The architecture that defines a place tells tales of years gone by, the history of the myriad structures and elements that complete a city. I use mapping as a way of highlighting little details, narrating lesser-known fascinating facts and capturing the moment and memory of the place.

My artworks capture iconic landmarks seen through the eyes of an individual, from a personal perspective. My love for exploring old cities, from their deep-rooted history to present-day life takes form in my pen and ink drawings, for this medium lends intimacy and allows me to weave an intricate storyline.

This illustrated map of Bangalore explores the heritage of Bangalore, marking various historic landmarks such as the State Central Library at Cubbon Park, KR Market, Bangalore Palace, Lalbagh and the Bull Temple in Basavanagudi. The map also features legendary eateries of the city like Veena Stores in Malleshwaram.





Bangalore was once a City of Lakes, however many remain polluted or have been encroached upon for urban development. The map highlights a few of the lakes that have been maintained. It is a blend of Bangalore then and now, bringing in the bygone era through its iconic structures and the Bangalore of today with the breweries, pizzerias and the evergrowing traffic.

The medium of the artwork is pen and ink, highlighting the details of architecture and spirit of the city while mapping memories of the place. The colour red is emphasised as most of the landmarks in the city stand out bright in a Pompeian red colour surrounded by lush greenery. Some of the local transport like the public buses were also red and white which have been emphasised in the artwork. The illustrated map is a tribute to the city of Bangalore, that is evolving every day and it is an attempt to capture and celebrate the heritage of the city that remains preserved while the city continues to grow.

Archana is an architect by qualification and an artist by passion. She is enchanted by history and specialises in detailed pen and ink artworks that are inspired by travel and architecture.
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Mayo Hall

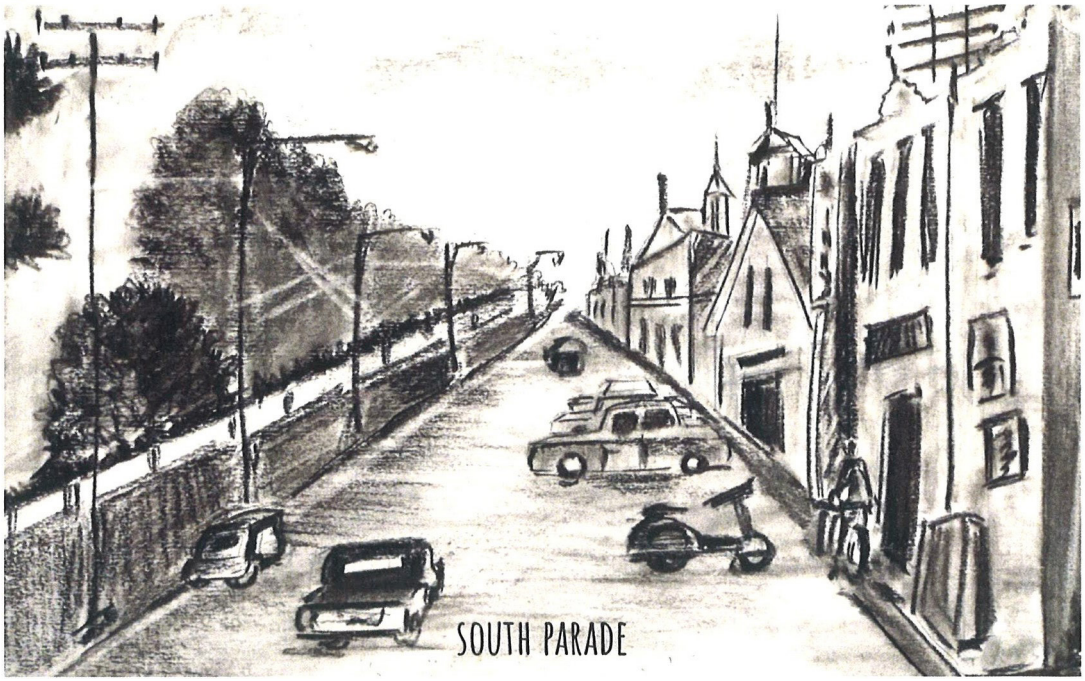
SOUTH PARADE'S STORIES

Vivek Mahaveer & Esha Raikar

Bengaluru, Karnataka's capital city, sits in India's Deccan Plateau. Once known as the City of Lakes and Garden City, it evolved to become India's Silicon Valley. But the city's nucleus started off as a settlement around a mud fort, built in 1537 by a local chieftain, Kempe Gowda I.

Bengaluru was the headquarters of the British administration from 1831 to 1881. In 1949, the *Pete* and Cantonment areas were merged, and Bengaluru switched from a textile production hub to a real estate market with the highest land rate in India! High-rise buildings came into the picture and with that came more small-scale industries on the city's outskirts.

Scan this card to bring it alive



South Parade Road

South Parade Road

Did you know that Mahatma Gandhi Road was once known as South Parade during pre-independent Bengaluru? During colonial times, the road used to be called South Parade Road because it was situated to the south of the British military parade grounds. On 26 February 1948, it was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi (MG) Road.

Today, MG Road is part of Bengaluru's Central Business District. The road runs from Trinity Circle at one end to Anil Kumble Circle at the other. MG Road is one of the busiest and most popular roads in the city, lined with shopping malls, pubs, restaurants, art galleries, showrooms and banks. Take a closer look and one can spot remnants of a bygone era hidden amongst the colonial buildings, plaques and statues.

Not known to many today, MG Road abounds with architectural treasures and places rich in heritage and history. For example, the Holy Trinity Church, one of the oldest in the area, built in 1852 for the British Regiment, has several tablets dedicated to officers who died in various battles in South East Asia. The Mayo Hall is another colonial building along MG Road and is dedicated to Lord Mayo, Viceroy of India.

FlippAR Go

FlippAR Go is an Augmented Reality (AR) start-up based in the beautiful city of Bengaluru. Fuelled by NUMA Accelerate and (*kaapi* - colloquial for coffee), it specialises in computer vision, 3D, video, app and content development. Augmented Reality is a technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user's view of the real world, thus providing a composite view, to get people, especially the younger generation to unlock the stories of these places by simply pointing their phones at a building to watch its story come to life on their screen.

Experiencing heritage through tech

Ask most people about MG Road and they would say it is a great place for shopping, food and having a good time. Very few know of its former name, South Parade Road, and the history surrounding it. As founder of FlippAR Go, I wanted to change that and what better tool to use in today's day and age than technology, to tell such stories?

It all started with the story of the Plaza Theatre that was once located on MG Road. I recall fond memories of watching movies at the Plaza theatre with my friends in the 1990s. But very recently, I got to know that the theatre has some intriguing stories of its own! Built in the 1930s, Plaza used to have a ballroom, modelled after Piccadilly Circus in London. Unfortunately, by the time I stumbled upon this piece of history, I could not experience Plaza theatre in this new light as it had since been demolished. Today, the MG Road metro station stands in its place. Diving deeper, my team and I discovered that MG Road was in fact a treasure trove of heritage buildings, and every other wall had some story to tell. I saw AR as the perfect tool to tell these stories, allowing people to get to know their city and its evolution better.

Methodology

i) Identification of heritage buildings

FlippAR GO worked with Aliyeh Rizvi, a cultural documentarian with a deep understanding of the history of Bengaluru. Aliyeh helped curate the buildings and stories that needed to be covered on South Parade. The heritage spots we selected were:

- South Parade Road
- St. Mark's Cathedral
- The Bengaluru Tract & Book Society
- Oriental Building (LIC)
- Higginbothams
- Cauvery Arts & Craft Emporium
- Mayo Hall
- Galaxy Theatre
- East Parade Church.

ii) Content development

The team collated information from multiple sources. Some photographs were contributed by Kiran Natarajan, a Bengaluru-based IT professional who collects Bengaluru ephemera and memorabilia and writes on related historical topics. A priest at St. Mark's Cathedral contributed a coffee table book containing information about the church.The content for each building, which might be in the form of text, videos, audio, images and 3D projections is collated into short videos with English voice-overs.

iii) Setting up the buildings on the AR platform

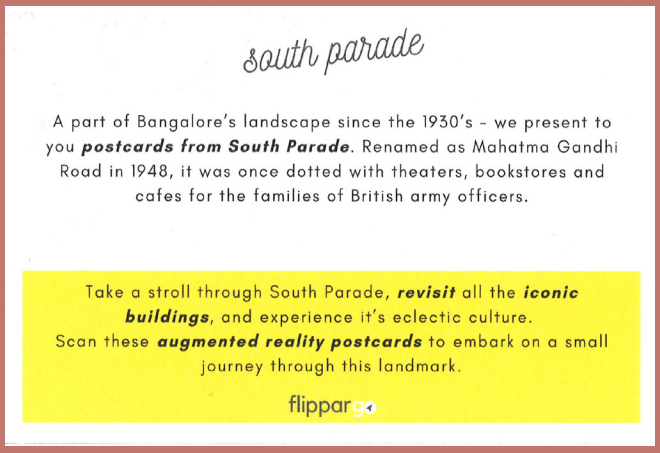
The buildings are AR enabled so that on scanning the buildings with the FlippAR GO app, the stories come alive on your screen.

iv) Creating AR postcards

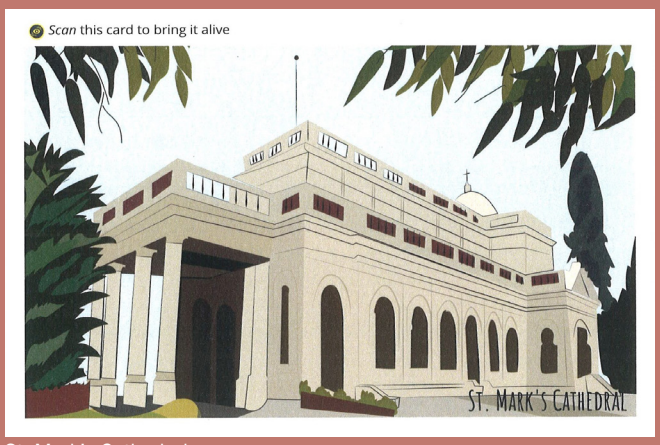
For the buildings of South Parade, Esha Raikar, illustrator and user-experience designer at FlippAR GO illustrated a set of AR postcards of heritage sites on the former South Parade. She researched the buildings, visited them, referred to photos from archives, and illustrated them in her style using Adobe Illustrator. AR made it possible for any artwork to come to life, in an experience that is educational, fun and interactive.

How do these AR postcards work?

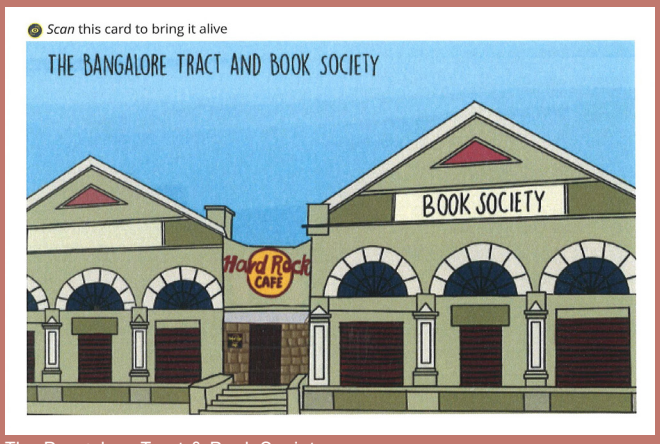
Scan the postcard using the FlippAR Go app that can be downloaded for free on Google Play Store and the App Store, and watch it come alive with the stories of that place. This way you can access these stories from anywhere around the world. Currently these postcards are being sold at bookstores, hostels, hotels and a few embassies.



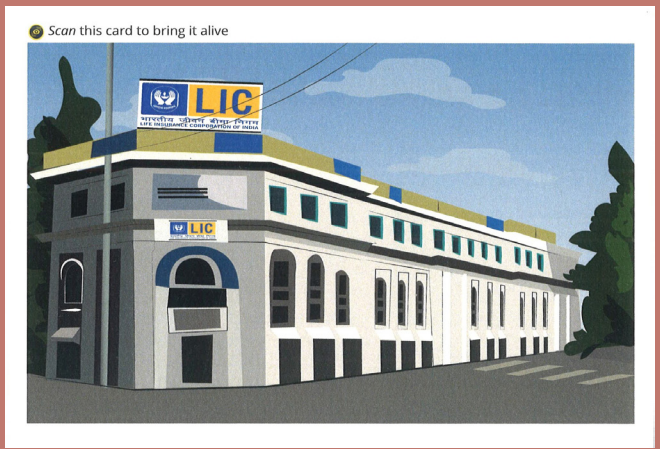
The cover card for the South Parade FlipArr card set



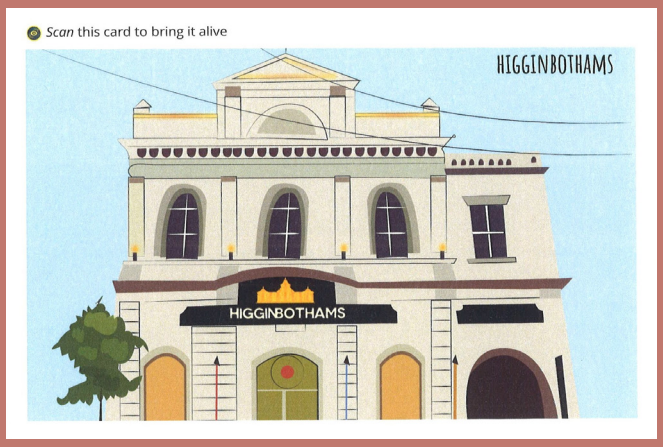
St. Mark's Cathedral



The Bengaluru Tract & Book Society



Oriental Building (LIC6



Higginbothams

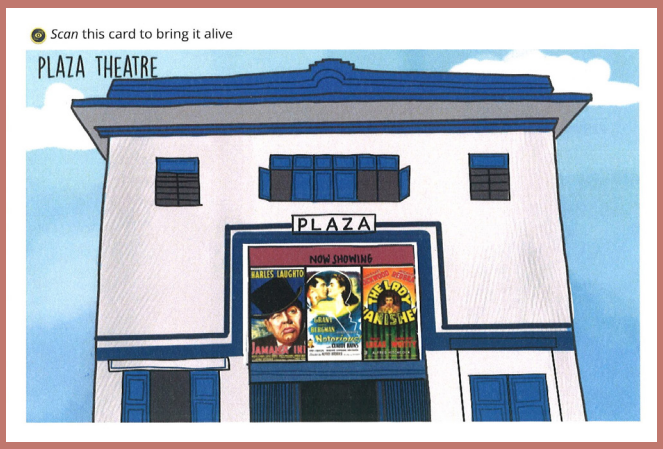
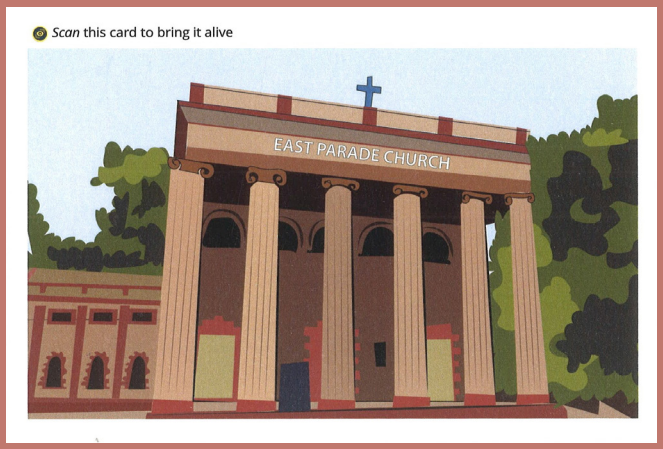
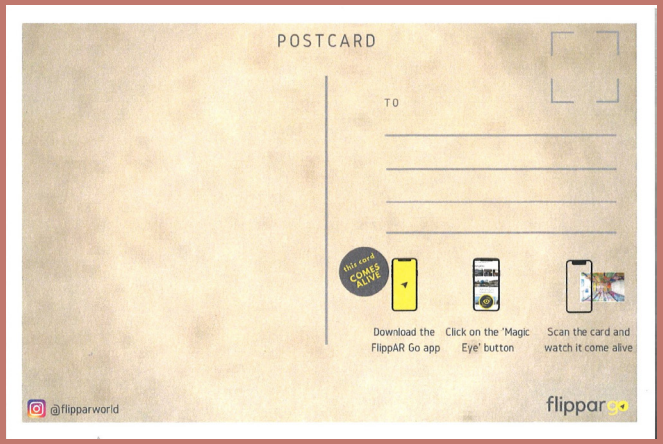


Figure 8. Plaza Theatre



East Parade Church



The back of the FlippAR card

How can you unlock MG Road's stories?

1. Download the FlippAR GO app for free on Google Play Store or App Store.
2. Look for the MG Road trail on the app, which lists all the curated buildings covered on MG Road and the shortest route to reach there. If the user is already at MG Road, the trail would show up on the top.
3. When in front of the building, scan the building to bring alive its stories.

Challenges to the FlippAR GO project

1. Varying light conditions have to be taken into consideration. The scanning of the buildings would be inconsistent at times.
2. Creating awareness about the South Parade Road project was a challenge. The creation of AR enabled postcards helped achieve the same.
3. Content generation and information verification were one of the most important steps. All the information had to be verified by an expert.

Impact of the South Parade Project

1. The project was very well received by citizens and government departments.
2. Both tourists and locals continue to unlock stories on a regular basis, using the FlippAR GO app.
3. The AR postcards have travelled across 30 countries and over 400 cities in India.
4. This project has helped a lot of youngsters experience and learn about South Parade.
5. With the positive feedback that followed the execution of this project, the FlippAR team went on to create stories for over 200 other places of interest.

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Wonderland

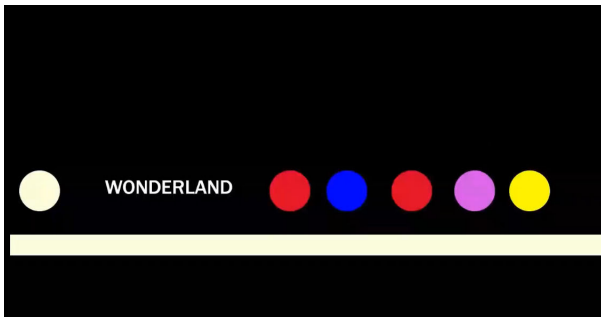
A Speculative Exploration of Learning and Desire

Namrata Dewanjee

All meaningful human interaction will happen (is already happening) digitally in the near future. The real world is only a theatrical space- a space to react to and record content and run back to the digital space to broadcast the collage of our experience.

[paraphrased from Bo Burnham's Netflix Special "Inside"]

The city is a living, breathing entity in a constant state of flux characterised by its desire to grow, spread and become. 'Becoming', Deleuze writes, 'is an anti-memory'. In Bangalore's bustling Church Street, this desire for growth and expansion takes on a frenzied, almost paranoid quality, inducing the same in the visitor who gets caught in its web. Here, the vestiges of British colonial occupation intermingle with the glittering signs of consumer capitalism, promising endless possibilities for satisfaction and fulfilment, bringing to mind Lenin when he described 'colonialism as the first large-scale expression of capitalism.'

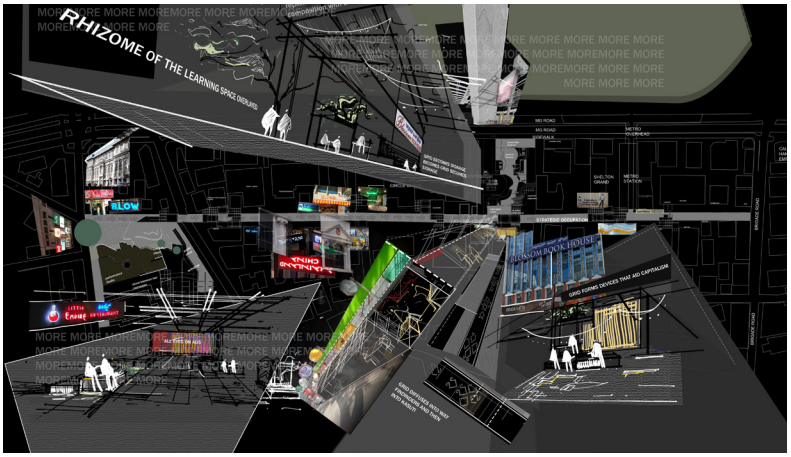


Click on the image to watch the video

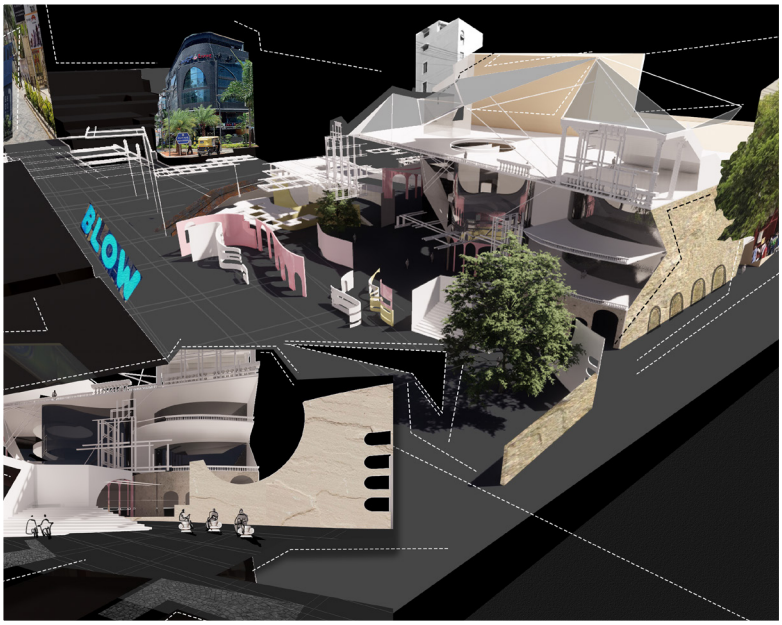
Into this charged atmosphere comes Wonderland, a speculative exploration to see the city as a centre for learning and vice versa. This intervention does not aim to provide a remedy for this paranoid condition but to fuel it further, investigating the possibilities that emerge from a city in flux. It is a whimsical investigation for an Architectural Design Studio as part of the sixth-semester undergraduate curriculum to explore idealistic and abstract ideas and to understand the nature of education and its relationship to the city. Wonderland questions if education (or the city) can ever be truly democratic in a schizophrenic society in which, according to Frederic Jameson, the individual 'lacks a personal identity, is unable to differentiate between self and world, and is incapable of experiencing continuity through time.'

Wonderland is a threefold exploration taking place in three distinct sites on Church Street, each one embodying a different aspect of the city's restless desire to become more and more itself. At the first site, the memory of the soon-to-be-demolished Shrungar Shopping Centre looms large, a symbol of the city's perpetual flux and change. The second site is where 1 SOBHA Mall stands today. The intervention imagines the absence of the mall but is unable to ignore the possibility of the site being, as the builders of Sobha describe, 'A plush shopping centre. A world-class entertainment avenue.'

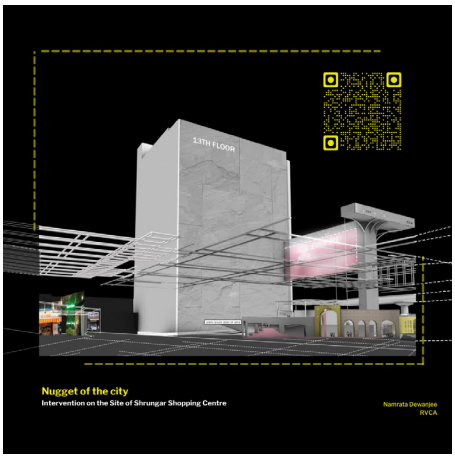
Abutting the site is the Stacey Memorial School established in 1964 in the heart of what was the British Cantonment in Bangalore. The intervention utilises the conventional spaces of education offered by the school while providing new modes of learning and interacting with the city. The third site is Church Street itself, tying the projects in the first and second sites with its schizophrenic desires.

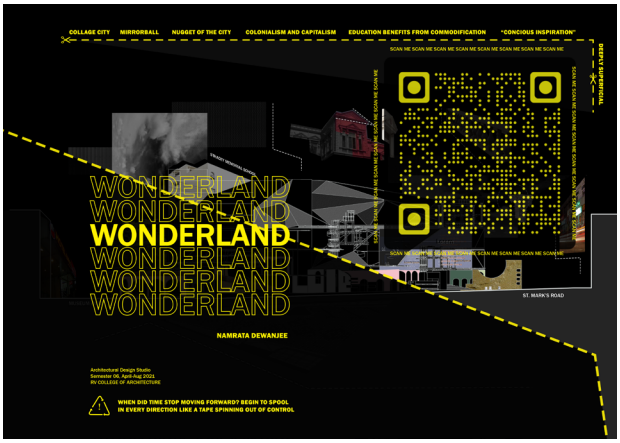


However, Wonderland is an incomplete gesture and only the tip of the iceberg in imagining a space for learning for the entire city. It also touches upon the question of whether any attempt to imagine a democratic model of learning would fall short in a place that is rife with what Jameson defines as 'isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers'. This threefold exploration seeks to answer these questions and understand the role that learning can play in our relationship with the city.









Namrata Dewanjee is an alumna of RV College of Architecture, Bangalore. She explores the multifaceted nature of the built environment and the layers that shape it.
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Where are the Horses?

Raji Sunderkrishnan

'*Yella* okay. Cool drink *yaake*?' (All is well, why do you need a cool drink?) exhorted maverick actor Upendra, plastered over every other billboard in Bangalore in the early 2000s; United Breweries had launched its home-grown beer, popular today as Kingfisher. I diligently noted the tagline down - it was now the third sentence in my Kannada arsenal, after '*Kannada gothillaa*' (I do not know Kannada) and '*nimma hesaru yenu*?' (What is your name?). As a new migrant from Bombay to Bangalore, I was part of the great migration of software engineers' spouses, a Bangalore phenomenon that accelerated since the late 1990s.

This was the first time I did not know the local language, but being interested in languages anyway, I set about integrating with the city's fabric. The sentences I knew would only allow me to ask somebody for their name and then replace the cold drink in their hand with beer. If I wanted more meaningful conversation, I needed to quickly expand my vocabulary. But where could I find a Kannada teacher?

In the part of South Bangalore that I still live in - once considered the city's outskirts at the turn of the century - the crowd was and still is cosmopolitan. My apartment complex (one of the very few in Bangalore in the early 2000s) was filled with the sounds of Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Marathi and English. My search for a Kannadiga neighbour proved futile. Determined, I began self-learning - from the radio, auto drivers, and our domestic help. I soon gained fluency in 'household chores-Kannada', but sweeping, mopping, and lamenting over the grease removal inefficiency of a dishwashing soap were hardly popular topics in social situations. I needed more.

Radio to the rescue! '*Onde ondu sari kanmunde baare*' (Appear before my eyes at least once) crooned a love-struck Ganesh in Mungaru Male, a blockbuster movie at that time. I took notes: 'the same saree keeps appearing before my eyes', marvelling at the hero's capacity to remember a saree, a quality not usually ascribed to men. Mind you, my context for interpreting Kannada was through my proficiency in Tamil and Hindi, two languages which did eventually give me the advantage of learning Kannada much quicker than those who knew only one or neither of those languages. And Bangalore's youth largely got by using 'Kanglish', a convenient mix of Kannada and English. But all this also meant that I was constantly attributing hilariously wrong meanings - many months later, I was dejected to know that Ganesh did not really remember the heroine's saree, and that 'sari' actually referred to time in Kannada. Learning from songs eventually also proved to be restrictive because there was a limit to how many people I could profess my love to. Or invite for a midnight rendezvous by the lake.

'Auto-Kannada' - picked up during my chats with auto drivers (while clinging to the sidebar of the speeding auto for dear life, even as Bangalore's cold breeze decimated my humidity and heat-acclimated bones), turned out to be my most impressive progress in the language. Auto drivers were always happy to talk - about the weather, route shortcuts, professional woes, and how inflation in Bangalore had made things unaffordable for them (an unfortunately true repercussion of the software boom). They were the ones who taught me the correct Kannada pronunciations of tricky spellings of localities like Arekere, Chikpete, Bidadi and Kathriguppe. Or mouthfuls like Bommanahalli, Sampangiramanagara and Agrahara Dasarahalli, all

of which had far too many letters and syllables than I was accustomed to. Through these lessons, I learnt that '*halli*' meant village, '*kere*' meant lake, and '*pete*' meant market: it was also a glimpse into the city's form and its focal points.

Talking to auto drivers and eavesdropping on their conversations with fellow-drivers at auto stands or the very few traffic lights that existed then, I also picked up slang words and tonalities. The word *goobe* (owl) was extremely multifunctional, and I used the mild expletive liberally with traffic violators, and as a term of endearment with friends and close colleagues. I could not quite understand the nuances of the popularly used '*chatri*' though, wondering when and why I would need to call a person an umbrella, which is what it meant in Hindi. Of course, I did not give such careful consideration to the usage of words like *yeno*/what, *baro*/come and *hogo*/go, confidently putting a pile of drawings on my boss's desk with a casual '*nodo'* (take a look) thrown at him. He turned red and told me how I probably did not realise that *nodo* lacked respect, and was only used with friends or youngsters in the family.

As my vocabulary grew, so did my confidence. I was picking up Kannada's tongue-twisting tenses and plurals, and one fine day, having learnt that '*-galu*' is a suffix for plurals, I eagerly tried it out on my auto ride home from work. By then, Bangalore's potholed roads were imprinted in my memory, and I had created a pothole map in my head. Wanting to warn the auto driver about an upcoming, back-breaking 'three-potholes-of-various-depths' stretch, I put my knowledge of '*-galu*' to use. The slow head-turn I received from the auto driver, with a shocked expression, after I had unleashed '*mundhe hallagalu barthaidhaare*' (there are potholes coming ahead) on him, is one for my history books. Of course, since he was looking at me and not the road, he drove over the potholes, and my spine suffered the consequences, leading me to admonish him gently - '*naanu helidhini, alvaa*?' (Did I not tell you?). He ignored the admonishment, and equally gently asked me '*yaavu ooru, maa*?' (Which city do you belong to?), an indicator that he had guessed that I was not a local. How? I thought I had nailed it! I was told by a chortling friend the next day that '*barthaidhaare*' is not the right way to pluralise inanimate objects; it is in fact a sign of respect or pluralisation only for people.

Undeterred, I forayed into 'construction-Kannada', a prerequisite for my professional work as an architect. While working on an international school, my boss would often drop by my desk to discuss the design. For a few days in a row, he pointed vaguely to a corner of my computer screen and asked '*gode yelli*?' (Where are the walls?). I nodded and ignored him for some days, but could sense that he was slowly getting frustrated, asking '*gode yelli*?' multiple times a day.

Making a presentation drawing with plants, people and other templates was supposed to be the last stage of the drawing, but irritated by his badgering, I completed a few things, took a printout, and plopped it on his desk with a 'here are the *godes*!' One look at the drawing and he thundered. Just as I started fearing for my job, he burst out laughing - '*gode*' means wall in Kannada and not horses, as the Hindi speaker in me had presumed. I felt foolish when I saw the equestrian track in the school design, which I had peppered liberally with drawings of horses. This also solved a huge mystery - during site visits, when fellow architects kept asking the masons - '*gode yavatthu kaththaiddiraa*?' It was an inquiry about when the walls were going to be built, and not my perplexing (and now obviously nonsensical) translation of 'when are you going to tie your horses?'

All these linguistic mishaps did not dissuade me from further attempts at speaking Kannada. I am happy to report that over the years, my Kannada grew from strength to strength. The day I was extremely proud of my progress was when a bus conductor asked me if I knew the stop where I had to alight. I nodded and told him in Kanglish, Bangalore's lingua franca - 'next stop *nalli illithaaythini*' (I will alight at the next stop) - a pronunciation that I would have fumbled with a couple of years earlier. I had finally arrived - at my stop, and in Bangalore.

Raji is an architect who ironically dreams about moving out of the concrete jungle someday. A slow travel enthusiast, she often disappears to learn from travel, which she considers her lifelong teacher.
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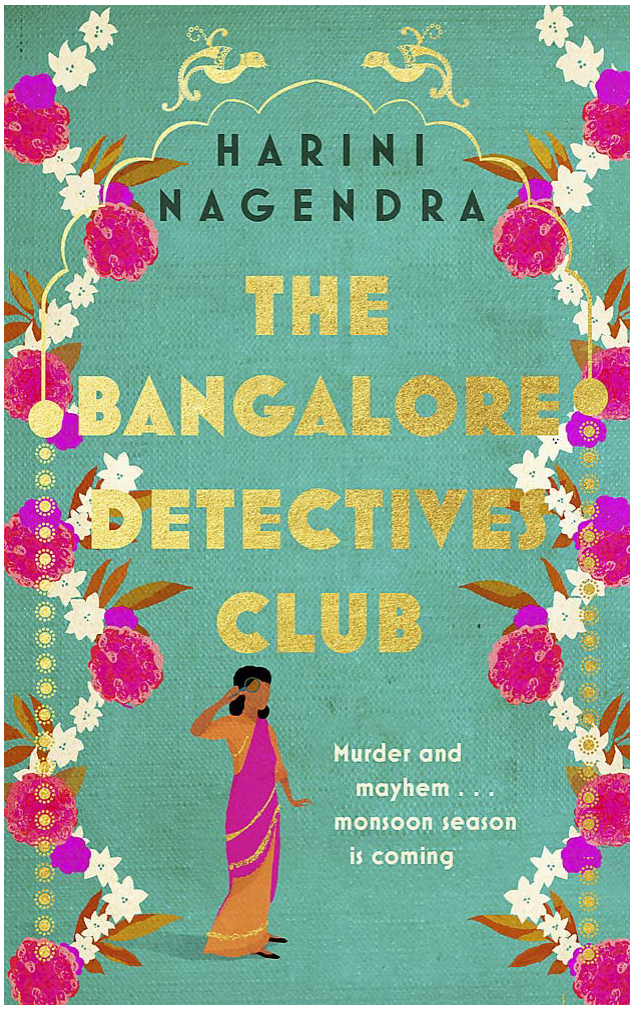


The Bangalore Detectives Club

2022, Hachette India

Harini Nagendra

Book in Question

What motivated you to write The Bangalore Detectives Club, a very different genre from your academic writing?

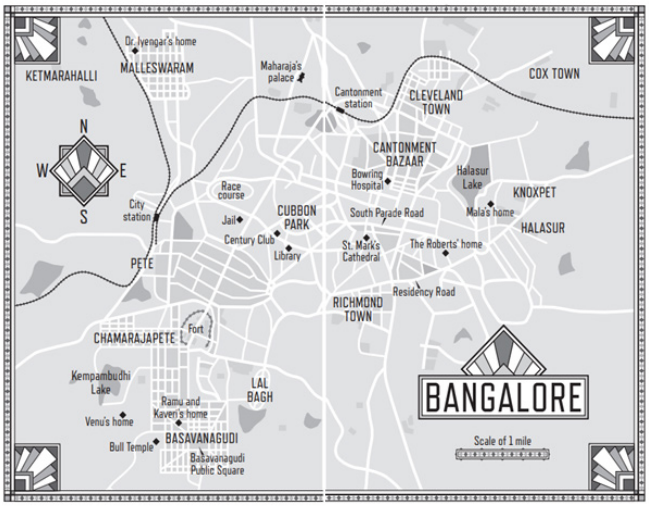
Fiction writing has always come first for me. When I was very young, I wrote a lot of fiction, short stories for school, entries for writing competitions (I won two medals in the Shankar's International Children's Competition, organised by Children's Book Trust, when I was 8 and 9 years) and for magazines. Later, up until my PhD and postdoctoral research, I wrote newspaper 'middles', short stories for the Sunday children's section of newspapers, and even a story for an online literary magazine. As my academic life became busier, though, I turned to academic writing and then to popular non-fiction writing, and this left me with little time for fiction writing. I never forgot or lost my fascination for, and interest in writing fiction though. I read a lot - one of my favourite genres is historical mysteries. In 2007, the idea of writing a mystery book set in historical Bangalore came to me. My original plan was to set this in the 1890s, but I later changed it to the 1920s, as this was a time that was far more interesting to explore for the reasons above.

What is the role of the city of Bangalore in the book? Backdrop, protagonist or character, or all of these?

Historical Bangalore provided a backdrop and setting, but a very important one, which has agency and influence in the way it shapes the lives and activities of the main protagonists in my book. For instance, the aristocratic Mrs. Urs, part of the extended royal family, drips condescension and disdain when she speaks of the need to keep 'riff-raff' out of the hallowed bounds of Century Club - paying little heed to the fact that Century Club was itself established because the British refused to allow the 'natives' (whom many British quite possibly considered 'riff-raff' too!) into their elite clubs. So, it has always been, in history, with the excluded forming their own clubs, and excluding those they think are further beneath them. In contrast, women from the lower socio-economic strata such as Mala, Thimakka and Narsamma, have very little, but share whatever they have most generously, without bounds - because it is precisely that dependence on others, that community-feeling, that has helped them survive in hard times - so when they are in a position to, they extend a similar helping hand to others. The landscape and ecology shaped the structure of buildings and streets, and in turn shaped the characters, mores and social life of people. In that sense, Bangalore is the backdrop, but not a neutral backdrop - it is a setting with agency.

Can you please elaborate on your choice of the time period in Bangalore's history for the book and how it defined the city at that point or even today?

Bangalore in the 1920s was a fascinating setting for a mystery book that could showcase the cultural contrasts between the British cantonment. I especially love Golden Age mysteries, set in the time period between World Wars I and II, an era when the world was on the cusp of major transformation. For women, especially, this was a time of great opportunity. In the US and UK, with so many men lost in the war, women had begun to step out of their homes in large numbers to enter the workforce, changing social attitudes, norms and expectations. The suffragette movement for women was gaining force, with women across the world demanding the right to vote and enter parliament. In many parts of India, and certainly in Mysore State, these movements had their influence as well. There were many women stepping into public life, entering the teaching profession and setting up schools for young women, joining the Mysore Representative Assembly, launching womens' magazines, becoming coffee entrepreneurs, and doing so many other things that were unheard of for women even a decade before. These women were true trailblazers and their struggles and perseverance, navigating past formidable societal obstacles, showed the way for women after them. Because the city in the 1920s was jointly governed, with some parts controlled by the British administration, and other areas by the Mysore Maharaja, the intersection between colonial and local lives was stark, and at the same time very fluid - providing many interesting opportunities for a historical crime novel.



What aspects of the city's identity/identities did you consider as integral to carry the narrative?

The landscape setting of different parts of the city shaped identity, and therefore, shaped the possibilities of different social and domestic interactions. The British Cantonment had large bungalows with gardens and pools, maintained by hard working Indian staff - but these gardens were largely empty. The wealthy Indian neighbourhoods such as parts of Basavanagudi had similar large homes, though with very different kinds of garden spaces - less ornamental, fewer lawns, more focused on fruits and flowers - more *used* gardens - but life was similarly conducted indoors for the most part, as Indian women from 'respectable' families were not expected to spend much time in the public gaze. In contrast, in the cramped bylanes of places like Ulsoor, where the cowherds made their homes, much of daily life was outdoors, with women moving freely through public spaces, and claiming them in the same way that men did. Many of these signatures live on in the city today, in the differences in the kinds of vegetation we see in the Indian areas such as Malleshwaram and Basavanagudi, with their *peepal*, banyan, coconut and *champaca* trees, versus the former Cantonment areas, with butterfruit, wood apple and Christmas trees - as well as some of the old homes that still remain, although fewer and fewer of these remain each year.

In what ways did particular locations and their socio-political milieu in Bangalore shape the storyline?

I can illustrate this best with examples, perhaps. At the Century Club, a club for Indians, but with 'elite' membership criteria that excluded many from it - the workers who labour there are focused on their own struggles, but resent the British influence that is strong and persistent even in places supposedly created in defiance of British exclusion of Indians. Similarly, through the British obsession with renaming Indian place names, and even the names of Indian people whose names they found difficult to pronounce - such as their servants, who toiled hard for them, and were unable to protest if they called them by a different name - I was able to illustrate power hierarchies and the injustice of everyday lived experiences of many Indians under the British rule - even if partially buffered by the fact that Mysore was a Princely State and the local residents here were not directly under British control.

Ralph Waldo Emerson famously wrote that 'Fiction reveals truth that reality obscures.' In what ways does this apply to The Bangalore Detectives Club?

We turn to nonfiction for data and facts that help us make sense of the world - but we turn to fiction to understand how people felt, lived, imagined, laughed, loved and dealt with the world. History is critical for us to make sense of our place in the world. So many of the things we do today - as a society or as individuals and communities - the thoughts and beliefs we hold closest to us, the norms and values that propel us to act or to stay silent - are contingent, not absolute - shaped by the past lives and societies inhabited by our ancestors. Fiction books set in historical times allow us to look at a diversity of lived experiences of people from various strata of society, in a way that it becomes difficult to pursue in a nonfiction, because the dominant voices in a nonfiction book are necessarily those that are recorded in some form or other. In this way, fiction helps us examine issues such as power and hierarchy, gender, caste and class disparities, and socioeconomic obsessions with status, whether Indian or British, in a more imaginative and empathetic way that emerges from the heart of the writer and in that sense, has a better chance of connecting directly with the reader.

In the process of writing the book, did you encounter any hitherto unknown facets of Bangalore that you would like to share with us?

In Lal Bagh, when my main protagonist Kaveri - a young bride who has just moved to Bangalore - goes with her husband Ramu to the zoo - the boundary between the wild and the cultivated parts of the city are clear when Kaveri sees a litter of tiger cubs in the zoo being suckled by a street dog. Their mother refused to feed them, so the zoo authorities turned to a local dog for assistance. This is based on a true incident recorded in the archives, although I took some liberties with the timeline. Similarly, the story of how the Century Club was founded - by Sir M.Visweswaraya, who wanted to create a club for Indians because he was once denied entry into the Bangalore United Services Club (now the Bangalore Club), is a true one, though better recorded in the archives.

Note: Images in this article are contributed by Harini Nagendra.

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Statue of Queen Victoria, Cubbon Park (Source: Madhuri Rao)

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KERE ECOSYSTEMS

Learnings from the Past

Anita C Jakkappanavar

Bengaluru is a multilayered city with many identities that span its origins as a *pete* to a colonial Cantonment and a post-Independence public sector industry hub to today's information technology capital. While the city's name 'Bengaluru' finds its first written mention in 890 CE, it was in 1537 CE that Kempegowda I, a local chieftain, established a mud-walled fort (*kote*) and market town (*pete*) under the Vijayanagara Empire's dominion. Perceived as a 'naked country' with dry fields and open horizons (Mathur, 2006) in the early 1700s, the city underwent significant transformations in economics, form and material landscapes through the 1800s. In the post-independence decades, rapid growth in trade, commerce and industry catalysed urbanisation and unplanned development, leading to the exploitation and degradation of Bengaluru's natural and built systems. The illustrations in this article aim to interpret and represent Bengaluru's transformations and changing landscapes over time, and are based on stories and anecdotes that I heard from local residents, environmentalists and researchers.

The illustration titled 'The Rhythm of Terrain, Water & Community' portrays the interaction between the city and its landscape before and after transformation (Figure 1). The right side of the illustration depicts holistic living of people in their ecosystems. It portrays the form, topography, climatic responses and material explorations in the city. The illustration is a collective memory of Bengaluru from the 1600s to 1700s where communities understood the role of water conservation and developed knowledge systems over generations, to conserve and recharge groundwater. Built with the communities' good will and participation, these systems were cost-effective and utilised the undulating terrain to develop irrigation channels by creating a network of diversion bunds. These harvesting systems were called *keres* (tanks), which supported afforestation, reduced soil erosion, increased groundwater absorption and the rainwater catchment area. These systems were the natural habitat for many birds and animals and also influenced the microclimate.

Planned and executed from the 1500s to the 1800s, Bengaluru's *keres* were based on traditional ponding systems where the waterways are structured in a series of interconnected lakes and canals, including rivulets such as Arkavathi (a minor tributary of Kaveri river) and Vrishabhavathi (a minor tributary of Arkavathi river) which was used for cultivation purposes. Bengaluru has an undulating terrain towards the west with thin soil cover and towards the east, the terrain is flat land with extensive soil cover. The *kere* was constructed by digging the soil and building elevated mud bunds to hold water. These bund walls were made by binding mud and loose stones, and slowed the flow of water and stored water during dry months. During the monsoon season, the runoff water formed streams and rivulets, which collectively formed a system of irrigation channels shaped by a network of diversion bunds.

The surplus water begins its journey from north and west through gentle slopes of the hillocks, small ridges and valleys of Nandi hills, Vidyaranyapura, Doddabettahalli, Makalidurga, Narayangiri, Antargange, Ramanagara, Savandurga, Rangaswamybetta, Kabbaldurga and many more. The running water was then collected by a series of tanks and smaller feeder tanks from which the surplus water overflowed into catchment basins and into main streams. The *keres* hence acted as catchment basins collecting surplus water, silt and clay. These tanks absorbed the monsoon rain to recharge the groundwater, maintaining the moisture in the soil, encouraging irrigation and providing nearby wells with drinking water. The *kere* system also acted as a flood control system preventing soil erosion and wastage of runoff water. The interconnected system enabled water access to nearby agrarian settlements and also balanced the surplus water runoff level during the monsoon season.

The left side of Figure 1 portrays the continuous change in the city with rapid urbanisation - the land dynamics, exploitation, and neglect resulting in an urban mosaic of grey concrete disrupting

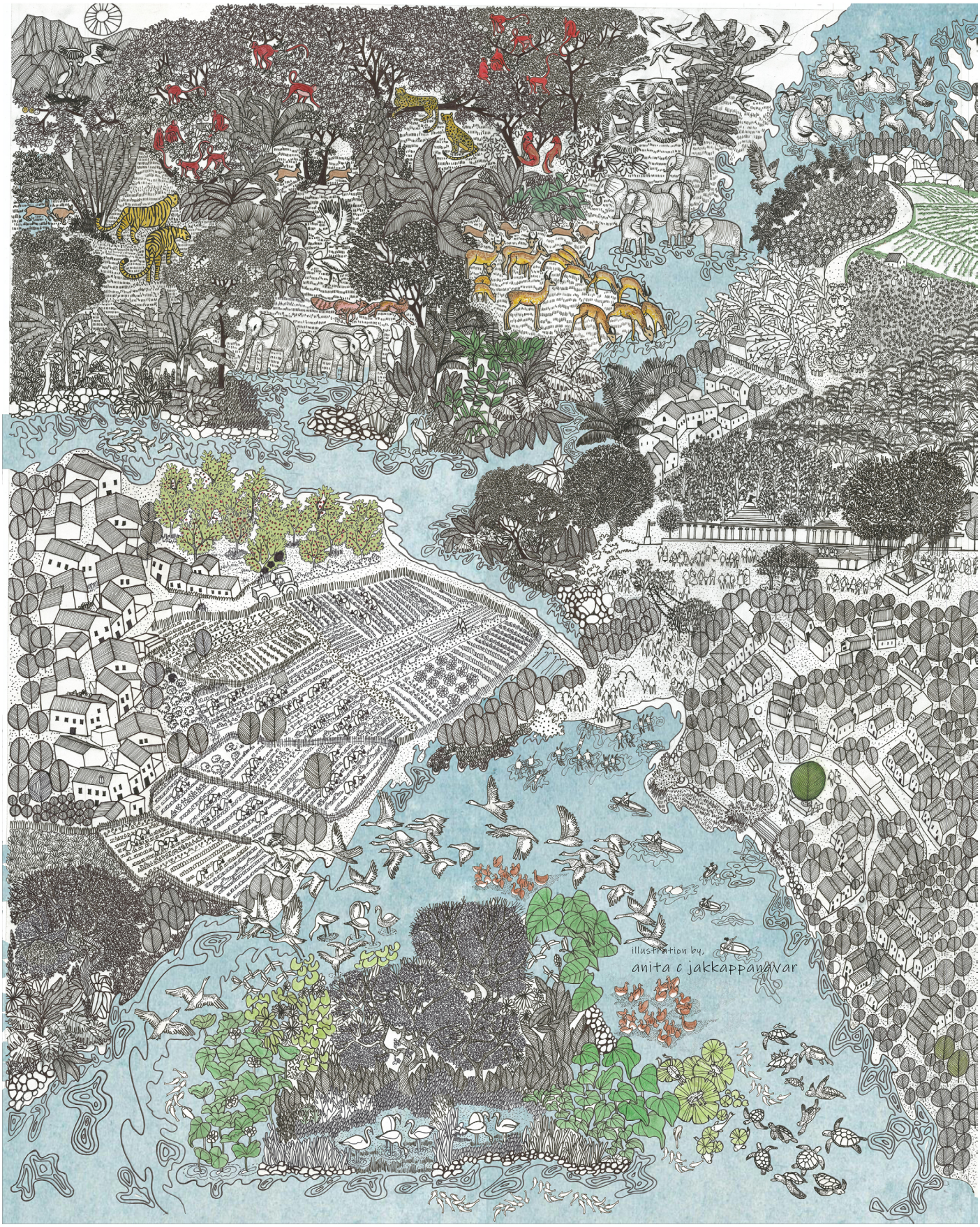

Figure 1. The Rhythm of Terrain, Water & Community

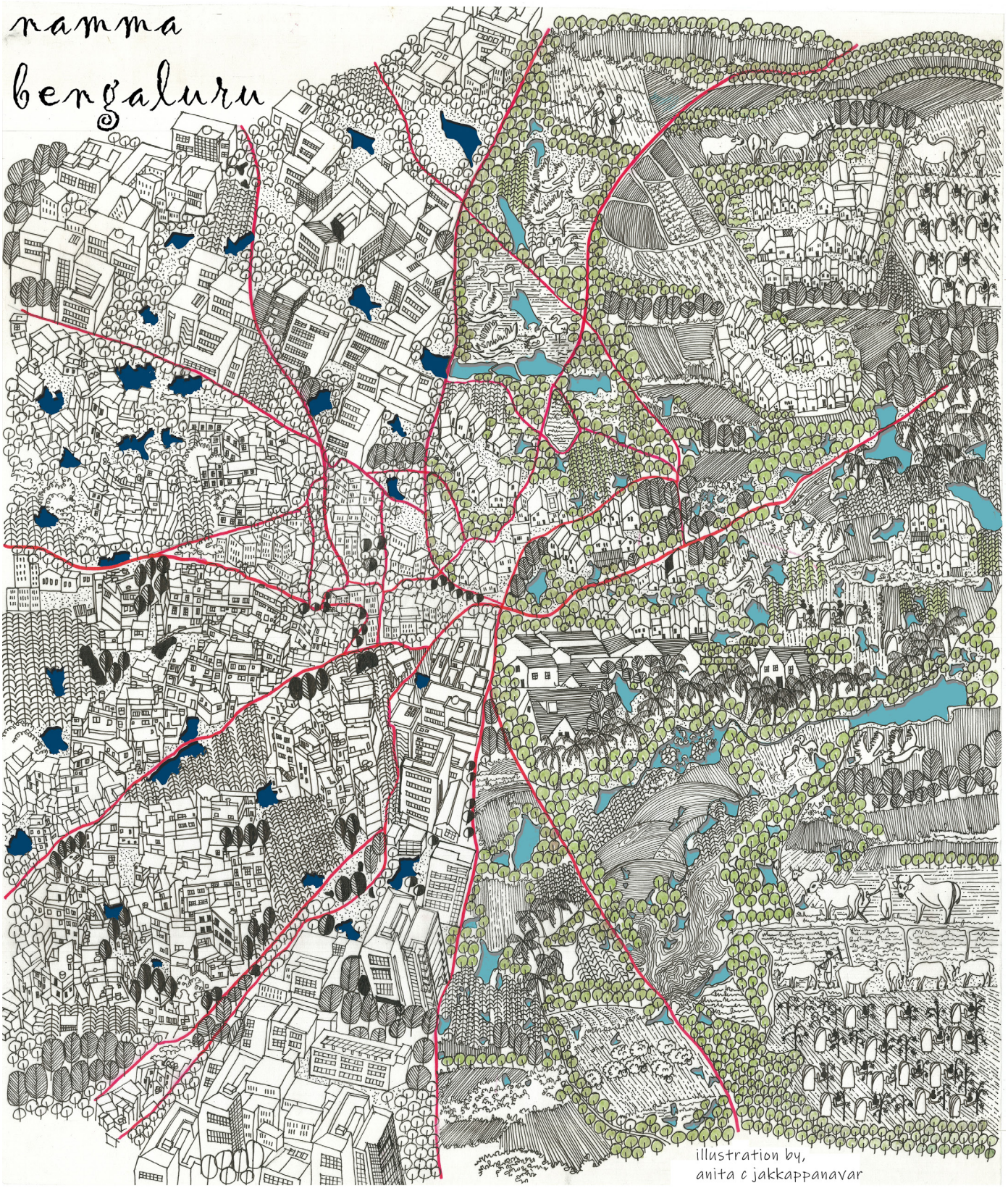

Figure 2. Cultural Scripts of Regional Landscapes in Bengaluru

the human-nature relationship. As the city grew, the encroachment of *keres* resulted in their disappearance while the rivulets were reduced to sewers. The illegal encroachment of lakes, unchecked dumping of effluents and waste, poor maintenance and management, are causing deterioration of lakes. The recent heavy rainfalls in the year 2019 and 2020 have highlighted the consequences of mismanagement of water systems in Bengaluru.

The illustrations are a deliberate attempt to evoke a paradigm shift in our vision and responsibilities towards water and urban ecosystems. Bengaluru is a fast-growing urban centre and is home to more than 13 million people today. According to the 2018 NITI Aayog reports, Bengaluru would have run out of groundwater by 2020 and 1450 million litres per day are being pumped into the city from Kaveri river, amidst growing needs for water. It is necessary to rethink the matrix of lakes and water dynamics and take necessary mitigation measures for groundwater preservation and conservation of indigenous water tank systems. The *kere* system is a reliable investment to build a resilient and sustainable future.

The second illustration titled 'Cultural Scripts of Regional Landscapes in Bengaluru' portrays the importance of water as a source of biodiversity (Figure 2). The illustration is a narrative through memory-mapping of pre-1700s Bengaluru where water held a sacred place in human settlements. Lakes and rivers hence emerged as identity markers for cultural gatherings, social and trading centres, agriculture and other utilitarian purposes. The illustration attempts to capture the holistic idea of settlements with diverse water harvesting systems managed by the communities, ranging from *kalyanis* (temple tanks) to perform rituals, small bathing tanks and larger tanks to support agriculture. The illustration also captures the food systems centred on growth patterns of neighbourhoods and settlements in the 1600s to 1700s. The *akadi* system, which means cultivation of multiple crops simultaneously, was made possible because of the yearlong availability of clean water, leading to increased agricultural yield. Rainwater-fed streams flowing through cattle yards collected dung and urine of cattle in their journey to the agricultural fields, leading to increased soil fertility. This water also fostered the growth of fish and medicinal plants. Staple crops like paddy, lentils, legumes and millets were grown in the dry fields that were supported by nearby wells and small tanks. Mustard and castor were the cash crops grown to make cooking oil. The houses were supported with small gardens locally known as *thotas*. These *thotas* are distinct examples of productive landscapes across the region which include *tarkari thota* (kitchen garden) and *huvina thota* (flower garden) with *yelley thota* (betel leaf garden) and *teyngina thota* (coconut plantation) at the old city's fringes. Communities lined the lanes of the main city and surrounding villages with fruit-yielding trees like jackfruit, custard apple, tamarind, guava, *jamun* and shading trees such as banyan, *peepal* and other flowering trees.

The two illustrations in this article highlight the multiple benefits of traditional ponding water systems which were self-reliant, ecologically sustainable and cost-effective. They depict water conservation methods which evolved over centuries and were ingrained in local culture, customs and traditions. The *kere* system highlights community ownership, responsibility and participation. With unsustainable development patterns and rapid depletion of natural resources, today Bengaluru faces an acute water crisis and considerable challenges towards building a resilient future. Reviving and managing indigenous water management systems in the city can show us the way forward in designing with natural systems, without further undermining our environment.

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Lake Stories: Spatial Reconfiguration of Keres

Rohan D'Souza

The lakes of Bangalore or *keres* as they are known in the vernacular, have morphed spatially over the centuries. This has been a result of human interventions and natural processes. The aim of this photo essay is to focus on these changes with special reference to one particular lake at Rachenahalli, located in North Bangalore. Through this photo essay, the spatial transformations and the factors that drive them will be explored.

Rachenahalli *kere,* which is located in the Hebbal valley, is part of the Yele Mallappa Chetty lake series (Yele Mallappa Chetty being a noted city businessman and philantropist). Like many other lakes in Bangalore, this lake was also man-made and designed to be part of a cascading series of lakes built on a gradient, catering to irrigation and household needs. Like all man-made lakes, this lake had a bund or embankment built to dam the flow of water and bring the lake to life.

I have photographically captured this *kere* 2009 onwards. This includes its former state in 2009, with markers from an older system such as sluice mechanisms, overflow and *rajakaluve* or connecting canals. A *rajakaluve* or a main canal carried the overflow of water from the lake downstream to the next lake in the series.



1. Rachenahalli Lake Bund - May 2009

As Bangalore urbanises, many of these lakes, including the Rachenahalli lake, do not serve irrigation functions anymore. This is primarily due to the transformation of livelihood practices around the lakes. This in turn has spurred further human interventions in this lake to cater to new needs and sensibilities. In the last 15 years, Rachenahalli *kere* has transformed from a spatial identity linked to the older system of irrigation and water supply to a newer one characterised by a stated urban need for recreation and urban ecology. This would entail a redesign of the structure of the lake itself from a cascading one to a more contained 'water bowl'.



2. Rachenahalli Rajakaluve - May 2009

The engineering interventions that the Bangalore Development Authority undertook in 2009 -10 offered opportunities to document this process as well as provide last glimpses of markers of the older system such as sluice mechanisms.

Rachenahalli Kere Reengineering - December 2009

The wetlands (*gadde jameen*) or moist land were located downstream of the lake into which lake water was released in a controlled manner through sluice mechanisms in the lake bund and where agriculture was practised.



3. Rachenahalli Wetlands - May 2009

The lake in 2009 as is visible from the notice near the lake.



4. BDA Notice - 2009

The work then commenced in December 2009 with the breaching of the bund to empty the lake.



5. Rachenahalli Lake Bund Breach - December 2009

The newly designed space in 2014

By 2014, the reengineering of the space was over and it presented a new form and shape completing its transition into a newer system and catering to different needs driven by ideas of urban recreation and ecology that took the shape of walking trails, jogging paths and spaces such as bird islands. This also meant exclusion of some communities, based on the new form and purported function that involved draining all the water from the lakebed.



6. Rachenahalli lakebed view - December 2009

This provided me a chance to enter the lakebed and take photos of the sluice mechanisms in the bund from the lake side.



7. Rachenahalli lake sluice mechanism, view from lakebed - December 2009

After draining the lake, the engineering work commenced. This included building a ring bund all around the lake compared to the linear bund which existed on one side of the lake ‘containing’ the lake and transforming it from a cascading system to a ‘water bowl’ one.



8. Rachenahalli lake ring bund granite reinforcement - April 2010

The bund was reworked removing markers of the older system such as the two sluice mechanisms.



9. Rachenahalli reworking of bund - April 2010

Other engineering work included the creation of artificial islands in the lakebed.



10. Artificial island creation in Rachenahalli lake - April 2010

This engineering work was completed in the year 2010.



11. Rachenahalli lake ring bund - April 2014

I paid a visit to the lake four years later in 2014 to capture the look of the lake in its transformed ‘water bowl’ avatar. The ring bunding and fencing of the lake was complete. The lake was now neatly fenced in from all sides completing the containment.



12. Rachenahalli eastern fence and path - April 2014

And the multistorey buildings moved closer to the wetlands, now suitably dried out as the sluice mechanisms have been removed and the lake water tightly bound by the ring bund.



13. Rachenahalli lake downstream wetlands - April 2014

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Sleeping Over It All

Years ago in the metropolis of hope
A hill stood behind my home
One day when blasting of the hill began
We raised our voices
My neighbours and I
And we were silenced
Told there was no hill
Look! It's not on the city map!

Bewildered we slept at the foothill of the disappearing hill
Bewildered we slept at the foothill of the disappearing hill
after all!

Till twenty years ago
In the emerging southern metropolis of hope
Where stands the National games Village today
There lay a nurturing lake
My decades old silence prevailed
As it turned to a swamp
The quietude of urbane convenience
Sealed the lakebed with concrete heights
With my city I slept over it all
With my city I slept over it after all!

Twenty years later now
Heavy downpours never fail
To fill my home with monsoon flood
The flood of consequential corruption
The flood of false metro magnificence
Of silent corroding retribution
Through live tears of dead lakes
The deluge of the Earth's blood
I struggle to sleep over it all
I struggle but sleep over it after all

The flood seeks the voice
That will restore that soil
Resurrect the abandoned earth mother's soul
Render alive the hills once more
Infuse life into the lakes and shores
Banished from the land of the heart
As they lie scattered
Buried in the foundations of our homes
How does a nation sleep over it all?
How does a country sleep over it after all?

Padmavati Rao

Padmavati Rao is the Founder and Managing Trustee of Sarsayee Foundation for Theatre and Education, a theatre and film actor, a natural farmer, poet and storyteller.
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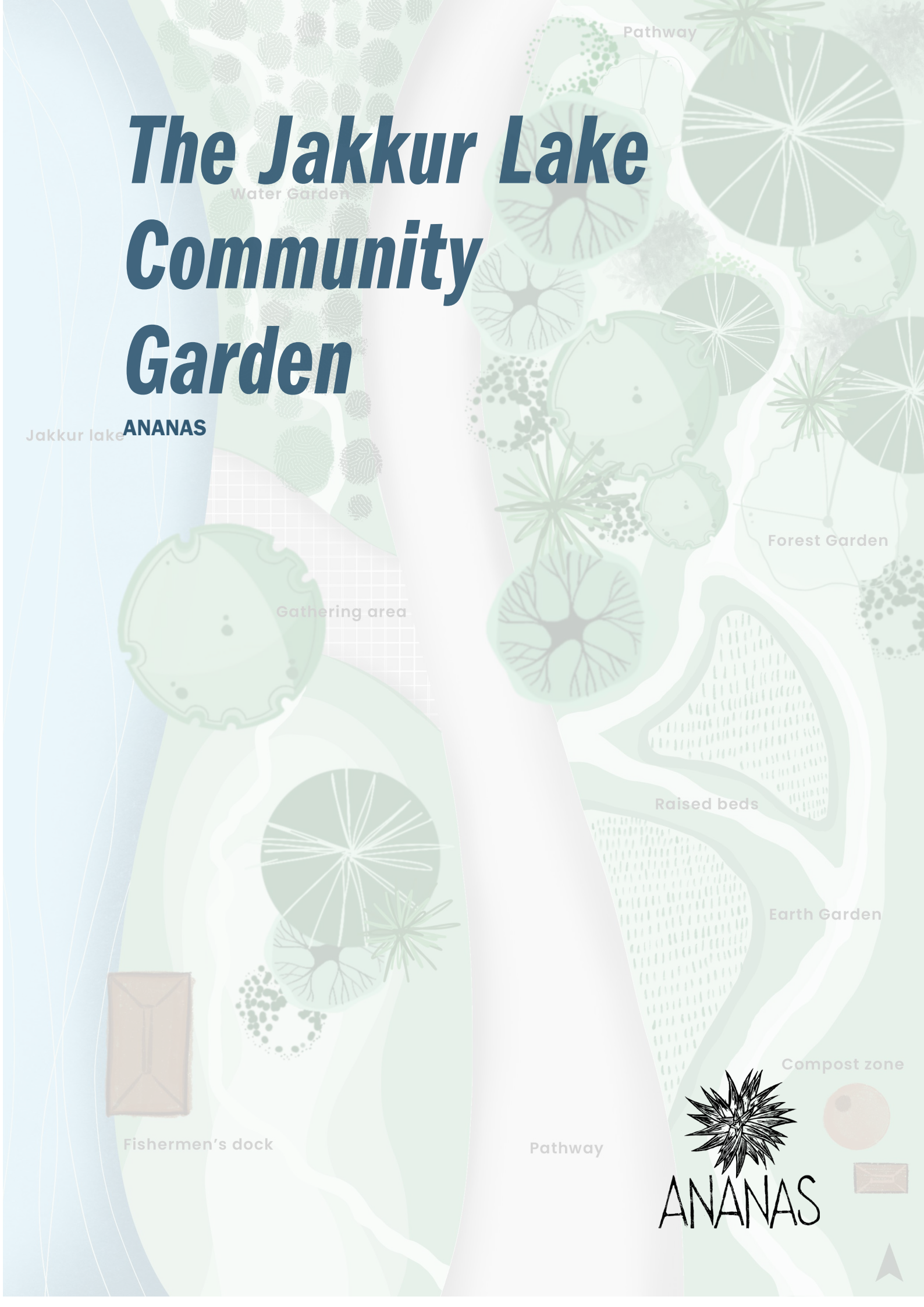
The Jakkur Lake Community Garden

ANANAS





Jakkur Lake and Community Garden (Illustrator: Shreya Mahabalshetti)

Ananas is an ecological design team based in Bangalore. Our projects range from small garden design to large-scale land regeneration and agriculture projects, using techniques and approaches of permaculture. We plan systems and spaces that grow diverse vegetation, restore soil, harness and conserve water which over time becomes a sustainable system. We are dedicated to teaching people about land and helping them transition to more regenerative lifestyles by making them active participants of the process. Through knowledge-sharing we seek to empower our community partners to operate the systems we create together.

In order to be part of the solution and not the problem we need to practise the following:

Care for Earth: Care for all living and non-living things; soils, species and their varieties, atmosphere, forests, micro-habitats, animals and waters. It is important to respect the natural cycles of growth and decay of living systems

Care for people and self: To promote self-reliance and responsibility towards the community and to take responsibility for one's community by sharing knowledge and experience to up-skill people. Participating in a collaborative effort to ensure individual and community wellbeing.

Fair share: To ensure the wellbeing of the earth and people we need to share the surplus we acquire. Ananas practises an open-source policy for all information they create for and with clients.

Everything gardens: Our work in the commons has always been rewarding and we aim to bring permaculture to urban spaces.

The Jakkur Lake Community Garden: Since late-2017, Ananas has been working with JaLa Poshan, a citizens' initiative supported by the charitable trust Satya Foundation at Jakkur Lake to create a community garden. The initial idea was to create gardens for the community in and around Jakkur as well as for the garden workers (from a women's self-help group) and the fisherman working at the lake. The idea was to bring food and water close to dwellings by reducing dependencies on resources coming from a distance. The community garden represents a model that creates a sense of responsibility in the community to volunteer and actively nurture their commons for produce.

The design concentrated on creating zones based on the different functions determined for the community. The area was divided into three basic zones:
(i) Earth Garden,
(ii) Food Forest and
(iii) Water Garden.

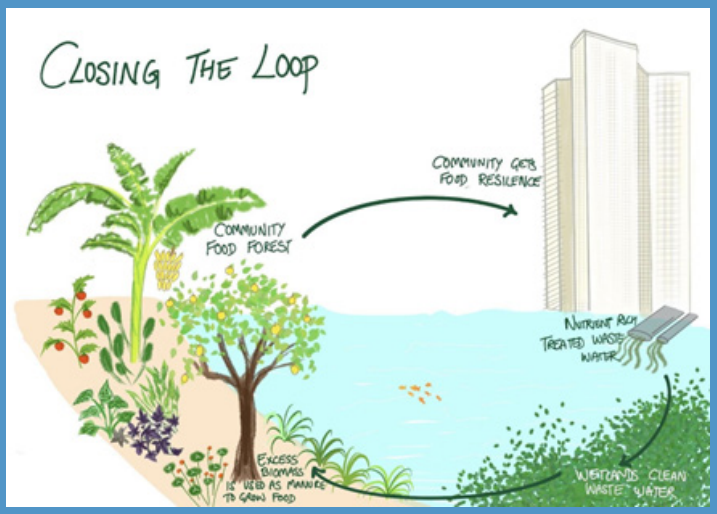
Earth Garden is a space to grow perennial vegetables on a raised bed. The zone was defined to be separate as these plants require more attention and regular care. Food Forests are biodiverse, productive and regenerative systems modelled after natural forests, with careful species selection to suit the needs of the human inhabitants of the area. Water Gardens include creating a garden along the lakeside that functions as a gathering space for different scales of interactions among lake users.

Materials were also carefully selected by the Ananas team and JaLa Poshan Trust based on local availability. Donated materials including gravel, *kadappa* stones, bamboo and Mangalore tiles from nearby construction sites were used.

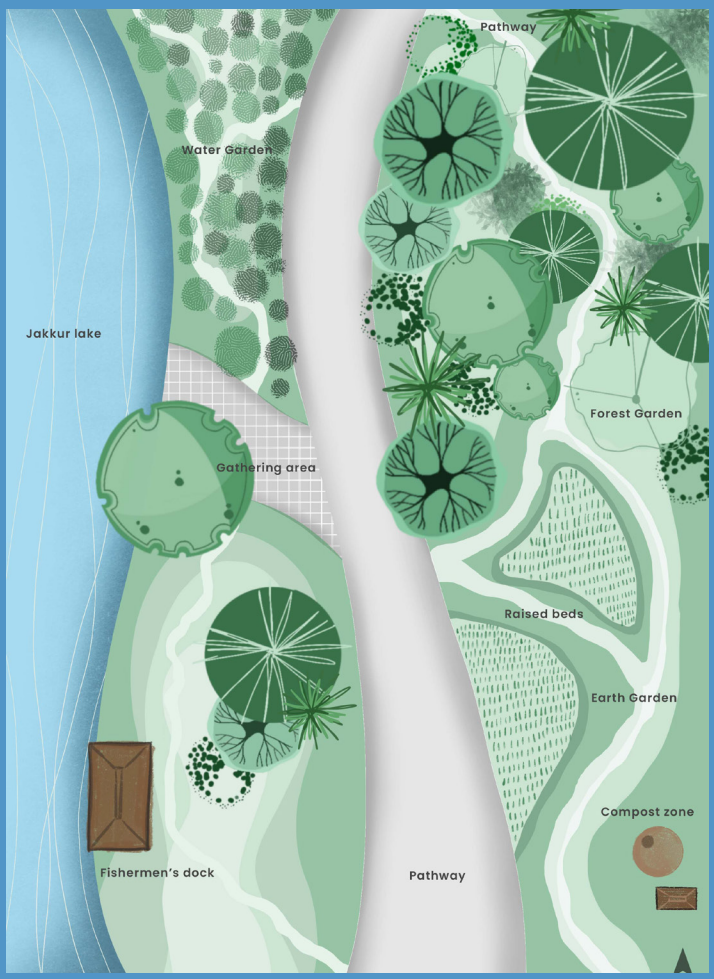
In 2018 the design was executed by community members, a self-help group (SHG) that works at Jakkur lake, gardeners and volunteers from across Bangalore. The volunteers were given an understanding of the design and the end goal. In time, we saw a growing sense of responsibility among community members for the garden. Volunteers came up with ideas and design interventions that they wanted to add to the community garden.

Through the volunteering programme, the community garden was used as a space to learn permaculture principles, gardening and design strategies. In May 2019, Ananas and JaLa Poshan received a three lakh rupees grant from Bangalore Sustainability Forum (BSF) to conduct volunteer days and continue work on the Earth, Forest and Water Gardens and have them ready by May 2020 to a point where they could self-sustain with minimal maintenance.

Having a garden in a public space, tended by volunteers, brought with it a range of challenges that led to the vision and design of the project to evolve continuously. The yield of the garden is not quantifiable, but can be seen and experienced. The project aimed to create a sense of responsibility, ignite active participation and to create a space for interacting and learning. The project involved multiple stakeholders and hence many challenges were faced in the course of the 3-4 years.



Vision for the community garden: Closing the loop.



Jakkur Lake Community Garden - Design and Zones
(Illustrator: Shreya Mahabalshetti)







Volunteers making trenches and filling them with mulch, in preparation for planting

The following points summarise our experience and highlight the activities, challenges, impacts and benefits from the project.

- The post and pre-pandemic period posed a huge gap in the volunteering activities at the lake which included volunteers from nearby communities, schools, company employees, etc. There was a halt in work, and that is when the need for regular volunteering to ensure maintenance of the garden until it has been established.
- During the pandemic, it observed that the maintenance of the community garden could not be taken up by the SHG alone as they were occupied with the maintenance of the rest of the lake.
- Recognizing these challenges with the JaLa Poshan Trust we realised that there is a need for a nodal community lead volunteer who would take on the responsibility of the volunteering activities. Through this intervention we have seen a gradual improvement in the involvement of the community members especially children who are enthusiastic and regulars in volunteering.

Milestones

The tool shed: The tool shed is used to store tools, seeds, gloves and other materials required regularly.

From monthly to weekly: We decided to call out particularly to those who live within walking/cycling distance from the lake. Some very enthusiastic locals show up, volunteer and make decisions together.

The Whatsapp group: Has over 100 members and is a great place to share and discuss ideas, activities, timelines and design. Interested people are added to the group - a good way to keep track of attendees.

Garden manager appointed: A lead volunteer from the community was identified to take on the volunteering activities and nurturing the community garden. This has made a tremendous difference to the project as it means there is finally consistency and regularity in management.

Short talks: In addition to working on the gardens, the volunteer days can be used to sit and enjoy the space we have created together. Having short 10-15 minute talks by people who have an interest in a particular field is a great way of slowing down and getting to know each other in different ways.
The area selected had soil that had a larger percentage of clay and was lacking organic matter. There were also traces of construction waste and

other garbage identified in the soil. The area lacked shade and had a fire threat on the western side from neighbouring farms. There was also less biodiversity observed in this space including flora and fauna.

Observations of the Garden

Yields: Physical

Greens: Malabar Spinach, Ceylon Spinach, *Gongura*, *Palak*, Balloon Vine, *Agase*, Multivitamin, Water Spinach, *Moringa*, Sweet Potato leaves, Tree Spinach
Fruit: Mulberries, Passionfruit, Papaya, Barbados Cherry, *Bimbli*, Guava, Rosella, Custard Apple, Star Fruit
Vegetables: Snake Gourd, Bottle Gourd, Brinjal, Chillies, Sweet Potato, Flat Beans/*Chapparada Avarekai*, Elephant Foot Yam, ArrowRoot, Pea Brinjal
Herbs and medicinal plants: *Tulsi*, Insulin Plant, Aloe Vera, Basil, Mint, Butterfly Pea, Lemongrass, *Bramhi*, *Doddapatre*, Nasturtium
Green manure and mulch: Gliricidia, Mexican Sunflower, Napier Grass, Sun Hemp, Vetiver
Spaces to sit and converse, meditation, exercise, sitting, looking out, resting.

Yields: Biodiversity

Soil life: Building soil health by using leaf compost, domestic compost, green manure, a range of mulches, cover cropping, and water hyacinth from the lake. The soil was regenerated by mulching, supporting species that loosen the soil.
Insect life: Using flowering species and creating a diverse habitat - particularly in the low maintenance Forest Garden - has resulted in a huge increase in insect and spider diversity.
Bird life: Emphasis on trees and dense shrubs for perches and nesting sites, plant species such as Mulberry, Singapore Cherry, Barbados Cherry, that are eaten by birds.
Plant species diversity: To create resilience through water retention, nutrient cycling, nutrient diversity and more, it is important to have a diversity of species adapted to local climate.

Yields: Social

Create and play: There are not many spaces where anyone can go and, without the need for any particular skill or training, create something with others. The gardens are a playground and a space for people to express themselves freely without any pressure to 'deliver'.
Hope: Showing what is possible in our cities and common spaces. Creating a model that can be replicated in other urban commons based on the context of the space.

Before







After







Skill sharing: Volunteers came in with different skills and talents such as natural building, gardening, birding, community living, water management, engineering, how to use medicinal plants and so on. Tackling problems together: We got donations of materials from various people. Other than the labour of volunteers, we got free compost, gravel and Mangalore tiles to set up our gardens.

Bringing together people from a wide range of backgrounds: One of the most wonderful aspects of working in a public space is the wide range and diversity of people who show up. All volunteers brought a different perspective and knowledge to the table.

Pure joy: Many volunteers have expressed the joy of getting their hands dirty and learning from the environment around them. There is an intangible joy in sharing space and working together on a common goal.

Work on the garden continues with renewed objectives. The garden is ever-changing and the community continued its upkeep through the pandemic lockdowns. Our learnings from the community garden project at Jakkur Lake have been in the area of workability, challenges and beauty of urban commons. It is not only a great model to adopt for ecological growth and resilience, but also for involvement of all stakeholders.

Note: All pictures are from the ANANAS Jakkur Lake Project website.

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Kere Baavi

Historical Evolution of a Metropolis's Waterscape

Vishwanath Srikantaiah

Is geology destiny? The old rocks at Lalbagh lay testimony to a volcanic upheaval 2500 to 3200 million years ago, causing what was to become the city to rise to 920 metres above sea level. The nearest perennial river is about 100 kilometres away. Geology determined Metrology on this high plateau which caused a peculiar rainfall pattern termed bimodal by students of rain. May was a rainfall peak and then September, giving an annual rainfall of 970 millimetres (mm) in an otherwise surrounding arid landscape. Geology determined hydro-geology too; the water-bearing capacity of the groundwater was sufficient to hold onto substantial amounts of rain and then release it when wells were dug to extract the waters.

Human interventions have then shaped the landscape with water-retaining structures called 'tanks' being foremost among them; earthen bunds thrown across a valley or a stream to hold on to waters for irrigation purpose. Inscription stones carved in granite describe the construction of these tanks and wells. Some of the tanks date back to the 9th century. Tanks were primarily built for irrigation and wells built close by, sometimes for drinking water and sometimes for supplemental irrigation. Livelihoods and skills developed around soil and water such as the *Thiggala* community with its horticultural skills; the *Mannu Vaddars* with their earth-excavation knowledge have all contributed to the landscape of soil and water.

Technology. The relentless progress of technology has also played its part in the waterscape. Steam engines were first used to bring piped water from a reservoir at Hessarghatta on the Arkavathy river to the city. The advent of the borewell drilling technology in the late 1970's then led to an explosion in deep drilling with an estimated 500,000 borewells in the city with some as deep as 1800 feet. Water tankers roam around the city, especially delivering water and have come to be called the 'water mafia'. All the while the city grows in population and area.

Renaissance. The birdwatchers first point out the destruction of the tanks (also referred to as lakes) and especially the water quality. Committees were appointed, efforts mounted and with the courts' intervention, institutions created to save the tanks. Many tanks are lost but many are saved. Rainwater harvesting enters the lexicon and there is renewed interest in local waters. The question is - can we collect rain and recharge the aquifers? Enter the *Mannu Vaddars* now with a lesser livelihood opportunity, yet still around to clean and deepen old wells. They now learn the new art of digging recharge wells - wells that take rooftop rainwater or storm-water and after filtration, send it to the shallow aquifer. The *Mannu Vaddars* want to dig a million recharge wells for the city, to push filtered rainwater into the aquifer, and to restore the memory and functionality of the dug well. They now have dug at an estimate around 200,000 recharge wells. Here are some of the stories of these old wells and recharge wells. As they say, the battle of civilization and society is one of memory and forgetfulness.

The following water stories from across the metropolis are taken from my Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/zenrainman).

The return of the dug well and why should cities look at rejuvenating the shallow aquifer. March 02, 2018 (reshared on March 02, 2022)

The set of 24 flats needed water. The BWSSB lines do not reach this part of the city. The builder drilled a borewell to a depth of 1100 feet.



There was water for half an hour and about 500 litres of it. That's it and the borewell gave up its ghost. Enter Peddanna and team from the *Mannu Vaddar* community. The builder hired him to clean a 40-feet deep well, abandoned and filled with rubbish. The team started to empty the waste debris from the old well. At 30 feet they struck water. The well yields 17,000 litres of water a day and good quality water at that. The builder has also dug another well in the apartment. Now the new well too has water. He picks up rooftop rainwater from the 8,000 square feet roof, filters it and recharges the aquifer directly



through the well. Kaikondarahalli lake, cleaned up by the community and government, is the big brother of recharge in the area. The lake rejuvenation has been a boon to the aquifer in the area. The builder agrees that water metering for each individual flat, separate plumbing lines for the toilets and perhaps an STP to treat and recycle waste water would have helped a lot more. We need to get back to the conversation between the lake, the shallow wells and the community.



The tank and the well. September 01, 2021

In the semi-arid land with an average rainfall of 700mm and with 7 out of 10 years with below-average rain, drought was endemic. About 1200 years ago the people who occupied the land learnt to throw an earth embankment over a valley and hold on to the waters for 3 to 6 months. Sometimes the whole year in a good monsoon. The waters percolated the shallow phreatic zone and the old people dug wells. The wells filtered the waters from the tank and made it potable. The wells were also closer to the habitation. The tank waters were for irrigation, for the cattle, and for washing clothes. The well water was for drinking and cooking. Sometimes utensils and clothes would be washed too. Amarnath is a farmer from the village.



We discuss the merits and the need to clean the wells. It is a heritage from our forefathers, he agrees. It could be useful during emergencies when the borewells fail and when water may be needed for domestic needs. A grill on top will prevent waste being thrown in. We admire the top stone work in particular, cut so beautifully in a curvilinear shape. The well looks freshly made and not the hundred year history it has. Is the well really needed or is it an artefact of the past? Is nostalgia, that powerful drug, driving a romanticised need to revive it? Here are two wells close to each other. The same underground aquifer divided by a rather obnoxious caste system on the top. One well for one, the other for the other group. Can the wells be revived for all people together? The attempt will be made. Once more a tilt at the windmills.

Raghu and Rajappa, well diggers call. May 27, 2022

They are in a temple in South Bengaluru. A well needs to be cleaned. A turtle is in the well. It is lifted up and placed in water gently. The waters from the well pumped out. The silt and debris accumulated and removed. Potassium Permanganate added. The groundwater table is high and the aquifer feeds the well with lots of water. The turtle is reintroduced into the well. The temple has water for rituals and for visitors. Another job done by the well diggers whose livelihood depends on this work. If a million wells for recharge are built, if those that exist are protected, recharged and kept functional there should be no water crisis for the city.





The story of a well. August 28, 2022

Transit Oriented Design is the new urban planning and design tool making its way through city planning policies and investments. This is broadly the story of groundwater, especially the shallow aquifers in urban areas, one of lack of understanding and neglect. Ramakrishna sends me the photos and news.



The community here had required assistance in cleaning up an old well filled with garbage. Ramakrishna and team had cleaned it up, disinfected it and brought it back to life. The community started using these waters to supplement their requirements. Now a metro line will run below this well. The metro has served notice and will close this well. The roads we lay, the flyovers we build, the optical fibres that we place, the metros we dig all disrupt surface water and groundwater flows. Till we carefully think about the impact on water in all our infrastructure designs we will cause water shortages, flooding, waterlogging and scarcity all in the same city at the same time.



Note: All pictures in the article were taken by the author.

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Cubbon Park

Wayfinding and Information Signage Project

Ankit Bhargava, Sensing Local

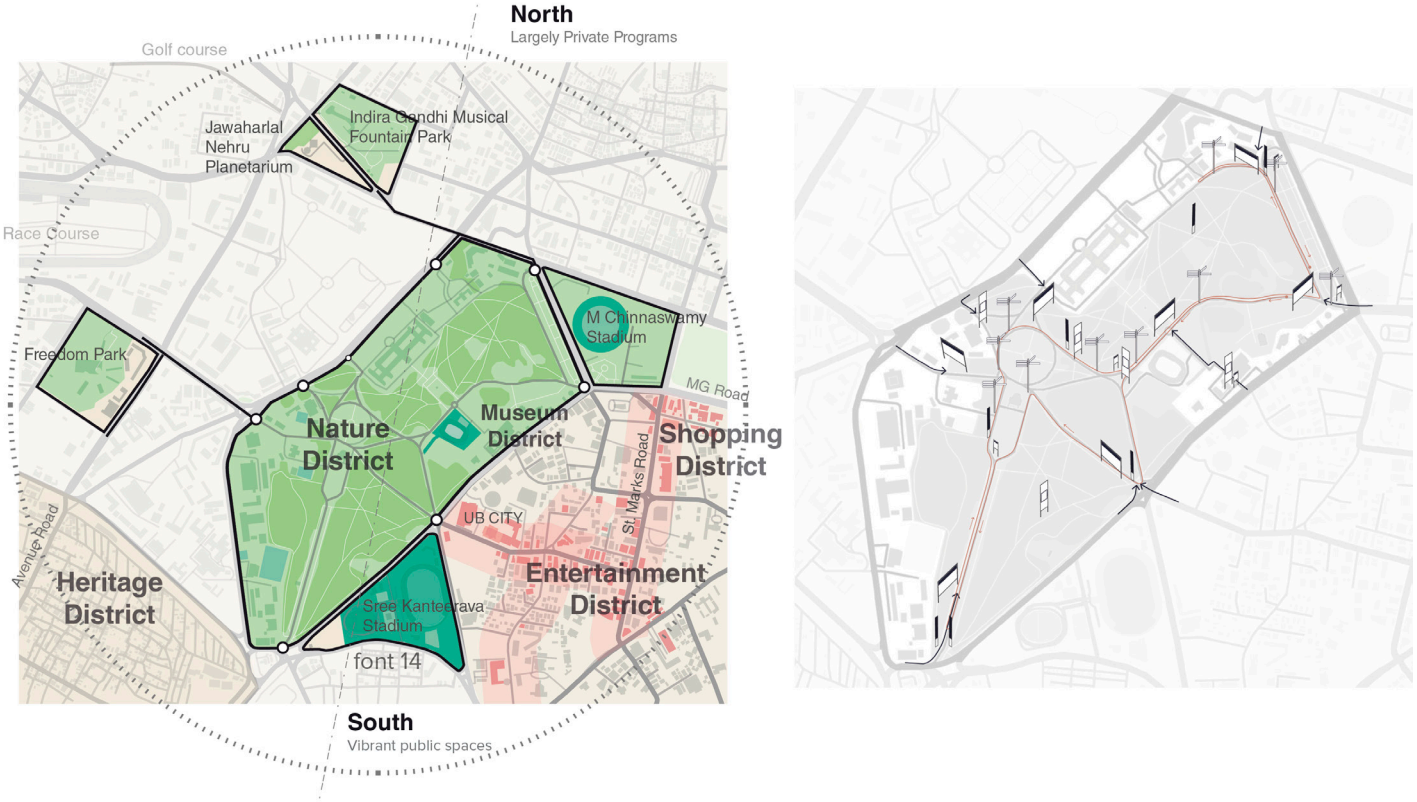


Figure 1. Larger cultural district of Cubbon Park and the placement of the signage system

The Cubbon Park Wayfinding and Information Signage Project is a bilingual signage system in Cubbon Park, Bengaluru, conceived to ease navigation and showcase its history, culture and biodiversity. The project was created in 2018 as a collaboration between two organisations - Sensing Local and Native Place, Bengaluru. It has materialised through the support of the Karnataka Tourism Department, in partnership with the Horticulture Department, since this park is one of the most popular destinations for city residents and visitors alike. The park spans 197 acres and is the second largest park in the city, with nearly 150 years of history. Cubbon Park was known as the 'People's Park', and it stays true to this identity even today.

Moreover, Cubbon Park is also at the centre of a larger cultural district neighbouring the popular Vittal Mallya Road-Lavelle Road area, and is surrounded by the highest density of museums, shopping streets, other public parks like Freedom Park, and historical areas, including the old *Pete* area (Figure 1). Hence, it serves as an entry point to the myriad of these cultural destinations within walkable distance.

Overall the signage covers information about the historical and cultural significance of the park, the stories about the monuments and statues, and provides navigation information. The content in the signage system was created by aggregating cartographic layers using primary surveys and secondary sources, archival texts and pictures from state libraries, and three rigorous participatory processes. The unique features in the signage include a bloom cycle for the park, where the signage shows which trees flower in different seasons.

The system includes 76 pieces and six types of signage placed across the entire park (Figure 2).

Gateway signage is the first signage a visitor entering the park encounters (Figure 3). It contains the complete map of the park, landmarks, park's history, activities, location of clusters and avenues of blooming trees, etc. It also includes a notice board for people to put up posters of events in the park. Lastly, since it is also the last signage a visitor would see while leaving the park, it hosts a neighbourhood map of nearby landmarks within walking distance. There are seven signage pieces in total that mark each of the seven entrance gates.

Signage as a system

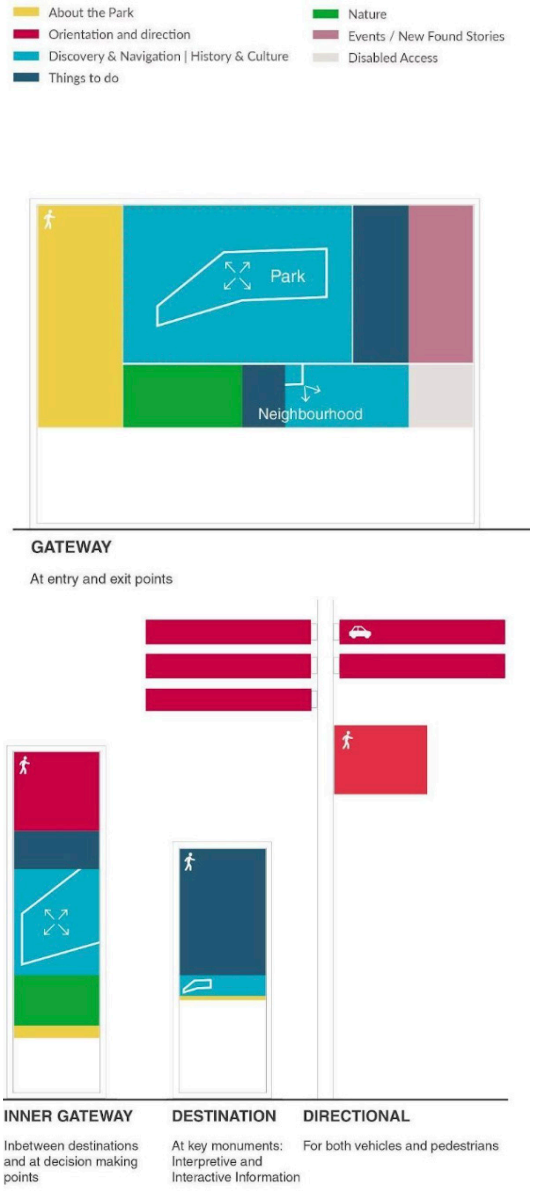


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4b

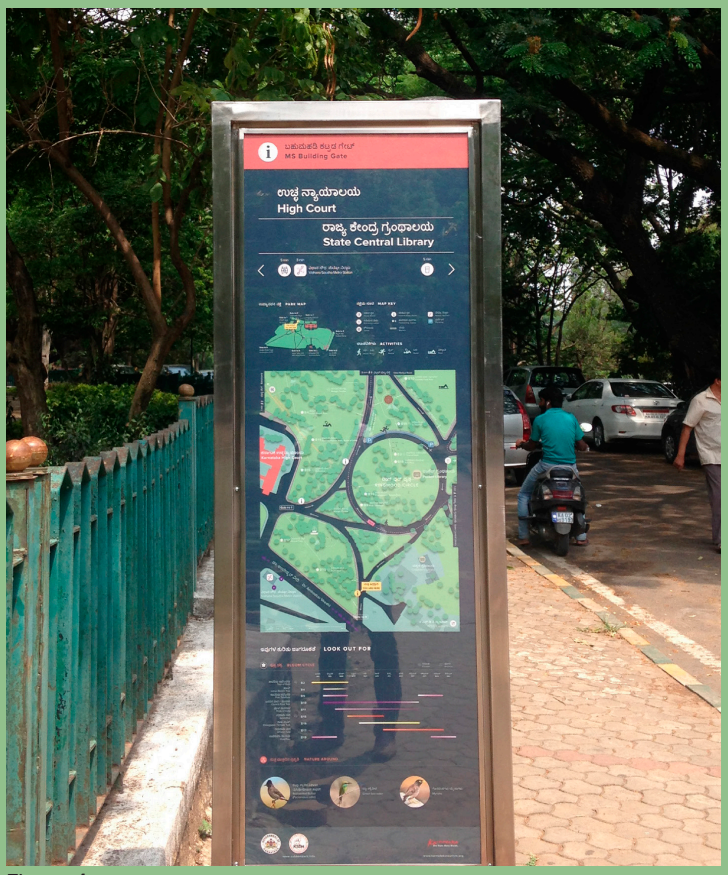


Figure 4a

The inner gateway signage is a smaller version of the gateway signage that marks the entrances to the individual gardens in the park's interior (Figure 4a). The map here is a 'heads-up map' to help visitors orient themselves. It also highlights biodiversity and amenities such as toilets and drinking water in the vicinity. The rear of this signage is intentionally left empty to create real estate that can be co-opted to tell other stories of the park by different contributors.

The destination signage is located at key landmarks such as the statues and institutions that dot the park (Figure 4b). The signage follows a simple template that showcases a short historic text alongside an archival photo and a fun factoid.

The directional signage is located along the roads passing through the park, primarily to aid vehicular movement and double up to serve pedestrians. In addition to the above, the signage system also contains a network of markers for the 5km jogging route and scenic experience routes.

Given the size of the park and the variety of content, the signange was designed by following the principle of progressive disclosure. It means the information unfolds itself gradually and strategically to the user.

image of the park

An integral part of the signage is a map of the park with 35 layers of data, created by integrating information from tree surveys, on-site mapping and open source maps and inputs from various designers, typographers, and historians. The mapmaking included accurately representing the boundary and edge conditions of the park and walking paths, heritage and flowering trees, tree avenues, and amenities such as benches, toilets, etc. It is now the most authentic representation of the map, and government authorities have also adopted it as the park's official map internally.

making (of the) public

The design of the signage projects followed a highly participatory process. The key reasons were:

1. The park is a significant historical public space, and so any intervention has to be mindful of its value.

2. The park is used throughout the day by many different types of people and for various purposes. Understanding their needs and their inclusion in the project was critical to creating useful and usable signage.

3. The information about the park was either fragmented or missing. Therefore, it had to be gathered and mapped from many different sources with the support of other users and domain experts.

The participatory process consisted of three exercises undertaken through the journey of the project using a unique set of themes and purposes (Figure 5).

(1) What is Cubbon Park to you?

'As the project was expected to unfold and become yet another piece of infrastructure in the city, the participatory exercise was imagined as a moment to ask - what is the park to the people?'

The first workshop captured inputs regarding who visits the park. What do people do in the park? And importantly, what would they like the signage system to do?

(2) Unpeeling the layers of the park through six experiential walks

'There is a philosophical thought that everything exists only in language. There is no Cubbon Park except in language. It is only in a shared agreement that the physical space we speak of is a 'Park' called 'Cubbon Park'. Each person conceives their park through how they experience it and interpret it. Therefore, describing it in different languages can provide entirely unique versions of the park. Sharing these stories and enrolling others in them can alter the agreement about the park and its reality. The 'Cubbon Park Wayfinding Project' situated itself at the confluence of this process of enrollment, agreement and reality.'

The purpose of the second workshop was to unpack 'ways of seeing' and 'ways of showing' the park in a multi-linguistic way.

(3) Test the prototype on-site with park users

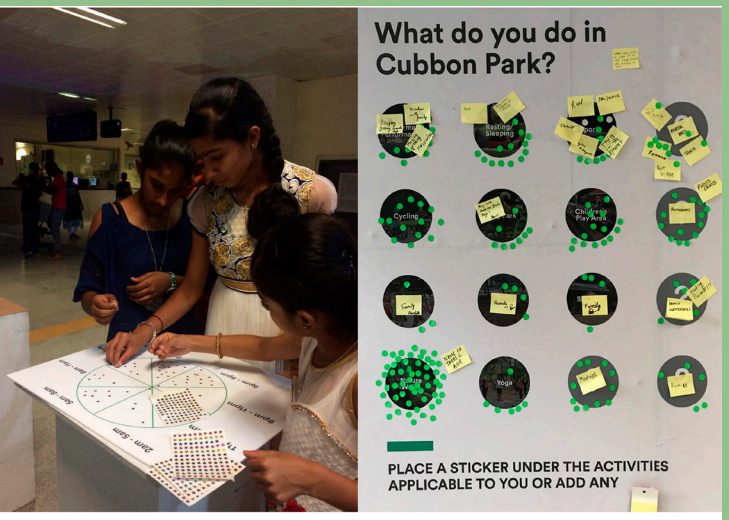
Upon completing the design development process, one of each type of signage was placed in the park to test how the park visitors felt about the signage design, information content, readability, colour schema, etc.



Figure 5

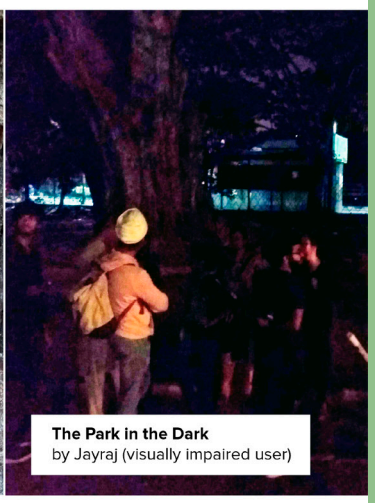
Conclusion

The signage system for Cubbon Park has been a unique and one-of-a-kind exercise. To an extent, it has set a precedent for the value of signage systems, particularly in public spaces. However, some of the major challenges in this project included underestimating the value of the following aspects:





Mapping biodiversity
by Karthikeyen S.



The Park in the Dark
by Jayraj (visually impaired user)





Scale

The signage pieces often got lost in the scale of the park. While human-scale design is essential, signage systems are not just about organising information, but signage is also an object in the landscape. A user needs to be able to spot the signage first before they can read the information in it. It means accounting for all the environmental conditions is key.

Tree shade and dynamic light conditions

The colour scheme in the signage did not fully account for the variation in light in the park. The signage was designed to be gentle and blend in, but this was in some ways counterintuitive to its core purpose. The signage pieces' location was also decided by identifying sightlines and on-ground feasibility, but the effects of tree shade on the spot were not considered significant. As a result, some of the signage pieces in the shade appear less legible than intended.

Information versus branding

Despite several rounds of design interactions, the gateway signage in particular valued information over branding. This meant the signage was more crowded than it needed to be; this limited its readability and attractiveness.

To conclude, the Cubbon Park Wayfinding and Information Signage Project was not only important in itself, but also represented a first step to informing park-planning in the future and increasing the legibility of public space in our cities.

Note: All graphics and images belong to the author.

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Memories & Layers

Collages of Cubbon Park

Viral Mehta

What is a collage? In relation to place-making, could it be elements taken from different places and combined - juxtaposing, overlapping, merging - to simulate an experience? Cubbon Park, Bangalore feels like a collage. This unique park is made of diverse elements - flora in particular - and welcomes myriad activities. Designed and created by British colonists in 1870, Cubbon Park came to life for two primary reasons. One, as an (unachieved) extension of the Lalbagh botanical garden to form a continuous green corridor between the *pete* and Cantonment. Two, for the British to feel at home, by planting tree species and practising gardening techniques brought from their home country and around the world to create a picturesque landscape. The 300 acre park in the middle of Bangalore, comprises so many elements that it is difficult and limiting to represent in a single collage. Hence, I approached collage-making to reflect three major aspects of Cubbon Park - botanical variety, cultural diversity and ecological impact.

To achieve a home away from home, the Britishers introduced exotic species, and implemented design strategies and visions of serial blossoming which are seen even today in the park. The pink trumpet tree planted in a large open ground stands out from far and provides an ever-magnificent experience. The *nilgiri* plantation in the low-lying area of the Park, planted to prevent malaria, still stands tall. Several tree species known for trading and medicinal value, found their way to Bangalore through Cubbon Park. The boulder outcrop of the Dharwar cratons within the Park remains unchanged, capturing the region's natural terrain formation. A few Hindu shrines, along with the sacred landscape of the *ashwath katte* (a traditional peepal tree seating with Hindu gods), became part of the Park at the time of its making, and continue to preserve the regional landscape. The bandstand, commemorative statues of British royals, government buildings around and within the Park, including the High Court, State Central Library, Venkatappa Art Gallery and Government Museum - all these independent elements kept adding to the collage.

Collage One

Broadly, tree species found in Cubbon Park can be classified into five categories. The first, representing the native species of the region, include honge, jackfruit, neem, copper pod, ficus, etc. The second category includes species that are native to the Indian subcontinent but not necessarily the Deccan Plateau, and were cultivated across the country for the use of their fruits, leaves, or bark, such as the mango tree.

The third category is species such as coconut and tamarind that were brought to India from other countries and continents and are now naturalised and integrated into the Indian ecology and culture so that most times they are perceived as native species. The fourth consists of tree species, such as the *nilgiri* and Rain trees, which arrived as gifts for kings or were brought by rulers like Tipu Sultan and Babur who were keen botanists.

The fifth, and maybe most dramatic layer in Cubbon Park, is the tree species introduced by British colonists to create beautiful scenic landscapes. This huge variety of trees, consisting of native, naturalised and exotic species, was strategically planned to create a collage wherein at least one flowering tree was in sight at all places and times of the year, a phenomenon called serial blossoming. Exotic trees are important for serial blossoming, as most Indian native trees blossom during the summer, while the exotic trees keep the canopy collages colourful in the other months.


Jan
Dec
Nov
Oct
Feb
Sep
Mar
Aug
Apr
May
Jun
Jul
Yellow Trumpet
American tropics
Nile tulip
East Africa
Pink Trumpet
American tropics
Bauhinia
India, Myanmar
Southern Magnolia
Southeast US
Honge
Asia
Saptaparni
South China
Aakash Neem
Southeast Asia
Jacaranda
South Central America
Empress
China
Australian
Chest Nut
Australia
Bottle brush
Australia
Cannonball
Central & South
America
Armherstia
Myanmar
Cotton Silk
Asia
Golden Cassia
South America
Plumeria
Tropical America
Copper Pod
Southeast Asia
Corel Wood
India
Palash
India, Southeast Asia
Arjun
India
Jarul
South Asia
Sita Ashok
India
Sampige
Southeast Asia
Gulmahor
Madagascar
African
Loctus
Africa
Kaner
Asia
Rain Tree
South America
Teak
Southeast Asia



Collage Two

The range of cultural elements and activities that take place in Cubbon Park indeed come as a surprise to a first-time visitor. Cyclists, dog lovers, skateboarders, stand-up performers, worshippers, nature lovers, yogis, artists, sculptors, classical music enthusiasts, historians - all can find their own place and people within Cubbon Park. There are large open spaces for people to perform yoga, play frisbee, soak in the sun; nature trails within dense plantations for jogging and solitary walks; a bandstand where one can find classical vocal artists practising on early Sunday mornings. Vehicles are prohibited on a few roads of the park on Sundays and are used for skating instead. A dedicated dog park draws dog-parents and their dogs from across the city to socialise and play. The 137 years old Government Museum, houses relics from Mohenjo Daro, Halebidu, and Vijayanagar, some of them older than 5000 years and of immense historical value. Intricate wooden sculptures dotting various locations in the Park, are the outcome of a wood-carving workshop, where various artists created nineteen sculptures with fallen branches and deadwood of silver oak, raintree, and gulmohar. An *ashwath katte* with two gigantic peepal trees, shrines of Hindu deities and snake gods, represents the few sacred landscapes left undisturbed by urban growth, and remains a hotspot for everyday religious activities in the Park.

Collage Three

A green patch comprising native and naturalised species such as Mango, *Peepal*, Banyan, *Amaltas*, Pink cassia, *Palash*, and African tulip, helps reduce pollution in and around the park, while providing shade in the hot summer months. An interesting phenomenon called 'canopy shyness' can be seen in rainforest tree species, such as the raintree and the African tulip tree, where the treetop branches do not touch one another, allowing the sunlight to reach the ground and forming a visual network of meandering pathways in the sky. The park also has an intricate, interconnected water system of ponds and swales, that help in nourishing the biodiversity. However, the Park's *nilgiri* trees, an Australian native species imported to India for their many uses, such as timber, fuelwood, paper pulp, and oils, give cause for concern because of their tendency to drain moisture and nutrients from the soil. The British extensively planted *nilgiri* trees near Bangalore's marshes and wetlands, to drain them and restrict mosquito-breeding to prevent the spread of malaria. Although malaria is no longer a threat today, the *nilgiri* plantations in the low-lying areas remain, damaging the groundwater.



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Rumale Chennabasaviah

Bangalore's Van Gogh

Rumale Art House and Sanjay Kabe

Rumale Chennabasaviah, also known as the Van Gogh of Karnataka, was a painter noted for his naturescapes on Bangalore. He was born on September 10, 1910 in Doddaballapur, Bangalore district. Rumale studied art in the late 1920s at Bangalore-based Kalamandir School of Art and later at Chamarajendra Technical Institute, Mysore. His contributions spanned participation in the non-violent Gandhian freedom movement for India's independence from 1930-47.

From 1947 to 1962, Rumale was involved in nation-building activities and helping leaders build the newly formed Mysore State; and laying the social foundation of a new India by starting a youth movement - the *Seva Dal* - to train youth across religious and socio-economic divides, to imbibe a 'service mindset' to work for the nation. He was a Member of the Legislative Council of Mysore State for two terms during 1952-60. He also served as the editor of the noted Kannada daily '*Tainadu*'.

Rumale was inspired by nature and he worked with full-minded devotion and passion on capturing the plein-air impressionistic style of the landscapes of Karnataka along with other parts of India and Sri Lanka. More than any other artist of his time, Rumale celebrated the beauty of Bangalore in particular, in both water colours and oil paintings. All his paintings were done 'on the spot' and often he trekked tens of kilometres with his art materials to do his paintings.

His chief obsession was nature, manifested in the flowering trees that he foregrounded against buildings. In addition to parks and gardens, he searched for such trees along roadsides, in private houses and near public buildings. Much in the manner of the renowned Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh, Rumale used colour to express emotion and mood.

The golden yellow shower of the Indian Laburnum, the rich orange of the Flame of the Forest, the African Tulip, and the cluster of drooping pink Cassia *Javanica*, the soothing mauve of Jacaranda, the bright yellow Gulmohur and the fragrant Frangipani lining the city's streets were a cause for exultation and wonder, which Rumale captured in acid yellows, hot reds, cool blues and deep purples.

Rumale was commissioned by the Government of Karnataka to capture on canvas the landscapes of important sites of Karnataka which were impacted by the Nehruvian vision of industrialisation. These included Jog Falls, several important dams, and



Gul Mohar, Cubbon Park, Bangalore, 1981
Oil on Canvas, 31.5x59cm



Tree in Blossom, Bal Bhavan, Cubbon Park, Bangalore. 1975
Watercolour on paper, 66.04x97.15cm, Cabinet Hall, Vidhana Soudha

historical sites that would be submerged and sometimes lost, due to the construction of dams.

He started Rumale Art Gallery, Bangalore's first private art gallery in 1973, to display his works. He received several awards, including the Dasara, Lalit Kala Akademi, All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, and Karnataka State Rajyotsava awards. Rumale was posthumously bestowed the status of Distinguished Citizen of Bangalore in 1988. Renowned litterateur Professor V.K.Gokak called him the 'Painter-Laureate of Bengaluru'.



Unknown Soldier Statue, Opposite General Post Office, Bangalore, 1978. Oil on canvas, 37.5x57.5cm



Tree in Bloom, Rama Mandira, Rajajinagar, Bangalore. 1985
Oil on Canvas, 37x40.5cm



Yellow Bloom and Jacaranda, High Court, Bangalore, 1985
Watercolour on paper, 34x29cm



Jacaranda in Bloom, Cavalry Road, Bangalore. 1983
Watercolour on paper, 38x56cm



Bougainvillaea on Sri Nagappa Alva's Residence, Bangalore, 1973
Watercolour on paper, 56x76cm



Spring Season, Lalbagh, Bangalore, 1968
Watercolour on paper, 61.59x93.98cm, Cabinet Hall, Vidhana Soudha



Varna Mythri, Vidhana Soudha Corner, Bangalore, 1986
Oil on Canvas, 39x59cm



Edward's Statue, Cubbon Park, Bangalore. 1976
Watercolour on paper, 35x46.5cm



Bougainvillaea on St. Peter's Seminary, Malleshwaram, Bangalore, 1973
Watercolour on paper, 50x70cm,



K.R. Circle, Bangalore - A Collage, 1979
Watercolour on paper, 66x98.5cm

Note: Sanjay Kabe of Rumale Art House generously shared the images for this essay. The text for this essay draws from the Rumale Art House brochure 'Rumale Chennabasaviah: An Introduction.'

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THE GARDEN OF COMMONS

Ashwath katte, Bengaluru

Smruti Balvalli

As a new girl in the Garden City, my encounter with *ashwath kattes* started almost a decade ago. Standing magnificent and bare, marking their own territory on busy sidewalks or in quiet temple compounds, *ashwath kattes* are modest, raised plinths on which the native *peepul* (Ficus religiousa) and *neem* (Azadirachta indica) trees grow robustly. At the sight of an *ashwath katte*, one cannot help but agree with the words of Saurapala, the author of the ancient Sanskrit text *'Vrukshayurveda'* (the science of plant life) that, 'it is better to plant a single tree by the roadside under which people can rest, rather than several trees in a forest.' Creating pauses and marking nodes, these *kattes* are immersed in local folklore and guarded by myths, almost as if time around its immediate precinct has slowed down.



Figure 1. Product and Producer

Forming informal spaces of communal associations and activity, the *kattes* are spread across Bengaluru and strongly resonate with the universal idea of the 'commons', which represent shared resources and social practices maintained equitably by communities (Ostrom in Čukić et al, 2020).

'To speak of the commons as if it were (only) a natural resource is misleading at best and dangerous at worst - the commons is an activity and if anything, it expresses relationships in society that are inseparable from relationships to nature. It might be better to keep the word as a verb, an activity (or process), rather than as a noun, a substantive' (Linebaugh 2008:279). Hence, the



Figure 3. Ecosystem

commons are not only the product of the city but also a producer of urban space, stitching the city fabric with invisible threads (Čukić et al, 2020).

Co-creation. Who creates the *katte*? What are its extents? The magnificent sacred trees of *peepul* and *neem* mark this space. The common man shapes this space through part instinct and part will, through shared cultural beliefs, myths and actions of rest, refuge and storytelling. Local communities create their own communing space with exchanges, interactions and interdependencies spread over space and time. The space is co-created at the intersection of nature and culture (Keswani, 2019). This makes the reading of the space cohesive, giving it identity and a sense of belonging. The sacred trees are also keystone species and critical in maintaining the diversity of their ecological communities. As a canvas for exchange between the larger ecosystem - the human and non-human world - the *katte* creates a strong socio-cultural and ecological connect between nature, humans and future generations to build a humane and ecologically-sensitive social order (Patterns of Commoning).



Figure 2. Co-creators

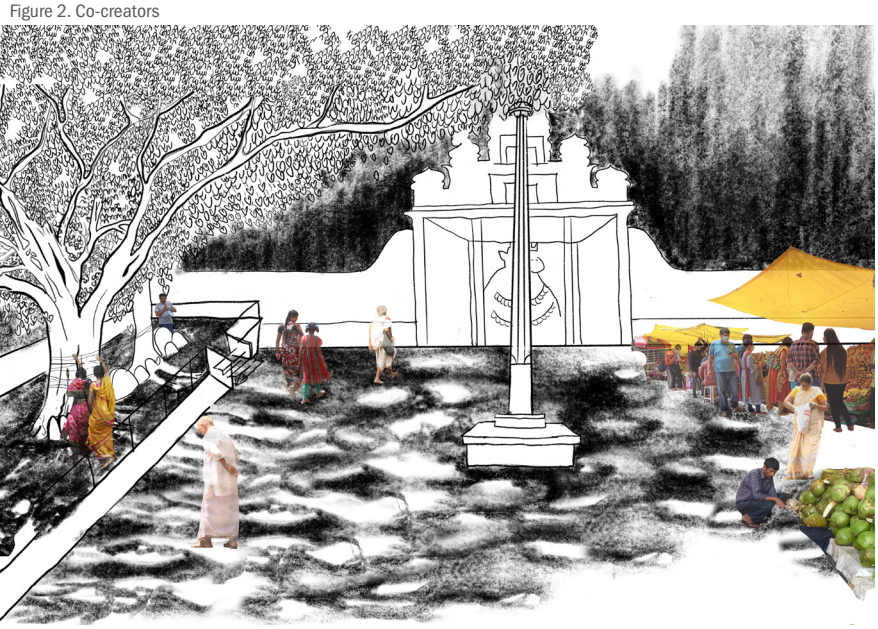

Figure 4. Shared management

The *ashwath katte* at Baiyanpalya sits in a quiet alley parallel to the city's busy Kanakapura highway. The *katte*'s co-creators are many - the women visiting for a daily ritual that gets extended by small chats, autorickshaw drivers sitting alongside, passersby from the adjacent Water ATM, and flower and fruit vendors.

Shared management. How is the space managed? What do they do? Adorned with *kumkum* (vermilion), *haldi* (turmeric), sacred threads and cloth-strips around their trunks, and idols of serpent gods at their roots, the trees stand tall marking a notional domain that celebrates transient exchange between the community and the commons. The 'verbs' in these commons are a series of tangibles and intangibles - actions, transactions, conversations, and layers of barriers and buffers co-created by varied users. How the community constitutes itself is manifested in the social practices for managing the resources and associated values, rituals, customs, myths and self-determined rules to develop this malleable system, rather than dependency on the market or government (Bollier, 2013).



The other silent guardians of the *katte* are neighbourhood local senior citizens who pause there for their daily conversations with friends, wayfarers for short afternoon naps or street vendors who create a dynamic threshold between the sacred space and its outer world. The *katte* is a non-hierarchical and flexible space, replete with varied interconnections and interactions of users and activities. Therefore, what 'makes' these urban commons is actually a 'process of space creation' that unfolds through 'practices of commoning' (Woerden, 2021).

At the Bull Temple in Basavanagudi, the primary users are temple devotees, women who continue longstanding living traditions with their rituals related to the marriage of neem and peepal and fertility, and vendors who create this notional dynamic threshold under the shade of large canopy.

Generative Space. Space, as a resource, within the urban commons discourse is both a social product and a prerequisite for social interaction. While rapid urbanisation, construction of more roads and flyovers for motorised traffic, and built spaces continue to take precedence, 'commoning' represents a profound challenge to the current overwhelming pageant of capitalism. It is based on a very different ontology where values and practices enable communities to be generative instead of extractive (Woerden, 2021).

Bengaluru's *ashwath kattes* exist as multiple generous and undisturbed inner worlds of giving within the bustle and chaos of an outer world. They may seem a part of the everyday - small and speckled but with a deeper understanding of the city. One cannot disagree that the *kattes* are and will always be significant contributors to the identity and belonging of the bustling city.



Figures 5 & 6. Giving rather than extracting



Figure 7. Marriage of neem and peepal

Note: All illustrations are made by the author.

Smruti is a practising landscape architect, visiting faculty and self-taught illustrator. She attempts to read and shape environments that are socio-culturally diverse and hold narratives of nature in all its complex and rich forms.
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The Garden Market

Ganesh Katave



Chrome Oasis, an illustrative graphic of KR Market as a garden of vibrant hues and textures

The artwork is inspired by the everyday textures, colours, and objects of Krishna Rajendra Market (KR Market), Bangalore. This visual exercise investigates the manifestation of the marketplace as a garden in the Garden City. In this visual narrative, KR Market is the protagonist, becoming a place of and for people, activities, textures, and hues in symphony each day, to form what we can only call a garden. The graphic is created as a collage of colourful textures and patterns from the artist's digital collection named 'Pixel Rupture'. Pixel Rupture is a graphic technique that creates a series of patterns and textures using old photographs which are edited by simple photo editing applications. The flower baskets and colourful sunshades were juxtaposed with Pixel Rupture patterns keeping the humans as plain silhouettes in this vibrant garden of hues. The people become the landscape with the flower baskets as objects placed carefully in the vast space we call the garden.

Ganesh Katave is an architect and designer from Hubli. He currently works for Deshpande Foundation, an educational NGO. He likes to narrate lost stories through his artworks. Email: ganeshkatwe1515@gmail.com

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

Dinesh Rao

Dinesh Rao is a practising architect, teacher, photographer and writer, but primarily a work in progress with no schedule and no end in sight. Email: rao.dinesh@gmail.com

sub:version Issue 01, August 2023, pp. 184-185

The Garden Campus

Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore

Neha Harish

The grey stone and concrete walls have faded into the background. The large rain trees form portals through which these walls reveal themselves, although as glimpses. My first visit to the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIM-B) campus was during the summer months of 2018 as part of a case study for my undergraduate semester coursework. The green of the campus was very evident even during these hot months. The subsequent visit was two years later during the monsoon months and anybody visiting the campus could clearly see the shift of the landscape towards a more prodigal green. It was during this visit that I decided to pen down this memory. Coincidentally it was the institute's yearly celebration where its venerated architect Balkrishna Vittaldas Doshi was the chief guest. My illustration tries to capture Doshi's words of the old campus' conception combined with architect Sanjay Mohe's note on his latest extension for the campus. The illustration sits at the union of two visions, where the old stone walls of the great corridors across the campus, intertwine with green ivy on one end and with the new exposed concrete walls on the other end.

A stark feature of this memory was the light fighting its way through the vine-covered pergola almost as a final attempt to grace the old stone walls of the great corridor. It reminded me of the great architect Louis I.Kahn's words '...which slice of the sun does your building own today...?'.

Everytime I draw, I try to capture the material qualities of the buildings in front of me, but this time it was more about tracing the veins on the leaves, the last twirl of the climber's newborn leaf and the winding vines on the campus's walls and pergolas. The new building has also started to be engulfed by this beautiful and plentiful garden, almost as an attempt to marry the old and new. But above all, in a city of no extremes, IIM-B represents the power of light and shadow, and architecture's primordial dependence on it.

Neha Harish is an architect at CollectiveProject and is interested in contextually-driven architectural endeavours and her hand illustrations attempt to understand the built environment through its relationship with man, material and landscape.
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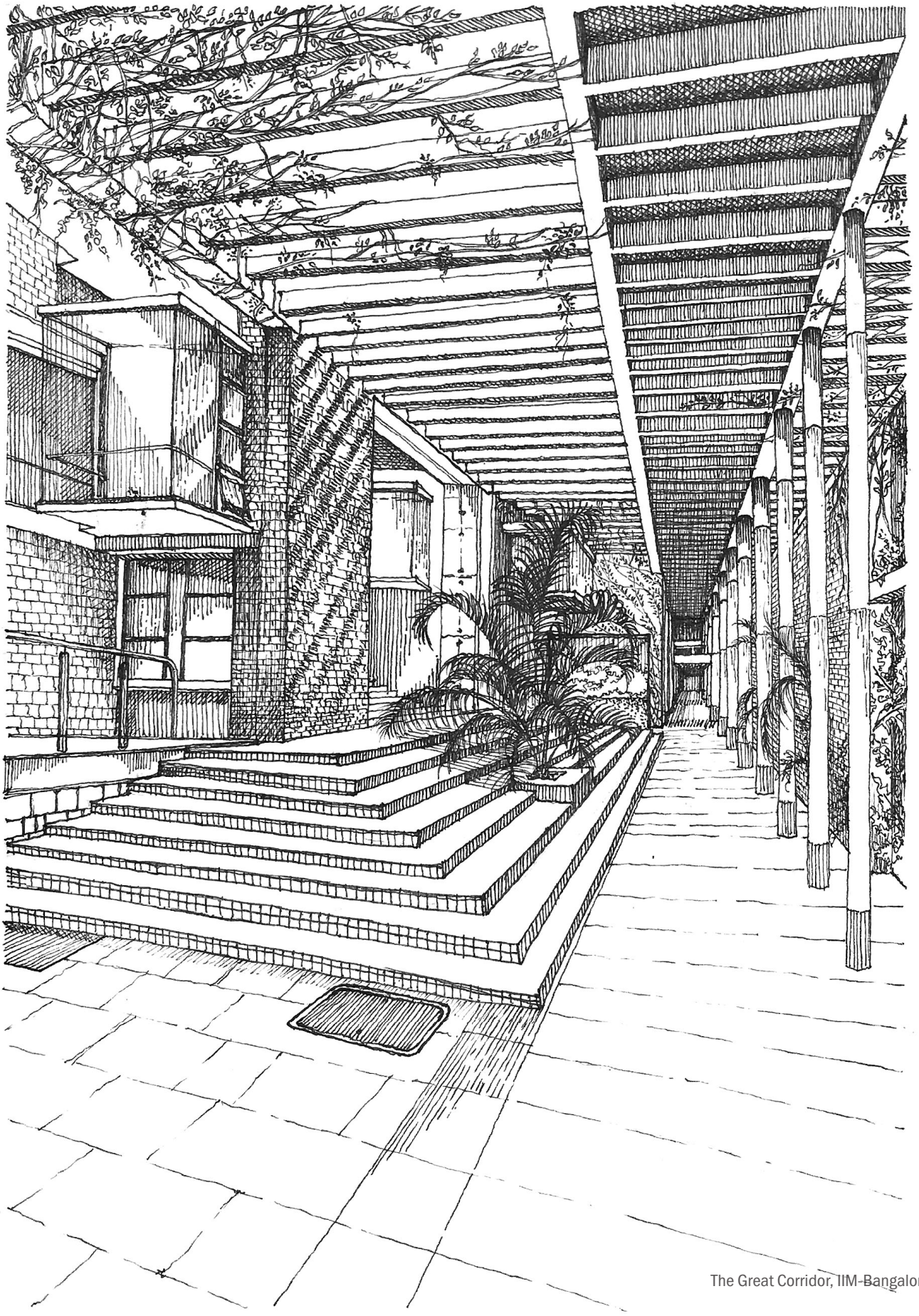
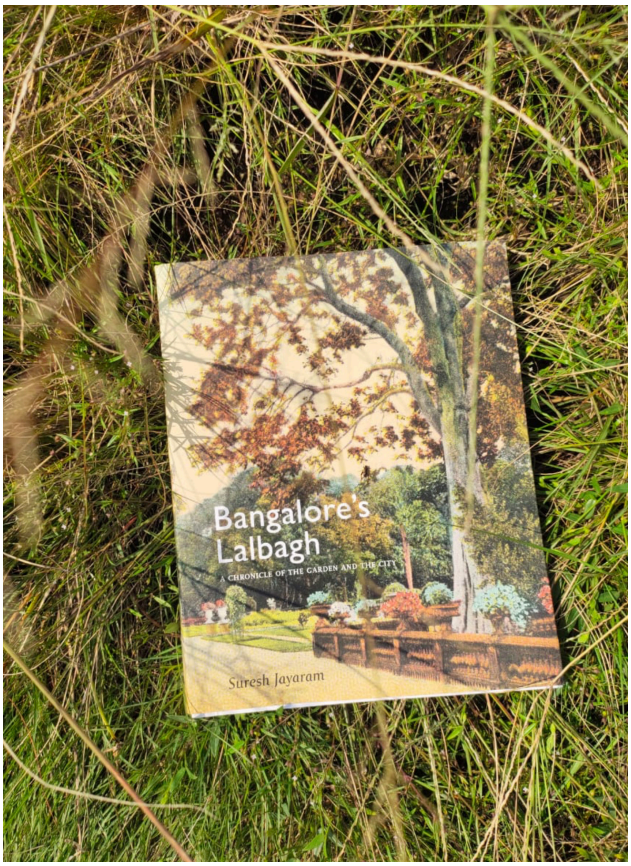
Note: This illustration was originally published as cover art for 'Blueprint', newsletter of the Indian Institute of Architects (Karnataka Chapter, Issue 01, Volume 02, 01 July 2021)



The Great Corridor, IIM-Bangalore



Bangalore's Lalbagh

A Chronicle of the Garden and the City
2021, Visual Arts Collective x Press Works
Suresh Jayaram

Book in Question

What motivated the writing 'Bangalore's Lalbagh: A Chronicle of the Garden and the City'?

I live in Shanthinagar, a locality sandwiched between Lalbagh and Cubbon Park, two gardens that define the character of the city's identity. This has shaped my perspective on life and nature in the city. My life revolves around these two gardens of Bangalore. The motivation to write a book was to record the oral history of my family of farmers and gardeners (*Thigalas*). They grew fruits and vegetables in their orchards and farms for the British. It is here that my grandmother told me a story about an apple tree in her garden. I was fascinated to imagine this elusive apple tree that was almost like a myth and a catalyst to write this book.

What does Lalbagh - past and present - mean for Bangalore and its people?

For many Bangaloreans, Lalbagh is just not a lung space but also an emotion. It is central to the identity of the city and is still one of the favourite haunts of the citizens.

How have you characterised people, place and time in 'Bangalore's Lalbagh'?

My idea of framing the book involved looking at the context of Bangalore becoming the 'garden city' from the native 'naked country' as a consequence of its altitude and weather. The initial seeds of Lalbagh were sown by Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan and their vision to create an Islamic Garden. The colonial interlude laid the foundation through the visionary zeal of John Cameron and G.H.Krumbiegel. And later on, the Indian superintendents H.C.Javaraya and M.H.Marigowda introduced their unique perspectives on this garden. These influences made the city a global botanical hub.

Since this book is intricately linked with your personal experiences in and of Bangalore, can you shed light on how Lalbagh shaped you and your identity locators over the years?

I am trained as an artist and art historian with an interest in botany and nature in the urban context. Lalbagh has been a source of inspiration from my childhood to paint landscapes and to make botanical drawings in school. Later on, it became a garden of earthly delights that shaped my senses and kindled my curiosity. I slowed down, paused, and looked at the garden as a palimpsest of nature and culture. The horticultural element comes from my own lineage of being born in a farmer's family and looking at the change and conflict in the city.

You drew on various sources of information over the three years to write this book. Can you please elaborate on the process of collating the various layers and formats of information in one comprehensive narrative?

The personal archive of looking at and mapping the city was a passion that led to focusing on the changing landscape of Bangalore. The postcards, photographs from private albums, botanical drawings from the Lalbagh library, and many more images from Google Commons have enriched this book and made it a rich visual narrative with personal anecdotes, and oral histories that are often relegated to the anteroom of discourse. This book is a collection and a conversation with the city at large and the garden in particular.

Did you encounter any hitherto unknown facets of Bangalore that you would like to share?

The story of the Lalbagh Zoo and its many animals is a fascinating story for us today because it is unimaginable to fathom the idea of all these exotic animals housed in this botanical garden. I heard that a tiger slipped out of the cage by accident and was frightened by the gunshots of the caretaker and a local hunter to return to its cage. This was a sensational story!

What in your opinion is the quintessential Bangalore and Bangalorean?

For me, the quintessential Bangalore is very nostalgic and is a romantic postcard from the past - colonial bungalows, home gardens, and tree-lined avenues with no traffic. But the reality is different. This city has influenced my work as a writer and an artist. It has made me a *flaneur* of nature in this urban context and has influenced the way I live in a home/studio that is built as a homage to the city and has a reference to the native and colonial, set in a contemporary context.

Can you elaborate on the importance of seeing city archives as repositories of city identity and collective memory?

Bangalore's archives are repositories of specialised information that are often not accessible to the public or the researcher. One needs perseverance and tact to penetrate the red tape and get the information one needs. These archives are not user-friendly and need to be more open to discourse and dialogue. The city needs an interconnected archive that is online and comprehensive.

Note: The pictures in this review are taken by Suresh Jayaram.

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