

URBAN SUBCULTURE “WATERWAYS”

A LIVE SKETCH ESSAY OF DIFFERENT PLACES

Suman Paul

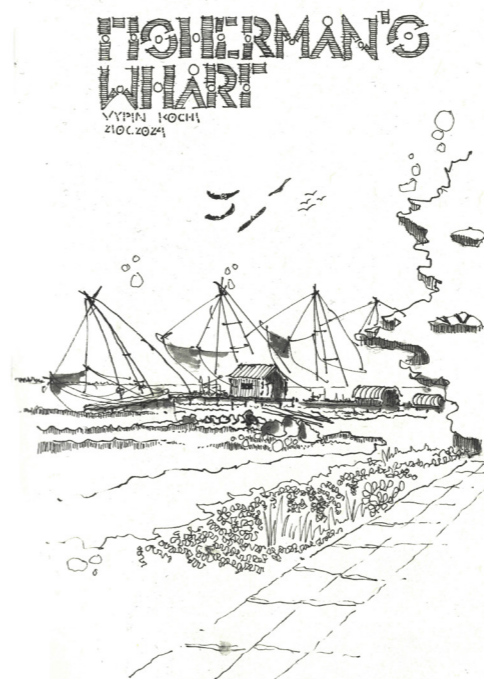
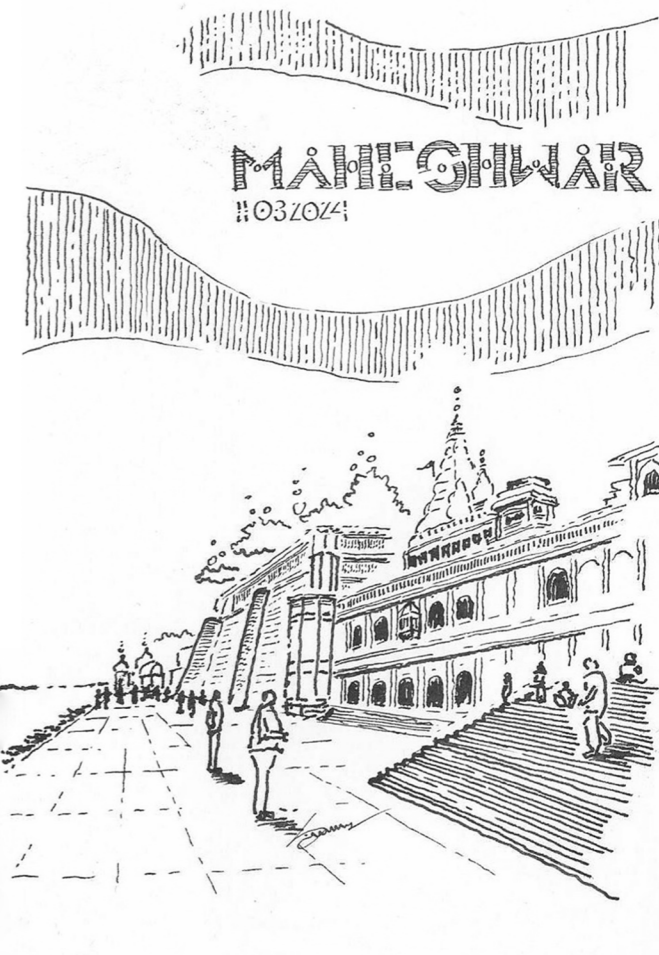
Life happens where the land meets the water.

Maheshwar is a town adjacent to the Narmada river in Madhyapradesh. There is a beautiful ghat slowly rises up from the water and touches the temple complex and a palace. It has embedded history in it which tells the story of its evolution.

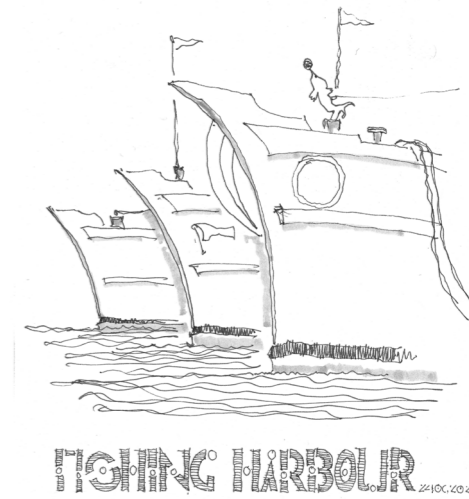


The ghat is dotted with many small and medium shrines which are used by the locals everyday. On various occasions, the entire ghat premise becomes vibrant and people come from all over to celebrate. On a regular day, the same ghat is used for many purposes - taking bath, doing rituals, washing clothes, boating, lazying around, taking a nap under the tree, smaller shops, food outlets, horoscope, walking, running, kids playing, gossiping, drying clothes, yoga, exercises, and so on.

The palace complex and the temple complex gradually opens up to the ghat and eventually touch the water. On the other side of the town grows organically keeping an invisible anchorage to the ghat. That creates a multiple routing from the entire town towards the water. And all the daily or occasional life celebrations are tied back to the waterway. This has been happening for long and has become a culture of that land. One can say it as a subculture in an indigenous urbanism.



Kochi city has evolved respecting the ocean and backwaters. Fishing as a profession acts as a reflection of the local culture here. One type of fishing is in a static format which happens in a particular location depending on the time and flow of water through the Chinese fishing nets.

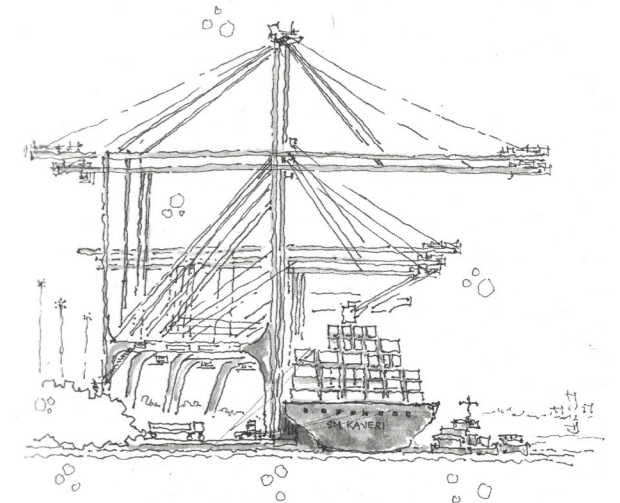


Another type of fishing happens through an elaborate system of fishing trollers which go deep inside the ocean for a longer time to fetch large quantity and then change hands through auction, storage and retailing. This is a subculture of urbanism in terms of different community, activity, mechanism, economy, food habit etc. purely connected with waterways.



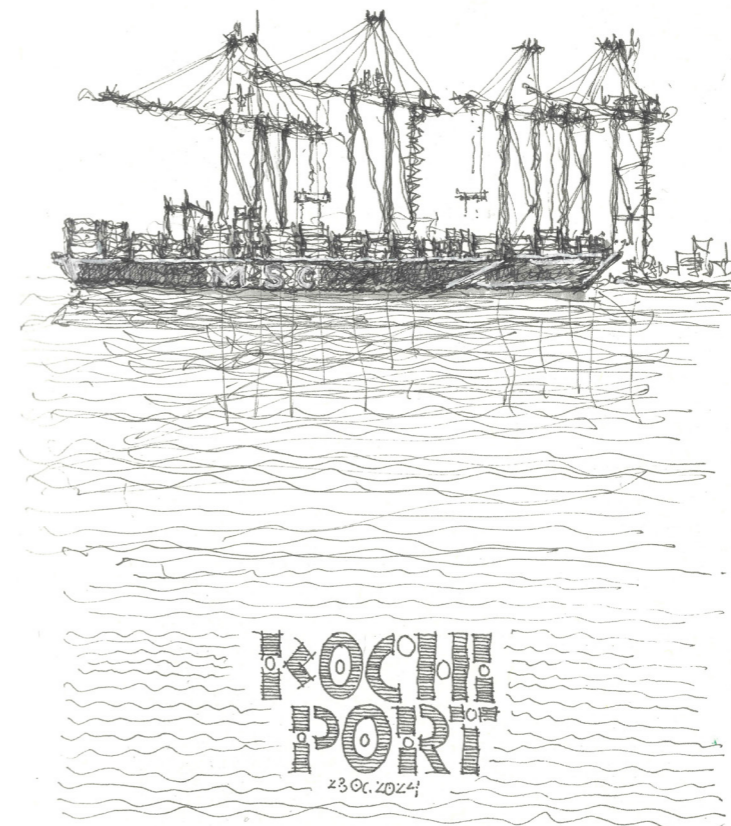
KOCHI BOATMAN

This subculture is both individualistic and pluralistic by nature that directly feeds into the common culture of the land.



Shipyard is purely a place where the global and the local have dialogues between each other. Even if it seems very silent and apparently not recognisable but inherently there is a constant exchange happening at the shipyard.

KOCHI SHIPYARD



KOCHI PORT

Water and the waterways become the lifeline of many. This has been the culture from the ancient time. Waterways is one of the three major milestones of human evolution where the other two being agriculture and metallurgy. So as a whole, one can equate waterways as a subculture of various levels of urbanism keeping in mind that urbanism is referred as holistic systematic growth of living environment for human, animal, plant and any other form of living being.



VYPIN, KOCHI

Transportation through water unites land masses. That itself is a subcultural aspect.



KOCHI FERRY

Taking the ferry to reach on the other side of the water is a sort of lifeline at many places. Different walks of life are combined through this unique travelling mechanism and it contributes very significantly to the entire urbanism.

Suman Paul is an architect with extensive experience in corporate architectural practice at WS Atkins, Jurong Consultants, and CPG Corp, he has collaborated with international designers on numerous projects in India and Singapore. At CnT Architects, where he practiced for over a decade, he led several award-winning designs across healthcare, residential, institutional, hospitality, and public infrastructure sectors. He currently runs his own practice, Rainmaker Studio. His notable works include one of the world's most advanced underground nanotechnology labs in Bangalore and one of India's largest hospital buildings, which won the IDAC 2020 award for sustainability and was presented as Building as a Therapy at a design conference in Manipal. Suman has lectured at architecture schools and shared his research at forums including ISRO. He has designed over 15 million sq. ft. and built around 5 million sq. ft. of architectural projects. He is also deeply interested in architectural and urban illustrations.