

Once upon a Garden City ...

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

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