

Celebrating
World **Landscape Architecture** Month
April 2021



I S O L A

MUMBAI (MMR) CHAPTER



SILENCE...

NATURE SPEAKING!

An open call to submit any traditional/indigenous wisdom, indicators, learnings from nature which are simple solutions to understand and deal with our natural surroundings better!

Submission format
Write Up + Photo

Last date of submission
25th April 2021

Submit to
isolamumbai@gmail.com

(Selected Entries will be published on ISOLA MUMBAI social media pages)


ISOLA
MUMBAI (MMR) CHAPTER

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(APRIL 2021)

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This is a Compilation of shortlisted entries for the open call


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केंबळ्याचं घर

Shubhada
Thorat



" केंबळ्याचं घर "

दगड- गोट्यांचा मजबूत पाया, कारवीच्या कडाच्या भिंती, निलगिरीच्या मजबूत लाकडाचे छत व त्यावर मातीची कौलै. कोल्हापूरच्या शाहवाडी तालूक्यामध्ये बघावयास मिळालेली ही निसर्गपरिपूर्ण सुंदर वास्तू निसर्ग व मानवी जीवन यामधील परस्परावलंबी नात्याचे उत्कृष्ट असे उदाहरणचं!

ही घरे बांधण्याच्या वेळी आजूबाजूस उपलब्ध असलेल्या दगड- गोट्यांचा वापर करून पाया बनवतात. जंगली श्वापदापासून संरक्षणाकरिता कारवीचे झाड कुंपण म्हणून लावले जाते, झाडे कालावधीने वाळून गेल्यावर त्याच्या काटक्या विणून कारवीच्या कडाच्या भिंती बनवतात व त्याचवेळी परत कुंपणासाठी नवीन झाडे लावली जातात, जेणेकरून ती वाढून वाळल्यानंतर पुन्हा नव्या भिंती बनवण्यासाठी किंवा जून्या भिंतीच्या डांगडूजीसाठी वापर करण्यात येतो.

छतासाठी वापरलेल्या निलगिरीच्या लाकडाचे सुद्धा तसेच. आपापल्या शेतावरील बांधावर लावलेल्या झाडाचे लाकूडचं घराच्या छतासाठी वापरतात. एका पिढीकडून झाडांचे रोपण केले जाते, पुढच्या वेळी छताच्या डागडूगीची / नविन बांधण्याची वेळ येईपर्यंत रोपण केलेली झाडे वापरासाठी तयार होतात व नविन झाडांचे त्याचवेळी रोपण केले जाते. मातीची कौले कुंभाराकडून धान्य किंवा इतर वस्तूच्या मोबदल्यात घेतली जातात. याद्वारे, " निसर्गाशी एकरूप होऊन जगण्याचे संस्कारचं जणू नविन पिढीवर केले जातात."

मानवी जीवन कळत - नकळत रित्या पूर्णपणे निसर्गावर अवलंबून असूनदेखील आजच्या काळात आधुनिकतेच्या शर्यतीमागे त्याचा निसर्गाचा ज्हास करित असताना, वरिल प्रमाणे नैसर्गिक जीवनशैली अवलंबून जीवन जगणे म्हणजे मानवी जीवनावर असलेल्या निसर्गाच्या असंख्य व अनन्यसाधारण उपकारांचे ' ऋण ' चं व्यक्त करणे होय.





THE CHANGE OF SEASONS



Aparna
Bhargava

Wheat Field, Jaipur, Rajasthan
Source : Author



The Wheat Fields as an indicator of Season Change

I live in the outskirts of the city of Jaipur where these wheat fields exist. People here plant crops in rotation. While on morning walks I used to observe the change in color & texture of the crop - slowly indicating the shift in season, and the latter picture is taken on the day of Holi, the day when these crops are harvested and worship rituals are performed in the evening. This is a religious traditional practice performed and one can very well co relate the link between festivals and nature.

Thus these crops act as a beautiful indicator of the upcoming hot days



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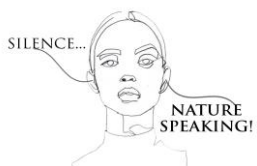
THE TALE OF *TULSI VRINDAVAN* IN THE COURTYARD

Rutuja
Ulhe

ADORNING INDIAN COURTYARDS: *TULSI VRINDAVAN*

Worshipping nature, animals and objects of symbolic importance, particularly gods/goddesses have played an essential role in the Hindu religious practices. Every symbol or ritual holds a historic prominence be it a jewellery, motif or an architectural element. Like the embellishment of an Indian Courtyard. No household Courtyard is observed without a Tulsi Vrindavan, which represents Indian mythological. For centuries, the goddess of the courtyard is pleased in India by prayers and worship. The plant of 'Tulsi' is known for its purity, medicinal and herbal values. In Hindu mythology, the Goddess of 'Courtyard' has been shown expressing her love, compassion and devotion for Lord Krishna through the pain of separation 'Viraha bhakti'

As a child, I was always curious about the significance of Tulsi Vrindavan in a Courtyard, ever since my Grandmother narrated me a beautiful mythological story, she read in Devdutt Pattanaik's book about the same. The story revolves around a dangerous Asura (demons) named Shankhachuda who was responsible for terrorizing Devas (gods). Devas who were in distress were unable to defeat this powerful demon in any way, so they seek help from Lord Brahma (the creator of the universe). Wherein Brahma informed the devas that the magical armour would protect the demon until Shankhachuda's wife 'Vrinda' remains devoted to her husband and does not betray him.



Indra the supreme leader of Devas requested lord Krishna for help and Lord Krishna promised to return the favour. Vrinda who was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna once expressed her desire to see Lord Krishna. All of a sudden, Lord Krishna appears in front of her but, in disguise of her husband Shankhachuda and tries to persuade her. She welcomes him like a devoted wife she was and indulges in adultery. As a result, Shankhachuda loses his magical powers.

With Devas victory over Demons, Vrinda was then accused of Infidelity and was thrown out of her house. Wandering homeless, she reaches Dwarka to seek justice from Lord Krishna. His wives refused to let Vrinda in out of jealousy. Standing in the courtyard of his house, Vrinda while pleading for help patiently waits for Lord Krishna to meet her in the courtyard. Responsible Krishna could not cross her miserable eyes and stood solid as a rock. He was guilt-ridden for breaking the faith of his devotee. With no response from Lord Krishna Vrinda is then turned into a Tulsi plant, growing roots into the courtyard of his house. Krishna thereafter proclaimed that he would be worshipped as a stone/fossil 'Shaligrama' and would accept no prayer unless a sprig of the Tulsi plant accompanies it.



Tulsi vrindavan at Mhamai Kamat house, Panjim, Goa
Photo Credits: Self





A Tradition of the *Warli* Tribe

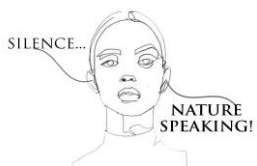
Saylee
Soundalgekar

The Tarpa Dance by the Warlis – an indigenous tribe in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh – West India.



I learnt about this tradition and practice of the Warli community from Mr Milind Thatte – founder Vayam. Vayam is an organization located in Jawahar, dedicated to sustainable development and the rights of adivasis. The story speaks of forest conservation and traditional practices that are still prevalent. The Warli tribe in one of the villages in Jawahar follows a practice where men above 18 years of age, accompanied by the elders go into the community forest for 7 days. These 7 days they are taught all about the forces of nature, forest produce, plant species and their significance, the extents of the forest etc.

Jagran – a ritual for forest gods is carried out. Through these days they are expected to eat only forest produce and not harm a single living organism or their habitat. Even though a cobweb bothers the face or anthill intersects the path or a honeybee stings, there can be no harm done to the forest-beings. At the end of 7 days the younger men are expected to walk the ambulatory path, worshipping the forces of nature – wind, fire, earth, etc and end the ceremony with a celebration. The celebration includes the complete family and traditional Tarpa dance.





Annapoorna

Mayura
Paranjape

The kitchen is a marker of culture. The kitchen fire is then the first yagna. In Vedic literature, the act of Dharma is embedded in the ritual of yagna. During the yagna, the yajman feeds the devata in the hope that the devata satisfies his desire. The yajaman gives in order to receive but there is no obligation. A good yajman sees his giving as a repayment of loans from his previous lives – hence there is no demand, no expectation. Similarly, the housewife serves the family members by cooking the food in the kitchen. The references can taken be seen in the great epics “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata”. In Ayodhya, Sita’s kitchen (Sita ki rasoī) is a popular pilgrim spot. In the Mahabharata, reference is made to Draupadi’s plate (Draupadi ki thali), which is always overflowing with food.

At the heart of Hindu philosophy, the idea of food (anna), which is when consumed becomes flesh (anna-kosha), and the body, which is the vehicle of the soul (atma). Feeding the body and keeping it healthy is the primary obligation (dharma) of a living creature. Nature is the source of food, thus goddess. The Kitchen (rasoi) is a sacred place where juices and flavours (rasa) are harnessed and food (bhog) is prepared from grains, cereals, fruits, vegetables, fish and meat.

The goddess, who is the forest, is also the goddess of kitchen – “Anna-poorna” This puranic theme of respecting the kitchen manifests in the kitchens of the heroines. There is a Hindu marriage ritual or tradition associated with this idea. When the bride comes to her in-law’s house, after marriage, she carries along with a small idol of goddess “Anna-poorna” whose blessings are sought to feed the family.

Bibliography: “RAMAYANA VERSUS MAHABHARATA” by Devdutt Pattanaik





The Sacred Groves

Priyanka
Gupta

Bijagarh Mahadev – Origin of a natural stream at Khargone, Madhya Pradesh
Source : Author

SACRED GROVES - THE MINI BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN INDIA

In Indian thought, the human is considered to be indispensable and integral component of the universe. The vivid concept about the spiritual and material dimension of man from time is immemorial according to Indians. Being originated from the precious treasures of Indian culture, the epics, purans, upnishads and vedas, the philosophy here elaborates the ultimate objectives of human duties to the environment and society. Since the beginning, on contrary to the alien western concept of conceiving ecosystem as utilitarian agency; Indians had the philosophy of worshiping nature. nature was not considered to be a commodity to be consumed for human fulfilment. The utilization of natural resources was based on human restraint, confined to desirable needs and necessities. This unique spiritual connection of humans and nature is the basic concept of Indian ecology. The river, mountain, stars, trees and soils are divine and sacred to Indians. The mother earth is worshipped as aditi, the goddess. It is the duty of human being to make it lively as it is . The present-day globalization and its adverse effects on nature has made a need to return back to the man nature ideology and envisage the concept of the human nature deep consciousness.



Sacred grove are one such example. Sacred grove have important socio-cultural functions, in addition to the religious practices which are an important part of community's lives. Sacred groves are home of the sacred trees (medicinal / environmental importance). It may be patches of trees on the outer part of the villages or within village premises, dedicated to local deities or ancestral spirits. Sacred groves offer habitation to birds, wild animals and insects. the myths and taboos are very helpful in protecting the groves from anthropogenic disturbances. The offerings to the deities of these groves not only have religious importance but ecological and cultural importance too. Offerings like Shreefal, Agarbatti, Terracotta Utensils and Terracotta Horses, Local Sweets and use of leaves/fruits/flowers from sacred and temple trees like mango, peepal and dhatura all have their own philosophy and cyclical ecological role. Terracotta represents the powers of rejuvenation inherent in earth. The philosophy of birth, death and rebirth is represented through the cyclic role of clay. The acceleration in ecological catastrophe due to globalization is a greatest danger to the current society. The purity of principles practiced in ancient India and the form of fundamentalism of nature can help us restore our ecological equilibrium.



THE DAILY ACTIVITIES PRACTICED IN INDIA SINCE VEDIC TIMES. ACTIVITIES INDICATE THAT HUMAN IS INTEGRAL PART OF THE MOTHER NATURE.



Sounds Of Nature

Vidisha
Barwal

The local forest from my balcony
Source : Author

It was probably six-thirty in a wintry morning. My mother woke me up to get ready for school. She handed me a 'katori' of rice. It was our daily ritual. It still is. I moved out towards our kitchen garden which is six-seven steps down the level of the courtyard. I walked towards the edge, following my daily route with sleepy eyes, and spread the rice on the top of the retaining wall. The birds always waited for me every day. At least that is how I thought! As I climbed the steps back and reached the courtyard, the morning silence suddenly broke into an uproar of kutroo-kutroo- hruu-hruu- twihu-twihu...I stopped by the Guava tree in the yard to see what was happening. I was baffled, for the birds were shouting at me from its smooth branches. Unable to understand, I started moving towards the verandah. I paused again. A little chill went down my spine as my eyes pounced upon a cat. I felt my heart thumping loudly.

We both were silent, standing, staring, downright at each other for a few seconds while the birds continued to raise alarms. My seven-year-old heart mustered up the courage to walk towards the verandah. As the cat watched my steps, I opened the door and slid in quickly. I felt safe. The birds soon dimmed their chorus, and the cat vanished into the fog.

It was in the latter days of my primary school where I learned about a similar phenomena from a chapter in our Hindi textbook. When animals transition in between various grains of the forest, birds start calling, giving warnings around, indicating the arrival of a beast. When I read this, I felt a deeper relationship with the birds of my local forest. I truly believed and I was convinced that they were trying to protect me from the cat. I always wondered how they knew that I was afraid of cats.

I woke up the next day with greater enthusiasm to meet my friends, and I follow them till today.





Sounds & Knots of the *Khasi* Tribe

Saylee
Soundalgekar

A knot depicting Friendship
Source : Author

Khasi – an indigenous tribe in Meghalaya – North East India. What do we know about Meghalaya? Pristine river, the living roots bridge, the waterfalls... and the 3 hills that divide the state – Khasi, Jaintia and Garo. In my recent visit to Meghalaya, I learnt about the Khasi language. Sounding completely foreign to a Mumbaikar, the script were English alphabets. Curious, I questioned my driver. To my surprise, he answered, Khasi tribe never had a formal script until the British arrived here. As Khasis had no indigenous script they adopted Roman script. “We were considered illiterate.” But the origin, inspiration of script and language history runs deep into nature. The Khasi is an ethno-zoological community. They communicated with sounds and knots. An abundance of all species of Ficus, orchids, bamboo, and the nature of their roots, stems to grow, tie, twist and grab has led to a completely unique way of communication. Messages were sent their messages either through the sounds (that led to development of phonetics) or plant knots.



A KNOT DEPICTING FRIENDSHIP

These knots were made out of the locally available plant material in forests. And it conveyed the emotive responses of foes, friendship, love, care, anger and so much more. Until the seventeenth, communication was oral, through sounds of nature or through knots.



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