



TRACING NARRATIVES

INDIAN
LANDSCAPE DESIGN

A true telling of the garden histories of the Indian subcontinent will take decades of research; much of which has not been initiated as yet. While there is considerable interest in the gardens of the Mughals, little is known of the gardens that preceded this era, and strangely even those that followed.

Even from a typological perspective, we know little of the home gardens, across the vast ecological variety found in the country or for example, the way that parks expressed themselves in our towns and cities.

This effort then is by no means comprehensive and cannot lay claim to even making a modest start in that direction. It is however an attempt to regain lost ground; to consolidate the many areas that landscape designers and garden lovers have perhaps forgotten, could invest time in exploring, and from the many lenses presented, develop a deeper appreciation of this discipline.

Tracing Narratives Indian Landscape Design
2016



Landscape Environment and Advancement Foundation (LEAF)

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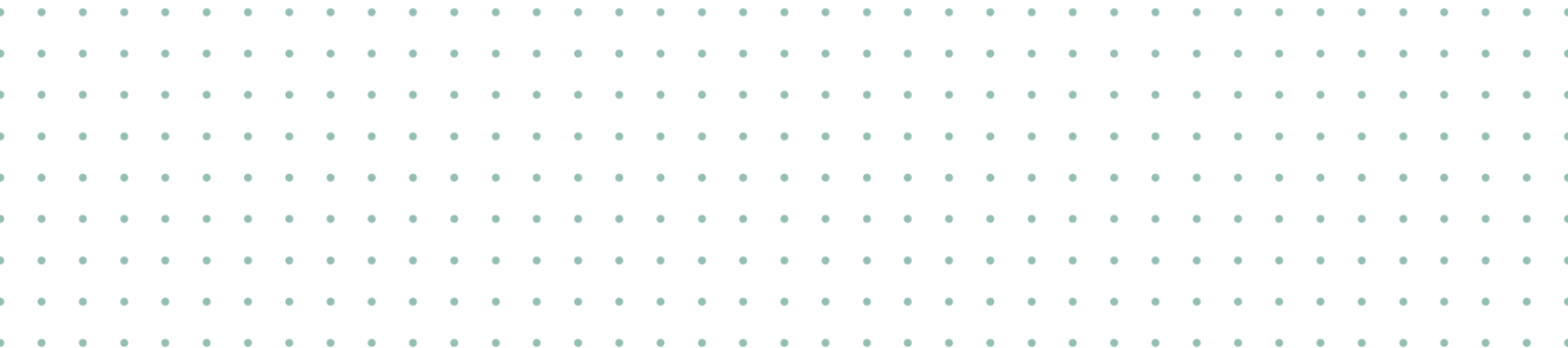
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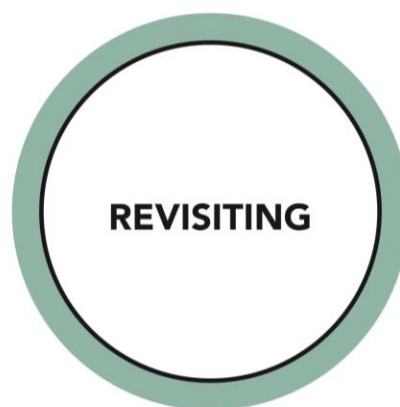
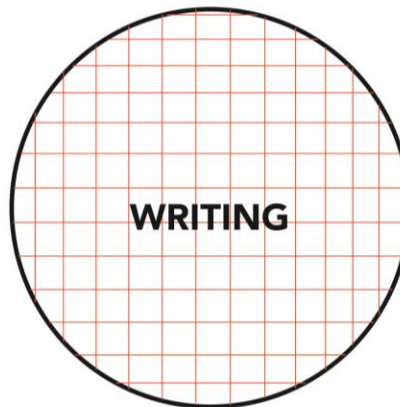
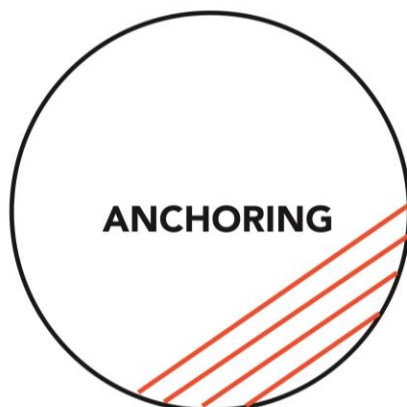
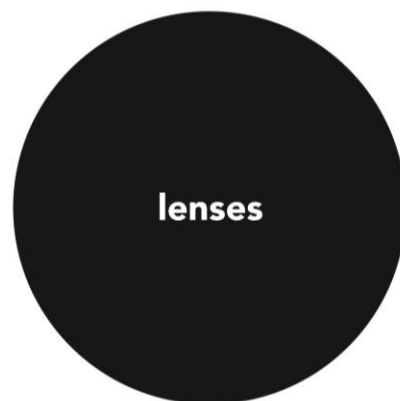
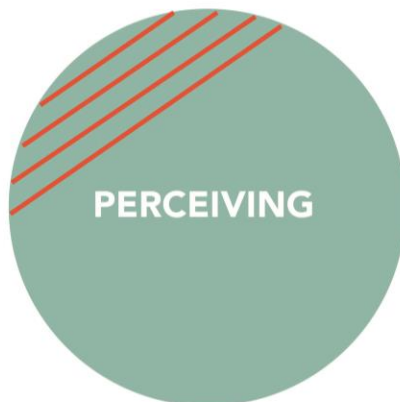
The garden is an apparatus
By which to see self
Shadows of self
A future self,
Or a self that may never exist;

The garden is an apparatus
By which to navigate the world
Rhythms of life
And cycles of death:
Meanings of patience and piety

The garden is an apparatus
In which to enact life
Its joys and sorrows
Its whimsical madness
And scholarly pursuits.

The garden is a rusty apparatus
It's time to mend it
And make it the centre of our being
Once more.





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Preface

Somewhere along the way, it became unfashionable for Landscape Architects to say that they designed gardens. It started for good reasons. Humphry Repton in 1794 CE used the term Landscape Gardener and perhaps did this to distinguish his systemic approach to thinking and documentation and set himself separately from others who did not do so, and the Olmsted in 1863 when he printed his card to describe his works for the planning of urban park systems adopted “Landscape Architect” as a professional title, perhaps to state that his interest was “more” than just making a garden; it had to understand the city and its scale and people and then went on to do one of the greatest gardens of all times. Overtime the schism only widened. There is the world of garden designers and there is the world of landscape architects and both look at each other with wary disdain.

Landscape Architects today do a host of things, from thinking about cities, to regional natural resource management, to conserving fragile ecosystems and most think that doing gardens is not really a compelling reason to be in the trade.

On the other hand not only has the garden always occupied the human mind historically; but the history of landscape design is the history, to a large part, the history of gardens.

Paradise is a garden; not a mansion, or a palace, but a garden. And this is amplified in most of the religions. Accounts of a primordial earthly paradise in several religions range from that of a garden of life (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) to that of a golden age of human society at the beginning of each cycle of human existence (Buddhism, Hinduism).

Somehow the garden as the “other place”, the place we aspire for, a place to be in when all else is over, is strongly embedded in our minds and we are unable to shake off that idea.

But also along with this, is the fact that the garden in many real and metaphysical ways is a microcosm of the world and the many things linked to it are different worlds in themselves.

The appreciation and the need to relook at the idea of the garden; is the key but without deep understanding of this idea, the voyages are often hollow.

Being practitioners we are perhaps keenly aware of what is the state of work in the country, and while early iterations of the exhibition attempted to be expansive, we realized that this would be at the cost of having an uneasy narrative and limited ability to find areas to explore and reflect on; so all in the hope of suggesting possible soliloquies in profession and giving a glimpse to the lay visitor and the student of the wonderful layers and connected world that makes this discipline; we have chosen the narrative that we have.

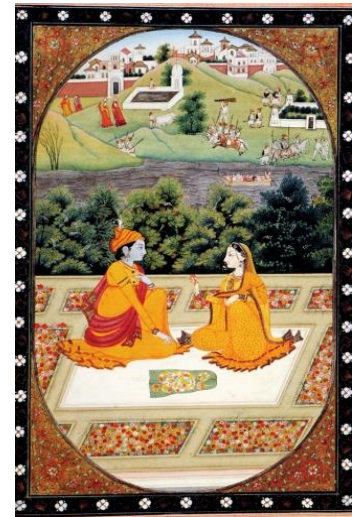
It all started with a garden; and somewhere we seemed to have forgotten that.

You cannot heal mankind, unless you know how to tend to one human first. And what use is that body if it does not dream, and aspire for poetry.

ACTORS IN GARDEN



Painting by Bishandas depicting Babur supervising the laying out of the Garden of Fidelity. This painting is from 'Baburnama' Manuscript c. 1590-1598.



Folio from a Baramasa Series: Krishna and Radha on terrace. (Kangra, Himachal Pradesh), 1850.



Princess Damayanthi talking with Royal swan about Nalan, painting by Raja Ravi Varma, 1899.

goes underground here, to emerge about a mile away.

I have to walk only a furlong to reach my grandfather's house. The road is lined with eucalyptus, jacaranda and laburnum trees. In the compounds there are small groves of mangoes, litchis and papayas. The poinsettia thrusts its scarlet leaves over garden walls. Every veranda has its bougainvillea creeper, every garden its bed of marigolds. Potted palms, those symbols of Victorian snobbery, are popular with Indian housewives. There are a few houses, but most of the bungalows were built by 'old India hands' on their retirement from the army, the police or the railways. Most of the present owners are Indian businessmen or government officials.

I am standing outside my grandfather's house. The wall has been raised, and the wicket gate has disappeared; I cannot get a clear view of the house and garden. The nameplate identifies the owner as Major General Saigal; the house has had more than one owner since my grandparents sold it in 1949.

On the other side of the road there is an orchard of litchi trees. This is not the season for fruit, and there is no one looking after the garden. By taking a little path that goes through the orchard, I reach higher ground and gain a better view of our old house.

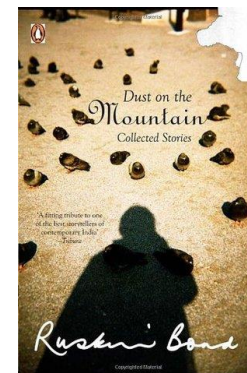
Grandfather built the house with granite rocks taken from the foothills. It shows no sign of age. The lawn has disappeared; but the big jackfruit tree, giving shade to the side veranda, is still there. In this tree I spent my afternoons, absorbed in my Magnets, Champions and Hotspurs, while sticky mango juice trickled down my chin. (One could not eat the jackfruit unless it was

they seemed remote enough for our house to be a desert island, with walls instead of cliffs.

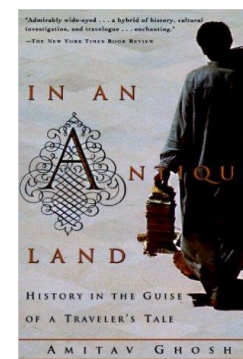
At times, unaccountably, the house would fill up with strangers. The garden, usually empty except for dragonflies and grasshoppers, would be festooned with saris drying in the breeze, and there would be large groups of men, women and children sitting on the grass, with little bundles of clothes and pots and pans spread out beside them. To me, a child of seven or eight, there always seemed to be an air of something akin to light-heartedness about those people, something like relief perhaps; they would wave to me when I went down to the garden and sometimes the women would reach into their bundles and find me sweets. In the evenings, large fires would be lit in the driveway and my mother and her friends would stand behind huge cooking-pots, ladles in hand, the ends of their saris tucked in purposefully at the waist, serving out large helpings of food. We would all eat together, sitting around the garden as though it were a picnic, and afterwards we, the children, would play football and hide-and-seek. Then after a day or two everyone would be gone, the garden would be reclaimed by dragonflies and grasshoppers and peace would descend once more upon my island.

I was never surprised or put out by these visitations. To me they seemed like festive occasions, especially since we ate out of green banana leaves, just as we did at weddings and other celebrations. No one ever explained to me what those groups of people were doing in our house and I was too young to work out for myself that they were refugees, fleeing from mobs, and that they had taken shelter in our garden because ours was the only 'Hindu' house nearby that happened to have high walls.

Dust on the Mountain Ruskin Bond, 1990



In An Antique Land Amitav Ghosh, 1994





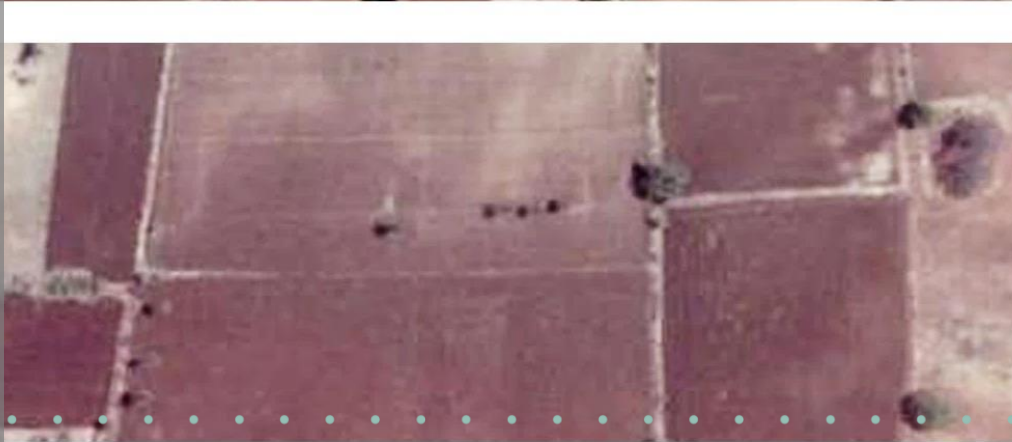
PERCEIVING

No matter how fleeting or fragile, seeking patterns in phenomena is an innate ingrained ability. When relationships are recognized, the mind quickly layers it with meanings that embellish, substantiate and finally canonize that pattern.

Over time the pattern attains a hallowed status, and is repeated ad-nauseam; making it seem greater than truth itself.

At different times of its life cycle it means different things; but rarely is it questioned, slowly numbing and impoverishing the mind.

“Gardens were rooms, where all facets of life expressed themselves; they were a continuum of the built – inseparable in activity and spirit; but often transcending life cycles to attain states of the metaphysical.”





Income Tax Colony
Amritsar

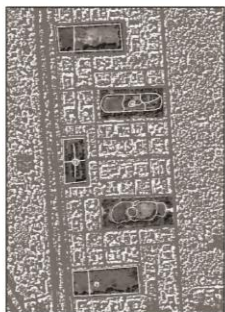
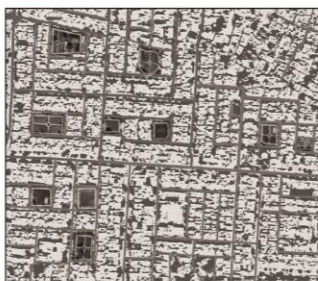


Children Park,
Agra Cantonment



Mohammadpur, New Delhi

Sen Martin Park (CPWD),
near Bangladesh High Commission,
New Delhi (2006)



Basantha Park, Durga, Sadbhavan,
Laxman Park, Kaveri Kunj and
Ghatwasan, Kamala Nagar, Agra

Company Park, Agra

Kabul Line Park, New Delhi

SOUTH



Margao Municipal
Garden, Goa



Jogger's Park, Mumbai

Rani Chennamma Nagar Garden, Belgaon



Metro Nagar Park, Chennai (2006-2012)



Vallabhacharyaji Udyan, Nagpur,
Karnataka

National Academy of
Defence Production (NADP),
1978 and Silver Jubilee Park,
Nagpur



WEST



A.M.C. Garden Ahmedabad



Arvind Bagh, Mehsana



V.M.C. Park And Madhuvan Park, Vadodara



Palika Udyan, Akota, Baroda



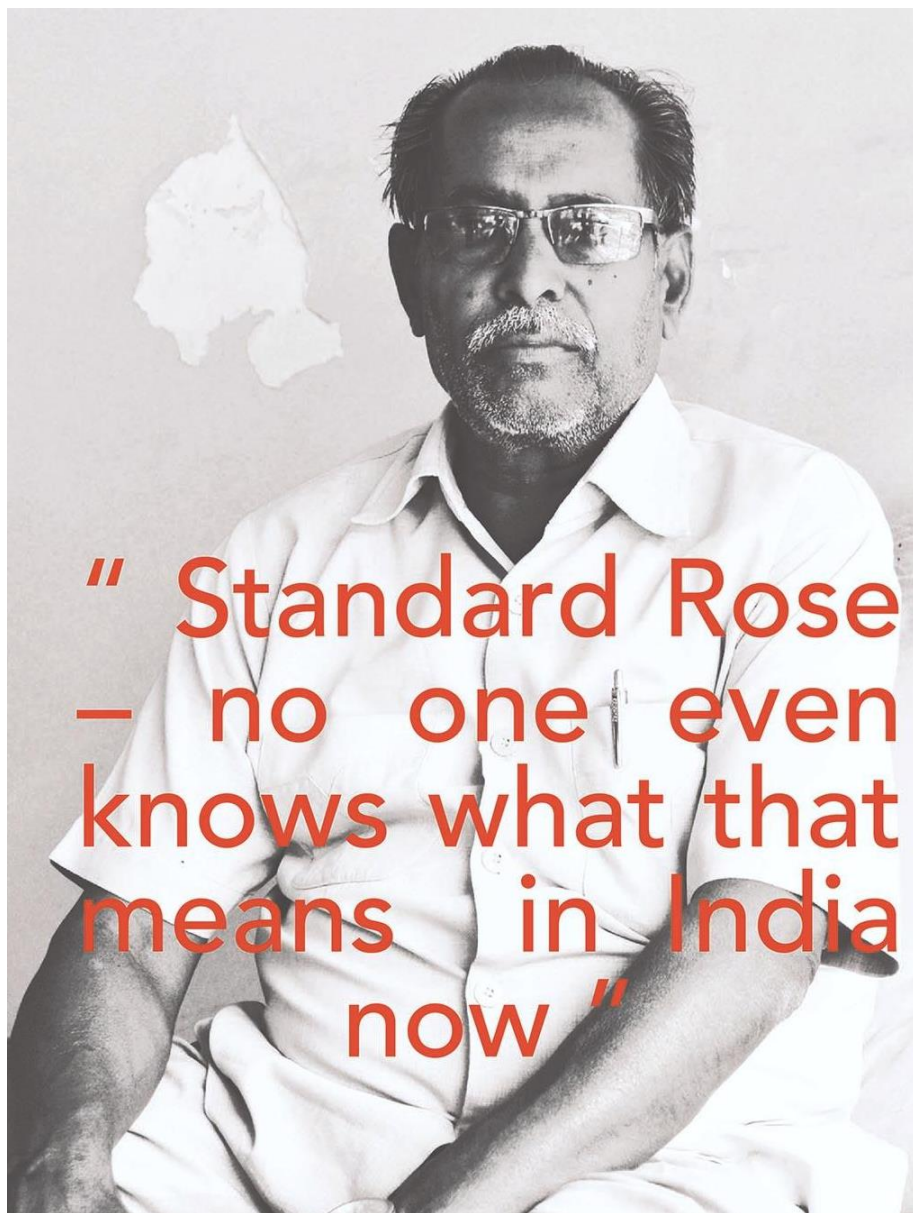
Biladi Bagh, Mehsana

NUR'URING

Soon after the first garden was planted; just a bit later there must have been someone stocking and selling plants. Books are repositories of recorded knowledge, and botanical gardens and herbariums the hallowed vaults. Nurseries on the other hand allow a sensorial understanding of the world of plants; often stocking the same species to be seen as a young sapling and also a slightly mature one; or often acting as windows to the way plants are sought after and used at a particular time and age. In a way they are the fashion houses of the profession. But even more valuable is the knowledge that the nurserymen has accumulated over the years, always conveyed orally, never written, it consists of anecdotes, and tales of the world of flora that is always fascinating. Much like the narrator of a play, a nurserymen carries the script of the story of every plant that he has around him, for he has witnessed its life cycle all along. They are skilled and have inherited knowledge from mentors or through the family lineage.



AZAD NURSERY, AGRA



Ishwar Singh the descendant of the nurseries of the Mughals.

"He is a story teller. Most nurserymen are- once they trust you. Till then they are cankerous."

"We were nurserymen even during the Mughals and before, and when India got independent, my father said, we have a business, but not a name; so he called it – Azad Nursery that's how we came to being. We had hundreds of acres of farms, and the nursery was a small part of it. In those days this belt along the Yamuna was the nursery belt of India. We sent plants by the thousands each day. The roses were famous- better than any other place in the country. But now; the waters of the river have gone, and with it our trade and we are now left to be traders."

But even today Ishwar Singh sits on a high bed along a busy road, where once there was a forest, and holds court. People come to buy a plant and sit talking about them for a long time over tea.

"Standard Rose – no one even knows what that means in India now"

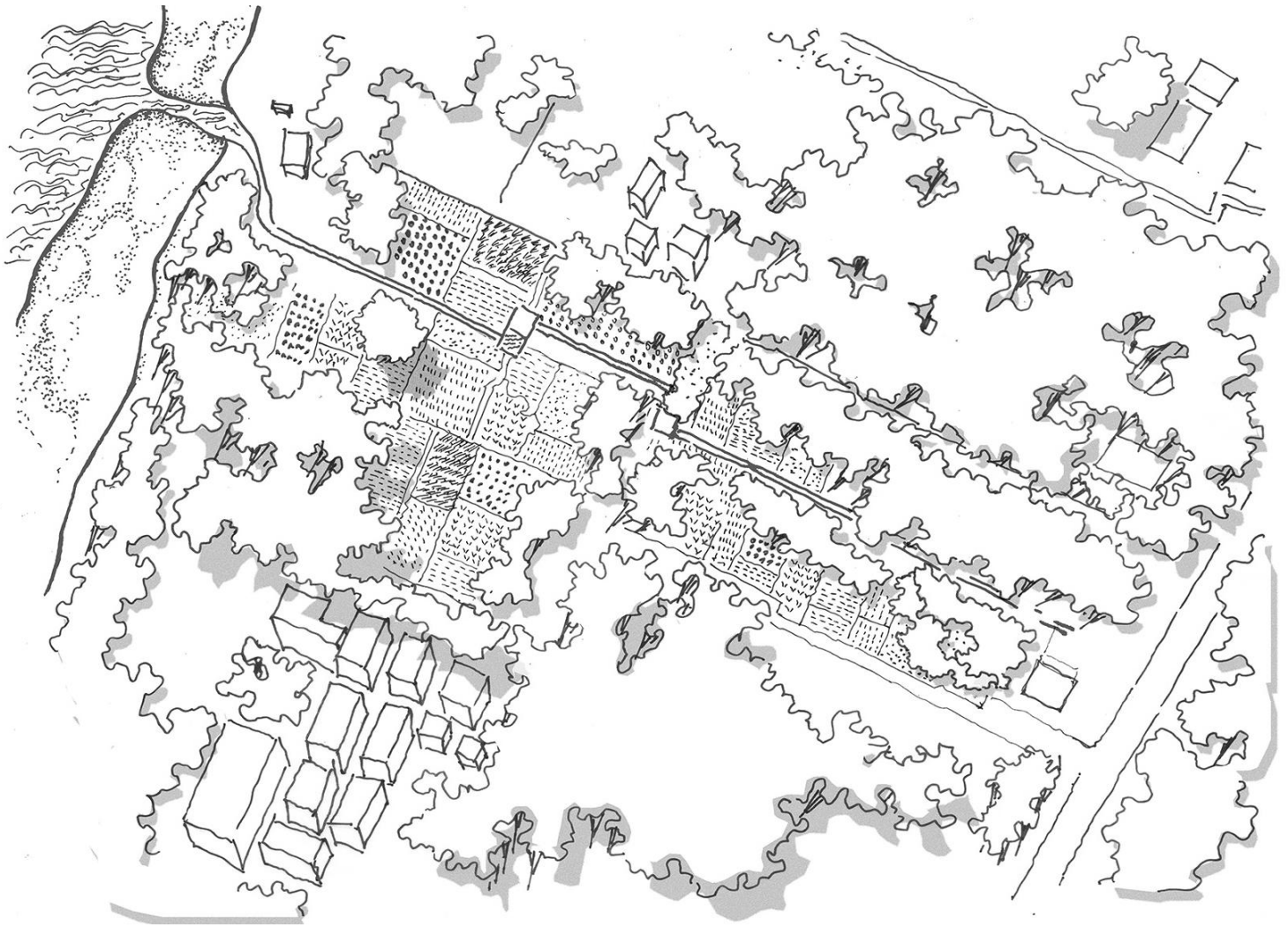
"You people plant weedelias- do you know a weedelia that is a big tree?"

"Do you know the cupressus in India was called Agra saru?"

"And you in your life don't know a plant called ittardauna do you- it's the most scented tree ever"

The quizzing is continuous, the pride and love obvious, and he holds high the flag why nurseries are great repositories of plant knowledge one that is worth conserving as a valuable oral tradition.

AZAD NURSERY, AGRA



Plan of Azad Nursery, Agra

RECORDING

The desire to maintain records of that which grew around us can be traced in prehistoric rock paintings such as Bhimbetka near Bhopal that date back to 30,000 BCE or to rock-cut caves at Ajanta and Ellora, extending around c.800 CE. The Vedic era (c.1500 – c. 500 BCE) reveals meticulous records and much later around 15th – 18th CE Mughal courts commissioned recording of flora and fauna in a manner that captured the context and emotion of the plant and the life around it. The most systemized records however commenced with the advent of Europeans in the 18th -19th Century, in the country. Individual and institutional efforts continue; now with different eyes and new narratives built around the recording, often allowing a fresh way of appreciating that which was recorded earlier.

The Botanical Gardens in the country, nearly 122 in number, continues to do an exemplary job and are a bodily expression of this enterprise; they store information that is seemingly infinite; with actual species planted on the grounds, or vast and written pictorial records, along with preserved species in the herbariums. Quite simply, these are the census keepers of the world of the plants; with in some ways better records than available for humans. And in many cases they are also the Noah's Ark. When all else fails, this is where we turn to.



INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF PLANTS

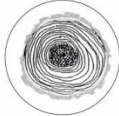
RIG VEDA

BRHADARANYAKA
UPANISHAD

VRUKSHAYURVEDA



VALKA
outer bark



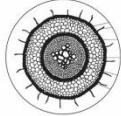
VAKALA
inner bark



TVAK
skin / bark



MAMSA
soft tissues



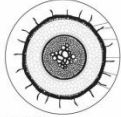
ASTHI
wood / xylem



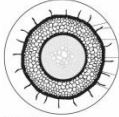
MALJA
pith



SNAYU
fibres both xylem and sclerenchyma



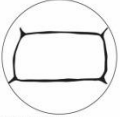
SYANDANA
xylem



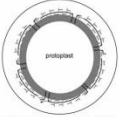
SIRAJALA
phloem



RASARAYAH
sap



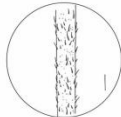
KALAVESTANA
cell wall / cell membrane



KALALADUPAJAYATI
protoplast

CLASSIFICATION OF LEAVES

TEXTURE



LOMASA-VASANA
hairy stem



MRDU PATRA
soft leaf



KOMAL PATRA
tender leaf



SNIGDHA PATRA
rough thick leaf

SHAPE



GIRGHA PATRA
long leaf



MANDALA PATRA
round leaf



VISALA PATRA
broad leaf

COLOUR



SVETA PATRA
white leaf



RAKTA PATRA
red leaf



NILA PARNA
blue leaf



SUVARNA PARNA
golden leaf



DHUMRA PARNA
smoked coloured leaf

TASTE



SVADU PATRA
sweet leaf



AMLA PARNA
sour leaf



KATU PARNA
leaf with spines



TIKSNA PARNA
hot leaf

SURFACE



ROMASA PATRI
hairy outgrow



RANSHRA PATRI
leaf with holes



VALKA PATRI
bark-like

LEAFLETS



EKAPATRIKA
one leaflet



DVIPATRIKA
two leaflets



TRIPATRIKA
three leaflets



CATUSPATRIKA
four leaflets



PANCAPATRIKA
five leaflets



SAPTAPATRIKA
seven leaflets



BAHUPATRIKA
a number of leaflets

SIR JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE

1858–1937

Named as one of the fathers of radio science, he was a polymath, physicist, biologist, biophysicist, botanist, archaeologist, as well as an early writer of science fiction. He conducted his research under Nobel Laureate Lord Rayleigh at Cambridge. With a recommendation from Rayleigh also endorsed by Viceroy of India and the Secretary of State for India, Bose was promptly posted as a professor at Presidency College in Calcutta, in 1885.

He conducted landmark research of the response of plant and animal life to stimuli including electricity, light, sound, and touch, and showed how water and sap in plants and trees is elevated from roots due to capillary action. He invented the crescograph, an early oscillating recorder using clockwork gears to measure the growth and movements of plants in increments as small as $1/100,000$ of an inch. He used it to measure plant response to various stimuli, and thereby scientifically proved parallelism between animal and plant tissues.

His paper "Responses in the Living and Non-living" in 1902 showed that plant and animal tissues share a similar electric-impulse response to all forms of stimulation and also showed that even inanimate objects—certain rocks and metals—have similar responses.

In a 1907 Bose established the electro transmission of excitation in plant and animal tissues, and showed that plants respond to sound. Prior to his plant and animal experiments, Bose spent several years experimenting with electromagnetic waves, and conducted successful wireless signaling experiments in Calcutta in 1895.

He founded the Bose Research Institute in Calcutta in 1917, which continues to conduct scientific research. He authored numerous books of his varied interest, to name a few they are *Plant Autographs and their Revelation* (1915, non-fiction), *The Physiology of the Ascent of Sap* (1923, non-fiction), *The Physiology of Photosynthesis* (1924, non-fiction), *The Nervous Mechanism of Plants* (1926, non-fiction), *Collected Physical Papers of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose* (1927, non-fiction), *Motor Mechanisms of Plants* (1928, non-fiction), *Growth and Tropic Movements of Plants* (1929, non-fiction), *Abyakta* (The Unexpressed) (1929, poetry), *J. C. Bose Speaks* (1986, essays; posthumous).

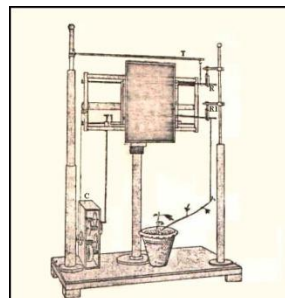
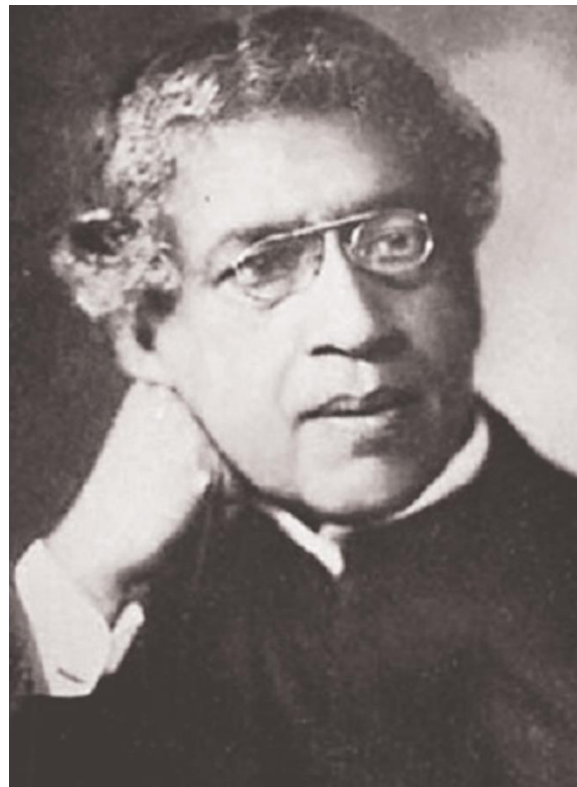
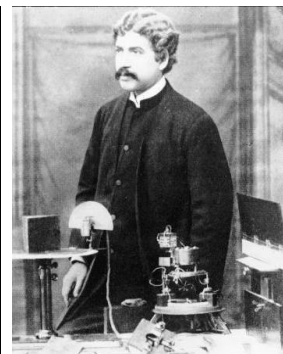


Fig. 2. Apparatus for automatic record of movement of trees and plants: T, differential metallic thermometer; R, recording lever for thermometer; H, for recording plant movement; C, clock-work for oscillation of recording plate. The same clock-work moves plate laterally in 24 hours.



INTRODUCTION.

UNDER the most favourable point of view it can hardly be said that horticulture has as yet made much advancement in India. Of the natives, those of the higher class, it would seem, have never manifested much fondness for it, nor taken much interest in the pursuit; while those who follow it for a livelihood have not found it sufficiently remunerative to devote to it more than the least possible of their time and thought. Of this we have the plainest evidence, look in whatever direction we may. The flowers they prize are confined to only a limited few; and those not especially for their beauty, but from having been consecrated from time immemorial to certain religious or festive purposes. And so, again, in regard to the fruit that we see exposed in vast quantities for sale in the bazars; it is always the most inferior of its kind. The Mangos, Guavas, Pine-apples, and Plantains, are uniformly all but of the very worst description. That this should be the case no adequate reason can be assigned, but the want of a very trifling amount of care and attention bestowed upon the cultivation of better sorts. This little care and attention, it does not appear that they think it worth their while to bestow. Their fruit-trees, generally, are such as have sprung up on the spot, where the seed of some worthless kind has been casually dropped or cast away; and although the seed of a fine sort does not invariably produce a tree of equal excellence to the one that bore it, from the seed of a bad sort can only be expected a tree that will yield fruit no better than that of its parent. Not only is it thus, however, that their trees are multiplied; but as they grow up they are left altogether neglected, densely crowded, perhaps among others of their own

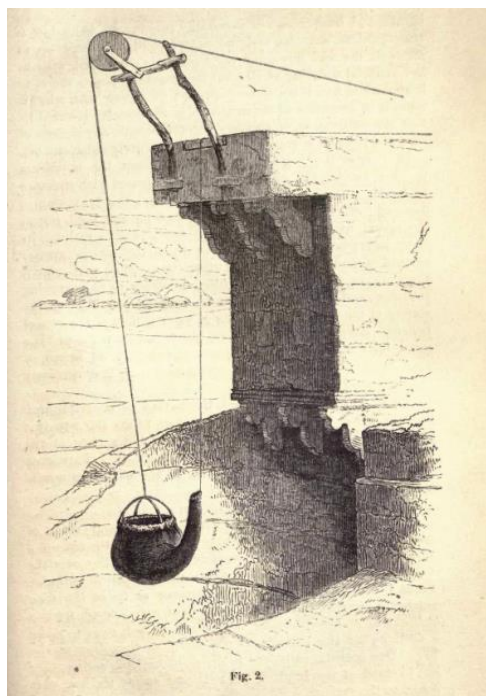


Fig. 2.

2. In the Deccan of India a common way of drawing up water is by means of a bag and a pair of bullocks, as in the former case; but in this instance the bag opens into a leathern pipe attached to its bottom. The pipe has a rope fastened to it whereby it is so contrived that the end of the pipe is raised above the level of the bag whilst ascending; but when the bag reaches the pulley, the pipe is lowered down over the brink of the well, and the water flows out through it from the bag. Of this an illustration is given in Fig. 2.



3. In the Punjab the all but universal way of raising water is by what is called the Persian wheel. (Fig. 3.)

In the mouth of the well a large vertical wheel is fixed, over which a looped chain of earthenware pots is suspended, the lower part of the loop reaching down into the water. As this wheel revolves, one length of the chain is continually rising with pots full of water, which, on reaching the summit, discharge themselves into a trough fixed in the upper segment of the wheel, and then turn, and descend empty, to be filled again. A large beam, passing through the axis of this wheel, has its extremity fixed in the axis of another large wooden vertical wheel, from the circumference of which projects a series of horizontal wooden cogs, or teeth. These teeth work in the teeth of a large horizontal wooden wheel. By means of a pole projecting from it, a pair of bullocks turn round the horizontal wheel, and so set the whole apparatus in action.

For creepers grown in pots, trellis-work of bamboo, or frames of iron, may be contrived of various devices. Common examples of this kind of ornament are represented in figures 4, 5, 6. For some plants, such as Ferns, Achimenes, &c., hanging baskets are much used in England, and considered very ornamental.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

TALLIES.

When it is desired to distinguish potted plants by merely numbering them, it will be found far the most convenient to use the tally of the Horticultural Society of London, of which a representation is here given.

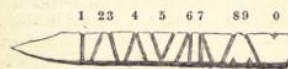


Fig. 7.

This represents a pointed flattened piece of bamboo, upon which the figures cut are always read upward from the pointed end, inserted in the ground. The uppermost of the numerals, when any number is to be cut on the stick, will be in the place of units, the next lower in the place of tens, the next in the place of hundreds, and so on, as in the ordinary Arabic mode of enumeration. Thus IV and VII marked on the bamboo will denote respectively 15 and 511.

will ever pass out of them from below. Upon this point one may easily satisfy oneself by merely placing out an empty flower-pot in the Rains. It will soon become filled with water, which will remain in it very many days, till dried up by evaporation. Such being the case with an empty pot, much more is it likely to be so with one that contains anything within it.

One remedy for this is, of course, very obvious, being merely to lay two bricks side by side, about three or four inches apart, and upon them place the pot with the hole just half-way between. This also serves to exclude worms, with which, when pots rest upon the ground in wet weather, they soon become filled. Another remedy is to have pots made with drainage-holes round the side, about an inch from the bottom.

For Begonias, Achimenes, and choice and tender plants of that description, which require the shelter of a verandah, an excellent method, as shown in Fig. 8, is to procure a shallow pan for the plant to grow in, and to drop it into a flower-pot about double its depth, so that the rim of the pan rests exactly upon the rim of the flower-pot. By this means drainage is rendered effectual, and insects are excluded.



Fig. 8.

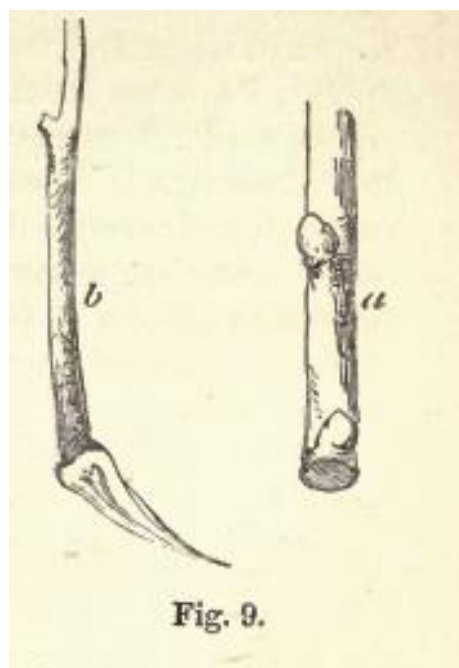


Fig. 9.

CUTTINGS.

SEASON.

Some plants may be propagated by cuttings at nearly all times of the year, but the majority most successfully in the Rains. Some of our choicer plants, natives of a cold climate, and that are in vigorous growth only in the Cold season, cannot be multiplied by cuttings successfully except at that season.

Cuttings, for instance, of *Stephanotis* strike readily in the Rains, and cuttings of *Habrothamnus*, *Aloysia*, and *Verbenas* in the Cold season; but put down the former in the Cold season, and the latter in the Rains, and in neither case will they succeed.

The end of the cutting which is to be inserted in the soil should be cut across with a clean cut just below a leaf bud (Fig. 9, a). Some gardeners are of opinion that slips strike more readily than cuttings. A slip is a small shoot nipped off a plant at its point of junction with the stem, bringing away with it a heel of wood and bark from the stem (Fig. 9, b).

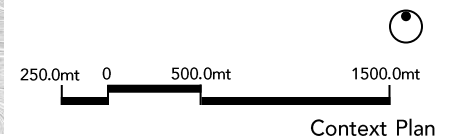
NISHAT BAGH, SRINAGAR





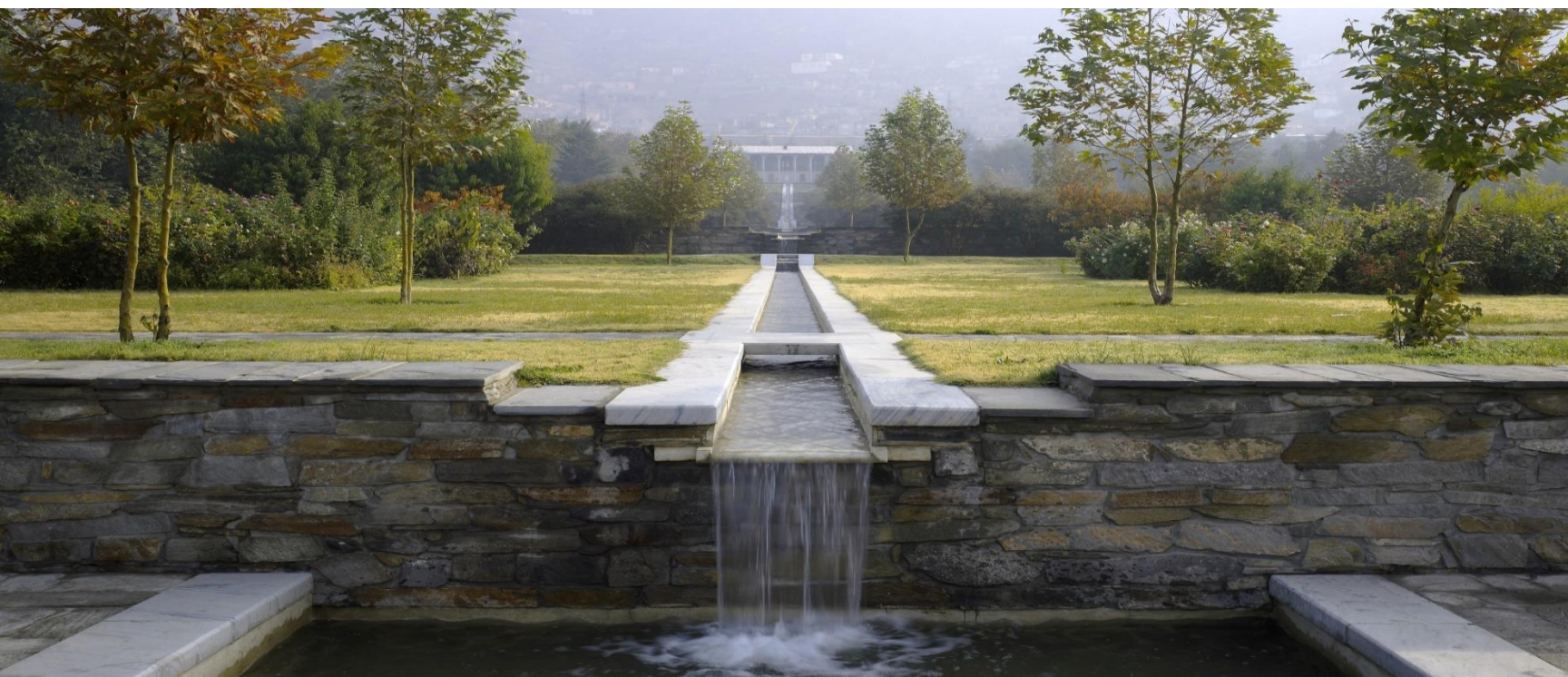
LEGEND

1. Shalamar Bagh.
2. Nishat Bagh.
3. Zabarwan Hills.
4. Nasim Bagh.
5. Oonth Kadal.
6. Dal Lake.
7. Floating Gardens.
8. Fort at Hari Parbat.
9. Chasma Shahi.
10. Char Chinar.







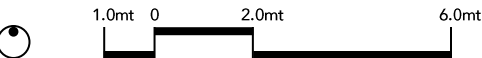


MAZAR – E – MIRZA GHALIB, NIZAMUDDIN, NEW DELHI

Shaheer Associates , 2010



Plan of Mazar – e – Mirza Ghalib



LEGEND
01 Tomb of Mirza Ghalib.
02 Planted court with trees.



