



# BEYOND THE MANIFEST

An exposition of subjective spatial sensibilities

No. 14; 2018

Landscape Environment Advancement Foundation , LEAF

# BEYOND THE MANIFEST

Shalini Prakash

July 2018

Landscape Environment Design Foundation (LEAF)

LEAF is engaged in research and publication in the area of landscape design and environmental planning. It supports research programs of varying durations every year.

Material produced by LEAF may be freely reproduced. LEAF and the author should be acknowledged while doing so.

For details please write to,  
M/S. Prabhakar B. Bhagwat, 901-Panchtirth, Opp. Venus Ivy,  
Jodhpur Cross Road, Ahmedabad-380 015.  
Ph No. +91 79 26923054, +91 79 26920554  
+91 79 40061191-96  
Email - pbb-ahm@landscapeindia.net

# CONTENT

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	7
<b>A SANCTUARY FOR INTERPRETATION</b>	9
<b>I PROBE</b>	
Pilot study- Gheekanta	12
The study structure	14
	24
<b>II AUGMENT</b>	
Sequencing evolution	26
-Sarkhej Roza and its environs	28
Expressing intangibles	
-A personal understanding	64
Multiple sensibilities	
-Subjective narrations	78
<b>III POSITION</b>	
Epilogue	111
	115
Acknowledgments	
References	

## INTRODUCTION

When about space, the doctrine of internal relations ensures that impressions are zealously protected by designers and then appropriated selectively in the forming of its transformation.

Epistemological clarity that should be the underpinning of such impressions, when overlooked, can lead to indulgent distortions, some that are happy accidents, and many that lead to discontinuities in cultural and social narratives.

The divide between ownership and possession of ideas of space, implies generosity and yet the need for Ryand's selfishness as an ever oscillating flux through which to determine multiple casts for an ultimate consolidation.

Using Berger's tools of long views or distant narratives of time and history, superimposed, on the close ups of immediacy, Shalinis work reminds us of the need to continually reflect about how we must construct the idea of a place , sometimes even before seeing it, so that we can absorb it better and imagine its being such that it counts.

Aniket Bhagwat

20th June, 2018

## A SANCTUARY FOR INTERPRETATION

*Eyesight is inceptive, perceives what it sees.*

*The senses are inclusive.*

*They perceive the tangible and lay them out as an objective illustration.*

Space when construed as a domicile for perception, generously accommodates and keeps within it several personalized insights of itself over time. While the visual gives a hazy image of its manifestation, etymology and semantics gives room for the making of preliminary impressions of its past; 'Malleshwaram' is then the land of the forest God 'Kadu maleshwara' and 'Sampangiramnagar' a product of 'Sampanigiram kere' a depression over which a society was defined.

Space as a cumulative of several realities, narrates collective imageries of objects, spaces, symbols of coherence and of subjective interpretations. It triggers an imagination where fact and fiction are congruent. A fully grown tamarind tree is not only a source of food but is also said to be a house for ghosts at night similarly, stumbling upon a flawlessly symmetric seedpod an indicator of good fortune along with being a painful accident. These narratives intensely weave the delusive with the genuine and lets one wander in a place which is sometimes more entrancing than reality itself.

Space as a lens of subjective memories is a mnemonic device that unfolds a collection of several narratives frozen in time. These narratives convert regular objects of daily-life into portals leading to a repository of past experiences. These sensibilities describe hatred towards a stone stumbled upon at the entrance of The Taj Mahal or immense admiration for wall carvings at Sheesh Mahal which resemble the arrangement of plants in a garden back home. This act of attaching meanings and narratives to several objects of the place establishes a sense of belonging and makes one wonder if the memory itself makes the space a memorable one or if the spatial articulation makes it possible for people to make memories in.

# PROBE

Examining an approach to understand spatial engagement

## THE PILOT

A systematic laying out of the several sensibilities of space as a domicile for perception, a cumulative of multiple realities and a mnemonic device was done using visual representation as a tool to arrive at a methodology for understanding the mysteries of its interpretations.

An example of a small space in the old city of Ahmedabad, Gheekanta was used to pose the questions about the meanings of space as a pilot. A stretch of 4km along the road was understood through layers of etymology, prominence of objects, signage and people using the street. Multiple imageries of the street were mapped and used to arrive at a methodology for a larger context.



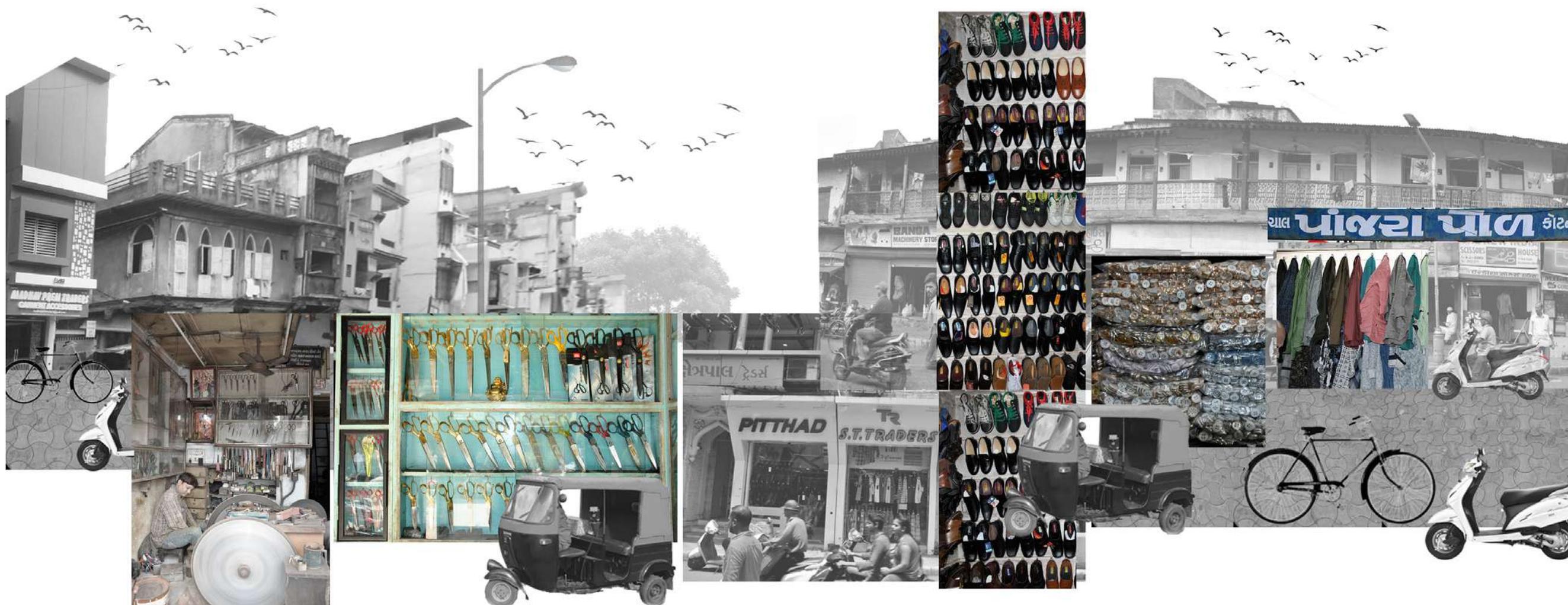
Gheekanta road, Ahmedabad

A projected impression of the space derived out of etymology.

Ghee . Kanta  
(Clarified butter . Weighing scale)



An introductory hazy image of the space.



Reference points on the street derived from objects and signage.



Hazrat Sadgir Edrus Masjid



Paan shop



Fire Hydrant



Signage



Post box



Hanuman mandir



Signage

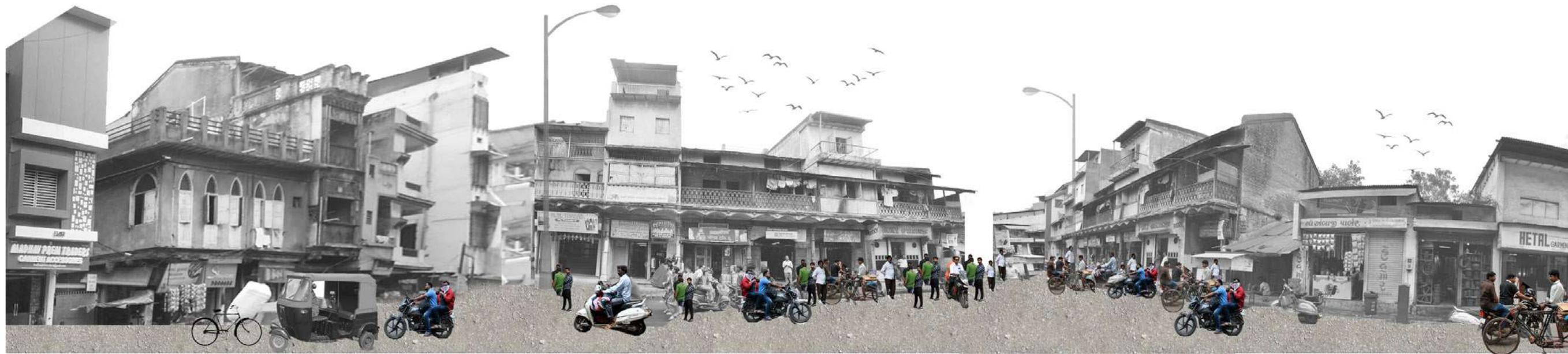


Police chowki



Signage

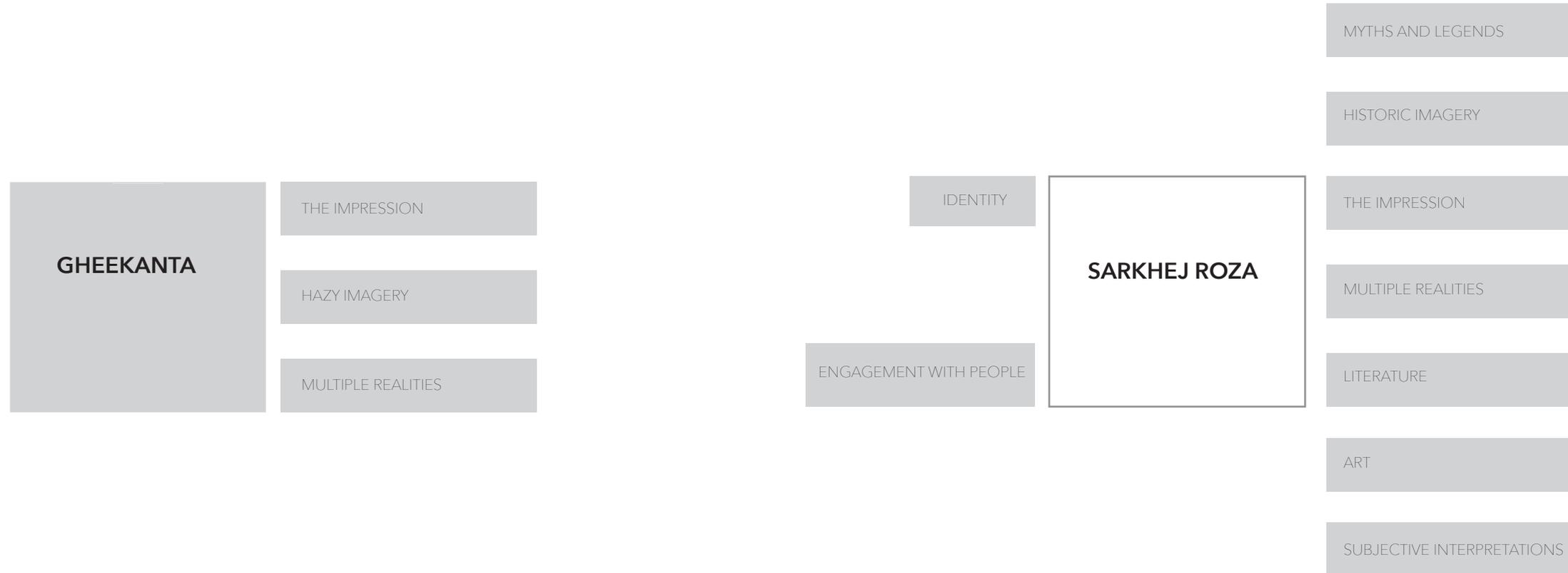
A variety of people that use the street, a resident, a passerby and a shop owner.



## THE STUDY - METHOD

Gheekanta served as a pilot to define lenses through which a place can be perceived.

The pilot laid out possibilities of a larger study with more lenses if applied to a space with a stronger identity in the urban fabric and a deeper engagement with people .



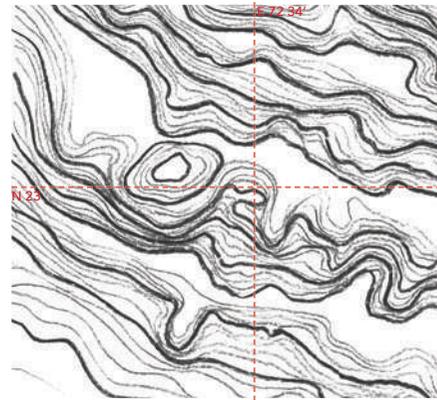


## SEQUENCING EVOLUTION

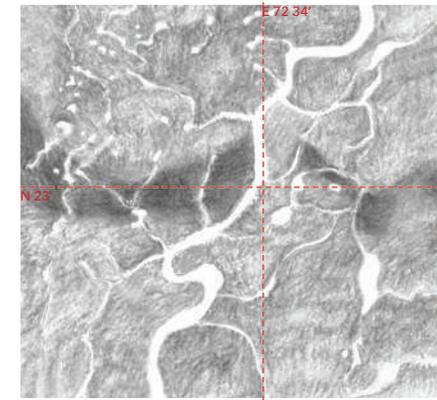
- Sarkhej Roza and its environs

Sarkhej Roza is a mosque and tomb complex built during the making of the city of Ahmedabad and has existed amidst a constantly evolving context for more than 600 years. Having grown to almost the edge, as the urban fabric eyes and waits to engulf the historic complex into its fast paced environment, people still continue to associate with it through their subjective lenses over time.

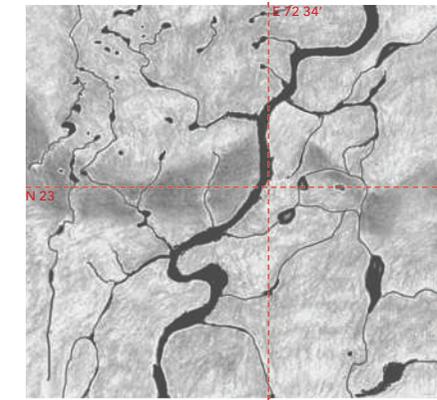
The study demonstrates the idea of understanding subjective insights of Sarkhej Roza and its environs. An objective documentation of the complex with respect to a larger cultural history and geography helps one interpret the space seen through time.



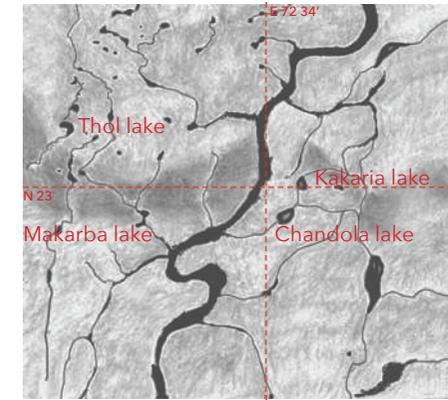
Terrain



Slope



Water

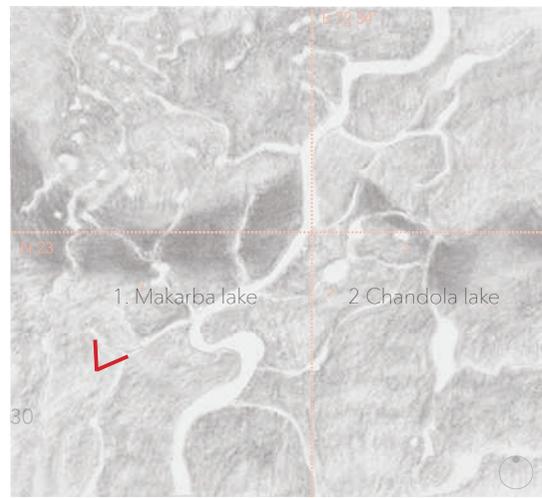


Nodes



## THE UNDEFINED LANDSCAPE

The landscape before being defined is seen as a composition of the Sabarmati River, the taalavs (lakes) and scattered tekras (higher grounds)



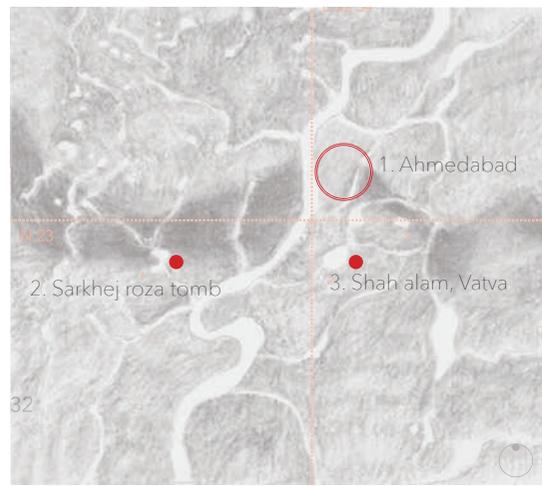
## AN ANNEXURE TO THE CAPITAL

1411-1445 A.D

The need for a new capital led Ahmed Shah to define an administrative boundary around a citadel (Ahmedabad) along the banks of Sabarmati River. In Sarkhej, a religious node for his courtier and spiritual advisor Sheikh Ahmed Khattu was also established.

The tomb complex of Ahmed Khattu defined a core and a hinterland to the landscape.

It also led to defining several other tomb complexes in its vicinity such as Shah Alam and Azzam Muzzam mosques.

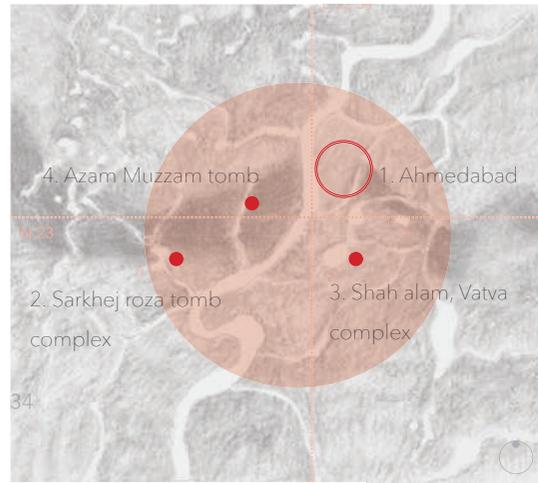


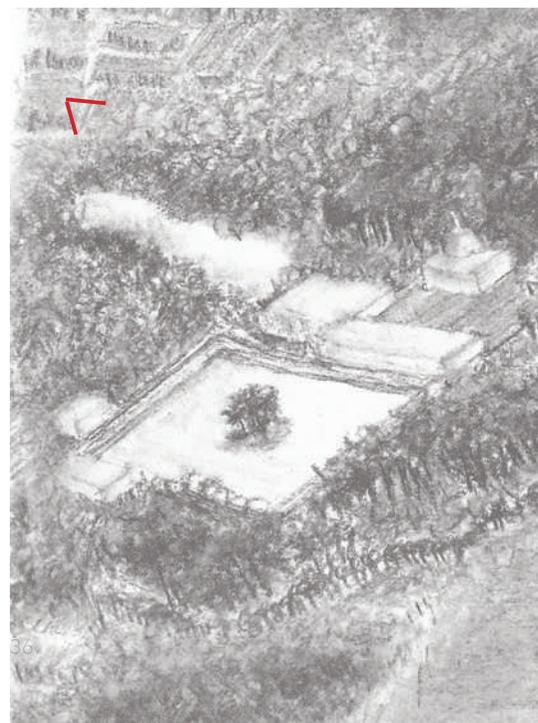
## A NODE IN THE INCLUSIVE LANDSCAPE

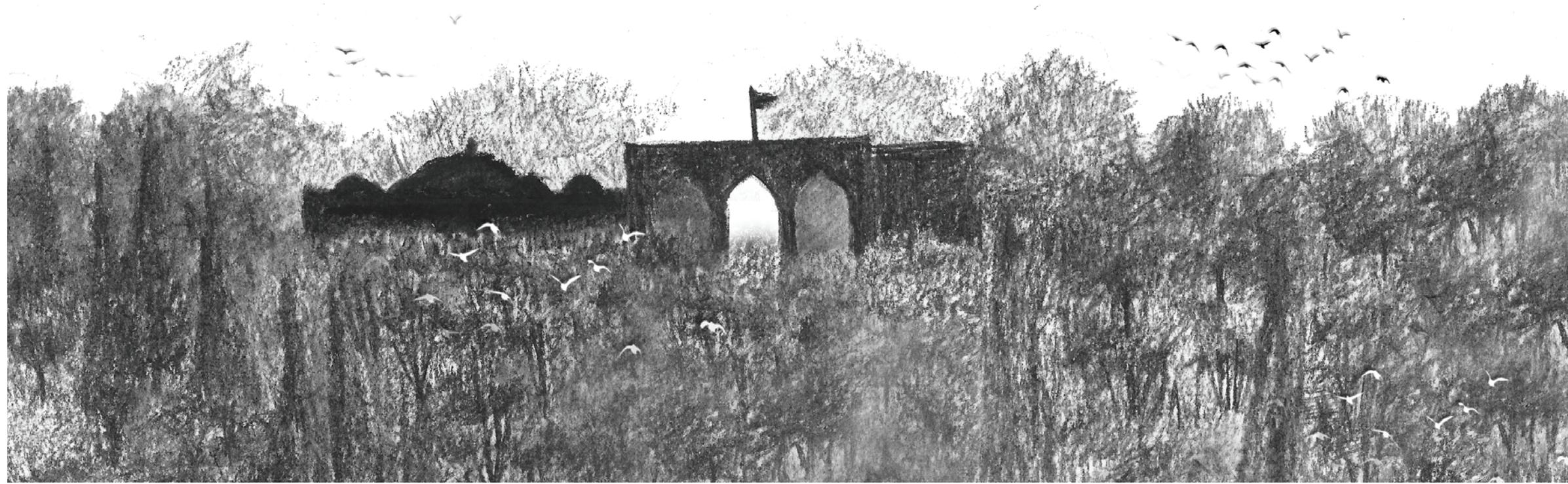
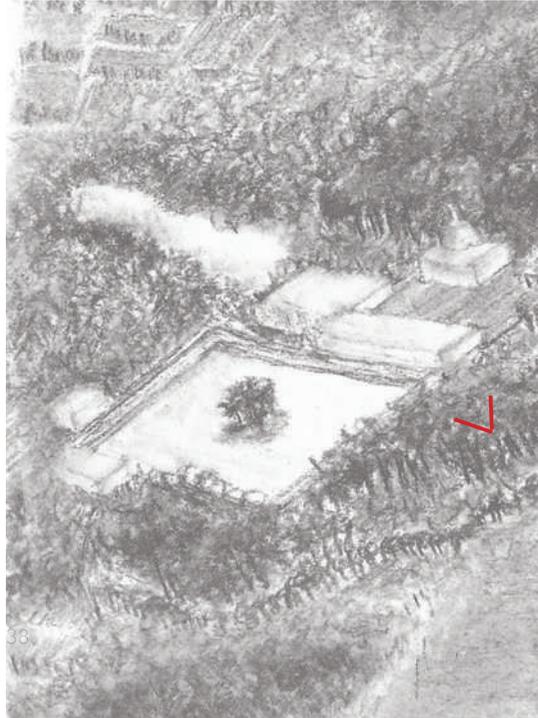
1455 A.D- 1511 A.D

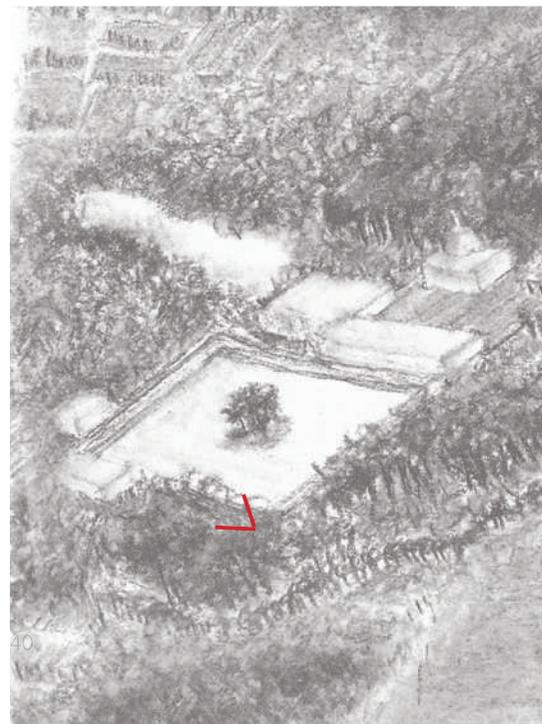
The glorious reign of Muhammed Begada defined a strong connection of the hinterland with the core of the city by establishing several retreat complexes around the religious structures constructed in the past.

The King and his Queens would visit these complexes regularly and which resulted in their expansion and also led including the regional landscape as part of the city.



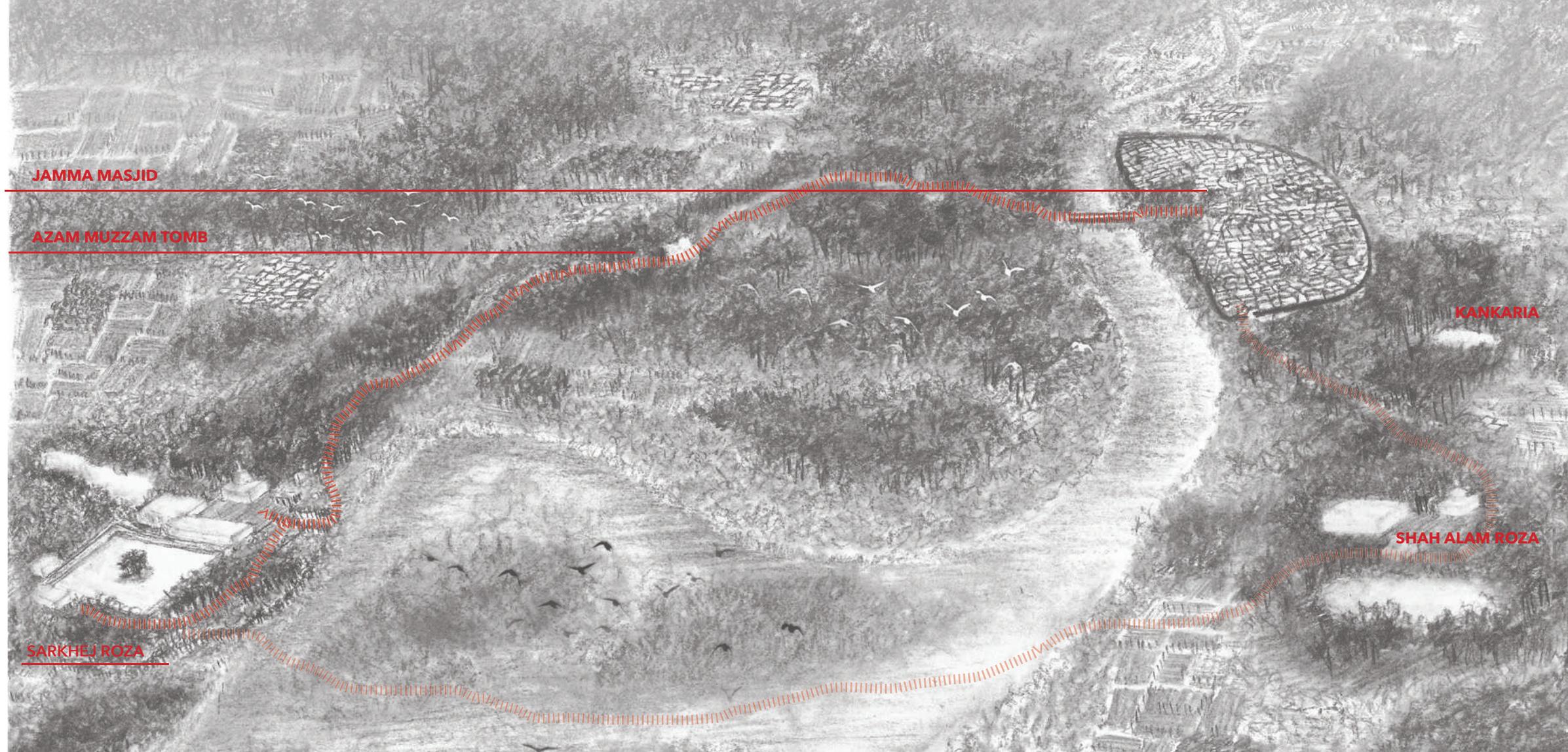
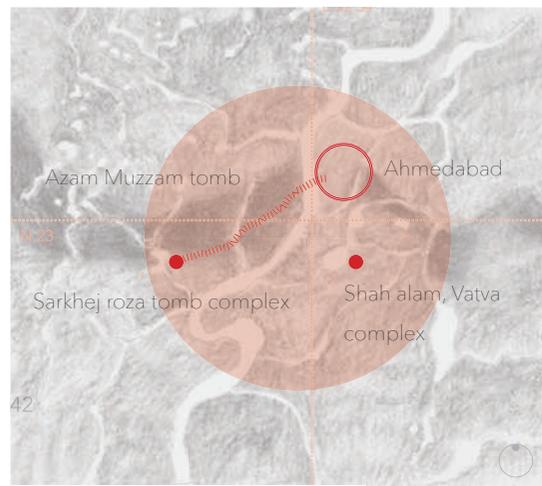






## THE APPROACH TO THE MONUMENT

The roza complex is at a distance of around 8 km from the fortified city of Ahmedabad, defining a 4 hour long walk between the city and the complex.



The approach to the monument was through a pathway which started with a wooden bridge connecting the two banks of Sabarmati River, cut across farmlands, tombs and finally led to the wetlands along which the roza complex was defined.



Sabarmati river



Azzam Muzzam tomb

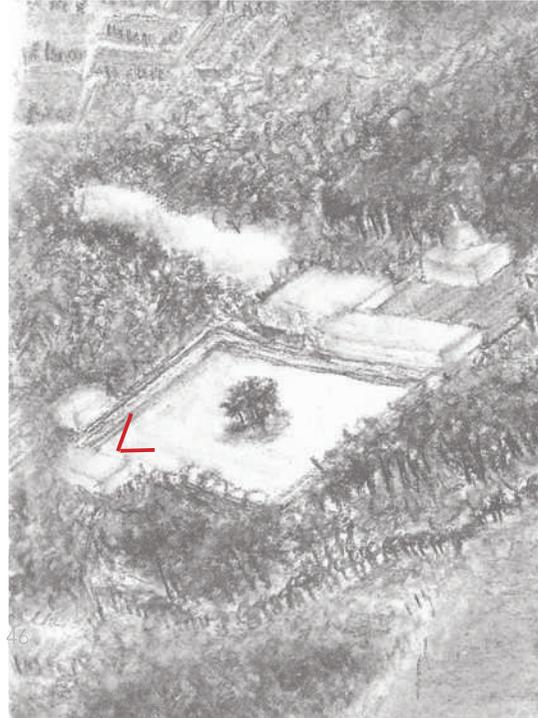


Farmlands



The wetland next to the dargah

Sarkhej at dusk seen from the king's pavilion



## AN APERTURE FOR GLOBAL RELATIONSHIPS

### 1700 A.D

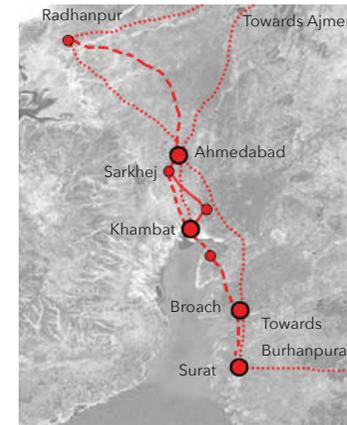
The increasing requirement of indigo for export to European countries led to an increase in its production in the country.

During this period, Sarkhej was one amongst the main regions that grew indigo owing to its fertile soil conditions. The abundance in shallow water available at the wetland was further, usefull in extracting the natural indigo dye from the leaves as well.

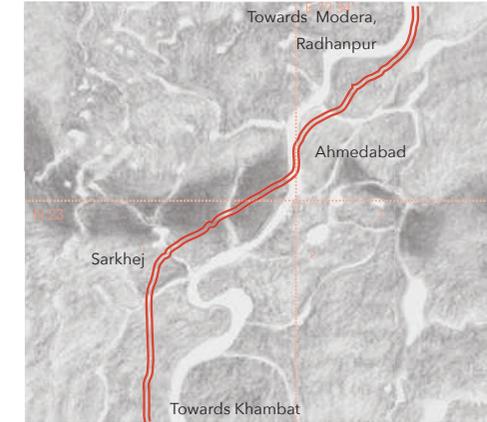
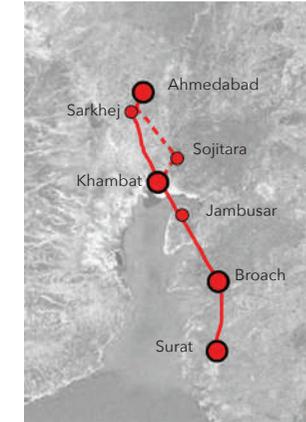
The proximity of Sarkhej to some important ports on the western coast such as; Khambhat, Baruch and Surat led the village in engaging with indigo trade.



Maritime trade routes



Prominent nodes for maritime trade on the western coast



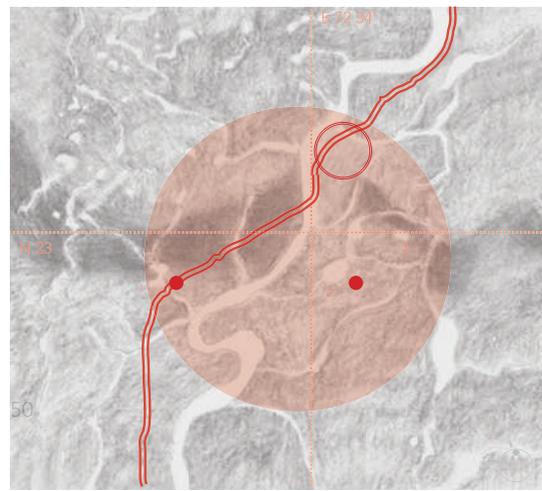
Sarkhej as a node in the trade route

## CHANGE IN THE REGIONAL LANDSCAPE

1700 A.D

The profit in the market for indigo dye resulted in the cultivation and extraction of indigo in Sarkhej and the surrounding villages in increased numbers.

This resulted in an increase in the number of indigo farmlands in the landscape leading to larger view-sheds for people traversing through the landscape and a decrease in the forest and food crop cultivation.



## THE BUILDING AS A MONUMENT



**Louis Rousselet Louis-Théophile Marie Rousselet** (1845-1929) was a French traveler, writer and photographer who stayed in Central India (Alwar, Baroda, Bhopal, Gwalior, Udaipur) between 1864 to 1868. Many of his photographs and drawings were converted into engravings<sup>1</sup> on a later date.

*1. Engraving, technique of making prints from metal plates into which a design has been incised with a cutting tool called a burin. Modern examples are almost invariably made from copperplates, and, hence, the process is also called copperplate engraving.*

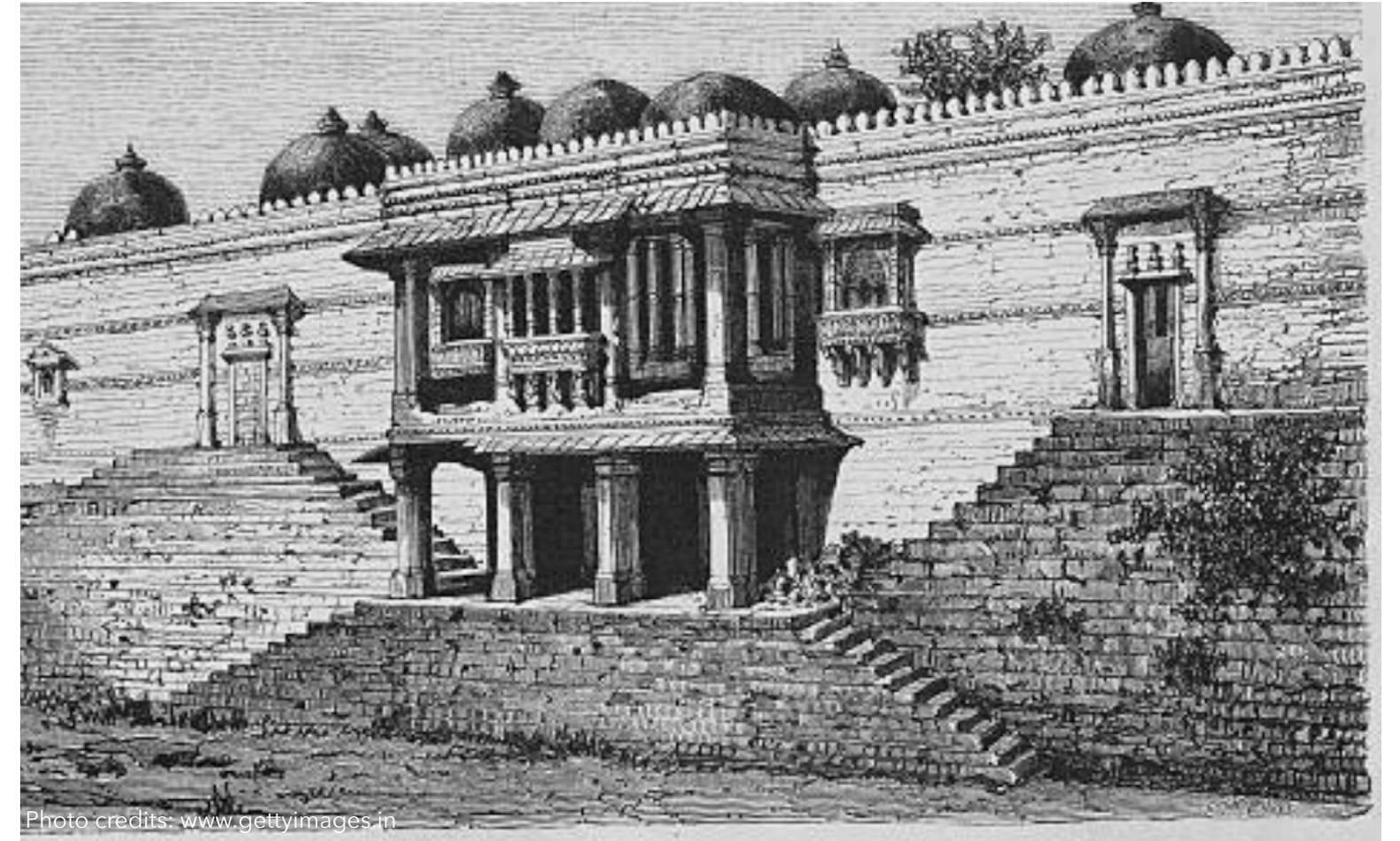


Photo credits: [www.gettyimages.in](http://www.gettyimages.in)

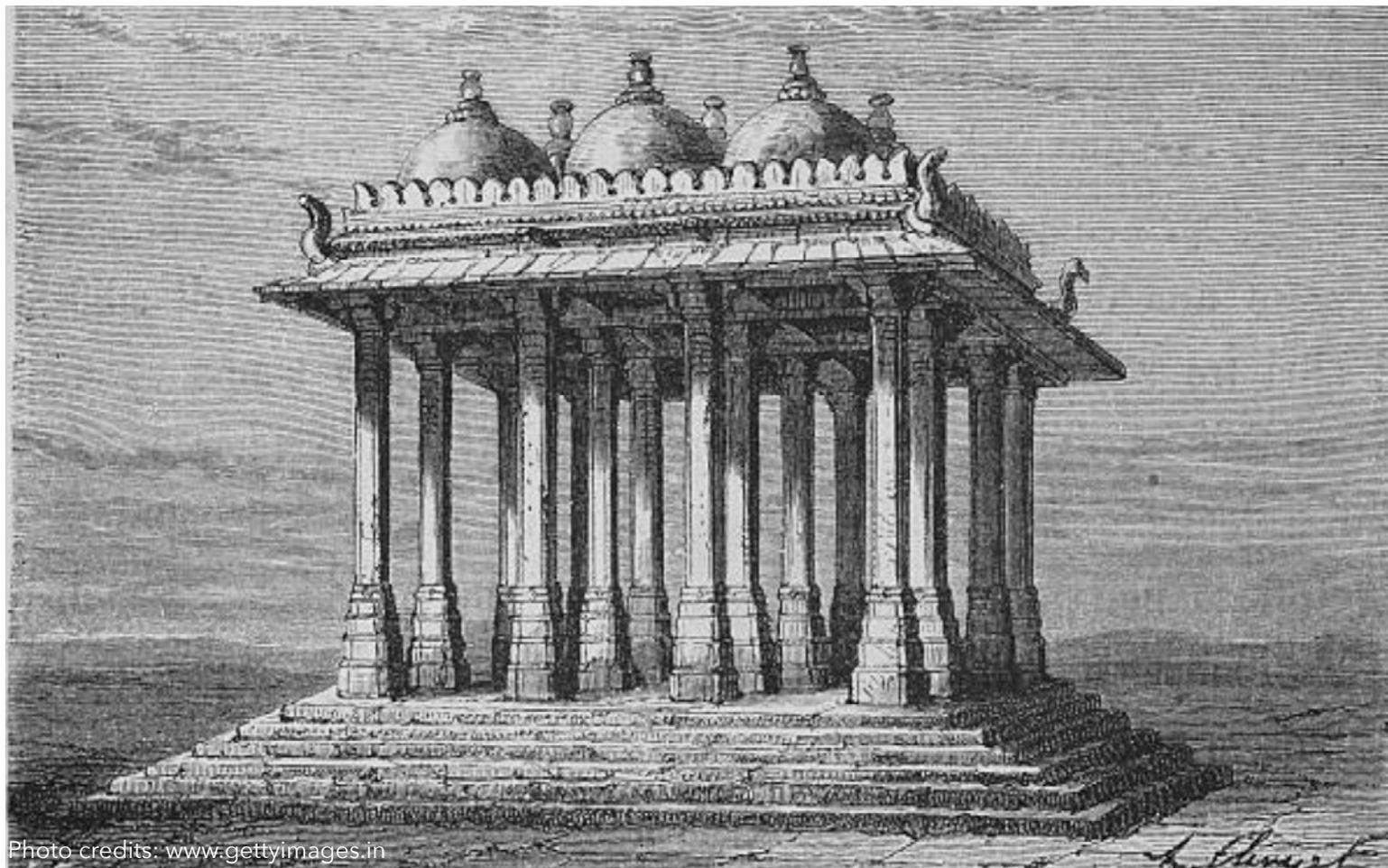


Photo credits: [www.gettyimages.in](http://www.gettyimages.in)

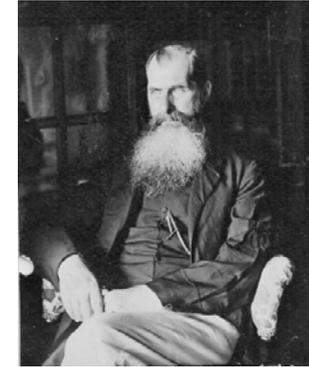


Photo credits: [www.gettyimages.in](http://www.gettyimages.in)

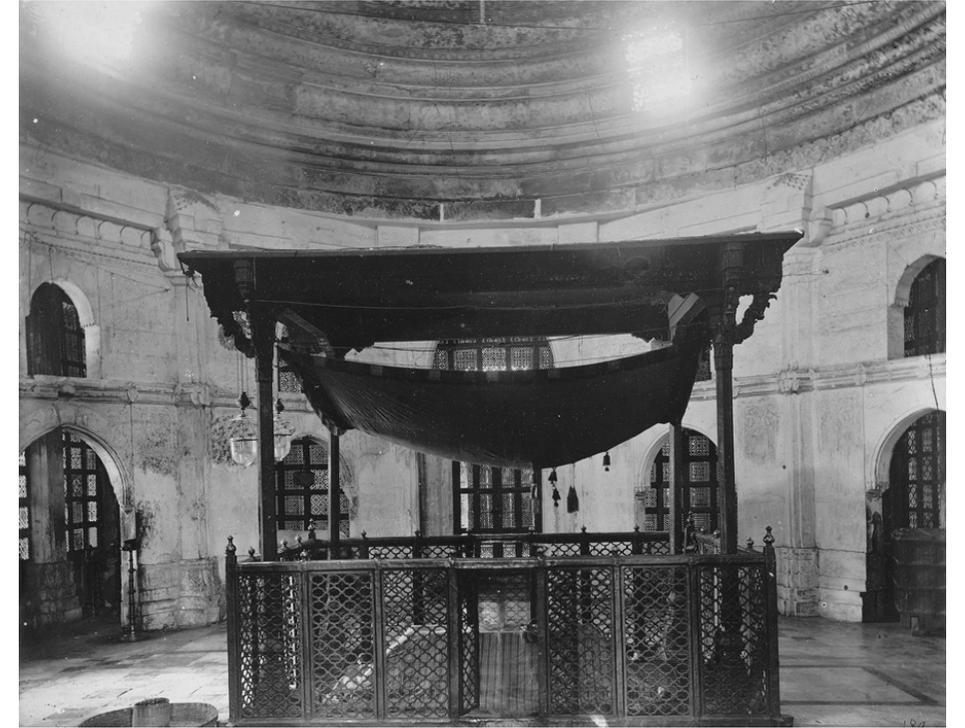


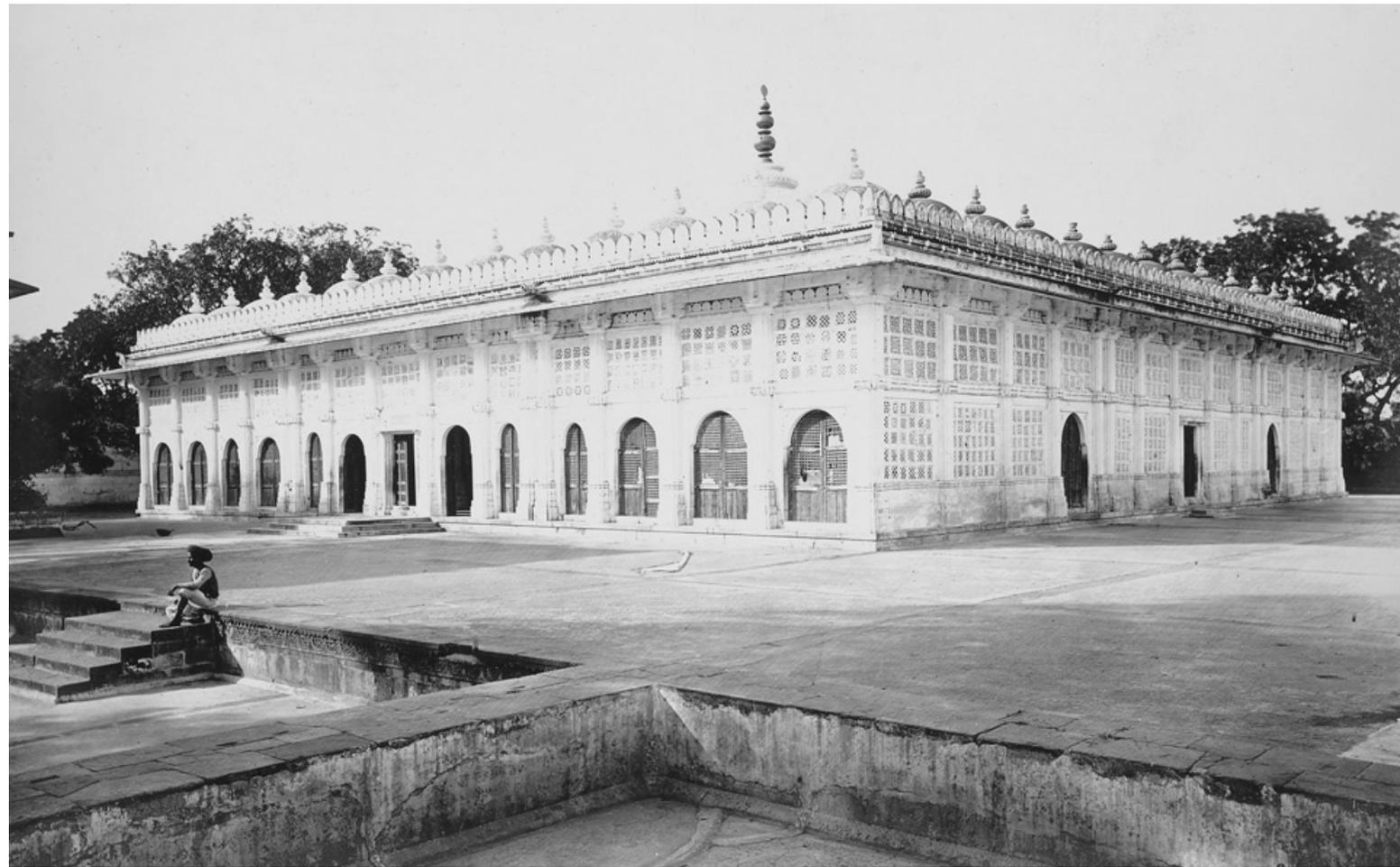
**François Valentijn** (17 April 1666 - 6 August 1727) was a Dutch minister, naturalist and author.

In his work, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* ("Old and New East-India") he illustrates and describes the tombs of the last three kings of Gujarat



**Henry Cousens** is a photographer who worked with the Archaeological Survey in India in the early 1800's. He photographed and surveyed several areas in the northern part of Gujarat between 1886-70 and 1889-90.

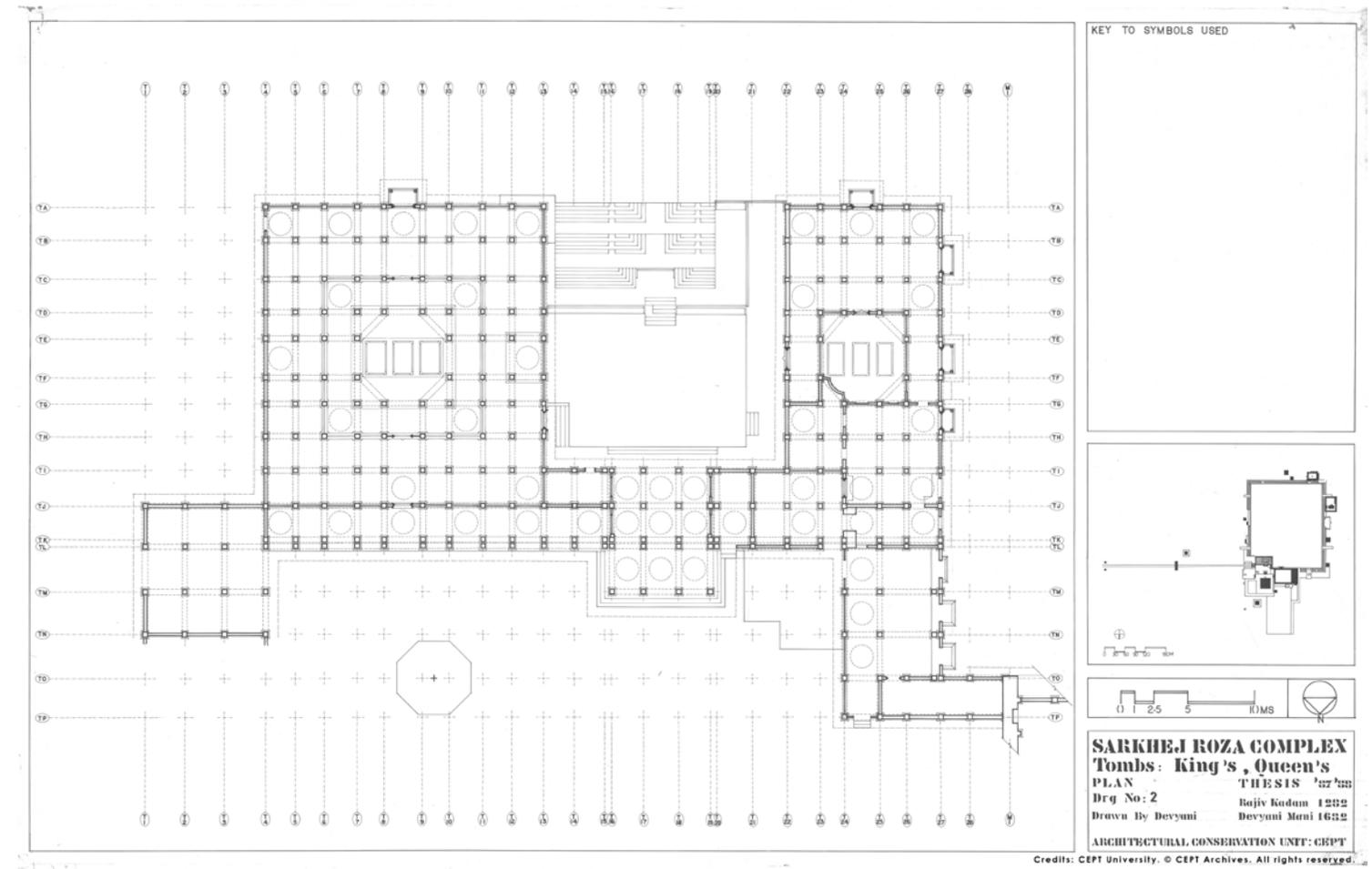


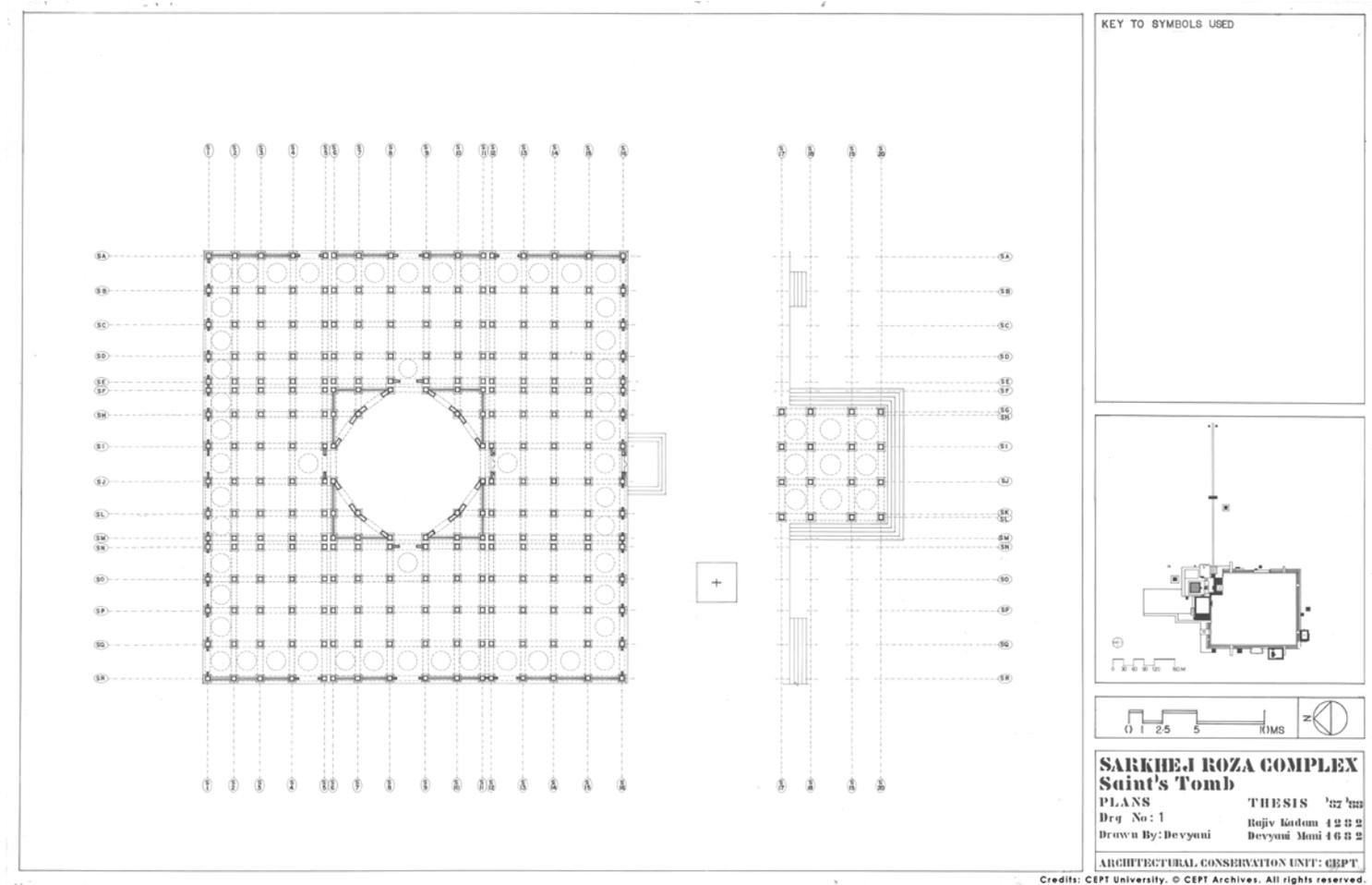
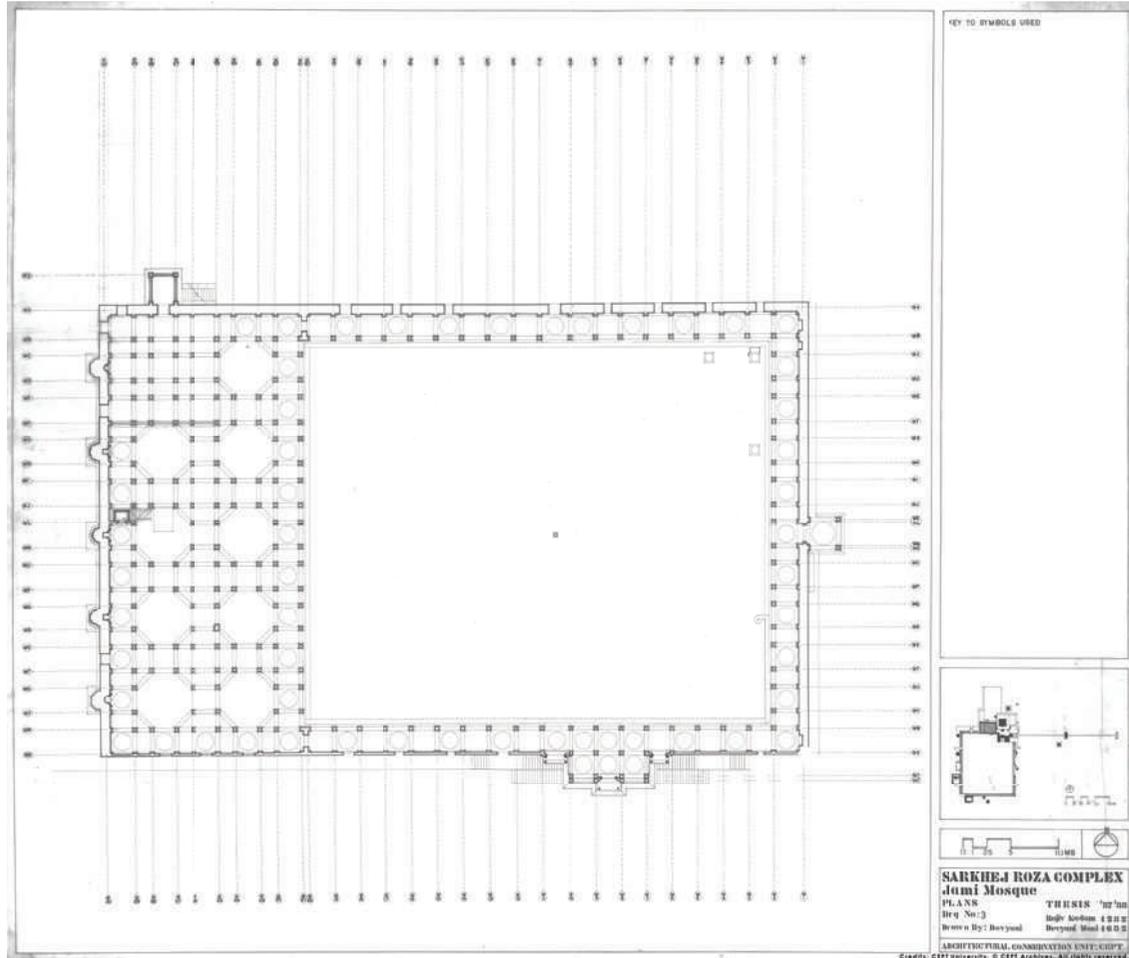


## AS A MONUMENT TO THE CITY

The roza complex was documented in great detail as part of the Related Study Program (RSP) at Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University, by students from 1982 batch.

The academic exercise included measure drawings of the overall plan of both the King's Tomb and the Queen's Tomb.



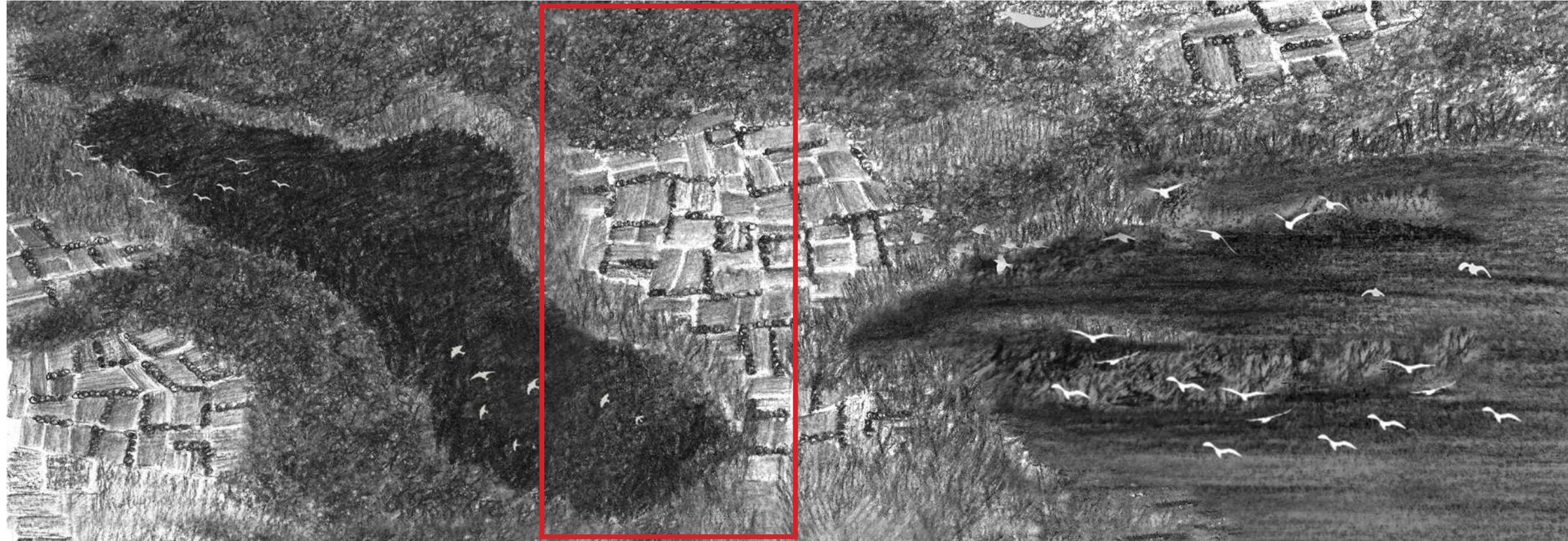


## EXPRESSING INTANGIBLES

- A personal understanding of the space

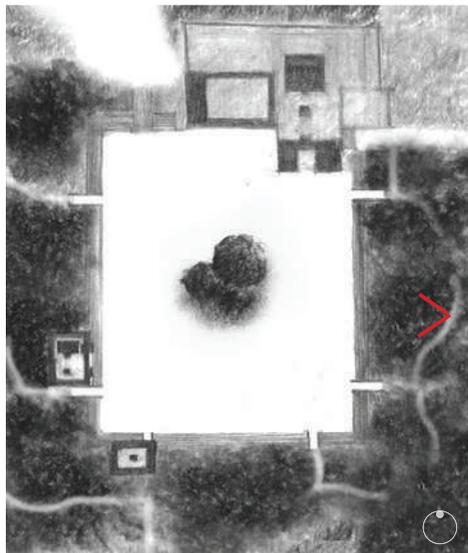
The roza complex is defined amidst a captivating composition of the Makarba Talab and wetland, Sabarmati River, indigo farmlands and neem forests. The design and articulation of spaces within the complex not only celebrates its alluring surroundings but engages with it in several ways.

A personal understanding of the space as it exists today derived an exposition of stone being used as a medium to express the natural elements of the landscape. Earth, light and water are celebrated within the complex.

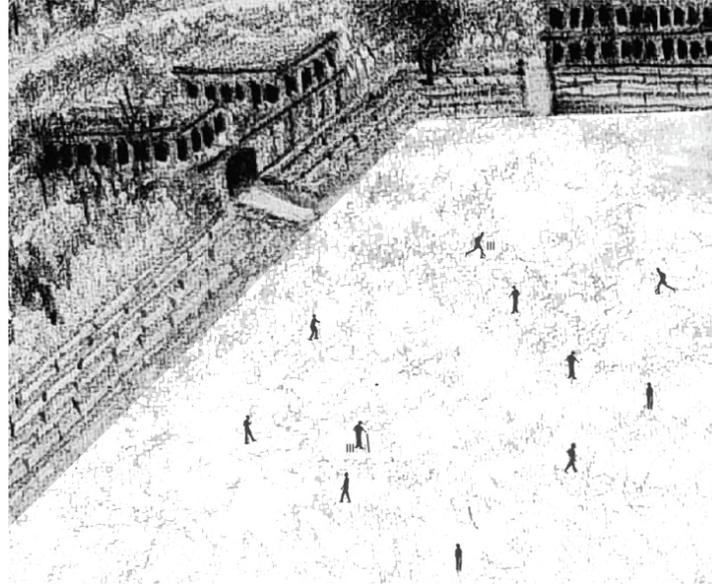


The earthen berms on all four sides of the tomb complex define a void that separates it from the retreat spaces of the king and his queens.

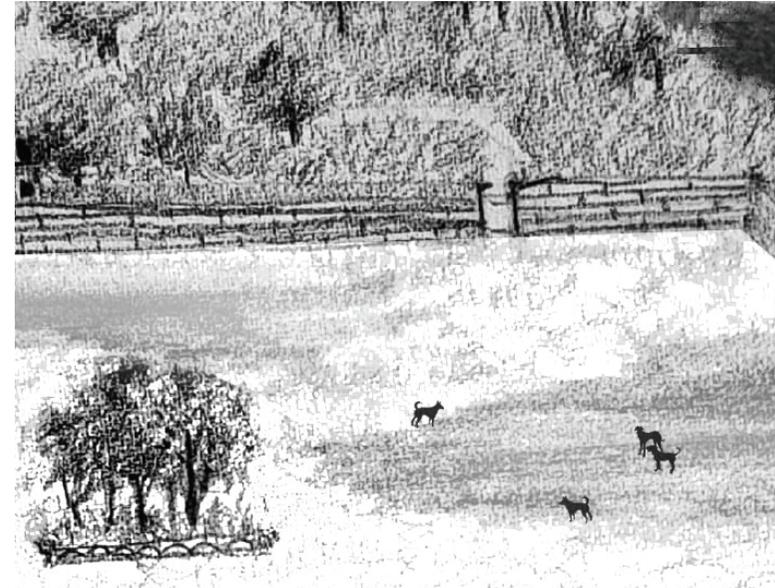
The void functions as a foreground with temporal qualities throughout the year, from being a storage tank for water with varying levels to being an open maidan for play.



Activities in the tank



The tank used as a cricket pitch post winter



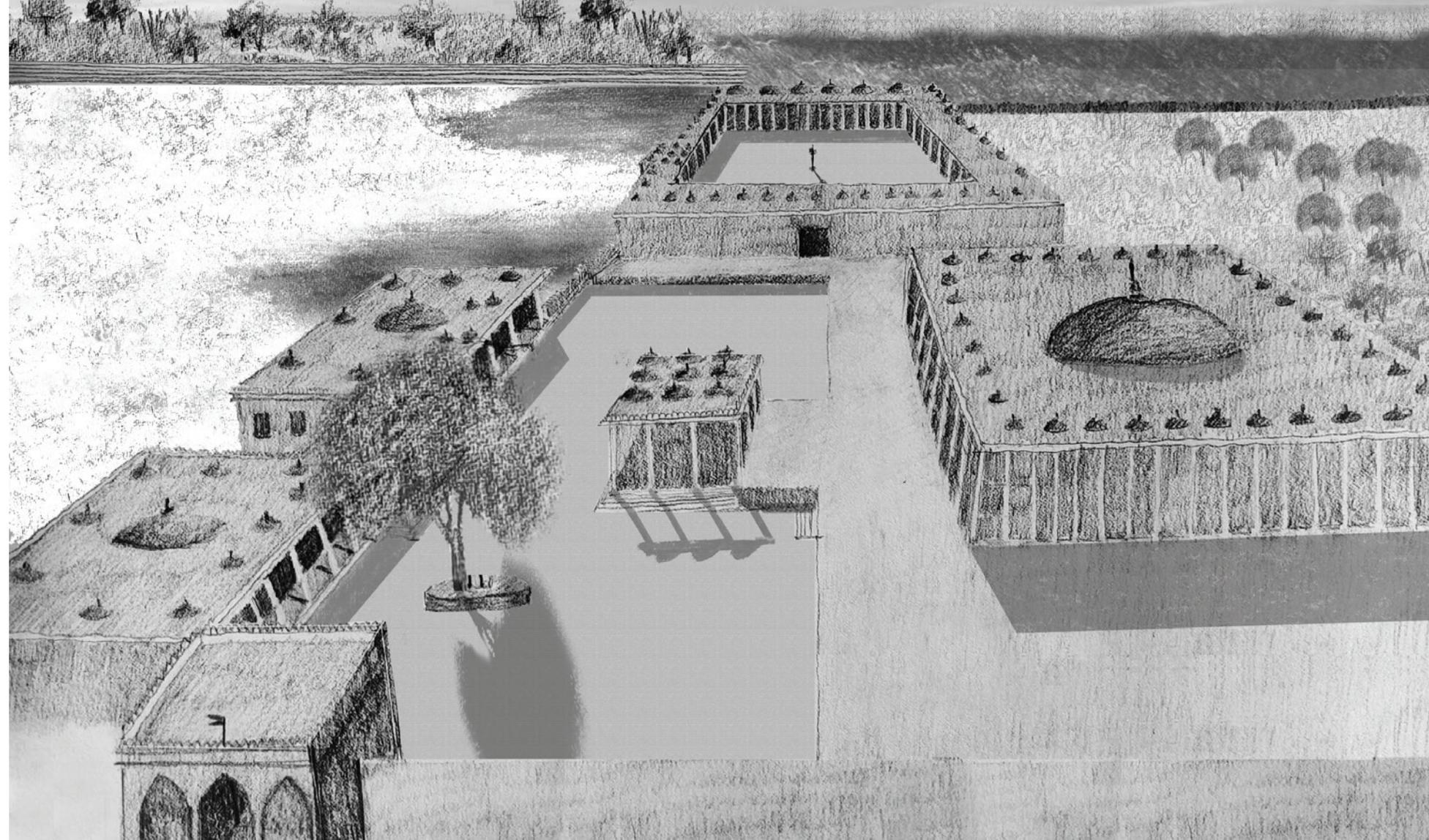
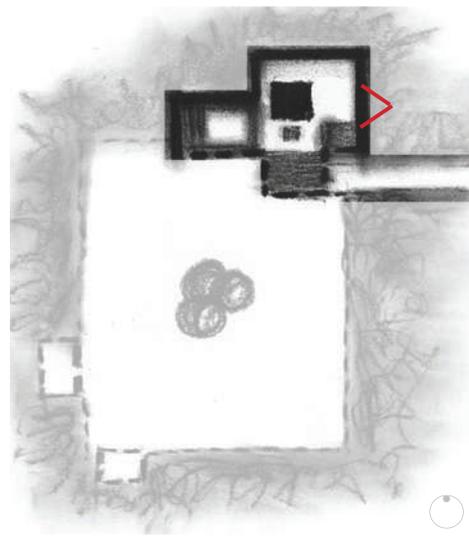
Small ponds of water in the tank during winter is a source of water for groups of dogs.



The tank serves as a shorter route connecting the roza complex with the retreat space in the absence of water.

A captivating play of light is created within every space of the Roza using thresholds made of stone.

The apertures and intricately carved surfaces of stone serve as a vertical element that expresses light in many ways within the complex.



Play of light within the complex



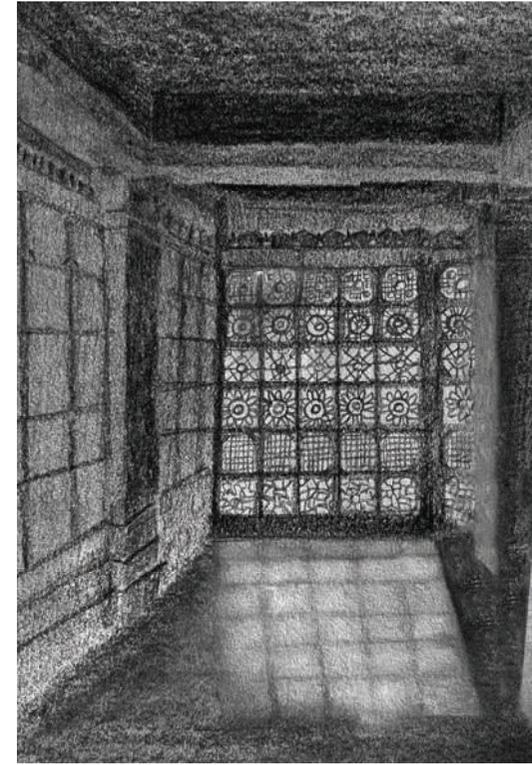
Light seen in the arched entrance gateway



Light within the dargah of Ahmed Khattu



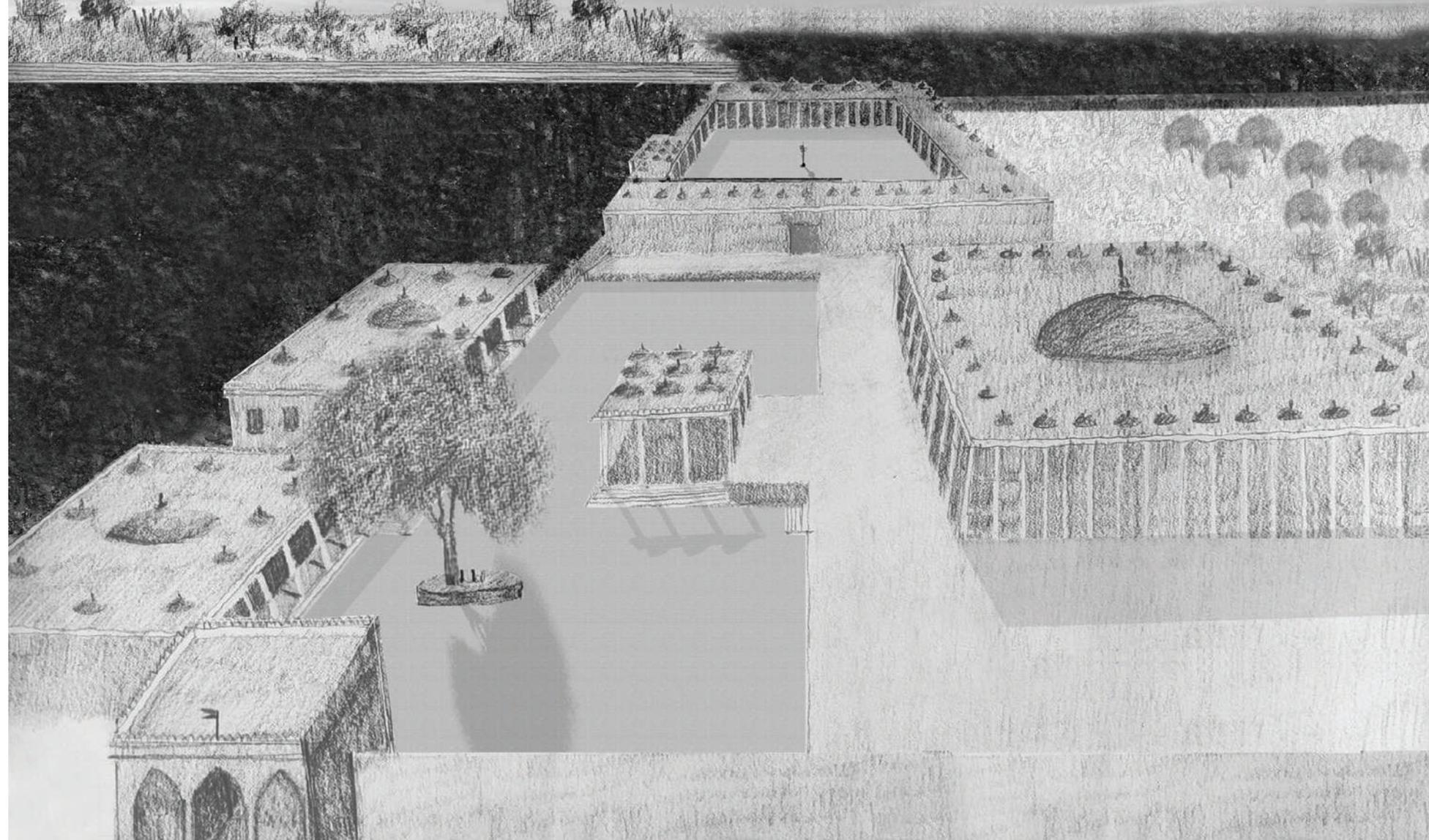
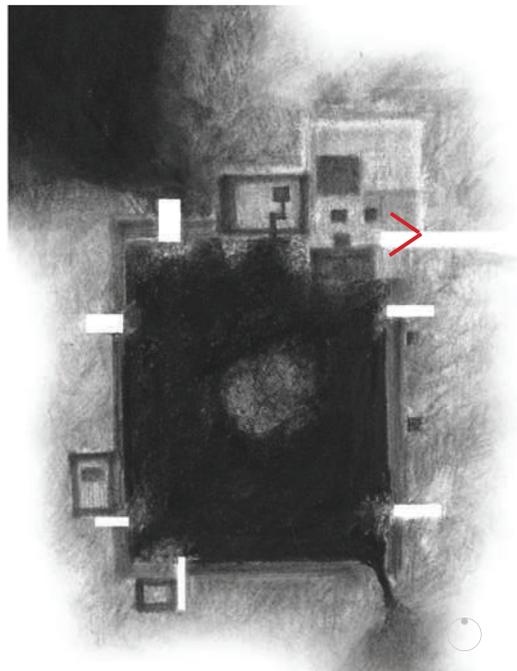
Light along the colonnaded verandahs of the mosque, the king's pavilion and the queen's pavilion.



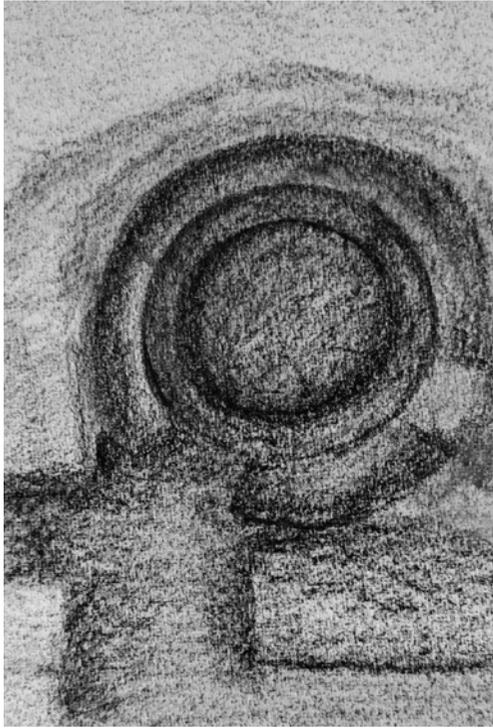
Light falling through the stone jalli inside the tomb of king Muhammed Begada.

A dynamic system of water is at play in the tank constantly. The varying levels of water give a different sense of aesthetic to the complex throughout the year.

The complex further responds to the water through jharokhas and articulated openings of windows that face the water.



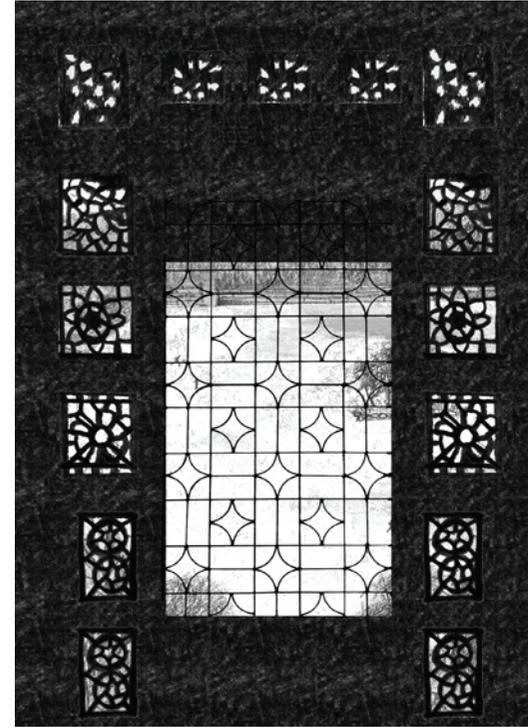
Water systems within the complex



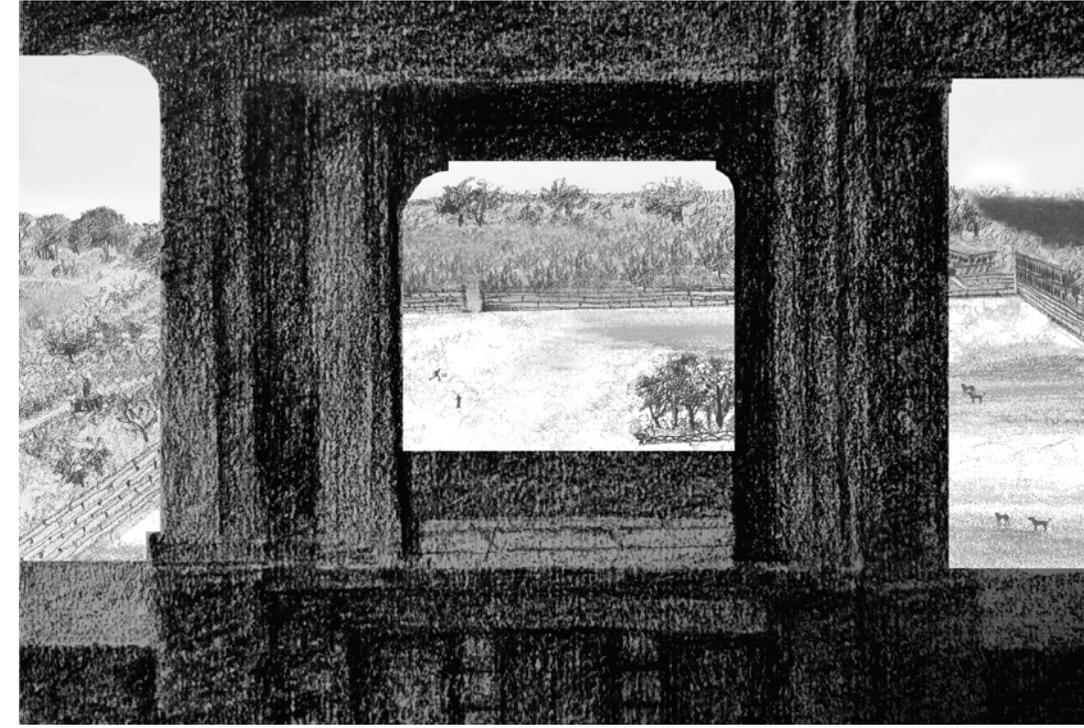
A floor detail in the mosque used to filter rain water



A surface drain outlet on the wall on the queen's tomb that leads to the central tank.



The tank seen through the windows in the King's tomb.



The tank and the island seen through the jharokha along the southern wall of the mosque.

## Multiple sensibilities

- Subjective narrations

The abundant visitors that the roza receives everyday gives room for it to be perceived with different eyes.

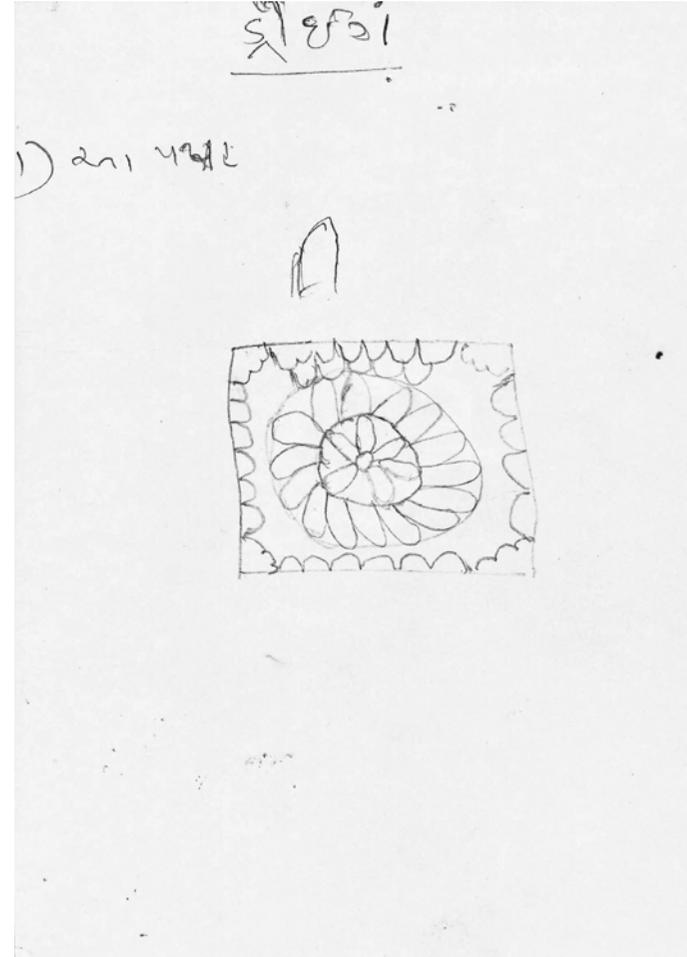
15 particularized narratives discussed with people associated with the roza and expressed as drawings on paper by them gives several insights to the same place and makes one perceive it through different eyes.





**MUHAMMED NAZIR MALIK**  
Security

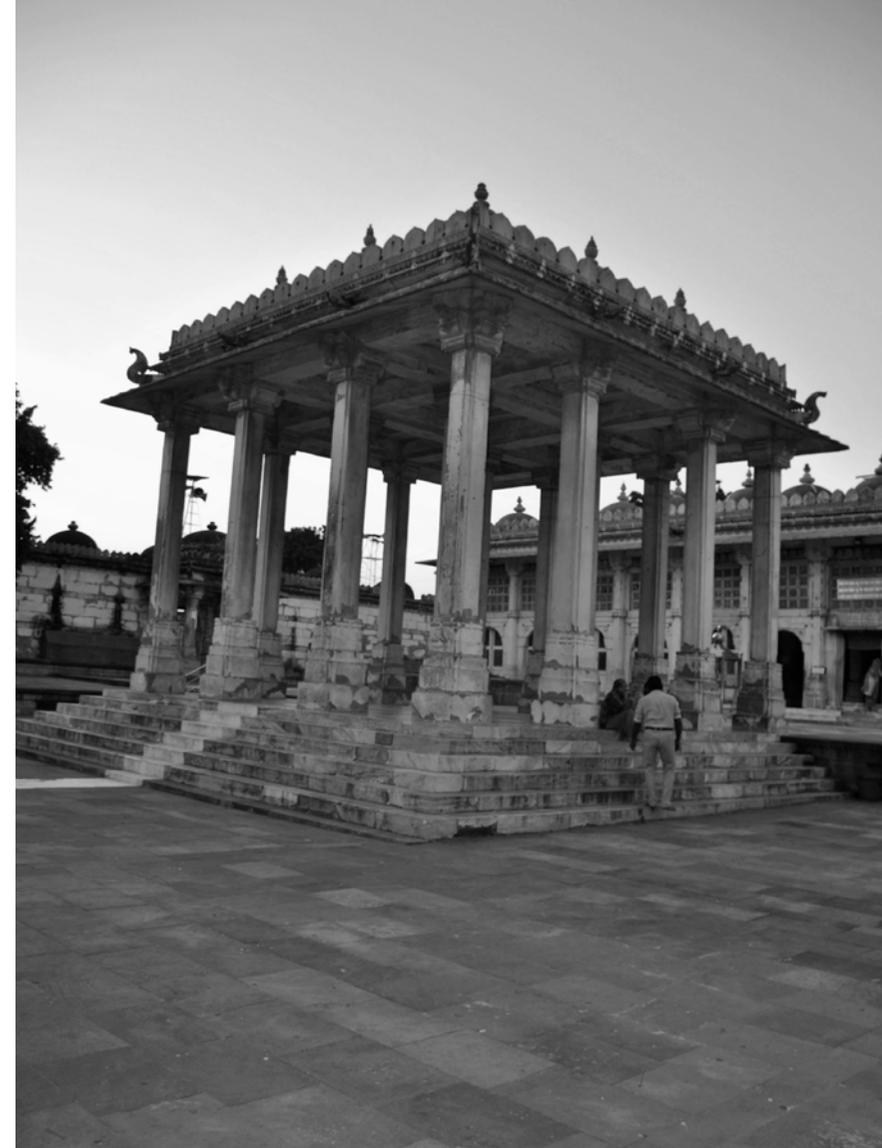
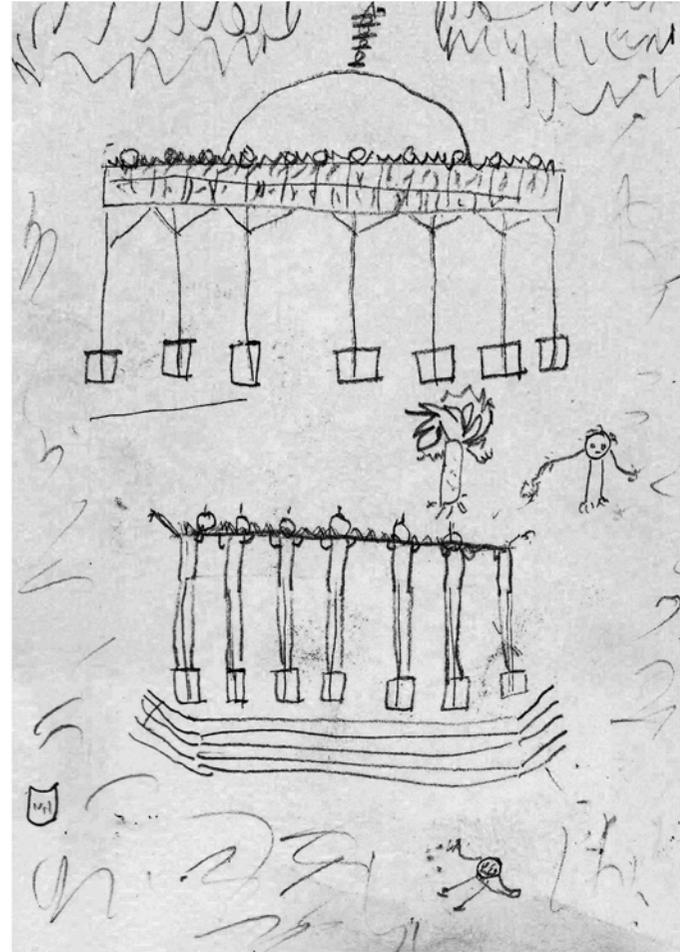
*"The stone is what makes the place what it is.....  
it is full of it used in different forms....they were all  
imported from Rajasthan and carved into beautiful  
jallis.....I look at it all the time and wonder how  
they were made"*





**HANIFBHAI B SHAIKH**  
Staff

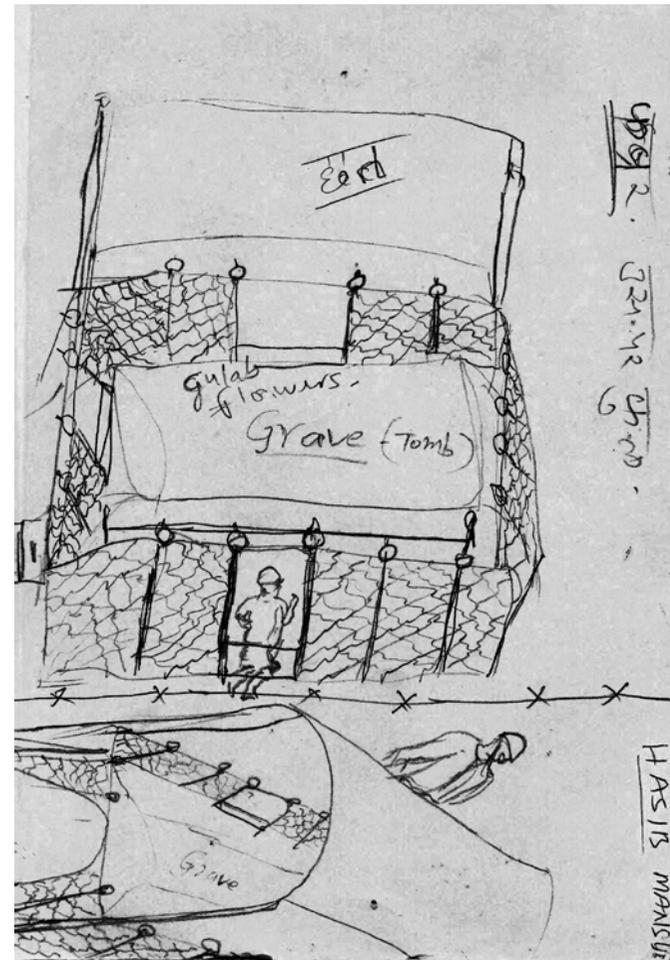
*" Every morning after cleaning the courtyard at around 6am, I stand alone at the center of the pavilion and pray to baba.....the sense of the Dargah, the view of baba and the feel of the place makes me extremely happy every morning"*





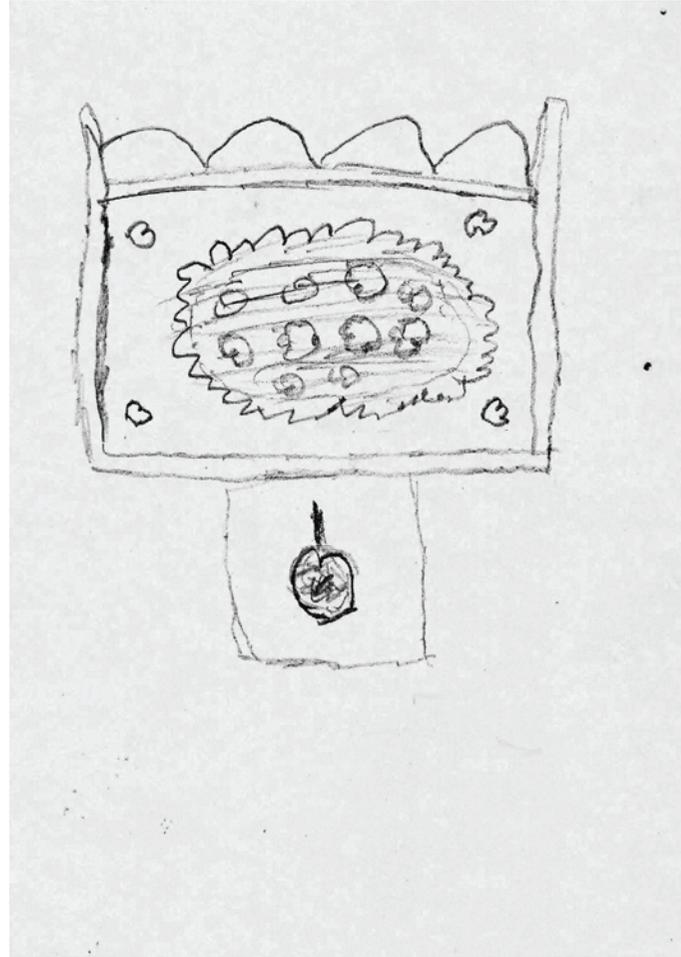
**HASIK MANSOOLI**  
Librarian

*"The dargah is what means the most to me and the innermost space is what I think of before I begin my day"*



RESHMA  
Visitor

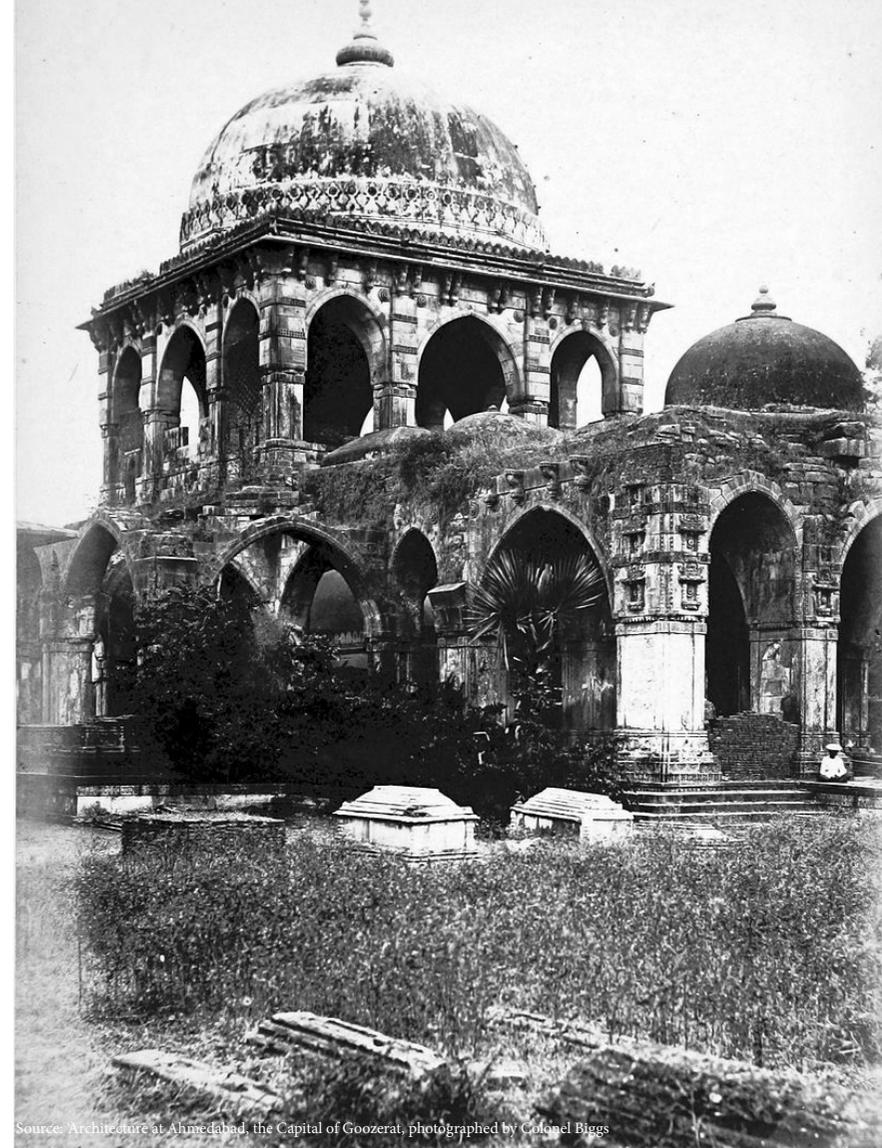
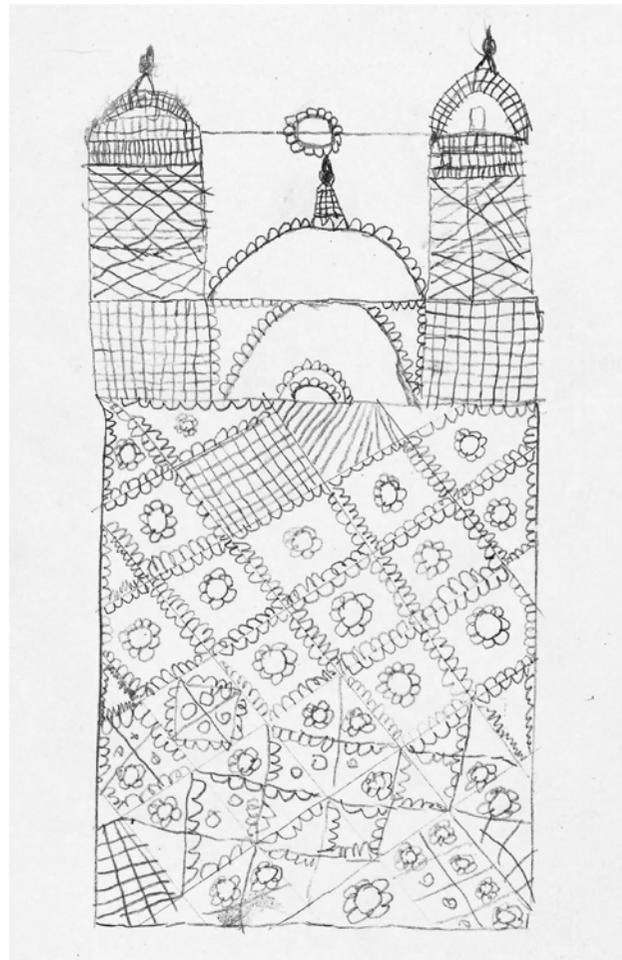
*"The diya opposite the dargah has an intricate pattern I like....when you asked me to close my eyes and think about Sarkhej that is the first thing that came in front of my eyes"*



**MUHAMMED**

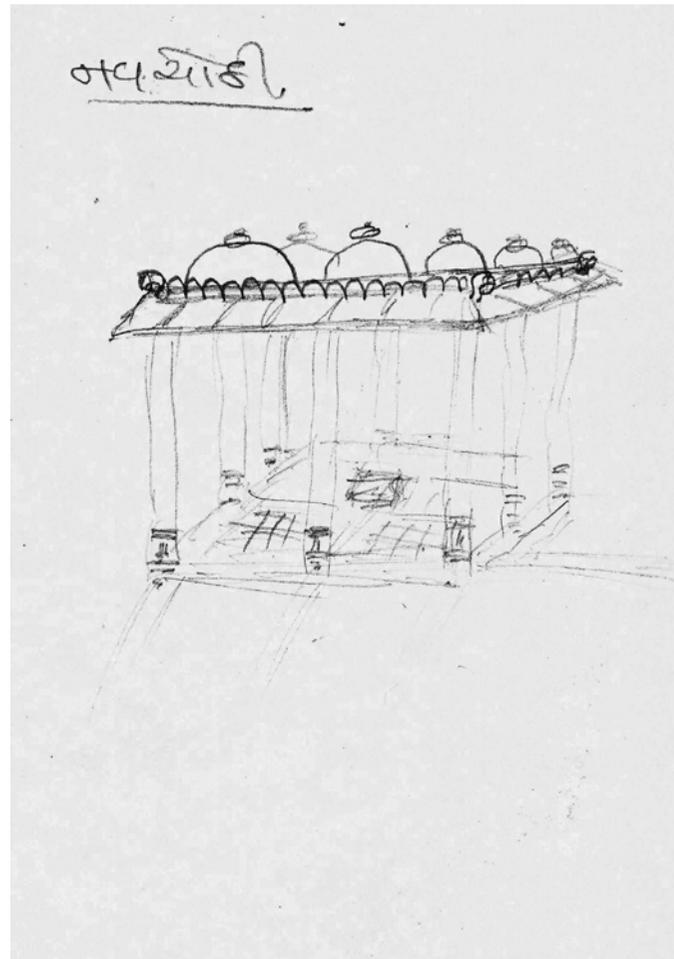
**Qawwali singer**

*“ Speaking and even thinking about Sarkhej makes me think about Shah-e-Alam, the masjid next to my house that I visit everyday.....I come here only for baba (Ahmed Khattu) and to sing for him, but when I pray here with my eyes closed, I feel like I am at Shah Alam.*



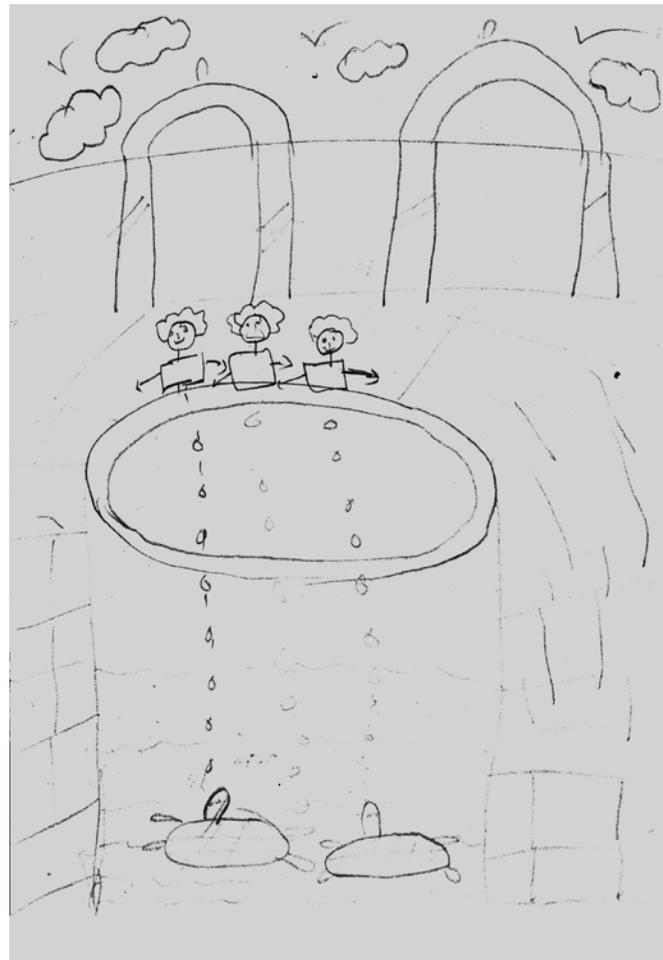
## MUJAWAR AT THE DARGAH

*"It was said the Sufi Saint Ahmed Khattu used to sit at the center of the pavilion and preach at the banks of Sabarmati with the neem forest at the backdrop.....I like watching the pavilion from inside the dargah, as in from wherever I sit and imagine him sitting there and preaching"*



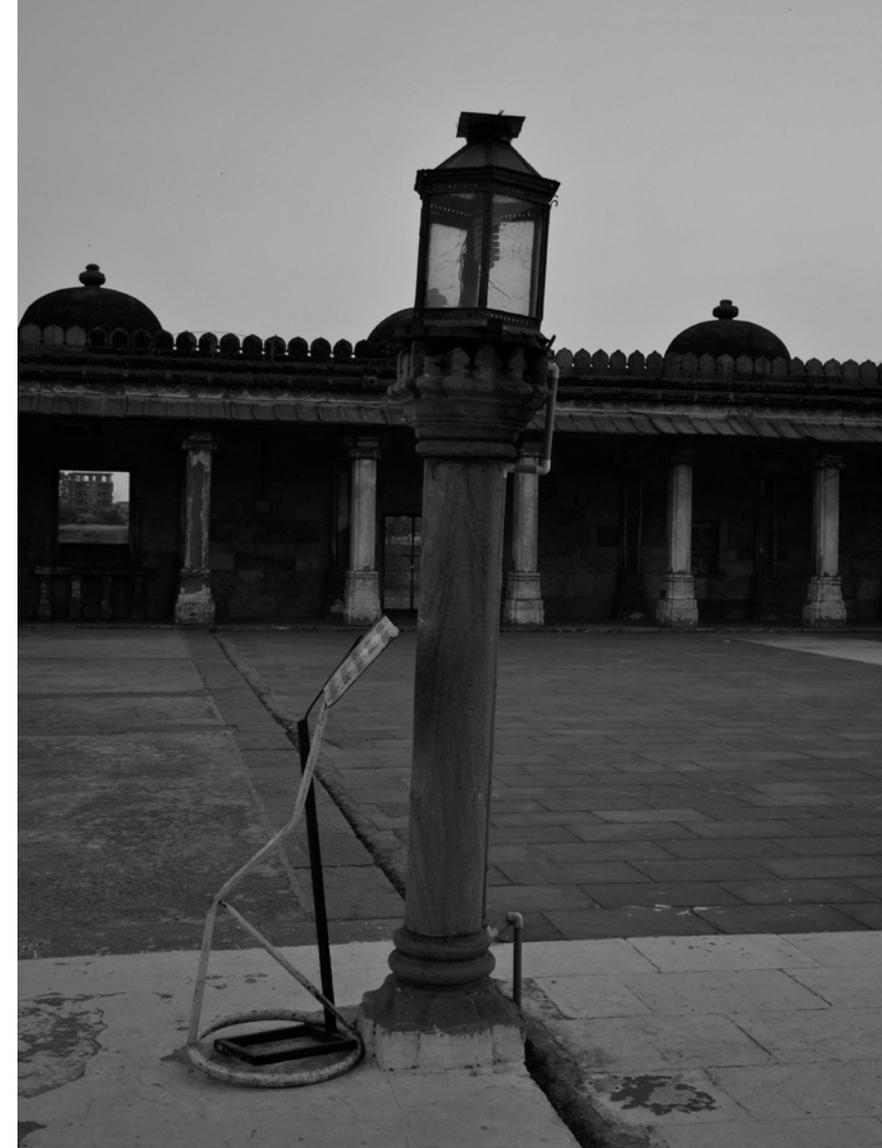
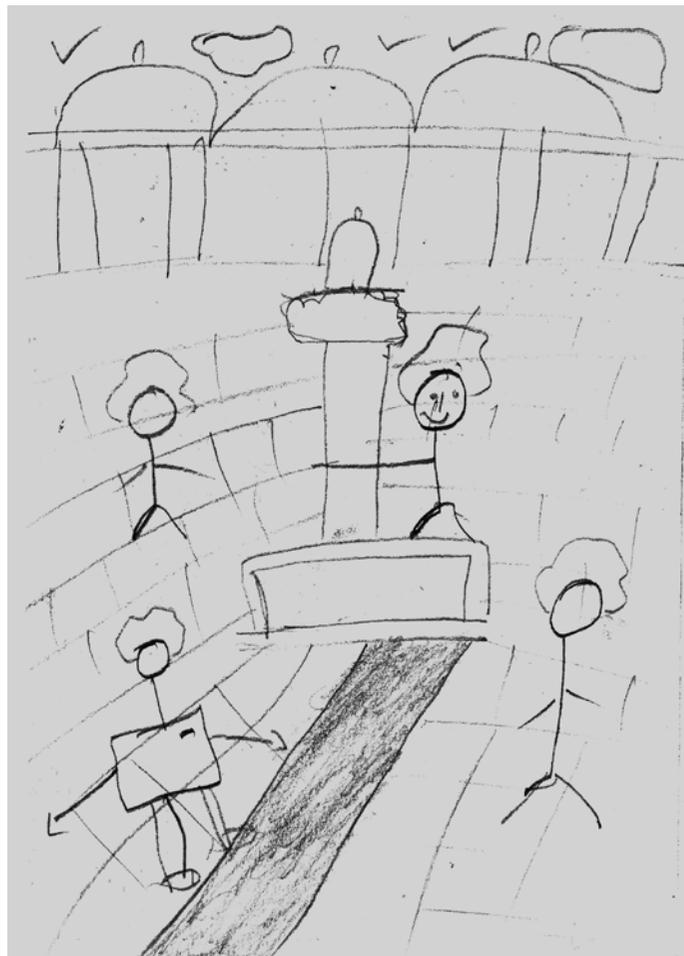
**RUKKAIYA**  
**Visitor**

*"The courtyard of the masjid was an extremely fun place where all the girls would run around and play.....the tank that is shut now was open back then and had tortoises in them.....we would go and feed them with bread and puffed rice every time we came here"*



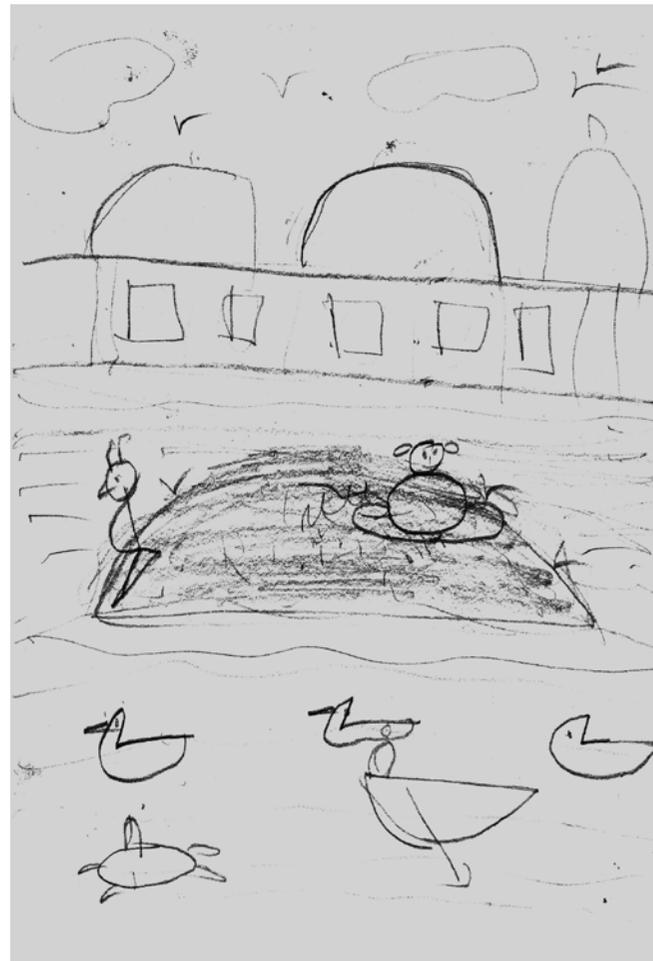
**RUKKAIYA**  
**Visitor**

*"We used to play a game, as kids.....just the girls though, as we would not go inside the Masjid, we played in the courtyard....we would close our eyes and walk from the gate of the masjid and try to touch the lamp in the center with our eyes closed. It used to be so much fun....some of us would end up walking till the jharokha with our eyes closed (laughs)"*



**RUKKAIYA**  
**Visitor**

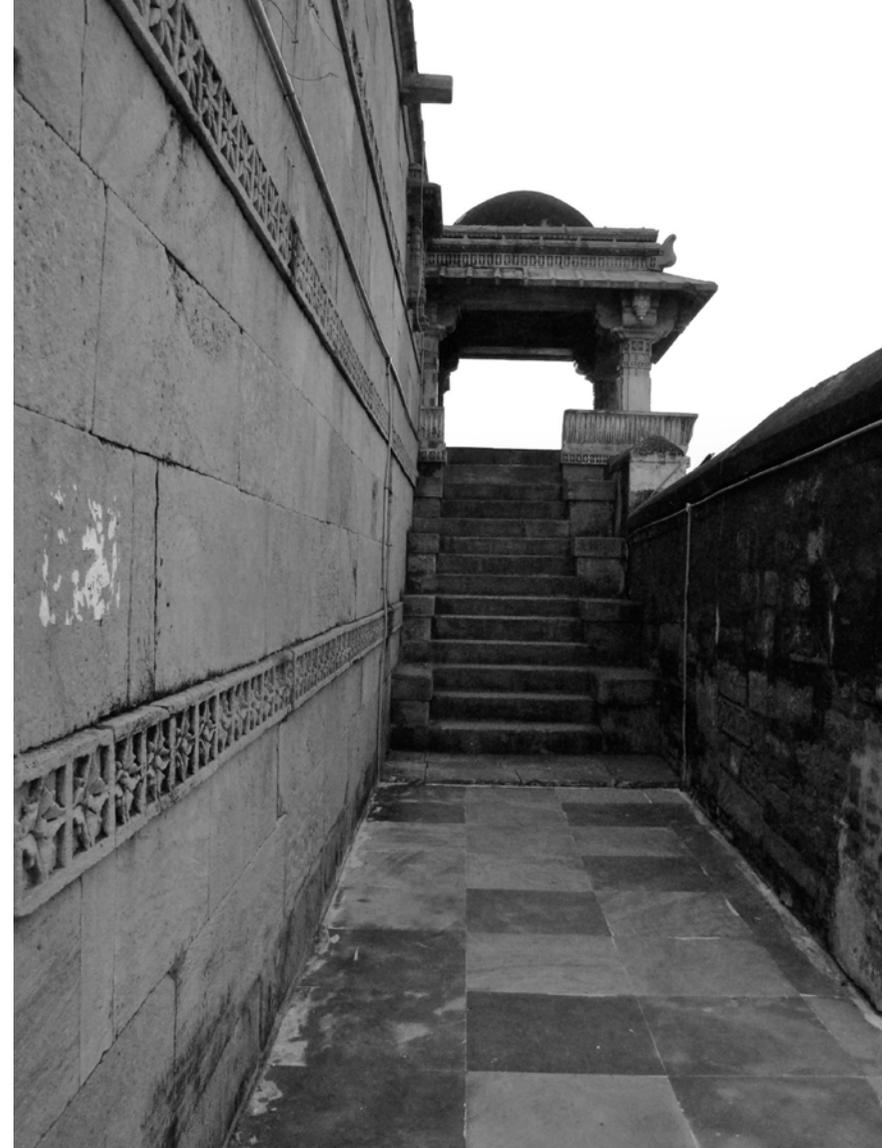
*"The island in the center of the tank was more beautiful before when it had no trees, when one saw the monument from a boat from the other side of the island, the domes of the masjid resembled the sandy oval island in the center"*



**RUKKAIYA**

**Visitor**

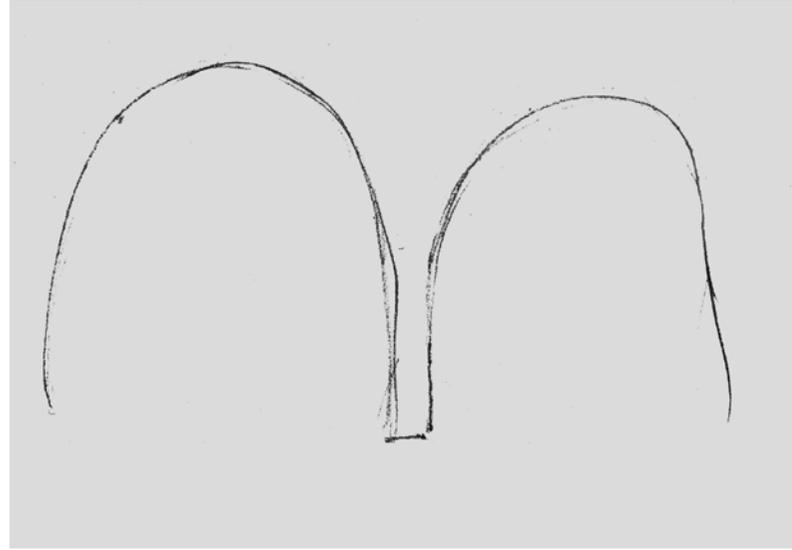
*"We climbed up the jharokha occasionally and watched the birds at the makarba lake all the time.....we also sat and counted the trees along the edge of the lake, it is a nice space to be in, it is quiet and secluded, I think this pavilion was meant for the king to enter the Masjid"*

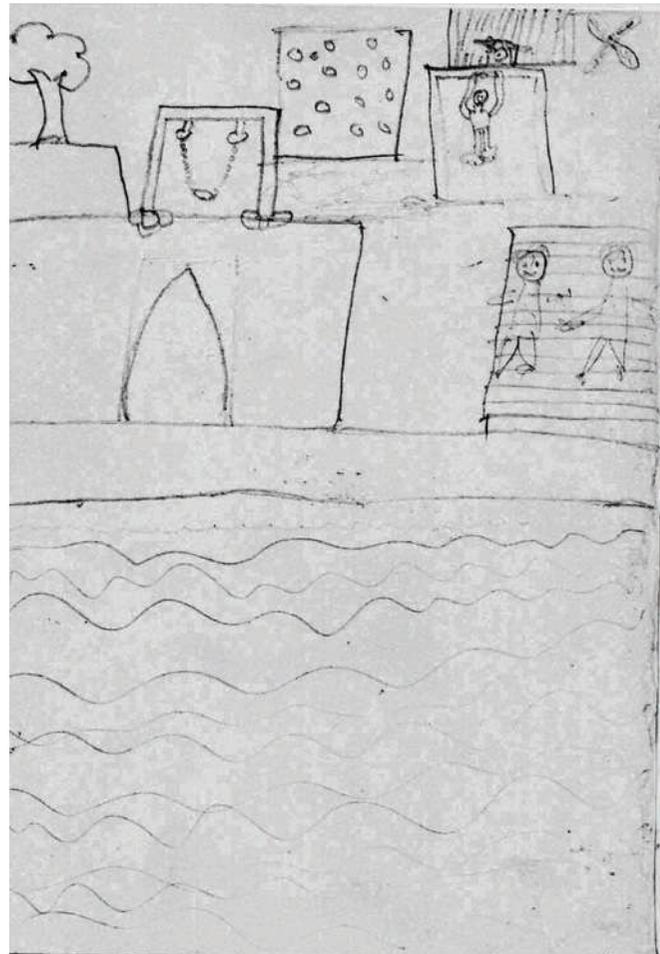




**SAMAD KHAN YASIN**  
Secretary of Sarkhej WAKF Board

*"My office being right opposite the entrance, watching people enter the monument all day makes me feel good.....every person is different and would carry an authentic meaning of the place with him when he leaves"*





**IMRAN**

**Visitor from Sarkhej town**

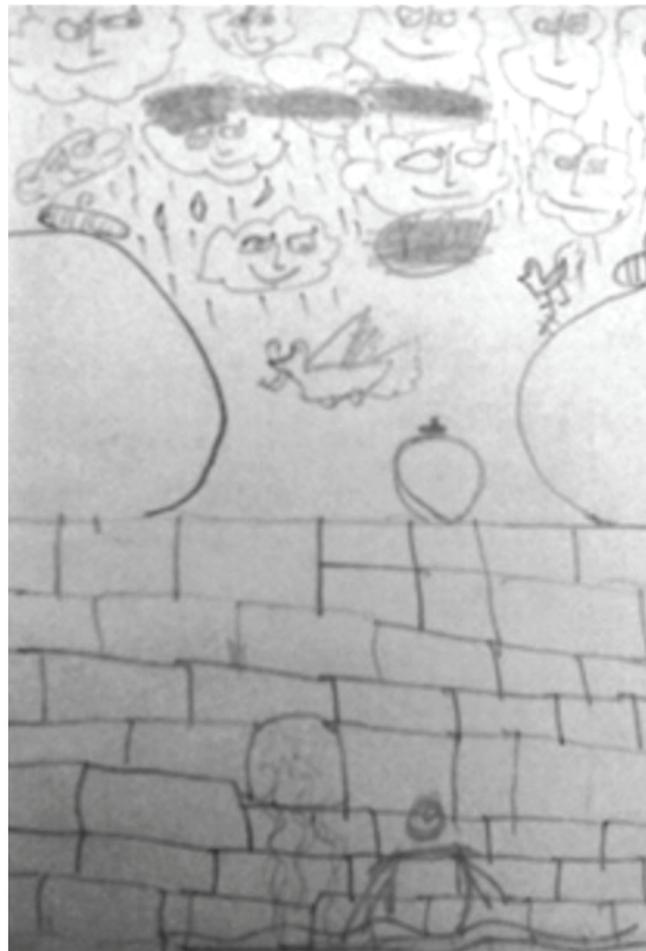
*"The playground behind the water is nice to see from the water....and the hole into which all the water overflows into, my friends and I like standing there when the tank is full and the water is moving fast....it gives us a strange thrill"*



**IMRAN**

**Visitor from Sarkhej town**

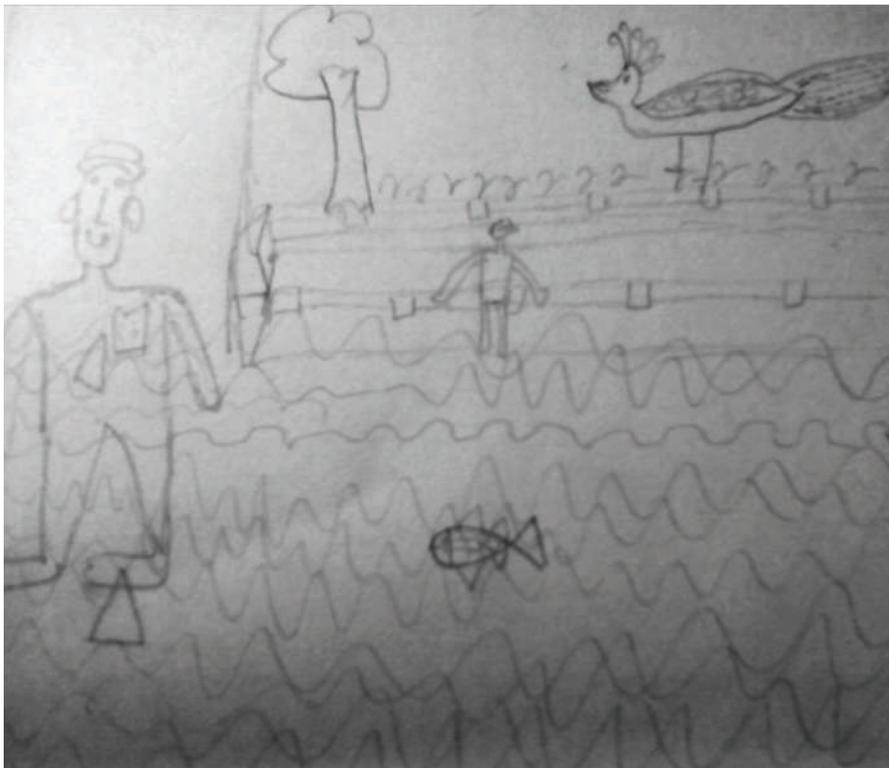
*"The water is beautiful to be in when it rains.....  
water falls into the tank through some openings  
in the building and I love standing below it when  
that happens although the water is smelly and  
dirty (laughs)"*



IMRAN

Visitor from Sarkhej town

*"Once I jumped into the water from a step next to the Queen's pavilion and got hurt"*





**NIKHAT**  
**Visitor**

*"I remember playing in the courtyard outside the Dargah when it rained"*

*"We always liked playing in the court opposite the Dargah"*





*Eyesight is inceptive, perceives what it sees.*

*The senses are inclusive.  
They perceive the tangible and lay them out as an objective illustration.*

*Emotions are unique and intuitive.  
It makes one perceive beyond the physical manifest.*



Water at the wetland



Water at the Sabarmati river



Water flowing into the tank from the surface drain



Water expressed by Imran, a visitor

## EPILOGUE

The ability of space to accommodate human participation has narrated social and cultural progress across time. Space as an empty canvas for expression absorbs collective imaginations and belief systems along with individual relatedness at different paces of time.

A cross section of this dynamic canvas defines multiple lenses for its perception. Be it religion and collective belief or memories and individual associations, the lenses lead to several exclusive repositories.

Having illustrated the idea of a place through several such lenses the study urges one to consciously examine the existence and impact of the relationship between humanity and space, both as a collective and an individual today.

Does the present disconnect humanity with history and time? Is there no relatedness to the glorious past in the global aspirations and progress of today?

Is space now just a cumulative of narratives of the past? or capable of being a potential medium for engagement in the making of a responsible future?

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The entire process of putting this study together was extremely engaging. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof Rabindra J Vasavada, whose inputs have been of great value.

To Mr Aniket Bhagwat for providing me with the opportunity to pursue this study and to urging me to look for more than the apparent.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Yagnik, Achyut. Ahmedabad: From Royal city to Megacity. Ahmedabad: Penguin India, 2011.
- David, Esther. Ahmedabad: City with a Past. Ahmedabad: HarperCollins, 2016.
- Mirat-i-Ahmadi. n.d.
- The Mirat-i-Sikandari. n.d.
- Nair-Gupta, Nisha. People Called Ahmedabad . Random House, 2017.
- Pandya, Yatin. Concepts of Space in Traditional Indian Architecture. Grantha Corporation; Reprint edition, 2013.
- G.Kalimi, Shahid. Sarkhej roza sankul no eitahas. N.B.S Book Depo, 2008.
- Desai, Miki & others. Sarkhej-Roza complex : an attitude towards conservation: a report related to the regional workshop on architectural conservation: water structures of Gujarat, . CEPT, 1989.
- Kadam, Rajeev. RSP : Ahmedabad : Sarkhej Roza complex. 1987.
- Menghani, Jitendra. Understanding the notion of place : a study of the Jami Mosque Complex and Sarkhej Roza, Ahmedabad. CEPT, 2000.
- Vyas, Devna P. Land form and built form : a study of the characteristics. 2007.
- Chauhan, Nilam. Study of urban settlement in historic city case Sarkhej Roza. 2014.
- Pallasma, Juhani. The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses . John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
- Nadri, journal article indigo production and its organization in sarkhej during the seventeenth century ghulam ahmad. "indigo production and its organization in sarkhej during the seventeenth century." (n.d.).

- Sarkar, Jagdish Narayan. "The Imperial Monopoly in Indigo (1633-35) (Summary) ." (n.d.).
- Thomas, Pooja Susan. "Rediscovering Sarkhej: Narrating Belonging in Ahmedabad." (2017).
- CEPT Archives. <[www.ceptarchives.org](http://www.ceptarchives.org)>.
- Sarkhej Roza. <[www.sarkhejroza.org/t](http://www.sarkhejroza.org/t)>.
- Wikipedia. <[www.wikipedia.org/](http://www.wikipedia.org/)>.
- <[anfarch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Helsinki-2013-Architecture-Neuroscience.pdf](http://anfarch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Helsinki-2013-Architecture-Neuroscience.pdf)>
- Googlebooks. <[www.books.google.co.in/books?id=anukDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=Nadri+1994+indigo&source=bl&ots=wtJBWMFVKA&sig=18nYh3dMU2vPapN743-tq3dX6eo&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiDub3zs7zbAhXMPo8KHQejC0AQ6AEIJjAA#v=onepage&q=Nadri%201994%20indigo&f=false](http://www.books.google.co.in/books?id=anukDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=Nadri+1994+indigo&source=bl&ots=wtJBWMFVKA&sig=18nYh3dMU2vPapN743-tq3dX6eo&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiDub3zs7zbAhXMPo8KHQejC0AQ6AEIJjAA#v=onepage&q=Nadri%201994%20indigo&f=false)>.
- <https://www.gettyimages.in/>
- <https://www.columbia.edu/>



Shalini Prakash is a landscape architect from CEPT University. She graduated in Architecture from RV College of Architecture, Bangalore.

E #  
shalni.prakash@gmail.com

