REJUVENATING THE PAST

The Restoration of Parimal Garden, Ahmedabad - Est. 1960s
LEAF, the research arm of M/s Prabhakar B. Bhagwat is engaged in research and publication in the areas of Landscape Design, Environmental Planning, City Development and Management and Developing Public Spaces.

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AHMEDABAD IN 1950-60s

AHMEDABAD- THE MANCHESTER OF EAST

“Unlike Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Ahmedabad was not a creation of British but a city which, while remaining true to itself, successfully adapted to the new industrial age, carrying over commercial and industrial skills and patterns of traditional social organization.”

The city’s expansive nature fostered architectural organisational paradigms based on idealised, abstracted representations of the Indian villages as it grew westward and absorbed nearby, ‘real’ villages in the first half of the twentieth century. The most prominent structure on the skyline were mills, which had smokestacks taking the place of minarets.
Ahmedabad in 1950s-60s

Gulzarilal Nanda  Kasturbhai Lalbhai  Dr. Vikram A. Sarabhai  Anasuya Sarabhai
PATRONS OF A PROGRESSIVE TOWN

Post-independence Ahmedabad was in a phase of renaissance. Many city fathers - exceptional people that were well travelled and made Ahmedabad their home - led the way with patronage that had foresight. Ahmedabad’s industrious community brought the best international architecture home thanks to their pragmatism, and progressive & innovative vision.

Pioneers like Le Corbusier (1954-56), Louis Kahn (1962), Balkrishna Doshi (1962-93) Achyut Kanvinde, and Charles Correa were giving life to the vision of patrons of Ahmedabad.
Ahmedabad in 1950s-60s

National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad

Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association
The Indian Institute of Management, the National Institute of Design, the School Of Architecture, ATIRA & many such institutions came into being then. Behind their intent for unsustainable patronage, the vision was to create a sense of community, and shaping Ahmedabad with development projects. It was during this period - with the establishment of these institutes - that the city and its patrons seemed to promote an interdisciplinary approach in areas of education and practice.

It wouldn’t be incorrect to describe the city as a hub of art & culture with a worldwide perspective, because it successfully combined the traditional with the modern. It was mill owners that embraced modern architecture as a symbol of modernity in the progressive town.
A TRIP TO THE “WEST”

In Britain, World War 2 curtailed the functionality of gardens for growing food or taking refuge. The 1950s shrugged it off & the design of gardens was more focused towards “mental rehabilitation” through ornamental & manicured lawns.
Popularly known as Chinubhai Mayor, he was the youngest President of the Ahmedabad Municipality & the first mayor of AMC in the 1950s. A refined gentleman, he proposed that Ahmedabad should have parks of great distinction. He was the man that brought together the mercantile - Jayantilal Bhikabhai who was a city industrialist; AMC - K.M. Katawala M D Rajpal; and the public who donated and worked together for the development of Ahmedabad.

He had been to the West. Inspired by what he had experienced there, he desired to build parks of great distinction, and in so doing, integrate a renewed sense of culture and community within the city.
Evolution of garden

Ahmedabad in 1940s Town Planning Scheme
“At every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences.” - Kevin Lynch (The Image of the city).

The Parimal Garden we see now was an open green space in proximity to Law Garden; one of the prominent gardens in Ahmedabad. The pathways travelling along the fences of this open ground merge together & create nodes that are hotspots for people to meet and perceive the space.
Evolution of the garden

URBAN CONTEXT OF PARIMAL GARDEN - 1940s

The garden has grown & aged with time, reflecting its surroundings. Perusing through the 1940s archives showed us that the land where the Garden was envisaged was a low lying open space that was surrounded by residential spaces which were ultimately occupied by the elite sections of the society by the end of the decade. Two of its edges were fenced by major transits.

1. Plots were divided as per residential land use
2. A low lying area, Water tank- 1945
3. Old Banyan Tree
4. Narrow streets for transit
Evolution of the garden

URBAN CONTEXT OF PARIMAL GARDEN- 1950-90s

Chinubhai Mayor, was intent on making a garden that was inspired by the pleasure gardens in Britain. With four entrances marked on the edges facing roads, the narrow pathways steer visitors to the beautiful lawns. And then, for four decades, the Garden continued to grow and evolve. It was also during this period that there was a densification of what is referred to as the ‘Old City’, along with a more easily facilitated migration across the river. With a change in ideas of densification and urbanization, in 1998, it was decided that the Garden would be redesigned.
Evolution of the garden

**URBAN CONTEXT OF PARIMAL GARDEN- 1998- EARLY 2000s**

By the late 90's early 2000’s, the land got demarcated as a commercial zone, making the road junction a major node for interaction & transit; the edges let people experience the garden. The redesign of the Garden by Ar. Kamalbhai Mangaldas incorporated a central waterbody; two fountains became the foci with pathways revolving around them. The Old Banyan tree stood strong next to the lake, with the mounds guarding the Southern edge as acoustic barriers.
The development of Ahmedabad brought with it widened roads, increase in traffic of people visiting the garden, and the surroundings growing to become a commercial hub. Even with shrunken garden boundaries, Parimal Garden remained a breathing space amongst these closely packed commercial complexes.
1. Entrance
2. Pre-function Plaza
3. Lily Pond
4. Bougainvillea Arbour
5. Meditation ground with Brick pillars
6. Mounds as acoustic buffer
7. Open Lawns
8. Informal Lawns
9. Pathways encircling fountain
10. Children’s Park
11. Meandering pathways around Lawns

Plan of Parimal Garden
Kamal Mangaldas - Devendra Shab-
1998
The park as it was found

- Need to Densify Planting Beds
- Create Visual Boundaries
- Introducing biodiversity through aquatic plants
- Need for Upgradation of the Nursery
1. Entrance
2. Pre-function Plaza
3. Lily Pond
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11. Meandering pathways around lawns
The redesign of the Parimal Garden was envisioned as an exercise in retaining old memories, and connections, while simultaneously building new ones. Rejuvenating Parimal Garden would be a tribute to the people who envisaged a space for the community, as well as to those who were the custodians of this legacy that has become synonymous with the identity of the city over a duration of over sixty years!
Rejuvenating Parimal garden

A Legacy Continued

Nostalgia that connects

Continuity & Change

Preservation & enhancement of biodiversity
The idea was to not recreate the essence of the garden, but rather to restore it while being sensitive to the people who have long-established associations with the Garden; a process for design needed to be devised that was rooted in the existent design. The intent was to enhance the sense of spatiality and identity that has been lent to the space; where the new simply expressed itself as an extension of the existent elements.
Beginning of the rejuvenation

Following the footprints along the twisting pathways, the garden was formalized along with infusing the chaos. It’s old and resolved as well as young and dynamic.
The Lily Pond - an inseparable element of the garden – expresses itself as a more immediate connection. The segregated lawns offer a sense of privacy for the users, even within the a public space.
Shaping the master-plan

Evolving pathways - directing visitors, into a plaza; a non-directional base, where all the intricate spaces old and new, were carefully infused in. It will allow vivid views to be experienced, and give freedom to the visitors exploring the garden. A meandering seating plaza has been intended to act as a space for pause, while the location of the amphitheatre was reimagined keeping in mind concerns of ambient noise.
MASTER PLAN - PARIMAL GARDEN

The final design laid emphasis on ‘continuity’, the inherent value of the context & preserving what we were holding in hand along with considering ‘change’ while adding, eliminating, or transforming spaces.

The master-plan is painted on a plaza, with spaces that a public park needs; spaces woven together, demonstrating a cohesion between what’s new and what’s restored. The plaza spreads its arms embracing the Arbor, the Amphitheatre viewing the Lily Pond. The Plaza guards the segregated lawns as personal spaces, with restored fountains adding a movement to the garden.
LEGENDS

1. Entrance Plaza
2. Seating under Trellis
3. Walkways
4. Mounds
5. Lake
6. Seating Deck
7. Arbor
8. Meditation Ground
9. Dog Park
10. Butterfly Garden
11. Edible Plant Walk
12. Amphitheater
13. Bridge
14. Yoga Pavilion
15. Restored Fountain
16. Multipurpose Play Court
17. Children's Play Area
18. Outdoor Gym
19. Indoor Gym
20. Lawns
21. Seating
22. Toilet Block
23. Parking
24. Existing Temple
MEANDERING PLAZA
The plaza acts as a pause point – allowing the viewer to choose the manner in which they are hoping to conduct their journey through the garden.
Regraded mounds create a visual - and indeed and experiential buffer – from the main road that edges the garden; reinforcing its position as a space for quietude and peace.
MEDITATION GROUND
For a garden that has a history of a thriving user community, the redesign incorporates a formalized Meditation Ground that is surrounded by refurbished brick pillars whose design is intended to pay homage to the textile families of the city – whose patronage contributed significantly to its growth and development. Upon the brick pillars, conceptualized and executed by artist Premkumar Vaishya (David), are monkeys made from scrap metal – playfully journeying from one pillar to the next – perhaps a reminder for us to find humor and joy in the smaller nuances and instances!
BOUGAINVILLEA ARBOR
Indispensable to the identity of the Garden – almost since its formalization – is this arbor which has now been refurbished; only in so much as to enhance its expression.
SEGREGATED LAWNS
Separate lawns allow the visitors their own space - within something that continues to be very much public! Amidst the woods, sits an amphitheater – relocated and redesigned. While the space was always integral to the Garden, it was relocated as a part of the redesign in response to ambient noise.
Two fountains located within the compound of the garden have been refurbished – retaining the old base, but replacing the bowls. And then, the Garden is also home to one of India’s first pet parks!
U.N. MEHTA FOUNDATION

U.N. Mehta foundation is a non-profit organization whose objective is to bring their various philanthropic works to fruition, carrying on the ethos of their late founder, that of caring for others. The activities comprise of Community Healthcare, Education & Knowledge, Enhancement and Social Care and Concern - activities that benefit the people. The Foundation’s activities aim to make long term benefits in the communities in which they are implemented.

PRATITI INITIATIVE:

Recognizing the integral part public parks play in the constitution of the urban fabric, a group of landscape and architecture practitioners within Ahmedabad, under the guidance of LEAF, have refurbished and designed many parks across the city, and continue to do so. The goal of this on-going initiative continues to be to create an adaptable, sustainable, and cost-conscious model for the design and refurbishment of public parks in a city.
The Pratiti Initiative was conceived back in 2016 with an aim to reimagine the public spaces, and public gardens within the urban context of the country.

The success of the model is, in no small way, the result of the public-private partnership established between the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, and the U.N Mehta Foundation. The AMC has been instrumental in furthering the process by allocating land towards the initiative, and continuously guiding the endeavor, with the Foundation taking on the responsibility of maintaining the gardens it has taken under its wing.
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