

M.C.E SOCIETY'S
ALLANA COLLEGE OF
ARCHITECTURE, PUNE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

COUNCIL OF ARCHITECTURE, NEW DELHI
AND
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, PUNE CENTRE

e-Proceedings of
the National e-Conference
on Empirical Theories
NCET-2020

7TH & 8TH AUGUST 2020

www.allanaarchitecture.org

ISBN : 978-93-5416-259-6

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ALLANA COLLEGE
OF ARCHITECTURE, PUNE



Council of Architecture
NEW DELHI,
INDIA



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ARCHITECTS, PUNE CENTRE

2020
NCET

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON EMPIRICAL THEORIES
IN ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

e-Proceedings of the National e-Conference on Empirical Theories NCET-2020

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Self Published by: M. C. E. Society's Allana College of Architecture
2390-B, K. B. Hidayatullah Road, Azam Campus, Camp, Pune -411001, Maharashtra, India.
website: www.allanaarchitecture.org

Cover Image © by ACOA
NCET Logo © by ACOA

First Edition, 2020
Printed by: Allana College of Architecture, Pune

Compiled and Edited by: Prachi Aiyer, Dhvani Iyer
Cover Page design by: Huzefa Chalisa
NCET logo design by: Gautami Renuse

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ISBN: 978-93-5416-259-6

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RE-CONNECT WITH NATURE

The first step for sustainable living.

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ABSTRACT

Our cause for concern today are the many environmental impacts we are facing, like temperature rise, climate change, floods etc, which are a direct result of the ever increasing population and their way of living. When we analyse this situation, from grass root level, we find a severe disconnect between Man and Nature. If we browse through our history, we understand man's evolution from caves, i.e prehistoric times, to highrise dwellings, in current times. In simpler terms, his journey where he lived in and amidst nature to his moving up and away from nature.

Different measures are required to be taken, on different scales, to mitigate these environmental concerns. 'Sustainability' means the ability to sustain for the longest, is the key to manage, mitigate and prevent these environmental concerns. This can happen when the inter dependency of Man and Nature is in balance with each other. To achieve this balance, the connection between them has to be reinstated, for Man to understand ways in which he can adapt a new lifestyle, wherein Nature plays an equally important part.

This research primarily focuses on the hypothesis that " As we have started living in high rise buildings, the more disconnected we are with the nature."

In response to catering the needs of this growing population, we provide housing units, which are high rise. This is unavoidable. But can we also give these units some of their deserving share of nature, for them to reconnect with nature again.

This study focuses on sustainable landscape interventions to make this re -connection happen again, from a single dwelling unit scale to a residential colony scale.

KEYWORDS : Sustainability, Terrace Gardens, Kitchen Gardens, Balcony Gardens, open spaces.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today we are facing many environmental issues like, Global warming, Climate change, Floods, Droughts etc., the gravity of which is very strongly felt today as the aftermath of these issues causes a lot of pain to us. Everyone today wants that peaceful balance restored between Man and Nature. But, to regain that balance, we have to change, change our lifestyle, change our habits and manners, change the way we look and treat Nature.
2. If we look at any village scenario, the connection between Man and Nature is very strong. A house made up of locally available material, which opens up into a frontyard and a backyard. Front yard, the main gathering space, is coated with cow dung, enabling small insects to survive within them, which in turn allows birds to come and feed on them. A house with a live fence, i.e. fence made up of shrubs, which allows small animals to pass through it, keeping their corridors intact. The backyard is mostly used for growing vegetables or as a Kitchen garden. The dung of domesticated animals is used as a manure to grow these vegetables. There is a very thin line between indoors and outdoors This inter-dependency on each other for sustenance makes it a stronger sustainable module. This module is somewhat absent in cities. We have houses in a building. Buildings which are multi storied to high rise. As we move up from ground level, our association with it starts reducing. Our front yards are converted to terraces, with a definite space. Backyards are converted into balconies. The experience of Nature as a 'whole' starts getting fragmented. It is the call of the current times to inculcate this sustenance module in a city life, to secure our future, to restore that peaceful balance between Man and Nature.

AIM :

3. The aim of this study is to identify sustainable landscape interventions to make the connection between Man and Nature happen again, from a single dwelling unit scale to a residential colony scale.

CONTENT:

4. To address our aim, this study is undertaken in two parts,
 - a) **Hypothesis:** This part deals with the hypothesis, "As we have started living in high rise buildings, the more disconnected we are with the nature." Surveys were taken to prove this hypothesis correct and also identify issues associated with it.
 - b) **Solution:** This part deals with addressing those issues by identifying landscape intervention areas and giving guidelines to achieve a better sustainable module in a city life.

HYPOTHESIS:

5. It was important to study and analyse the present scenario, to understand this disconnect with Nature. For the same, we took a survey of people, of varied age groups. Most game changer questions, which led us to get the most clear picture of present scenario, were the following,
 - a. What is your age?
 - b. What floor of building do you stay?
 - c. Do you have your own Garden? If no, what is your reason?
 - d. Have you ever plucked flowers / fruits directly from a tree?
 - e. When was the last time you planted a plant?
 - f. Do you go to your terrace/ balcony / window to see trees, birds, sunrise, sunset or any scenic view ?
 - g. How often do you do that?
 - h. Do you see Birds in your vicinity? Which birds?
 - i. How often you visit public parks?
 - j. Memories from childhood with your association with Nature?
6. The Analysis of the answers to these questions, led to very interesting findings.