

NOT JUST A WALK IN THE PARK



Background

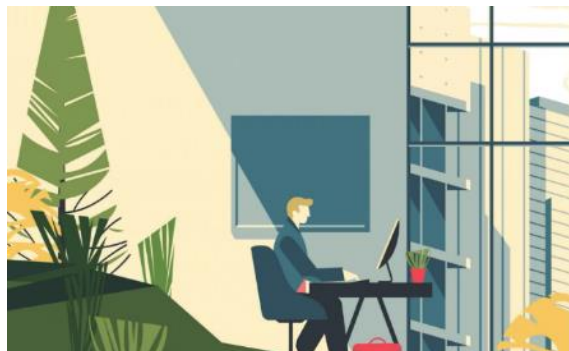
Ekonnect Knowledge Foundation (Ekonnect) is a non-profit section 8 company offering awareness, learning and training programs on environmental management and sustainability. Ekonnect conducts several awareness programmes aimed at bringing people close to Nature and Biodiversity. **Not Just a Walk in the Park** being one of them and as the name suggests is different from a casual walk in the park. It is an exciting new way to enjoy natural surroundings in the parks in cities like Mumbai.

Not Just a Walk in the Park is an attempt to give people a new perspective on the urban parks they often visit and teach them more about the natural environment by conducting sessions packed with fun, interactive activities. Ekonnect has conducted five such events in three different parks of Pune city in which more than 100 children from various schools and institutions of Pune have participated. This activity is designed in a manner where the participants get introduced to each component of the park ecosystem including the soil, plants, trees, flowers, birds, insects, butterflies and so on. The hope is that they understand their role as individuals as also the role of the community to act in terms of conservation of this precious yet undervalued resource.

Introduction

Mumbai- a Concrete Jungle is losing its green cover and open spaces due to its rapid urbanization and ever increasing population. Due to which people are losing touch with nature. People are getting so busy with their fast paced stressful lives and completely absorbed in their self-created technological world that they have stopped spending time or appreciating nature and its benefits. Nowadays, people pay a lot of money for spas, relaxation therapies, medications etc. to release their mental & physical stress without

realizing for a fact that nature provides the same rejuvenation for free. Nature apart from providing us with food, water, shelter, raw materials, and clean air also provides us less tangible, but just as important, gifts in terms of beauty, art, and spirituality. **Our well-being depends on the benefits that nature provides for free, every day and everywhere.**



A recent research based article in the National Geographic magazine showed evidence to support the fact that human beings when taken out of their daily routine office work where they face stressful situations and when they are immersed into nature for three days actually begin to feel refreshed and rejuvenated. "When we slow down, stop the busywork, and take in beautiful natural surroundings, not only do we feel restored, but our mental performance improves too." **Read more about the research online at National Geographic article called 'This Is Your Brain on Nature'**

With an aim of bringing people closer to nature, Not Just a Walk in the Park programme was held first time in the city of Mumbai at Pramod Mahajan Park, Dadar on 13th March 2016 from 7:00 am to 9:30 am.

About Pramod Mahajan Park

Pramod Mahajan Park- The site of this park was the city's sewage treatment plant till 1999 when operations were shut down and it was lying unused till last year (2015) when the idea of converting this 42,000 Square Meter (10 acre) vast area of Dadar into a Public Park. Carefully landscaped with lush greenery, and different species of plants and trees this park was opened to the public last year. This garden has about 200 benches to sit on and relax, rest rooms, 3 beautiful ponds filled with lotus flowers which are also named 'Lotus Lakes' and a 4000 square meter lawn area. It has about 500 species of shrubs, 5000 varieties of potted plants, total of 6 water coolers and a huge 26,000 square meter area just for plants and flowers.

Read: [Sewage treatment plant turn's into city's largest garden](#)





Images of Pramod Mahajan Park, Dadar

How was this programme different?

The programme was held for the first time in the city of Mumbai with an aim to bring people closer to nature. The programme highlighted the importance of the few remaining open spaces and urban parks in a 'concrete jungle' like Mumbai. **Mr. Rajeev Chawathe, the Landscape Designer and Architect of Pramod Mahajan Park, Dadar, Mumbai** was invited for the programme to highlight his experience with the participants. He kindly shared intrinsic details about the park and also the challenges faced during the designing and on- ground implementation stages. He spoke about the different types of floral species planted; which include various trees, shrubs, medicinal plants etc. He finally expressed, that the park could be maintained better and requested all the participants to support the continued maintenance.



Mr. Rajeev Chawathe sharing his experience with the participants

Objectives of NJWITP

- ✓ Bring citizens out of their technological world closer to Nature: specifically Trees & Urban Biodiversity.
- ✓ Help participants learn about different species of trees, their importance and the significant role trees play in our lives.
- ✓ Help citizens understand their individual role as well as the role of community action for conservation of this precious and undervalued resource.

Programme Proceedings

The programme commenced at 7:00 am on 13th March 2016, and entailed the following activities.

1. Tree Walk



Mrs. Katie Bagli, an avid nature lover and a well-known naturalist conducted the trail by engaging the participants with stories of different trees, caterpillars and butterflies present in the park. She also explained some scientific facts about the different types of tree species present in the park and was always referencing her facts with various books on trees, bees & insects. Rohit Pansare, a passionate bird watcher and documentary photographer showed participants close ups of the different types of birds present within the park using binoculars.

Some of the trees that were observed by the participants are:

1. False Ashok (Asopalav)
2. Casuarina Equisetifolia (Australian Pine Tree)
3. Banyan Tree
4. Saptparni (Devil's tree)
5. Desi Badam
6. Sausage Tree
7. Mango tree
8. Eucalyptus tree
9. Singapore cherry tree
10. Ficus (Umber tree)
11. Shirish tree
12. Pipal tree
13. Canon Ball tree
14. Sonchapha tree
15. Aegle Marmelos (Bael tree)
16. Gooseberry tree
17. Putranjiva tree
18. Kadam tree

Trail Leader: Katie Bagli



Mrs. Katie is an avid nature lover. She writes books on nature and when she is not writing she enjoys nature trails, wildlife workshops, storytelling and even puppet shows for children.

Some of the birds/mammals observed in the park were;

Cormorant, Asian Koel, Magpie Robin, Kingfisher, Fruit Bats



Participants learning about different trees from Katie Bagli



Rohit Pansare showing different birds to the participants



Common Tiger butterfly observed during the trail



2. Eco-Mapping

The participants were given maps of the park during the trail (See Annexure 2). While going around different routes during the trail, they mapped the identified trees using different colored pens. While mapping the trees, the participants also collected fallen leaves, fruits, barks etc. of the different tree species. Towards the end of the session, the participants placed their collected items on a common handmade large map drawing of the park.



Participants executing the Eco-Mapping session



3. What –to- do with your Waste

After the end of Tree walk and Eco mapping sessions, the participants were given their fruit breakfast which comprised of oranges, grapes & bananas. Subsequently, two cartons captioned Wet Waste and Dry Waste were placed in front of the participants. The participants were then explained the importance of segregating Wet waste and Dry waste on a daily basis. Vera Alvares, an active ALM of Bandra 'H west' ward enlightened the participants about the current waste management issues and the need & importance of segregation at source.



Wet waste & Dry waste cartons



Participants during the Waste Management session

End Notes

After the end of day's session, Sonal Alvares Head, Ekonnnect Knowledge Foundation thanked the participants for joining the programme and requested their feedback. She then expressed her gratitude towards Mrs. Katie Bagli for providing us her precious time & expertise. Katie Bagli showcased her books to the participants, titled; Trees of Dadar, Buzzing with Bees, Butterflies & Insects. Towards the end, the participants were gifted bookmarks highlighting key aspects & photos of the trees they identified during the nature trail as a souvenir of the walk.



Participants going through the book & bookmarks



Group Photo of the some of the participants

Our Way Forward

- As an outcome of the programme, we intent to garner public support and in partnership with Mr. Rajeev Chawathe we will devise ways in which the park can remain well maintained and promote it to more citizens.
- We plan to organize more such programmes in the other urban parks of the city on a city wide basis for Mumbai
- We will tie up with many partners & sponsors and scale up the programme to run in other cities in India

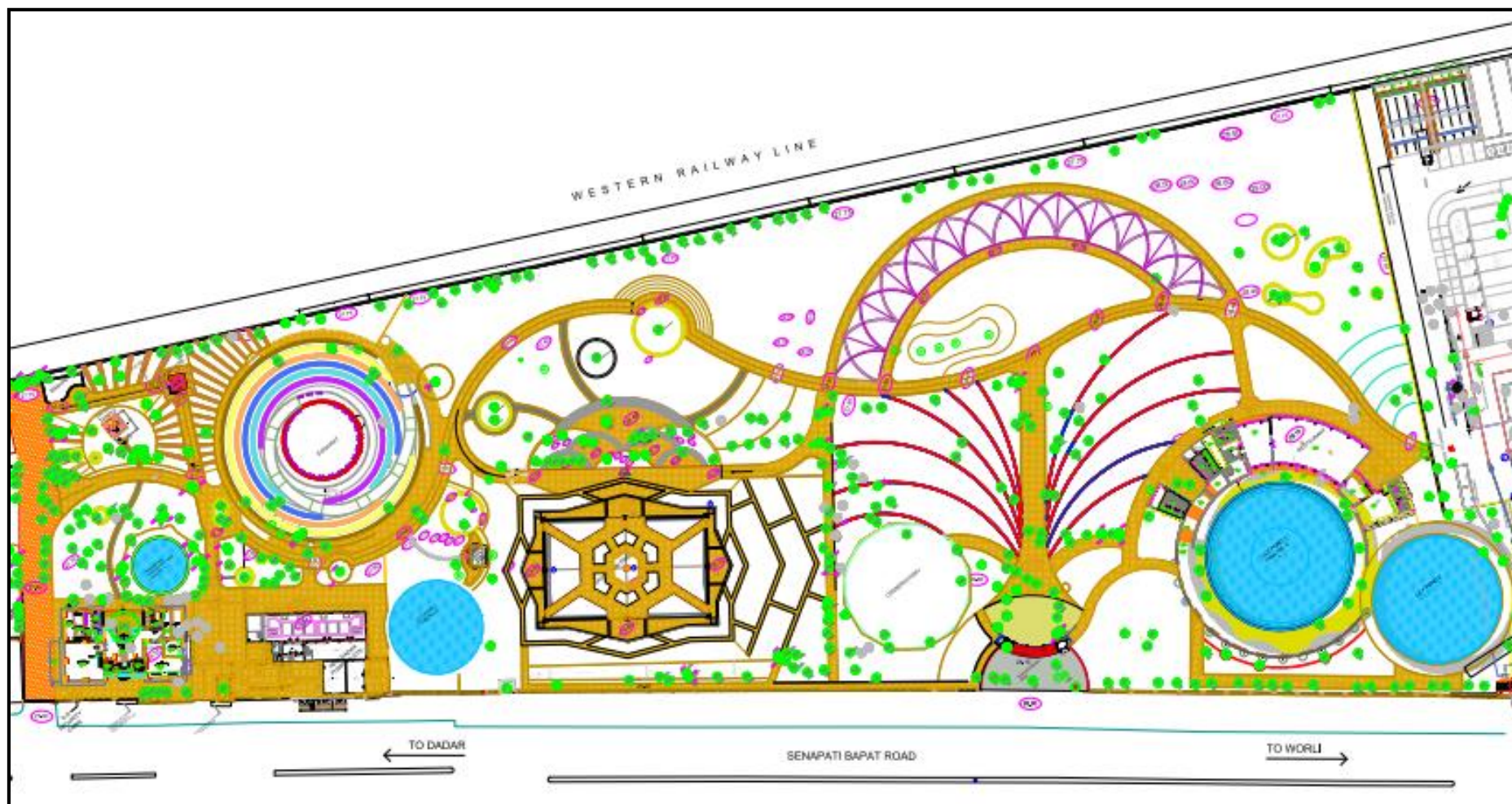
We are looking for Sponsors and Partners to conduct the next in the series of NJWITP programmes to be conducted across Mumbai and other cities in India: please contact Disha Mahajan at disha.mahajan@ekonnnect.net Visit www.ekonnnect.net Join our Facebook page: Ekonnnect Knowledge Foundation

Annexure 1: List of Participants

Sr. No	Name	Adult/Child	Organization/Community
1	Mr. Rajeev Chawathe	A	Creative Architects /Landscapes
2	Mr. R.Chawathe's Associate	A	Creative Architects /Landscapes
3	Shivangi Datar	A	Homemaker, Shivaji Park
4	Kuhu Datar	C	Student, Shivaji Park
5	Arunim Datar	C	Student, Shivaji Park
6	Vera Alvares	A	Souvenir, Bandra
7	Gia Alvares	C	Student, Bandra
8	Kedar Prabhavalkar	A	Sharadashram Society
9	Harshal Wagh	A	Sharadashram Society
10	Amruta Pendharkar	A	Student/Intern, Sprouts
11	Aaradhya Sardesai	A	Student/Intern, Sprouts
12	Deepa Bhulaskar	A	Swach Harit Shivaji Park
13	Nohini Bhulaskar	C	Student, Swach Harit Shivaji Park
14	Anagha	A	Correspondent, DNA newspaper
15	Chandrakant Rasal	A	Sharadashram Society
16	Mr. Vakharia	A	Sharadashram Society
17	Sonal Alvares	A	Ekonnect Knowledge Foundation
18	Mrs. Katie Bagli	A	Author & Tree Expert

19	Disha Mahajan	A	Ekonnnect Knowledge Foundation
20	Dr. Prasad Modak	A	EMC LLP
21	Rohit Pansare	A	EMC LLP / Nature Photographer
22	Vijay Mundekar	A	EMC LLP / Office Assistant

Annexure 2: Map of Pramod Mahajan Park



Map by Mr. Rajeev Chawathe of Creative Business Associates, Landscape/Architects of the Park

Annexure 3: Bookmarks

Indian Devil tree

Alstonia scholaris

सप्तपर्णी



- Alstonia is an evergreen fast-growing tree, that grows up to 40m tall.
- The fragrant flowers are greenish white and occur in early winter.
- The bark of *Alstonia scholaris* is used solely for medicinal purposes, ranging from malaria and epilepsy to skin conditions and asthma.
- The tree came to have '*Scholaris*' as its species name because its bark was used to make writing slates.

Raintree / Monkeypod

Albizia saman

शिरिष, सीरस



- Large, handsome and spreading, the Rain Tree is easily recognised by its umbrella like canopy of evergreen, feathery foliage and puffs of pink flowers. It is frequently planted in groups or as an avenue because of its ability to keep its symmetrical conformation in spite of prevailing winds.
- In Malaysia this drooping of the leaves is considered to portend rain and is the explanation of the name 'Rain Tree', *Hujan-hujan* meaning 'rain', but in India it is believed that the name was given because of a curious habit possessed by the tree of intermittently spraying the ground beneath with moisture.

Cannonball tree

Couroupita guianensis

नागलिंग, तोप गोला



- This large deciduous tropical tree, 75' tall and indigenous to the Amazon rainforest, is listed as a rare tree and flower in India.
- Cannonball trees usually carry 'CAUTION' signs posted on the trunks to advise people not to stand close to and directly under the fruits as one can get hurt as they drop off by themselves.
- The *shivalingam* shape is visible at the center of the flower and snake shaped pollen is the specialty of this flower and it has very good fragrance. This rare flower can be used for *Shiva Pooja*.

leaves and flowers



arrangement of leaves



flowers



'Not Just a Walk in the Park' organized by

ekonnnect
knowledge foundation
PRASAD MODAK INITIATIVE

leaves and flowers



arrangement of leaves



fresh pods / fruits



'Not Just a Walk in the Park' organized by

ekonnnect
knowledge foundation
PRASAD MODAK INITIATIVE

fruits and flowers



arrangement of leaves



flowers



'Not Just a Walk in the Park' organized by

ekonnnect
knowledge foundation
PRASAD MODAK INITIATIVE

Indian Bael tree
Aegle marmelos
बेल



- Bael tree is regarded auspicious in Hindu religion and is also referred to as, 'Shivadruma', meaning - the tree of Shiva in ancient scriptures. Its wood and leaves are offered to Hindu gods, Shiva and Parvati.
- Its ripe fruit is eaten fresh. Fruit-pulp is mixed with tamarind and sugar to make up a refreshing drink and also in preparing jams, nectar and squashes.
- Many parts of this tree including unripe and ripe fruits; fruit-pulp, rind of ripe fruits, bark, roots and bark of roots are used in various medicinal preparations.

Putranjiva
Putranjiva roxburghii
पुत्रन्जीवा, जीवनपुत्र

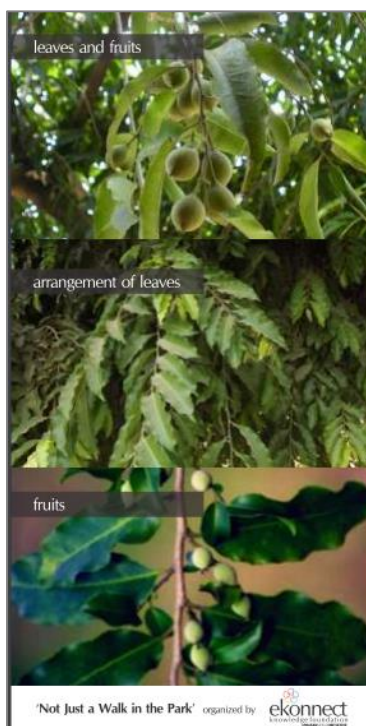


- *Putranjiva roxburghii* is an evergreen tree growing up to 12 metres tall.
- The tree is harvested from the wild for local use as a medicine and source of beads, oil and wood. An attractive tree with pendant branches, it is grown as an ornamental in gardens, especially in India.

Kadamba tree
Neolamarckia cadamba
कदम्ब



- The Kadamba tree is a fragrant, flowering tree that grows in Southeast Asia. Its cultural and religious significance for people who live there dates back thousands of years. Its flowers are bright, golden balls, like the one you see in the picture above. It's said that the tree blossoms with these flowers at the sound of monsoon thunder.
- The Kadamba tree has many practical uses from feeding cattle, to making perfume, to treating diabetes.



Annexure 4: Feedback



The tree walk is a really good initiative. You should arrange more such kind of walks in different parks at least once a month.

Suggestion: *It will be good if you extend the time and set up more interactive games.*

- Anagha , DNA

Thank you for organizing the walk. It was very informative. My daughter enjoyed and learned a lot!

-Deepa Bhulaskar

Thank you for creating awareness. You people have put in a lot of efforts. We all gained immense knowledge from the programme.

-Harshal Wagh

Not Just a walk in the park is a great initiative, me and my kids learned a lot today and would love to join for more such events.

- Shivangi Datar

