

THE VOICE OF MALABAR HILLS

Altamont Road Carmichael Road Peddar Road Kemp's Corner Breach Candy Napean Sea Road Walkeshwar Mahalaxmi Temple Ridge Road Little Gibbs Road Chowpatty Gamdevi

Not just a Garden

The Vihar Water Project was undertaken in 1860 for water supply to the growing population of Mumbai. Malabar Hill, being the highest hill was identified as the best location for a reservoir, from where water could be distributed. Two tanks were constructed and water lines laid for the city below. It was decided to cover the tanks from contaminating droppings. Ulhas Ghaporkar, a city engineer, was entrusted with the task of laying 'The Hanging Gardens' in 1881. The gardens were relaid in 1921 with unique topiary and renamed after Independence as the Pheroza Shah Mehta Garden.

A lot has been written about the history of the reservoir and the gardens. Over the years it has become a kind of a community garden, where residents go for their morning/evening walks and also connect socially with their friends and neighbours to stay healthy, both physically and mentally. Many have been coming here for over 50 years. You can see groups of people walking together and sharing laughter, some have made lifetime friends after meeting each other for so many years. Many residents come together and conduct group activities like laughter club, yoga groups and music sessions. They also celebrate festivals, our Republic and Independence Days together with enthusiasm in the garden. For residents who want to exercise and make more



friends in our neighbourhood this a good place to go. Apart from the unique topiary there is also a old non-operational sundial and a model of the water flowing from Vaitarna water reservoir to our city,

regular walkers informed that BMC is soon planning to restore the model.

The walkers have erected a 'Pillar of Friendship' in memory of their friends who were regular walkers with a message on the Pillar "Experience confirms that friends who regularly meet and walk in the garden have remained healthy & fit for the day. Spreading the message of good health through friendship for generations".

Some likeminded walkers have started social work together, like an initiative called 'Ek Mutthi Anaj' to address hunger and malnutrition and supporting schools in tribal areas. Also groups visit Tata Memorial and other hospitals, helping the poor taking medical treatment. Most of the donations to these initiatives come from the regular walkers of the garden.

However on weekends and holidays this garden becomes a tourist spot with visitors littering having no respect to the importance and heritage of this garden.

PM Garden is maintained by a highly technical and competent team of BMC's Department of Hydraulic Engineer. With the reservoir covered and a garden laid on top almost 140 years back, there are limitations regarding construction/renovation.

With many skyscrapers coming up on our Hills, let's take pride in this heritage open space and pride of our neighbourhood.



Pictures from the Garden: Pillar of Friendship, Walkers celebrating Republic Day in the garden, Group playing melodious tunes on their Harmonica, dedicated BMC staff - Sagar Doiphode, Asst Horticulturist (Centre) and Shivaji Chilay, Garden Supervisor (Right) with the Editor Tushar Prabhoo (Left).