



Nature – An Architect of Healing

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Abstract

Investigating the intersection of Pancha Boothas/ five elements with an eminent guru can make any landscape, Therapeutic. The importance of Geographic location opens a new dimension in the world of therapeutic landscapes. In the process of maintaining a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of an individual, Landscape plays an important role. The therapeutic spaces are not restricted to any geographic region, rather spread across civilizations. This paper delves into the concept of “Therapeutic Landscapes” and their profound significance on individual well being and healing process. Also, exploring how living organisms play a vital role in healing process, amplification of sound and silence in healing process are examined. Few case studies are analysed to make better understanding of inter-relationship between land, culture and health that make an environment therapeutic. One can get to know, how the materialistic influence can have a huge impact in one’s healing process. The research highlights the role of nature and its temperament in fostering mind-body connection to have a holistic health. This paper aims to deepen the understanding on how therapeutic landscape can have positive effect on individuals’ physical and mental health.

Keywords: Therapeutic Landscapes, Nature, Holistic health, Healing, Pancha boothas, Geography.

Introduction:

Mother Nature, the empress of planet Earth, the guardian of all creation, great or small, the protector of mankind, medicine to ailment, has her own way of being a saviour and a destroyer of all she owns and dispenses. When a human with any illness either physical or mental, interacting with natural environment will definitely have various positive health outcomes. Nature has a calming effect on human mind and body. Exposure to natural setting can reduce stress and improve mental health. The combination of fresh air, natural light and the tranquillity of natural surrounding can have an optimistic impact on mental well-being. When an individual engages in any kind of outdoor activities like walking, Jogging, Surya Namaskar, Cycling, etc... The benefits are higher when compared to indoor activities like gym exercise etc. This is because, the intersection of Pancha Boothas with Human body will have a profound, positive impact on one’s body and mind as human body is composed of Pancha Boothas.

Many studies suggest that spending time in nature will boost the immune system as breathing outdoor serves as exposure to varied range of microbes in natural environment, especially while breathing in phytoncides, which are antimicrobial compounds produced by plants strengthens the immune response. Exposure to nature paves way for many improved cognitive functioning which includes, enhanced concentration, creativity and problem-solving skill. It is also called, “restoration effect” of nature as spending time in ‘Green Spaces’ will help to refresh and rejuvenate both mind and body. The healing power of nature is abundant, thereby becoming a best medicine for many.

Theory of Mind.

Theory of mind has its roots in both philosophy and psychology. Theory of mind refers to the capacity to understand the mental state of others. Mental state includes beliefs, desires, intentions and emotions. In simple words, ‘Theory of Mind’ can be explained as one should be able to understand others (human or animal), who have their own thought-process, feeling and perspectives which vary from one another. This cognitive skill is important for the development of all complex social behaviours. The development of ‘theory of mind’ usually happens during childhood and it is a fundamental aspect of social cognition by interpreting and predicting the mental state of themselves and others.

This theory was not propounded by a single individual. The key figures in developing this theory were David Premack and Grey Woodruff, who published a paper in 1978 titled, “Does the Chimpanzee have a theory of mind?”. They introduced and popularized this theory to describe the ability of humans to attribute the mental state to themselves and others, suggesting that this ability is essential for understanding and predicting behaviour. This theory gained its prominence in Developmental Psychology. The Study of ‘Theory of mind’ helps an individual to understand and create awareness of other’s mental state. There are various components in this theory which are incorporated in the paper to examine how nature is playing its role in healing human mind and body.

Dear Comrade:

Dear Comrade is a Telugu, romantic film directed by Bharat Kamma released in 2019. The story revolves around the protagonist, Bobby, who is a hot-headed and impulsive student union leader and Lilly, a state level cricketer with dreams of playing at national level. Though both were of contrasting behaviour, they develop a close bond. In due course of time, Bobby’s aggressive nature becomes an obstacle to both, his personal and professional life. The film explores Bobby’s journey to challenge his inner demons, trying to become a better person. The path he chooses to overcome his anger and emotional breakdown is, travel and living in harmony with nature. He ventures into different landscapes where nature is in its grandeur. This miraculous nature serves as a therapy for him. The silence of nature treated his mental agony on one hand, and the sounds of nature, like the chirping of birds, rattling music of insects, rhythm of water fall, provided him with mental peace and stability. Travelling afar, away from the polluted urban land to the mighty ‘Green space’ washes out the pain, bringing him the inner peace that he longs for, which as a result helps in healing both physically and mentally.

Therapeutic Landscapes become socially and culturally responsive when they are called to action. The behaviour of people is deeply embedded within a place which can be either a massive land or a tiny plot of space. It is not just the landscape or ‘Green Space’ that is healing but the intention and one’s emotional connect towards the place that does the magic. For Example, many healing centres are located in places where nature is bountiful. This is because, in natural environment the higher cognition centre of human brain can rest and rejuvenate. *Dear Comrade* delves into societal issues, including struggles faced by women in pursuing their dreams and their impact of mental health in an individual. According to the Theory of Mind, every individual will have their own beliefs and thought process. Bobby in this movie believed in the healing process of nature and started his journey towards nature and succeeded in it by moulding himself into a calm and composed person. Here, Nature becomes an Architect in shaping his life, artistically and beautifully.

Understanding Beliefs, Desires and Intentions:

Belief plays an immense role in this world. All wars and peace across the region, is based on the bedrock of an individual's conviction. War is not about land, oil or any other resources. It is basically about one man's belief versus another. As Karl Marx rightly said, "Religion is the opium of the masses", many people are able to sleep, despite numerous issues in their day-to-day life, just because they have this simple yet strong belief that God will take care. Some people believe that they can reach God through their prayers at the Pooja room in their house. Some believe that they can reach God by visiting particular temples on particular auspicious days of the month. Others Believe that God is Present only in the snow crapped Himalayas, Some believe God exist within oneself.

In a Tamil movie, *Vaaranam Ayiram*, directed by Gautam Vasudev Menon, released in 2008, the protagonist becomes a drug addict due to an unfortunate mishap of having lost his lady love to a plane crash. In order to treat him, his parents asked him to travel across nation to explore various cultures and engage himself in other social activities, rather than sending him to any rehabilitation centre. Despite their son having lost himself to drugs, they believed in him and sent him to stay away from them which indicates the confidence in him. He was all alone for several months yet, did not have the slightest thought of consuming drugs again, as he strongly believed that he should not break the trust of his parents. Both, the parents and the protagonist, strongly understood the beliefs, desires and intentions they had on each other.

Sometimes the component of understanding beliefs, desires and intentions involves in recognizing that an individual can have beliefs that may or may not align with reality. "False Belief Task" is often used to assess the understanding where a character holds a mistaken belief and someone else is asked to predict the behaviour of that particular character based on that belief. Recognition of emotions and acting accordingly, also plays an immense role to this component. Another vital aspect of the 'Theory of mind' is knowing that every individual will have their own desires and intentions which guides their actions. This involves in understanding Beliefs, Desires and Intentions.

Attribution of knowledge:

Recognizing that others may have knowledge or information that one does not possess is another important aspect in 'Theory of mind'. For example, there is a fact that outdoor spaces and interaction with animals, helps in handling Stress and plays a predominant role in the process of healing. The therapy of, 'Animal-assisted Therapy' where people subjected to trauma caused by torture, violence, acts of war etc, will have strong feeling of vulnerability of being attacked. Such people sub-consciously are attracted to animals, seeking safety and comfort, as they lose hope and trust in humans. Researchers say, that the practice of petting animals helps people to focus on something else rather than focusing on their traumatic past.

The Jiyan Healing Garden located in, Chamchamal, Kurdistan, Iraq, is an International award winning 'Therapeutic Landscape', where a mixture of local and exotic animals are present. People subjected to trauma are given access to interact with the animals and get treated. There is a fact that interaction with animals can reduce the feeling of anxiety, grief and isolation. This garden provides relief and helps to overcome their trauma with the accessibility to 'Green space' and the animals there. 'Green Spaces' that is inclusive which contains structured activities is crucial for creating stronger and resilient communities. This is the grounding essence of a 'Therapeutic Landscape'.

When somebody articulates words of wisdom, one ought to be hopeful and must learn to acknowledge the common idea which helps in improvement of oneself. Be it a child or an ignorant person or whoever it could be, on the off chance that any new data is being shared either in a gathering or separately the audience ought to have the mindset to treat them with poise and acknowledge the learned idea shared by them. This part is connected with understanding that various people might have various degrees of information. Some might consider Food as their treatment, others rest, few think about travel, and it goes on. Any sort of treatment one might pick however Nature fills in as a base of everything.

Perspective Taking

When one looks through a dark glass, the whole world appears dark, when having looked through a red glass, the same world is exhibited in red, while looking through a green glass, the very world is visualised in green. It is all about the perspective of how one looks through each glass or prism that represents one's opinions. This can also be explained through a concept of 'ANEKANTAVADA' in Jainism, which deals with multiple points of view. It is the story of the six blindmen who have never come across an elephant. They try to imagine how and what an elephant is through their sense of touch. Here, the sense of touch replaces the sense of sight in order to gain knowledge on something. Similarly, each human being prefers to have their own ideal location to meet their serenity. While many prefer lush green paddy fields, others may opt for dark thick woods. There may be a few others who favour cloud kissed mountains to sun kissed beaches. It is evident that different geographical landscapes have their own enticement on individuals, not forgetting the fact of every space being therapeutic to different temperament. Therefore, it is very much cogent that Nature has its role to play in soothing and healing the minds and bodies of all human beings despite all their differences. This component aids to attain an understanding on different individuals having different outlook, thoughts and experiences based on their unique perspective and choice.

SOCIAL REFERENCING

None can escape the influence of a society on a person or a group. Each society has its own timetable of events with nature. Egyptians bury themselves up to their necks for desert sand baths as they believe it to have a natural remedy to cure everything (from joint pain to infertility). In Europe, healthcare systems have long embraced the healing power of nature, incorporating it into mainstream treatment plans. It is quite common in the Scandinavian countries where physicians prescribe walks in the park, forest bathing & gardening to their patients.

These days many mending communities are situated in the lower regions of any uneven locale as numerous individuals feel that people track down consolation in nature. Individuals have begun selecting eco-treatment, because nature's recuperating power is higher when compared to man-made synthetic tablets. For instance, a patient with malignant growth treated in an emergency clinic will undergo severe pain and actual torment through chemotherapy, which ensures no assurance. A negative result will end on a painful and agonising death. On the other hand, an individual with a problem likewise, when permitted to enjoy his last days with nature, that person will kick the bucket in harmony. A serene demise is a euphoria which nature can deliver, not the clinics. A patient who is counting his/her days will understand that eco-treatment is much better than chemotherapy. At the point when somebody shares their experience about a specific recuperating focusing natural conveniences, others will more often than not get drawn in.

In present days, delivering a baby in water tubs is becoming a trend through social referencing. It is a method of childbirth known as water birth, where the mother gives birth in a birthing pool or tub filled with lukewarm water. This approach is considered an alternative to traditional childbirth in a hospital bed. It is a pleasure to witness human kind moving back to good old days of living in harmony with Nature.

Environmental Psychology:

Therapeutic landscapes aim to provide healing and stress management. By understanding the mental state of individuals relying upon 'Green spaces', designers can create environment that facilitate relaxation, meditation, and rejuvenation. Incorporating elements that promote positive mental state, such as natural elements, soothing colors, and comfortable seating, art installations can enhance the therapeutic benefits of the landscape which helps in enhancing mental well being. Any landscape should be inclusive and culturally sensitive to ensure that they cater to the diverse needs of individuals who may seek solace or healing in the environment making it therapeutic.

Conclusion

The importance of location opens up a new dimension in the world of therapeutic landscapes. The Himalayas and Western Ghats are no less than a gem in the crown of therapeutic landscapes. No wonder all saints and sages made it their temporary abode on this beautiful lively planet. One can also get to know how material things can have sense of therapy in daily life in this twenty first century. Mere presence of bamboo chairs and earthenware water pot can have a great influence in the journey of house to home. No doubt nature should be a recurring theme in everyone's life. All species in the planet originated from water and soil which are part of Pancha Bootha. Thus, it is the ardent duty of mankind to save the planet, mother Earth, from the modern-day toxic mess. "Man is a part of nature and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself" is a quote by US marine biologist Rachel Carson in his book *Silent Spring*. When mother Earth is respected, she reciprocates her abundance by making every landscape Therapeutic.

In the present juncture of humans being influenced by the rapid growth of technology, the psychological and physiological well-being of an individual is undeniably at stake. Depression, anxiety, mood disturbances, social isolation and a multitude of fancy words are inflicted upon humans as disorders. To ameliorate the present disdainful condition, every individual must develop a relationship between space and temperament, for who better than Mother Nature is to nurture the mind and body of every soul.

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