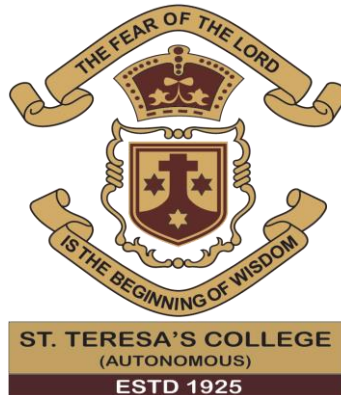


SUBASH BOSE PARK: HEART OF ERNAKULAM CITY

A Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a B.A Degree in
History

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.



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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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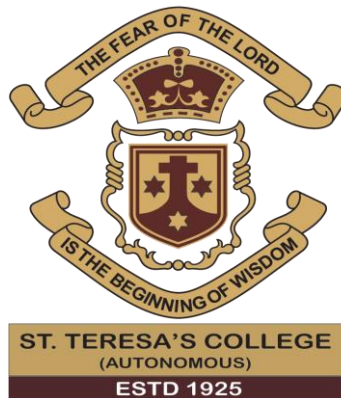
APRIL 2023

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CERTIFICATE

This is to verify that the project work entitled “SUBASH BOSE PARK: HEART OF ERNAKULAM CITY” a study on Subhash Bose Park being submitted by name in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of BA Degree in History of St. Teresa’s College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University is a bonafide record of the work done by them under my supervision and guidance. No part of this work has been submitted elsewhere for the award of the degree.

Dr. Stancy S
Asst. Professor,
Head of the Department,
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DECLARATION

We hereby declare that this project work entitled a "SUBASH BOSE PARK: HEART OF ERNAKULAM CITY " is an original work done by us under the guidance of Dr. Stancy S, Head of the Department, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous). No part of this work has been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree.

Place: Ernakulam

Date:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge all those who helped us to complete this project. We thank God almighty for helping us in the right path and made all things possible.

We take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude and deep regard to our guide Dr.Stancy S, Head of the Department, her exemplary guidance, monitoring and constant encouragement throughout the course of the project. She has taken the pain to go through the project and make necessary corrections as and when needed.

We express our gratitude to Dr. Vinitha T. Tharakan, Assistant Professor for her constant support and guidance. We express our gratitude to Ms. Gayathri Varier for her unwavering support and guidance.

We also thank the staff of Kerala History Association, Ernakulam for using us their Library. We also thank staffs of Kochi Municipal Corporation for their cooperation and time. We use this occasion to thank all our respondents for the valuable time they spent with us. We thank the staff of the Library of St. Teresa's college for their cooperation.

Lastly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our family and friends for their constant encouragement throughout the process of creating this project.

Place: Ernakulam

AB20HIS019 ARDRASREE P B

Date:

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CONTENTS

Sl. No.	Title	Page No.
1	CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1-6
2	CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PRESENT SCENARIO	7-24
3	CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION	25-38
4	QUESTIONNAIRE	39-41
4	BIBLIOGRAPHY	42-44
5	APPENDIX I - MAP	45
6	APPENDIX II - PICTURES	46-49

LIST OF TABLES

Sl. No:	Table No:	Title	Page No:
1	3.1	Age group of visitors	26
2	3.2	Place of Respondent	27
3	3.3	Recreational Preference	28
4	3.4	Inclination towards open space for recreational purpose in post- COVID scenario	29
5	3.5	Public perception in sufficiency of open space reservations in Kochi.	29
6	3.6	Awareness of Butterfly Garden and Herbal Park	30
7	3.7	Public awareness on Subhash Park as a space for morning walk	31
8	3.8	Public opinion on Subhash Park as a major tourist attraction	32
9	3.9	Purpose of visit	33
10	3.10	Public opinion on Subhash Park as aideal place for social - communal gathering	34
11	3.11	Public opinion on whether Subhash Bose Park has a effective waste management system.	35

LIST OF FIGURES

Sl. No:	Table No:	Title	Page No:
1	3.1	Age group of visitors	26
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10	3.10	Public opinion on Subhash Park as aideal place for social - communal gathering	34
11	3.11	Public opinion on whether Subhash Bose Park has a effective waste management system.	34

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This project aims to analyse the political, cultural, and social significance of Subhash Bose Park and the surrounding open spaces, namely Rajendra Maidan, Indira Priyadarshini Children's Park, and Annie Besant Park. The objective is to trace the history and development of these parks and assess their role as open spaces in Kochi, a city with a high population density.

In particular, the project seeks to explore how these parks have contributed to the social and cultural fabric of the city and how they have been utilized for civic and political events over time. The challenges of maintaining green spaces in urban areas and the impact of urbanization on their availability for residents will also be analysed. Overall, this study aims to provide insights into the importance of open spaces in urban areas and their impact on the quality of life of the residents.

Kerala has always been an integral part of the Indian subcontinent and its rich culture has contributed significantly to the composite culture of the country. With a unique identity as an independent geographical and political entity from early times, Kerala's strategic location facilitated extensive trade relations with foreign countries dating back to the 3rd millennium BCE, including the Assyrians, Sumerians, Arabs, Romans, Chinese, and Greeks. The arrival of European explorers, starting with Vasco da Gama in 1498, opened a new chapter in Kerala's history. While their initial interest was in trade, the political rivalry among chief kingdoms eventually led to their establishment as administrative rulers. As a result, Kerala's history has been shaped by a combination of cultural, economic, and political factors.¹

Kochi is in the southwest region of India and is recognized for its diverse biodiversity hotspots, including the mangrove bird sanctuary and Vembanad Lake, which have been designated as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.² Kochi has a rich history as a unique commercial and political centre that pre-dates European arrival. The formation of Cochin port is attributed to heavy floods in the Periyar River around 1341 CE, which caused the siltation of the then-harbour

¹ Menon, S. (2019) "The Geographical Background.," in *A survey of Kerala history*. Kottayam, Kerala State, India: DC Books, p. 14.

² *Kochi – INTERACT-Bio*. <https://interactbio.iclei.org/city/kochi/>.

Muziris and the creation of a new opening at Cochin. Cochin subsequently developed into a thriving trading hub that attracted international travellers, and was administered by colonial powers with trade interests for several centuries. Sir Robert Bristow played a key role in transforming the port from a mere roadstead to a modern harbour.³ However, the kingdom of Kochi existed much earlier, having emerged after the fall of the Kulasekhara Empire in 1102 CE. The kingdom held sway over the region covering present-day Kochi and its environs, and was ruled by the hereditary Cochin Royal Family, locally known as Perumpadappu Swaroopam. Mainland Kochi was the capital of the princely state from the eighteenth century, although the kingdom was largely under foreign rule during this period and the king had only titular power.⁴

Ernakulam was initially known as the capital city of Kochi; even though it lost its title as the capital city, it is still known as the commercial capital of the state. The city plays a significant role in matters of trade and commerce. Being the commercial hub, the area has an efficient transportation system. Located on the banks of Vembanad backwaters, the city can be reached by rail, road, sea and air. It was through the development of bridges, the kingdom of Kochi raised to the status of a city. The image of Kochi transformed when parts of Kochi which were separated by backwaters were now connected through bridges.⁵

Today Ernakulam is one of the most developed districts in Kerala covering an area of 3068 square kilometres and is based in the heartland of the state. It is the industrial capital of the state due to the presence of large, medium and small industries. The availability of infrastructure facilities like electricity, water availability, transportation, banking facilities etc, has contributed substantially to industrial growth. As the number of industries increased, more people migrated to the city in search of job opportunities, and thus the population of the city increased. According to the 2011 census Ernakulam has a population of 32, 82,388 including 16, 19,557 males and 16, 62,831 females. The population growth rate in the city was 5.69% from 2001 -2011. The population of Ernakulam in 2022 is estimated to be 4,332, 753 inhabitants.

As population of Ernakulam city increased, accommodation became a matter of concern. To solve the issue more lands were converted into residential areas. In the past decades, urban

³ History | Cochin Port Authority. <https://www.cochinport.gov.in/history>.

⁴ *Kochi, Kerala - Citizendium*. https://citizendium.org/wiki/Kochi,_Kerala.

⁵ Cochin Corporation, "Kochi Smaranika 2000",2000,p-6

sprawl has resulted into loss of highly quality agricultural land and open space, fragmentation of ecosystem. Considering Kochi's inadequacy in terms of land, open spaces in town planning are almost absent. While the general guidelines of city and town planning require that there should be 10% to 12% of open spaces, in Kochi it is a paltry 0.3%.⁶

Open spaces are areas which could be green spaces, parks created for recreational purposes or naturally occurring spaces generally unused by communities. Open spaces are a valuable contribution to quality life, health and the local economy. Open spaces provide vital green infrastructure benefits such as mitigating climate change, flood alleviation, and ecosystem services. The provision of these facilities in our cities, towns and villages is very important to a sustainable future.⁷ With rapid urbanization happening in the city public spaces have become a thing of past and more people tend to malls for recreational purposes. An accessible, safe and equitable public space not only ensures healthy and active living but also paves the way for a healthy and active living, but also paves way for a great means of strengthening social networks in our cities. All through lockdown in 2020 and even in the post-Covid scenario, outdoor spaces have proven to be lifelines across the world. People haven't headed to a mall or the cinemas first, but to parks and open streets, as they offered what no built structure could: relaxation and a connection with Nature.

Kochi lacks well maintained open spaces. Subhash Park is one of the main centres of recreation for the residents of Kochi. Situated at Park Avenue, facing the harbour and backwaters Subhash Park is one of the most valuable public spaces in the city of Kochi. The park is a popular destination among the tourists as well as the residents of Kochi. Like other green spaces in cities, Subhash Park also provides a multitude of ecosystem services which together help to improve the quality of urban life in Kochi.

⁶ Rajagopal, Shyama. "When the City Grows, Leaving No Room for Open Spaces." *The Hindu*, 16 Aug. 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/when-the-city-grows-leaving-no-room-for-open-spaces/article29113981.ece>.

⁷Harris, Corrine. "Why Is Open Space Important?" *TEP - The Environment Partnership*, 19 Jan. 2021, <https://www.tep.uk.com/why-is-open-space-important/>.

The project aims to document the development of Subhash Park from the early twentieth century to the present day and assess its impact on the environment and the public over the years. Additionally, the project aims to analyze the psychological impact that the park has on the public. An attempt has been made to understand how Subhash Park contributes to the enhancement of biodiversity. The project also aims to understand the historical significance and development of open spaces adjacent to Subhash Park, including Rajendra Maidan, Indira Priyadarshini Children's Park, and Annie Besant Park.

The project is divided into three chapters. First chapter gives introduction to the project topic, explaining the basic terms, describing the objectives and methodology used for this project. Second chapter is about the historical background and present scenario of Subhash Bose Park and adjacent open spaces including Rajendra Maidan, Indira Priyadarshini Children's Park and Annie Besant Park. Third chapter deals with analysis and interpretation of the data collected through surveys and conclusions drawn from this project.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kochi is a densely populated city in Kerala which rapidly undergoing urbanization. Rapid urbanization has resulted in a high loss of open spaces in the city. Subhash Chandra Bose Park is one of the few well-maintained open spaces available to the public. There has been a lack of models and theoretical frameworks that have been previously introduced to the research on this topic.

However certain books like Kochi Smaranika 2000 published by Cochin Corporation contain articles that give insights regarding the origin and development of the Subhash Bose Park and adjacent open spaces including Rajendra Maidan, Children's Park, and Annie Besant Park.

Trees of Subhash Bose Park a project publication by INTERACT-Bio, ICLEI and Kochi Corporation has given information regarding the location, biodiversity, and map of Subhash Bose Park.

Official records like census, newspaper articles, journals and personal interviews were helpful in the research of the project. It was truly difficult to study the transition of the park over

the years as there was a lack of information regarding the initial years of the park. To study and generalize the psychological impact the park holds on the public is even more difficult as the city is highly populated and it was difficult to reach the innumerable population. But maximum efforts were made to collect maximum data and to interpret the data in an unbiased and valid manner possible.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the historical significance of Subhash Chandra Bose Park and adjacent open spaces including Rajendra Maidan, Indira Priyadarshini Children's Park and Annie Besant Park.
- To trace the origin and development of Subhash Bose Park over the years.
- To analyse the psychological impact the park has over the general public.

METHODOLOGY

Various research methodologies have been undertaken for this project. This project contains data obtained mainly from primary sources like personal interviews, surveys, census, etc. hence this is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. This project is analytical, objective and descriptive in nature.

Primary data used in this research include personal interviews with local people, newspaper reports and journals. To understand the public perception regarding the topic a survey was conducted. Questions were in various forms, some were MCQ questions while others were descriptive. Surveys were conducted both online (with the help of Google forms) and offline modes (through personal interviews with locals). Official records such as census were used. Field visits to the park and adjacent open spaces were also helpful in conducting the project.

Secondary data used in this project include books available in various local libraries. Newspaper records and journals were also helpful. EBooks and articles available in the public domain were also utilized. Maps of the sites obtained through websites were also helpful.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PRESENT SCENARIO

Park is a large area of ground set aside for recreation. Since ancient times, areas have been set aside as recreation places. Parks and other open spaces were resources identified by historians as being used in ancient civilizations for the pleasure of man. The earliest parks were those of the Persian kings, who dedicated many square miles to the sport of hunting.⁸

Parks and recreation facilities are the places that people go to get healthy and stay fit. Parks and protected public lands are proven to improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of air we breathe and provide a place for children and families to connect nature and recreate outdoors together.

The Kerala Parks, Play - Fields and open spaces (Preservation and Regulation) Act 1968 was introduced. The act was to provide for the preservation and regulation of parks, play-fields and open spaces in the state of Kerala.

In this context open spaces are defined as any land whether enclosed or not, belonging to the Government or any local authority, on which there are no buildings, or of which not more than one- twentieth part is covered with buildings, and the whole or the remainder of which is used for purposes of recreation, air or light.

Park is defined as a piece of land on which there are no buildings of which not more than one twentieth part is covered with buildings and the whole or the remainder of which is laid out as a garden with trees, plants or flower-beds or as lone or as meadow and maintained as a place for the resort of public recreation, air or light.

Play- field is defined as a piece of land adapted for the purpose of play, game or sport and used by any schools or colleges or club or associations.

⁸*Park | Definition, Characteristics, History, Examples, & Facts | Britannica.*

<https://www.britannica.com/art/park>.

Kochi Parks have been created with intent of welcoming the nearby residents and visitors for a calming morning and evening walks. Indira Priyadarshini Park, Rajendra Maidan and Annie Besant Park, Subhash Chandra Park are some among the major recreational attractions in the city.

SUBASH BOSE PARK, ERNAKULAM

The Subhash Chandra Bose Park popularly known as Subhash Park is one of the few well-maintained open parks in Kochi. The park is in the heart of the Ernakulam city, overlooking the Vembanad Backwaters and Cochin harbour. With its magnificent scenic beauty and peaceful atmosphere, it is a major area of hangouts for city dwellers.

Subhash Bose Park one of the major recreational centres was originally build during the reign of Raja Rama Varma XV under the British rule. Raja Rama Varma XV was the highness of Cochin Kingdom popularly known as the Rajarshi of Cochin, and as the Abdicated Highness, ruled the Kingdom of Cochin from 1895 to 1914.

It was during the time of Raja Rajarshi the foundation of modern Cochin were laid. Raja Rama Varma transformed Cochin into one of the most advanced Indian states of the era. He was a leader who believed that a true ruler's greatest strength was self-respect, not their position.⁹ He became a king who sacrificed his position when he saw that his power and pride were being undermined. In 1913, the Raja wrote a private letter to the Viceroy Baron Hardinge addressing as 'My Esteemed Friend'. This was challenged as lacking in decorum and respect, which naturally annoyed the Raja who was himself a stickler for etiquette. Then the king abdicated on 1st December 1914 in protest at the misbehaviour of the viceroy. The bronze statue at Subhash Bose Park reminds us the story of an idealistic ruler who hesitated to bow down before the British Empire.¹⁰

It was Raja Rama Varma XV who came up with idea of creating a new road in 1903 when he was traveling to attend the Kochi Darbar. The king renowned for his love of gardening and nature envisioned roads lined with trees like those in Europe and America. He instructed the

⁹ "The Story of a Statue." *The Hindu*, 19 June 2015, <https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/the-story-of-a-statue/article7333585.ece>.

¹⁰ Ernakulam Karayogam. Navathi Smaranika.2015. p. 188

Diwan to construct a park where public could relax in the evenings, resulting in the creation of Rama Varma Park in an open area across from the Shiva temple facing the sea. The king ordered for beautifying the road bordering the park with a variety of flowering trees. The king even passed a law that prohibited anyone from cutting down the trees or even branches without the sanction of the Royal court. Impressed by the beauty of the road the Honourable British Resident of Kochi renamed the Street as Park Avenue.

Today Park Avenue is one of the last green lungs of the ever-growing Kochi. The street got its name owing to the two large parks situated along the road.¹¹The road that is known today as Park Avenue was originally called Broadway, and it extended from the Huzur Jetty, that is present-day Rajendra Maidan to Broadway.

The old Rama Varma Park, stretching from old Secretariat up to present day Broadway was turned into three neatly designed parks. The upper stretch called as Indira Priyadarshini Children's Park maintained by Central Government funds and lower stretch as Subhash Chandra Bose Park maintained under Kochi Corporation. And adjacent to it lays Annie Besant Park, a park exclusive for women. Subhash Park was one of the prime attractions in early 1990s, as years passed due to poor maintenance the park was at a state of utter dismay but then the government initiated for development and renovation of the park bringing it back to its glory. For the purpose of commissioning Park Jetty along with KSRTC Bus stand several portions of park was taken over for allied construction.

The park has been a ground for many historical events and agitations. One of the major anti-caste struggles in Kerala history, Kayal Sannam took place at the backwaters here. A century ago, the members of the depressed classes were prohibited from gathering in public spaces, even for peaceful discussions regarding their community. Due to the lack of large plots of land, it was impossible for members of these communities to convene in groups larger than a

¹¹ 'Park Avenue (Kochi)'. *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Park_Avenue_\(Kochi\)&oldid=1075093139#cite_note-Park_Avenue_in_Kochi,_Major_Attractions_at_Park_Avenue_in_Kochi-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Park_Avenue_(Kochi)&oldid=1075093139#cite_note-Park_Avenue_in_Kochi,_Major_Attractions_at_Park_Avenue_in_Kochi-1).

dozen individuals. Even if someone did possess enough land, the authorities would not permit them to assemble in substantial numbers.¹²

In 1913, the Pulaya community, belonging to the depressed classes, decided to use a most ingenious method to overcome that hurdle. At the time of retaining wall construction to protect coastal land from the Huzur Jetty near fine arts hall in the western part of Ernakulam town to Burma Shell Company near the Ernakulam high court. Krishnethi Asan and few other individuals who belonged to the Pulaya community were the sub-contractors in charge of the coastal wall construction. Inspired by the lines from Jathikummi, a poetic sculpture written by Pandit Karuppan with the aim of uniting the depressed class, Krishnethi expressed the need of an organisation for the people of Pulaya community to fight against the injustices inflicted by the upper caste upon the Pulaya community. The concept of organisation for members of Pulaya community was expressed to Pandit Karuppan who was then headmaster of Ernakulam Girls High School. Under his instruction the idea of Kayal Sammelanam was then discussed with Adv. Krishnan Menon and Fr. Dominic.

As discussed at mid-night of April 4th of 1913, boats used for carrying stones for coastal protection wall were moored and a meeting was arranged on the backwaters of Cochin. Advocate Krishnan Menon presided over the meeting and K. P. Karuppan and Fr. Dominic addressed the Pulaya conference. It is reported that the conference had been attended by more than 1500 activists. The Kayal Sammelanam was secretly held at a time when the deadly smallpox disease was spreading in the surrounding areas of Kochi. It is certain that Kayal Sammelam took place in the middle of the night as it was customarily prohibited for the upper caste to see the Pulayars during the day time due to the notion of pollution.¹³

During ancient times, Subhash Park was the venue for an annual agricultural marketing fair, which took place in Ernakulam and Thrissur. On October 23, 1912, a public meeting was held at Subhash Park, which was then known as Irwin Park, with representatives from all parts of the state in attendance. At the meeting, it was decided to celebrate the 60th birthday or Shashti-poorthi of the then ruler, Raja Rama Varma, on December 25, 1912. It was also resolved

¹² Chacko·History·, Thomas. 'Kayal Sammelanam: A Dalit-Lives-Matter Stir over a 100 Years Ago'. *KochiPost*, 23 June 2020, <https://kochipost.com/2020/06/23/kayal-sammelanam-a-dalit-lives-matter-stir-over-a-100-years-ago/>.

¹³ Cherai Ramadas (2022). *Kaayal sammelanam rekhakalilude*. Pranatha Books

to celebrate the occasion fittingly across the state, present an address of congratulation to the Highness on the day, and build a suitable memorial in honour of the event.

It was decided that a permanent memorial should be created in the form of a bronze statue of the Highness, to be erected on the foreshore of Ernakulam. The committee had a sufficient sum of money remaining from the subscriptions for the occasion, which was to be used for the statue. Diwan A.R. Banerji, who was going to England on furlough, agreed to oversee the statue's creation. He recommended that the committee entrust the work to Ernest G. Gillick of Chelsea, a noted British sculptor whose statue of the Maharaja of Bikaner had impressed Banerji. The work was completed by June 1922, and the statue was received in Cochin the following December. Gillick expressed a wish for a pedestal to be designed for the statue and furnished drawings for it. This work was carried out in Pallavaram stone in Madras by the well-known engineering contractor Diwan Bahadur T. Namberumal Chettiar. The statue was unveiled by Viscount Goschen of Hawkhurst, Governor of Madras on the afternoon of October 13, 1925. When the statue was unveiled, Rama Varma XV was no longer the Maharaja, as he had abdicated the throne in 1914.¹⁴

At this park, the then Maharaja of Cochin organized a garden party in honour of Viscount Goschen, the Governor of Madras. The elliptical cement platform on the southern side of Subhash Park and the semi-circular stage on the western side of the park are the remains of the platform where the Maharaja of Cochin organized the garden party. A quarter of a century ago, the remains of the platform were still visible. In recent years, the platform was removed, and footpaths were constructed as in the present style. Additionally, another stage was built on the east side, facing the stage on the west side. Among the dignitaries invited by Maharaja included all the members of the Legislative assembly of Cochin except Pandit K.P. Karuppan. Pandit K. P. Karuppan was a well-known writer and social reformer who held many official positions and was known all over Kerala. Despite being revered by all levels of society, including the royal family he was denied the invitation to attend the garden party just because he belongs to a lower caste. Being hurt by the unjust practice he wrote a petition and a poem titled 'udyanavirunne' to

¹⁴ The story of a statue. (2015, June 19). The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/the-story-of-a-statue/article7333585.ece>

Maharaja. This poem inspired the public to raise anti-caste movements in Kerala. This is the reason why the garden party has a significant place in the history and literature of Kerala.¹⁵

Before India attained its independence, Subhash Chandra Bose Park was known as Irwin Park. Irwin Park was originally named after Lord Irwin. The open ground near Park Avenue was transformed into a park to pay homage to the Viceroy. Under British control, entry to the park was restricted and was open only to British nobles. On the eve of Independence, a gang of youngsters marched towards Irwin Park holding their slogans high. They aimed to destroy the arched-shaped board in front of the park but when their efforts failed they poured tar over the board and placed a cloth with Subhash Chandra Bose Park written on it over the board.¹⁶

Later on when the non-Congress Municipal Council took charge in Ernakulam, they held the opinion that the park should not be named Irwin Park in independent India. During the council meeting, there were proposals to rename Irwin Park as Bhagat Singh Park, Children's Park as Tilak Park, and Ladies Park as Annie Besant Park. However, the Congress members did not agree with naming it after Bhagat Singh and preferred to name it after Mahatma Gandhi. When it came time to vote, it was unanimously agreed that the widely accepted name of Subhash Park would suffice.¹⁷

Subhash Bose Park, which spans an area of 11.5 acres and is owned and maintained by the Kochi Municipal Corporation, has transformed into a precious public space within the city of Kochi. It has emerged as a sought-after destination for both tourists and residents, providing a plethora of ecosystem services that aid in enhancing the quality of urban life. Much like other green spaces in cities, Subhash Park functions as an essential green cover, assimilating pollutants and enhancing the air quality in its vicinity. The park boasts a rich biodiversity, as evidenced by its collection of over 50 tree species. It also features an abundance of herb and shrub species. The

¹⁵ Cochin Corporation, "Kochi Smaranika 2000",2000,pp 144-145.

¹⁶ Cochin Corporation, "Kochi Smaranika 2000",2000,p-139

¹⁷ Ernakulam Karayogam. Navathi Smaranika.2015. p. 174

park's flourishing floral diversity not only contributes to its aesthetic appeal but also provides a conducive environment for a diverse range of insects and avifauna.¹⁸

The process of land reclamation was used to expand more than half of the park's area. The park was a prime attraction during the early 1990s. There were trained professionals who had received training to plant trees and maintain them according to the instructions of the British Government. Even today, the trees that were planted and maintained at that time stand on either side of the road. Formation of canopies is a distinctive feature of those trees.

Unfortunately, the park's popularity declined due to neglect and insufficient maintenance, as well as the rise of shopping malls in the city. To restore the park's former glory, a comprehensive renovation project was launched and was completed around 2015. The revitalization effort included various improvements such as landscaping, tiling, the creation of a communal meeting area, and the installation of play equipment, electrical works, and the addition of a popular musical walkway featuring four distinct zones with different types of music. New lawns, benches, lights, toilets, and waste bins were also installed, with designated areas for elderly visitors. As a result of these upgrades, the park is once again attracting visitors on a daily basis.^{19 20}

The maintenance of the park is primarily funded through corporate social responsibility funds from firms and private sponsorships. The Corporation's plan funds are used for major renovation works. For a period before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, the park's management was handled by a private party under an agreement with the corporation with fixed amount, based on the number of staff involved. However, during the pandemic when park activities were halted, only security staffs were working. Despite this, the private party submitted a report claiming that all staffs were working, leading to disputes over the false accounting. As a result,

¹⁸ *Plant-Handbook-of-Subhash-Park_Final-_Low-Resolution.Pdf*. https://southasia.iclei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Plant-Handbook-of-Subhash-Park_Final-_Low-resolution.pdf

¹⁹ *Subhash Bose Park | Centre for Heritage, Environment and Development (c-Hed)*. <https://www.c-hed.org/?p=3125>.

²⁰ '4.5-Cr Subhash Park Renovation in Final Stage'. *The Times of India*, 9 Sept. 2015, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/4-5-cr-subhash-park-renovation-in-final-stage/articleshow/48878867.cms>.

the agreement was suspended and the management of the park was handed over to c-hed, an environmental wing of the Corporation. Currently the management of the park and its finances are looked after by c-hed and the CSR fund is sponsored by Cochin Shipyard Limited.²¹

In April 2021, the Kochi City Corporation collaborated with the World Resources Institute (WRI) and ICLEI South Asia to reopen Subhash Bose Park after a comprehensive renovation. The initiative was part of the larger project called "INTERACT-Bio" by ICLEI South Asia and the KAWAKI initiative by the WRI, which is a part of the Cities4Forests movement in Kochi. The project aimed to showcase the efficacy of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for mitigating the effects of climate change in Kochi.

The primary objective of the project was to establish urban grooves that are reminiscent of the traditional grooves that once existed in Kerala. In addition to this, ICLEI South Asia aimed to combat the impacts of climate change by incorporating biodiversity objectives throughout the city. Subhash Bose Park acts as a significant carbon sink, with over 300 species of native trees and numerous species of native plants. The Kochi City Corporation is committed to increasing native biodiversity and educating residents about its importance to ensure the longevity of conservation efforts. This was a driving factor behind the development of the park, which not only enhances the native biodiversity of the city but also serves as a nature education site. The newly built pollinator garden is a valuable addition to the park, increasing the number of pollinators in the city.²²

The park is not only a habitat for various species of plants and animals but also a popular recreational area on the coast of the Arabian Sea. It is well-maintained and protected with the help of various stakeholders. To ensure sustainable use of the park, the city administration has implemented several projects such as an herbal garden, butterfly garden, and biodiversity centre. Geotagging of every tree in the park is also done to document and preserve the urban forest.

²¹ Interview with Alex C J, project coordinator-biodiversity, c-hed on January 18.

²² *Subhash Park: Green Lungs of Kochi | Urban Nature Atlas*. <https://una.city/nbs/kochi/subhash-park-green-lungs-kochi>.

Additionally, Kochi's administration is collaborating with multiple stakeholders, including the World Resources Institute (WRI), to develop afforestation and nature-based solutions projects.²³

In order to preserve its ecological well-being, c-hed has devised an extensive plan for its maintenance and management. One of the projects initiated by c-hed includes the restoration of sculptures. In the southern section of the park, there are a number of breath-taking sculptures and installations that have unfortunately been neglected. These works have an impressive history of their own, having been created by 14 distinguished artists who came together to participate in the first International Symposium of Sculptors, also known as the Sculptors Camp, which was jointly organized by Kalapeedom and the Kochi Municipal Corporation in 1990. Of the 14 artists, seven hailed from various countries around the world, while the remaining seven were from India. The Symposium of Sculptors was led by Hiroshi Mikami, a renowned Japanese sculptor, and coordinated by T. Kaladharan, the Director of Kerala Kalapeedom, with the support of the Kochi Municipal Corporation.²⁴

The management strategy of c-hed is focused on reducing the amount of concrete construction and increasing the spaces that increase soil permeability. This approach is aimed at improving the city's score in the City Biodiversity Index. By reducing concrete construction and increasing permeable spaces, the city can improve soil quality, reduce the heat island effect, promote the growth of vegetation, and support the habitats of wildlife. The goal is to create a more sustainable and resilient urban environment that can support the health and well-being of its citizens while also protecting and enhancing the local biodiversity. The current plan for the park under c-hed involves removing the existing concrete structures and reverting to a more traditional park design that includes play areas for children with soil and natural elements, and spaces for the public to spend time with nature. The concept is to prioritize a more nature-based park design, with a focus on providing opportunities for children to play in natural environments and for the public to connect with nature.

Subhash Park is currently home to both exotic and invasive tree species, with exotic trees being more prominent than indigenous ones. This is because, during the early stages of

²³ Suite 800, 10 G. Street NE, et al. "Kochi, India." *World Resources Institute*, 16 Sept. 2021, <https://www.wri.org/our-work/project/cities4forests/call-action/kochi-india>.

²⁴ Cochin, Ched. Maintenance and Management of Subash Chandra Bose Park | Centre for Heritage, Environment and Development (c-hed). 11 Apr. 2018, <https://www.c-hed.org/?p=3207>.

afforestation in Kochi and its surrounding areas, there was a greater availability of seeds and saplings for exotic species than for indigenous ones. Consequently, most of the avenue trees in Kerala are exotic. However, to rectify this issue, c-hed has devised a plan to replace the exotic trees in Subhash Park with more indigenous and endemic species.

Initially, the focus of tree planting in the park was on selecting species that would enhance the park's visual appeal. However, with the new initiative led by c-hed, there has been a shift in focus towards planting more fruit-bearing trees. This change aims to create a park ecosystem that not only enhances the park's beauty but also supports the natural vegetation and biodiversity of the local area. By planting fruit-bearing trees, the park will provide a sustainable source of food for birds and small animals like squirrels, which in turn helps maintain the ecological balance of the area.

C-hed's approach to maintaining Subhash Park is focused on supporting the natural vegetation and biodiversity of the local area. This will help preserve the local biodiversity and create a healthy environment for the local community.

ICLEI South Asia has developed a nature interpretation zone at Subhash Park with the primary objective of increasing awareness among visitors about the diverse ecosystems present in Kochi and the rich biodiversity that is harboured within them. This initiative aims to educate and engage visitors in a fun and interactive way, using various displays and exhibits that highlight the unique characteristics of different ecosystems and the species that inhabit them. The zone serves as a platform for promoting conservation efforts and sustainable development practices that can help protect the natural environment and maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem.²⁵

The pollinator and herbal garden at Subhash Park were established by ICLEI South Asia to increase awareness about the significance of pollinators and medicinal plants in the local community. Its primary objective is to conserve and restore local ecosystems by providing a conducive environment for pollinators and growing various medicinal plants. Pollinators like bees, butterflies, and birds play a crucial role in pollinating flowers and producing the fruits and vegetables that we consume. However, due to habitat loss and pesticide use, the populations of many pollinators are declining. The pollinator garden at Subhash Park helps to support their

²⁵ ICLEI South Asia, <https://southasia.iclei.org/news/interact-bio-kochis-new-nature-interpretation-zone-raises-aware>.

populations by providing them with a habitat and ensuring the continued production of crops. Despite this, the garden faced a limitation due to the unexpected surge in butterfly numbers, leading to a shortage of food sources.

The herbal garden, on the other hand, is a collection of medicinal plants that are grown for their healing properties. These plants have been used for centuries in traditional medicine and are still used today to treat a variety of ailments. By growing these plants in the park, the local community can learn about the different medicinal plants and their uses. The herbal garden also serves as a resource for researchers and students who are interested in studying the medicinal properties of these plants.²⁶

The management of the park is currently facing several challenges, including a lack of public acceptance for the plans proposed by c-hed. One of these plans is to remove invasive species from the park, specifically *Acacia auriculiformis*, an evergreen tree that is often used as an ornamental and shade tree. Although native to Africa and well-suited for dry and arid climates with sandy or rocky soils, these trees grow rapidly and can outcompete natural vegetation, leading to a loss of plant and animal diversity. Moreover, they can alter soil chemistry, making it difficult for native species to grow.

Unfortunately, *Acacia* trees are not well-suited to the soil conditions and local climate of Kochi, and they consume large amounts of water from the soil, which can lead to the drying of the area surrounding the tree. Despite the submission of requests to remove these trees three years ago, the proposal has yet to be accepted. There is public opposition to the removal of these trees, which adds to the challenge of managing the park.

The rising sea level poses a significant challenge to maintaining Subhash Park, as it causes tides and waves to reach higher elevations and damages the sea walls along the park. The destruction of these embankments is a major concern that the park currently faces.

Another matter of concern in the maintenance is the salt water intrusion. This occurs when freshwater in the area gets mixed with saline water, especially after the month of December. When plants are watered with this mixture, it causes their leaves to dry out and may

²⁶“Kochi Inaugurates New Pollinator and Herbal Garden in the Heart of the City – Interact-Bio.” *INTERACTBio*, <https://interactbio.iclei.org/update/kochi-inaugurates-new-pollinator-and-herbal-garden-in-the-heart-of-the-city/>.

even lead to plant death. To address this issue, a water treatment plant is currently being constructed as a solution.²⁷

Subhash Park is open to the public for a limited time, from 3 PM to 8 PM. However, registered members of the park are granted access to the park in the morning for their daily walks. The park's security measures have been appreciated by many, making it a popular destination for morning walks.²⁸ The park is a great place for people of all ages to visit, providing a serene and peaceful atmosphere to enjoy nature and relieve stress. With its well-maintained pathways and greenery, it is an ideal spot for a leisurely stroll or a brisk jog.

RAJENDRA MAIDAN

In this portion an attempt is made to trace the history, socio-cultural and political significance of Rajendra Maidan.

The Rajendra Maidan is an essential part of Kochi and was once the city's most popular open space. However, the gate to the maidan is often found locked, depriving visitors of a spectacular view of the backwaters from this majestic location. Unfortunately, the city has only a few open spaces available for the public to relax and unwind.

Rajendra Maidan situated along the backwaters of Cochin is a witness to the socio-cultural history of Kochi. It was just before the independence the ground was named as Rajendra Maidan. Before that it was known as Huzur jetty. The Huzur jetty served as a landing and embarkation point for the kings and royalty visiting the nearby Kochi State Secretariat building and the Bhagavathy temple in Mattancherry. The platform located in front of the Huzur Jetty was known as the Salem Mount. The reason why it was called Salem mount was because of Abraham Barak Salem.

AB Salem is a historical figure who has largely been forgotten in the context of India's independence movement, despite playing an important role in the struggle for freedom. He was the first lawyer from the Jewish community in Cochin and was attracted to Gandhiji's ideas of

²⁷ Interview with Alex C J, project coordinator-biodiversity, c-hed on January 18.

²⁸ 'After Two Years, Subhash Park to Reopen by April 15'. The New Indian Express, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2021/mar/27/after-two-years-subhash-park-to-reopen-by-april-15-2282029.html>.

non-violence and Satyagraha. ²⁹ Salem organized peaceful protests and civil non-cooperation against the British and attended the famous Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress in 1929. Whenever he felt like discussing contemporary political issues, he would arrive in a horse-drawn cart from Mattancherry and go up to the pedestal in the middle of the field to preach as much as he could. To the locals, the spot became known as "Salem Kunnu" or "Salem's Hill"³⁰ ³¹. Despite his contributions, he is not as widely recognized as some of his contemporaries.

Rajendra Maidan is believed to have been named after India's first president, Rajendra Prasad. The former president of the Indian National Congress, Acharya Kripalani, announced the name during a speech given here on March 6, 1947, after receiving a note from the Maharaja of Kochi. There is another story that the maidan was named after Malayali freedom struggle martyr Rajendran. ³² This ground has been a witness for countless political and social events throughout its history. The protest against the Simon Commission in 1928 and the farmers' conference held in 1930 to formulate laws in response to British rule were initiated from this ground. This is also where the agitation against colonial rule began. The procession marking the formation of Kerala started from this Maidan.

On Independence Day, during the dual regime, instead of hoisting the tricolour flag along with the king's flag, the students of Maharaja's College attempted to hoist only the tricolour flag. However, students who tried to do so were beaten up by some of the king's servants. In the ensuing strike, 17 students were expelled from the college. The subsequent protest meeting of the agitations was held at Rajendra Maidan. ³³

In 1947, Cochin State faced strikes and protests by government employees and workers who demanded better working conditions and higher wages. The Emergency Act was declared during Panampilly Govinda Menon's tenure as the Prime Minister of the state to suppress these

²⁹ Mahotsav, Amrit. 'Abraham Barak Salem'. Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in/unsung-heroes-detail.htm?4221>.

³⁰ Katz, Nathan, and Ellen S. Goldberg. "Jewish 'Apartheid' and a Jewish Gandhi." *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 50, no. 3/4, 1988, pp. 147–76. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4467422>.

³¹ Interview with the assistant public information officer at GCDA.

³² 'Kochi's Rajendra Maidan Remains Idle with No Action'. *The New Indian Express*, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/jul/27/kochis-rajendra-maidan-remains-idle-with-no-action-2480954.html>.

³³ Ernakulam Karayogam. *Navathi Smaranika*. 2015. p. 186.

demonstrations. The act allowed the government to give the police extensive powers to arrest and detain the protesters without trial. The police brutally charged a group of young people who attempted to enter the Cochin Legislative Assembly during the emergency declaration. Subsequently, a protest held at Rajendra Maidan was also suppressed by force. Despite calls for an inquiry into the incidents at Ernakulam Municipal Corporation and Rajendra Maidan, the minister T.K. Nair insisted that no inquiry was necessary. The cabinet under the leadership of Panampilly Govinda Menon resigned after the king accepted it. These events hold significant historical importance in Cochin State's political history.³⁴

Rajendra Maidan was the venue where the public welcomed the newly elected Chief Minister of Kerala, E.M. Namboodiripad, and the Deputy Chief Ministers after the Communist Party won the majority in the general elections held after the formation of Kerala. However, the party leader was elected at the parliamentary meeting held at T.D. Road in Ernakulam. During his tour of India, Swami Vivekananda first arrived in Kerala and then reached Ernakulam via the boat route first landed at the Huzur Jetty at Rajendra Maidan. Mahatma Gandhi who visited Kerala as part of Vaikom Satyagraha in 1947 also landed at this ground. Many important political figures have addressed gatherings at the Rajendra Maidan. It is a large public ground that has been the site of many significant events in the history of the region, including political rallies, cultural festivals, and sports events. Like Tekkinkadu Maidan in Thrissur and Puttarikanda in Thiruvananthapuram, Rajendra Maidan in Ernakulam also holds a prominent place in the history of Kerala.

In 2014-15, the Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) initiated a laser show project on the ground. However, the show had to be stopped after a few months due to technical issues, and all attempts to revive it were unsuccessful. The project faced criticism from the public as access to the ground was restricted for the laser show.

³⁴ Cochin Corporation, "Kochi Smaranika 2000",2000,pp 140 - 141.

Following a complaint by RTI activist KT Cheshire, the vigilance and anti-corruption bureau registered a case against former GCDA official and Congress leader N Venugopal, along with other officials involved in the project.³⁵

The laser show project initiated by the Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) collected fees from the public for attending the show, with ticket prices starting at Rs 100 and Rs 50 and later reduced to Rs 70 and Rs 30 to attract more attendees. The project was conceptualized by N. Venugopal, who was the Chairman of GCDA at the time.

The laser show project faced controversy and eventually stopped functioning, resulting in a cost of 3.44 crore for the GCDA. However, during the two years of operation, the project generated revenue of only 29.42 lakh, which is significantly less than the project cost. The project also caused damage to the Maidan, requiring the GCDA to spend approximately Rs 95 lakh to restore it to its previous state.

The Rajendra Maidan, a cultural and historical landmark of the city, was renovated and restored to its old glory at a cost of approximately Rs 95 lakh. It was recently opened to the public on February 14, 2023.³⁶

INDIRA PRIYADARSHINI CHILDREN'S PARK

The Indira Priyadarshini Children's Park, also known as the Ernakulam Children's Park, is situated in the heart of the city and is exclusively developed for children. The area was once a marshy swamp, and in 1971, a park was established with the aid and zeal of numerous individuals. In the friendly meeting of prominent people, including the district collector Narayana Swamy and FACT Chairman M.K.K. Nair, held around fifty years ago, Revenue Officer K. Bhaskaran Nair raised the issue of implementing programs for the benefit of children. It was decided to form a charitable organization called the District Child Welfare Committee, which later came into existence.

³⁵ 'Kochi's Rajendra Maidan Remains Idle with No Action'. The New Indian Express, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/jul/27/kochis-rajendra-maidan-remains-idle-with-no-action-2480954.html>

³⁶ Bureau, The Hindu. 'The Now Defunct Laser Show Cost GCDA Dear'. The Hindu, 19 Jan. 2023, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/the-now-defunct-laser-show-cost-gcda-dear/article66408836.ece>.

During the tenure of S. Krishnakumar as the district collector, the blueprint for the park was prepared. The park was established to reduce the number of road accidents and provide traffic training for children by reducing the accidents caused by speeding vehicles.³⁷

The park has undergone various upgrades and expansions over time, including the addition of children's play equipment, an amphitheater for cultural events, and train rides for kids. To promote environmental sustainability, solar-powered lighting has been installed, and trees and plants have been added to enhance the park's ambiance and air quality.

In response to an RTI application, it was revealed that the district child welfare council allocated Rs 4 crore for the park's renovation. KEL, a state public sector undertaking, was awarded the renovation contract on November 24, 2017, with a completion deadline of May 2019. However, the contractors were unable to complete the work on time, and the authorities granted an extension until October 31, 2020. The contractor has cited two major challenges that have impeded the project's advancement: the 2018 flood and the 2020 lockdown. The delayed importation of necessary ride equipment has been identified as a significant hurdle for KEL, as it has been affected by disruptions in the supply chain caused by the pandemic.

Indira Priyadarshini Children's Traffic Training Park was reopened for children on November 14, 2021 after remaining closed for about three years. The District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) has purchased five pedal boats as part of the renovation of the recreation pond for pedal boating. Additionally, a new toy train has been installed.

A number of visitors have expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that it has taken almost three years for the government to make headway with regard to the project.

ANNIE BESANT PARK

Annie Besant Park, situated in front of St. Teresa's College in Kochi, Kerala, India, is a public park built exclusively for women by the Cochin Corporation. The park is named after Annie

³⁷ Cochin Corporation, "Kochi Smaranika 2000", 2000, pp 191-192

Besant, a renowned British socialist, women's rights activist, and Theosophist who played a pivotal role in India's struggle for independence.

Initially, the park was a part of a children's park, but it was later divided to control traffic rush, and the remaining area was allocated to shopkeepers under the Cochin Cooperation. Annie Besant Park offers a lush green landscape and a picturesque walking track, making it a popular destination for morning and evening walks. It also has numerous benches and seating areas, play areas for children, and fitness equipment for enthusiasts.

While the Cochin Corporation initially managed and maintained the park, the responsibility was eventually transferred to Kochi Refinery, a significant oil refining company in the region. The company has made significant improvements to the park's infrastructure and facilities, including installing new lights, constructing new benches and seating areas, and building a new entrance gate.

Annie Besant Park in Kochi, which had been a valuable asset to the community as a peaceful green space, had unfortunately lost its former glory due to a variety of issues related to maintenance and cleanliness. Visitors had reported numerous problems, including inadequate basic amenities such as toilets, drinking water, and seating, and poor garbage disposal systems. Furthermore, the park had been heavily littered with plastic waste, making it less appealing for visitors.

As a result of these challenges, the park had become increasingly unused, and many members of the public were no longer aware of its status as an exclusive women's park.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Fig. 3.1

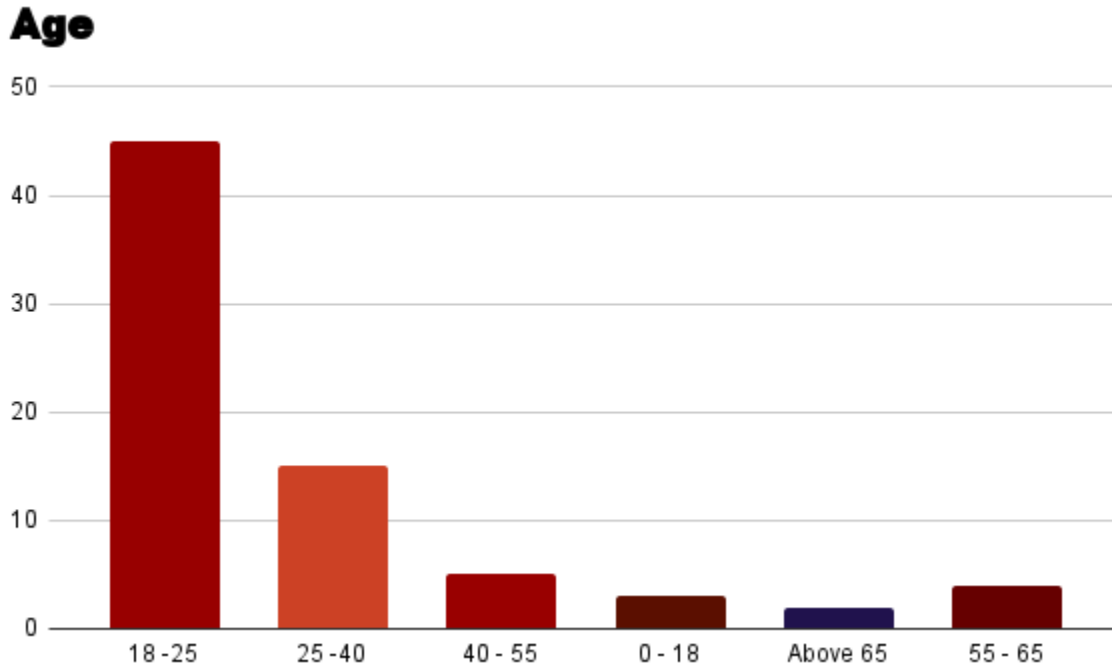


Table 3.1

Response	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 18	3	4.0%
18 - 25	45	60.8%
25 - 40	15	20.3%
40 - 55	5	6.8%
55 - 65	4	5.4%
Above 65	2	2.7%
Total	74	100

Based on the survey results, the age group of 18 to 25 years old constitutes the majority of visitors to the park, comprising 60.8% of the total visitors. The second largest age group is

between 25 to 40 years old, which accounts for 20.3% of the visitors. As the age group increases, the percentage of visitors decreases. The age group of above 65 years old is the least visited, with only 2.7% of the respondents belonging to this group. Visitors from the age group of 0 to 18 years old account for 4% of the total visitors to the park.

Fig 3.2

Place

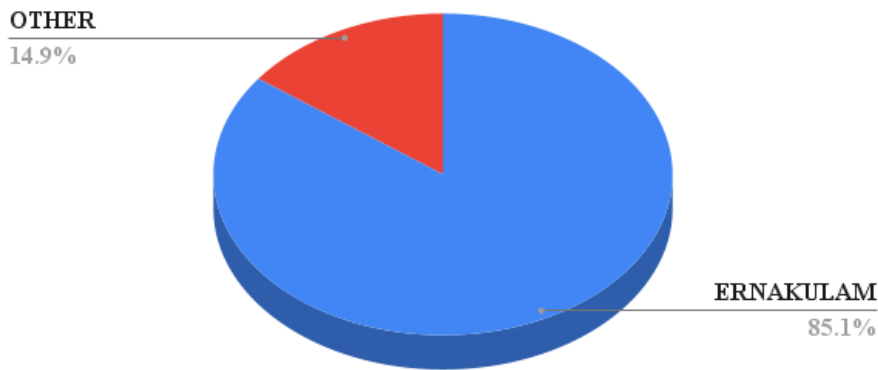


Table 3.2

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Ernakulam	64	85.1%
Other	10	14.9%
Total	74	100

Based on the survey results it can be inferred that the majority of people visiting Subhash Park are from within the city, accounting for 85.1% of the visitors. The remaining 14.9% of visitors are from other places.

Fig 3.3

Recreational Preference

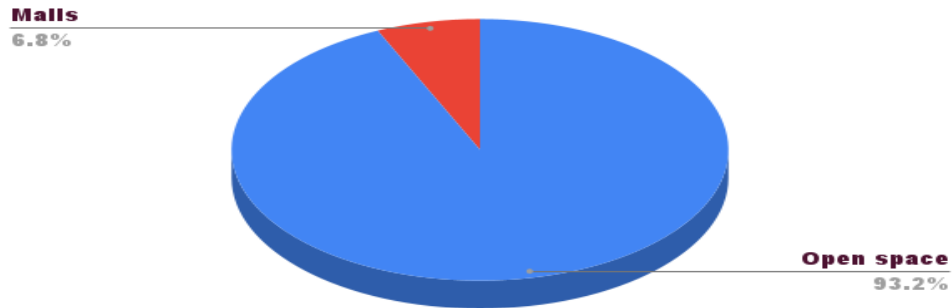


Table 3.3

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Malls	5	6.8%
Open space	69	93.2%
Total	74	100

Fig 3.4

In the aftermath of COVID-19, do you think that people have shown a greater inclination towards open spaces for recreational purposes?

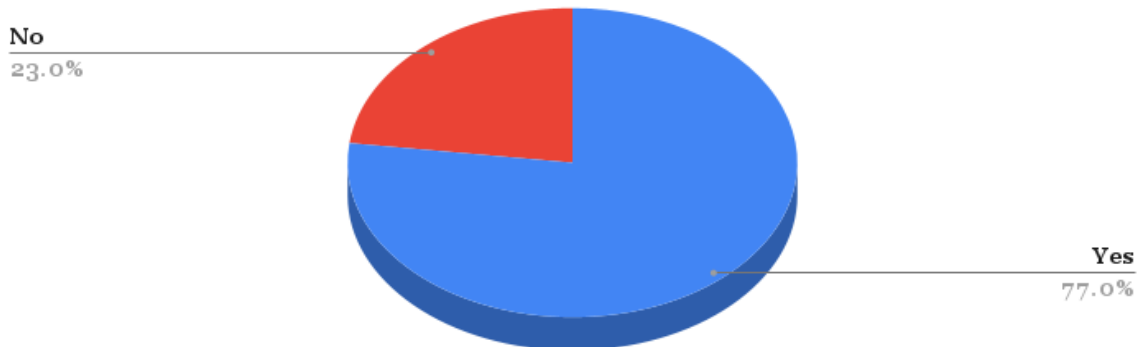


Table 3.4

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	73%
No	18	23%
Total	74	100

Fig 3.5

Do you think Kochi has sufficient open space reservations?

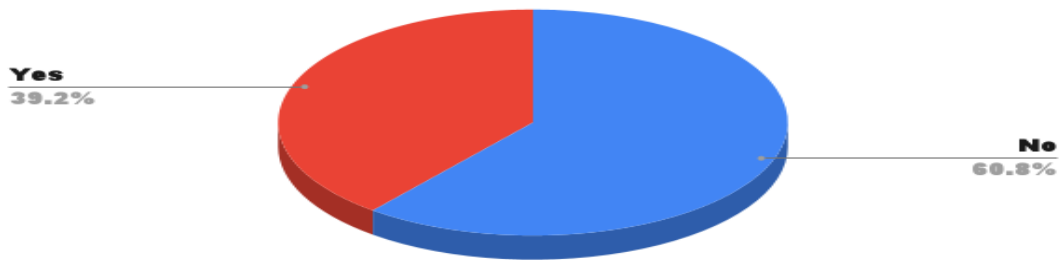


Table 3.5

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	31	39.2%
No	44	60.8%
Total	74	100

Based on the survey conducted, it can be concluded that there is a clear preference for open spaces for recreational purposes among the respondents, with 73% of them preferring it over malls. Furthermore, there has been an observed increase in this preference in the post-COVID situation. However, it is unfortunate that Kochi does not have enough open spaces or parks to meet this demand.

Fig 3.6

Are you aware of the butterfly park and herbal garden at Subash Bose Park?

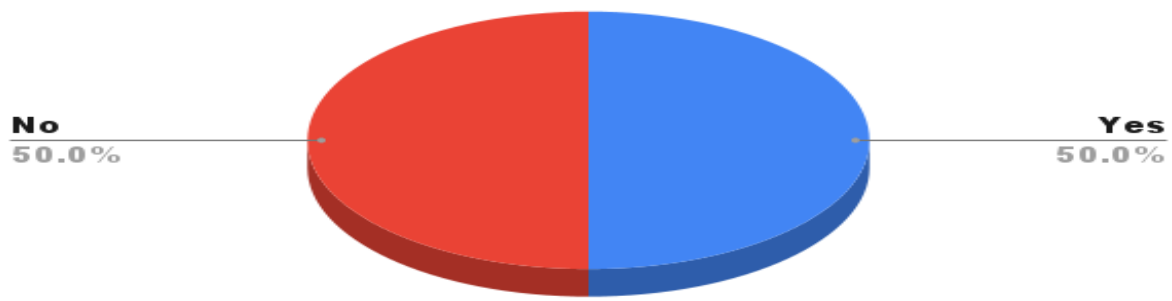


Table 3.6

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	37	50.0%
No	37	50.0%
Total	74	100

Based on the survey, it has been observed that exactly half of the visitors to Subhash Park are aware of the herbal garden and the butterfly garden developed within the park, while the other half is still unaware of these projects aimed at the conservation and promotion of natural vegetation.

Fig 3.7

Are you aware that Subash Park is open to the public for the morning walk?

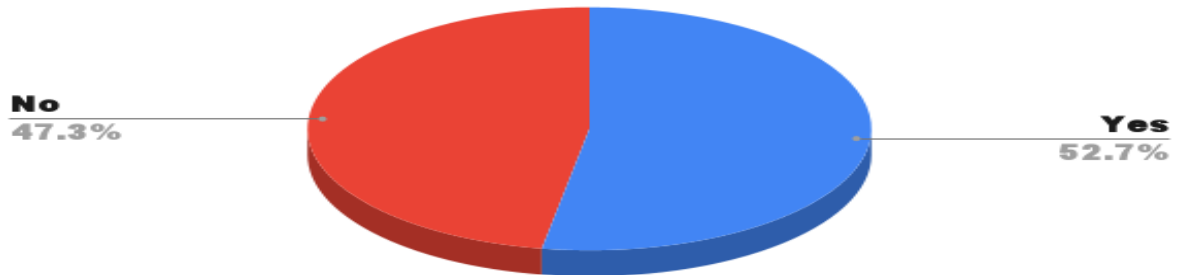


Table 3.7

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	52.7%
No	35	47.3%
Total	74	100

According to the survey results, it can be concluded that 52.7% of Subhash Park visitors are aware that the park is open for morning walks for registered members, while 47.3% are unaware of this facility. In addition, it has been noted that there is an increasing preference for Subhash Park for morning walks compared to other open spaces like Marine Drive. This preference is mainly due to the security provided at the park. It can be inferred that visitors feel safer walking in the park, and this could be due the presence of security personnel.

Fig 3.8

Do you think Subash Park is a major tourist attraction?

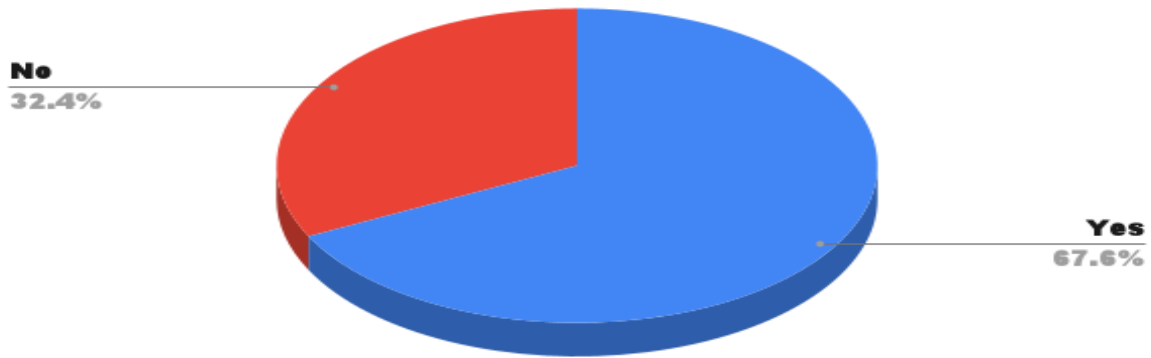


Table 3.8

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	67.6%
No	24	32.4%
Total	74	100

According to the survey conducted, it can be concluded that a majority of the respondents, which is 67.6%, consider Subhash Bose Park in Kochi as a significant tourist attraction. The reasons cited include its rich historical significance, suitability for recreational purposes, and scenic beauty. On the other hand, 32.4% of the respondents do not consider the park as a major tourist attraction.

Fig 3.9

Why do you think people often visit this place?

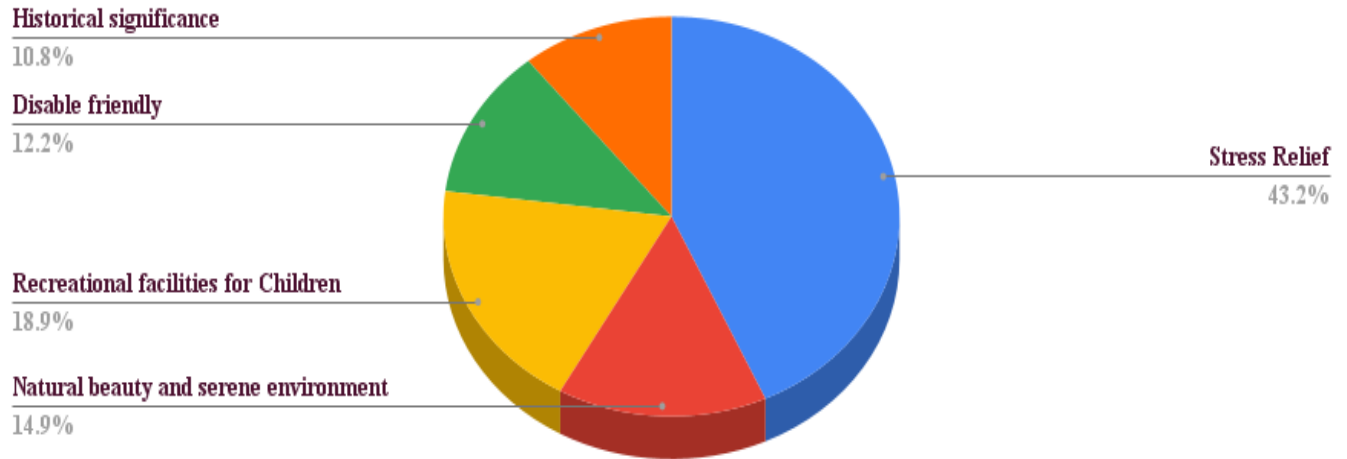


Table 3.8

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Stress Relief	32	43.2%
Natural beauty and serene environment	11	14.9%
Recreational facilities for Children	14	18.9%
Disable friendly	9	12.2%
Historical significance	8	10.8%
Total	74	100

In accordance with the survey conducted, it can be inferred that the primary reason for 43.2% of visitors to Subhash Bose Park is for stress relief, 14.9% visit the park to enjoy the natural beauty, while 18.9% visits the park as it offers safe and secure environment for children to play and explore. Additionally, 12.2% visit the park because of its disabled-friendly features, and 10.8% visit due to its historical significance.

Fig 3.10

Do you think Subash Bose Park is ideal for a social-communal gathering?

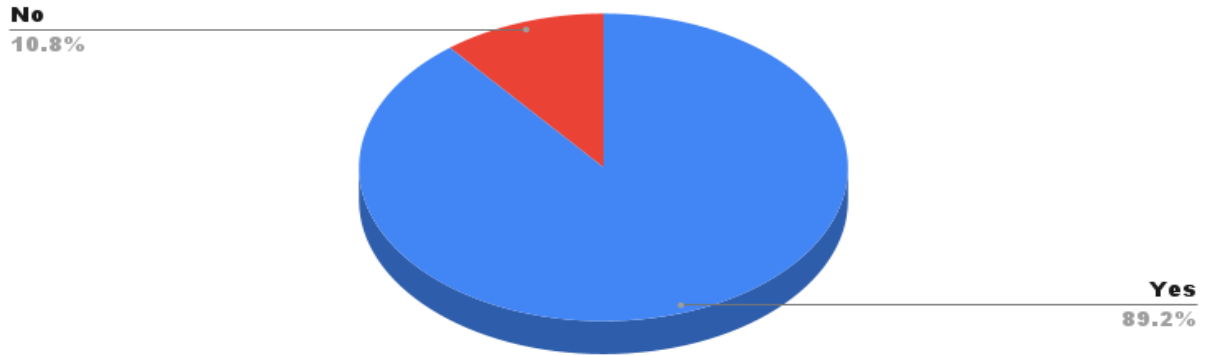


Table 3.10

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	66	89.2%
No	8	10.8%
Total	74	100

Fig 3.11

Do you think Subash Park has an effective waste management system?

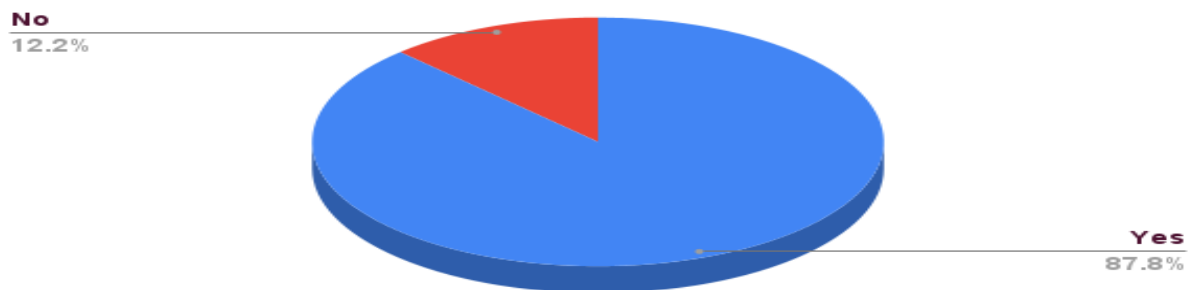


Table 3.11

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	65	87.8%
No	9	12.2%
Total	74	100

According to the conducted survey, it can be inferred that 87.8% of the visitors believe that Subhash Park has an efficient waste management system in place. They noted that there are enough waste bins placed at regular intervals throughout the park, and staffs have been appointed to maintain the cleanliness of the park. While 12.2 % differ to this opinion.

CONCLUSION

Vembanad Lake, located in the eastern part of Kuttanad region in Kerala, is the largest freshwater lake in the state and is of great ecological and socio-economic significance. The city of Kochi, which was once the capital of the Kingdom of Cochin, still retains its political importance. Vembanad Lake is a significant water body in the state of Kerala, India, located near the city of Kochi, which is considered the commercial and industrial hub of the state. Kochi is a major city in the district of Ernakulam, and the Vembanad Lake is an integral part of the city's geography and culture.

Subhash Park is a public park located in the heart of Kochi city. The park is named after the Indian freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose. Subhash Park is an important open space in Kochi city. It provides a much-needed breathing space in the midst of the busy city. The park is spread over an area of 11.5 acres and is located in the heart of the city, near the High Court and the Marine Drive. The park has lush green lawns, trees, and a beautiful water fountain, which attract people of all ages.

The open space provided by Subhash Park is significant, as it allows people to take a break from their busy schedules and relax in the midst of nature. The park provides a space for people to engage in recreational activities such as walking, jogging, and playing outdoor games. It is also a

popular spot for families and friends to spend time together, have picnics, and enjoy the beauty of nature.

In addition, the park has been the venue for many cultural events and public gatherings. It has played an important role in the social and cultural life of Kochi city. The park has witnessed many historical events and has been a witness to the social, cultural, and political changes that have taken place in the city over the years.

The main focus of area of study was to trace the historical significance of Subhash Bose Park, Rajendra Maidan, and Annie Besant Park. Subhash Park earlier known as Irwin Park played a significant role in the history of Kochi. It has been ground for various agitations. Subhash Park was originally developed by Raja Rajarshi Varma , who wished to develop a tree lined road similar to those seen in European countries and new park was developed for public to unwind in evenings and was known as Rama Varma Park and it was later dedicated to Lord Irwin as a tribute and the park came to known as Irwin Park. Under the British rule entry to the park was restricted to British Officials only. After India attained its independence, there has been several agitations and movements aimed for the freedom of the public. On the eve of independence, a group of political leaders broke this restriction and entered the park.

The statue located in Subhash Park serves as a reminder of a ruler who considered self-respect as a paramount virtue and was willing to relinquish his position rather than submit to the British. During ancient times Subhash Park was the venue for annual agriculture marketing fairs in Ernakulam. The backwaters of Subhash Park served as venue for anti-caste movements in Kochi. Kayal Sammelanam, an anti-caste movement against the injustice towards the Pulayar community took place here under the leadership of Pandit K. P. Karuppan.

Subhash Park is now maintained by the Cochin Corporation and the funds for maintenance of the park are provided through the corporate social responsibility funds from firm and private sponsorships. In case of major renovations the fund is provided from Corporation's plan funds

The c-hed, or the Centre for Heritage, Environment and Development, has undertaken several projects in Subhash Park in Kochi. Some of these projects include: Conservation of the park's natural vegetation: C-HED has implemented a plan to conserve and protect the natural

vegetation in Subhash Park, which includes several indigenous species of trees and plants, Restoration of the park's historical structures: C-HED has worked on restoring and preserving the park's historical structures, including statue of the abdicated highness, Development of the park's infrastructure: C-HED has also undertaken projects to improve the park's infrastructure, including the installation of new lighting, seating, and walkways, Promotion of eco-tourism: C-HED has developed a plan to promote eco-tourism in Subhash Park by highlighting the park's natural beauty and historical significance. This includes guided tours and educational programs for visitors.

Subhash Park, like any green space, can have a positive psychological impact on people. Being in nature, even in an urban setting, has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and improve overall well-being. The presence of greenery, trees, and flowers in the park can create a calming and relaxing atmosphere. Additionally, being in a public space like Subhash Park can encourage social interaction and a sense of community, which can also have positive psychological effects. However, it is important to note that individual experiences may vary and there are many factors that can impact one's psychological well-being.

Rajendra Maidan, which was once the most popular open space in Kochi, is an integral part of the city. However, in October 25, 2014, the governing council of the GCDA closed the park to the public and converted it into a venue for a paid laser show.³⁸ However, the show came to a halt due to the alleged technical glitches within a couple of months. All attempts to revive it failed. Notably, the project had invited public wrath as access to the ground was curbed in the name of the laser show.³⁹ The closure of the park has resulted in the denial of the spectacular view of the backwaters that could be seen from this magnificent maidan. The city of Kochi already has a shortage of open spaces for the public to relax and unwind, making the loss of Rajendra Maidan all the more unfortunate.

It has a significant historical background from the pre-independence era when it was a prominent venue for agitations opposing British rule. The ground was named after Rajendra Prasad. Legend also has it that the Maidan was named after a youngster named Rajendran who

³⁸Praveen, M. P. 'Rajendra Maidan in Kochi Being Restored to Its Exalted Status'. The Hindu, 31 Jan. 2023, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/rajendra-maidan-being-restored-to-its-exalted-status/article66453630.ece>.

³⁹'Kochi's Rajendra Maidan Remains Idle with No Action'. The New Indian Express, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/jul/27/kochis-rajendra-maidan-remains-idle-with-no-action-2480954.html>.

died in the course of an agitation staged there. The Maidan had also hosted eminent personalities such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and E.M.S. Namboodiripad. After the disastrous laser show left Rajendra Maidan in ruins, the GCDA had to spend approximately 95 lakh to restore it to its former glory. The recently renovated maidan was opened to the public on February 14, 2023.⁴⁰

Indira Priyadarshini Children's popularly known as Ernakulam Park is located in the heart of Ernakulam city. The park was established to reduce the number of road accidents and provide traffic training for children by reducing the accidents caused by speeding vehicles.

The Park has undergone upgrades and expansions, including children's play equipment, an amphitheater, and train rides, with a focus on environmental sustainability. The renovation project was funded by the district child welfare council with a budget of Rs 4 crore, and the contract was awarded to KEL. However, the project faced delays due to the 2018 flood and the 2020 lockdown, as well as disruptions in the supply chain caused by the pandemic. The park was reopened on November 14, 2021, after remaining closed for almost three years, with the addition of five pedal boats and a new toy train. Visitors have expressed dissatisfaction with the delay in completing the project.

Annie Besant Park in Kochi, Kerala, India, is a public park built exclusively for women by the Cochin Corporation and named after Annie Besant, a renowned British socialist, women's rights activist, and Theosophist. The park offers a lush green landscape and a picturesque walking track, as well as play areas for children and fitness equipment for enthusiasts. The responsibility for managing and maintaining the park was eventually transferred to Kochi Refinery, which has made significant improvements to the park's infrastructure and facilities. However, the park had unfortunately lost its former glory due to issues related to maintenance, cleanliness, and garbage disposal. As a result, the park had become increasingly unused, and many members of the public were no longer aware of its status as an exclusive women's park.

⁴⁰Bureau, The Hindu. 'Renovated Rajendra Maidan Thrown Open to Public'. The Hindu, 14 Feb. 2023, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/renovated-rajendra-maidan-thrown-open-to-public/article66508772.ece>.

4. QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your name?

2. Where are you from?

a. ERNAKULAM

b. OTHER

3. What is your age?

▪ 0 - 18

▪ 18 -25

▪ 25 -40

▪ 40 - 55

▪ 55 - 65

▪ Above 65

4. Have you ever visited Subhash Bose Park?

▪ Yes

▪ No

5. What do you prefer for recreational purposes?

▪ Open space

▪ Malls

6. In the aftermath of COVID-19, do you think that people have shown a greater inclination towards open spaces for recreational purposes?

- Yes
- No

7. Do you think Kochi has sufficient open space reservations?

- Yes
- No

8. How often do you visit the park?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Once in a year

7. Are you aware that Subhash Park is open to the public for the morning walk?

- Yes
- No

8. Are you aware of the Butterfly Park and Herbal Garden at Subhash Bose Park?

- Yes
- No

9. Why do you think people often visit this place?

- Stress Relief
- Disable friendly
- Natural beauty and serene environment
- Recreational facilities for Children
- Historical significance

10. Do you think Subhash Park is a major tourist attraction?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you think Subhash Bose Park is ideal for a social-communal gathering?

- Yes
- No

12. Do you think Subhash Park has an effective waste management system?

- Yes
- No

13. Can you comment on the changes to the park over the years?

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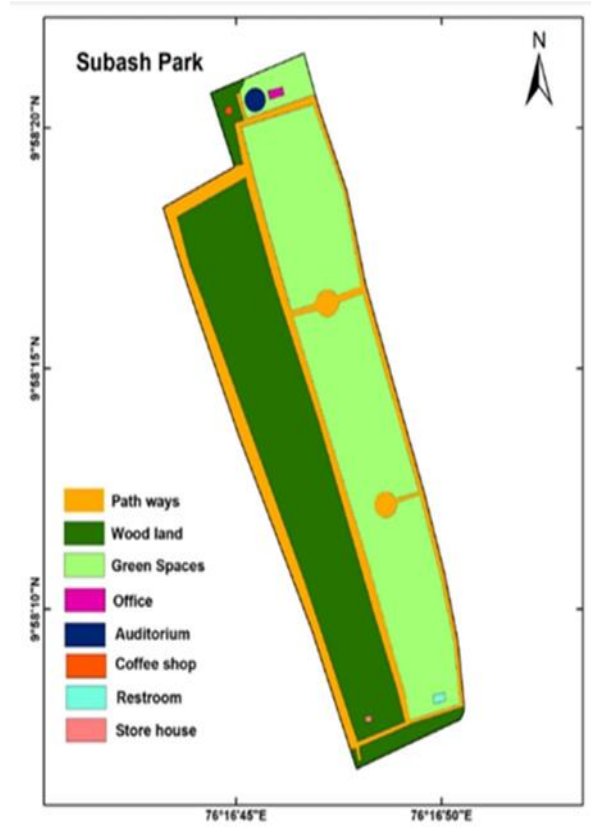
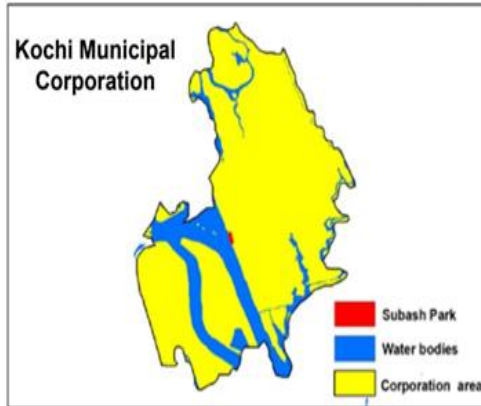
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APPENDIX I - MAP



APPENDIX II - PICTURES

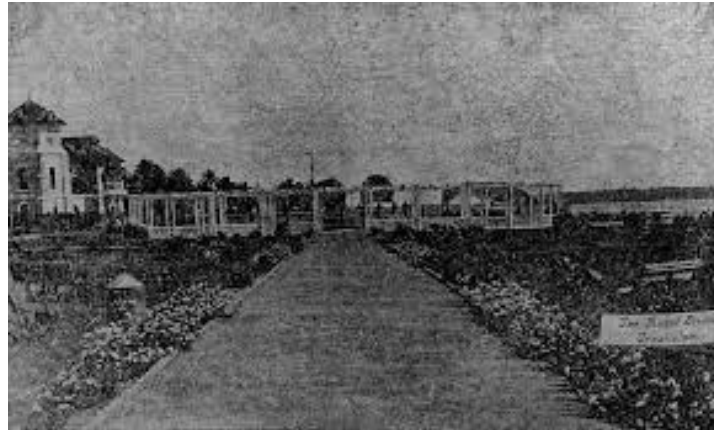


Fig 1. THE IRWIN PARK



Fig 2. SUBHASH BOSE PARK OVER THE YEARS



Fig 3. POLLINATOR GARDEN AND HERBAL GARDEN



Fig 4. NATURE INTERPRETATION ZONE

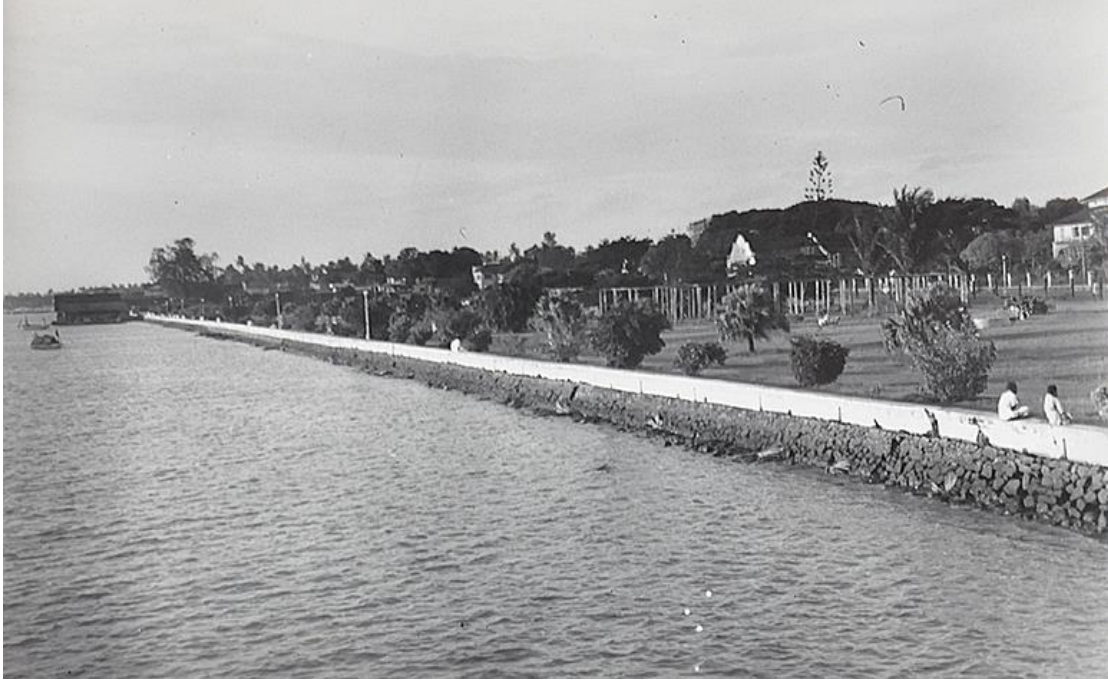


Fig 5. BACKWATER VIEW FROM RAJENDRA MAIDAN KOCHI



Fig 6. RAJENDRA MAIDAN ERNAKULAM KOCHI, OLD PHOTO 1944



**Fig 7. RAJENDRA MAIDAN BEFORE IT IS OPENED TO THE PUBLIC ON FEB 14,
2023**