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Suburban Tales! How Love For A Bandra Garden Inspired A Book

Updated: 18 October, 2020 08:01 IST | [Jane Borges](#) | [Mumbai](#)

D'Monte Park Street's resident-run Dream Grove project has inspired a children's book. And we love it



Bandra people's project is now a book

Two roads away from where children's author Nandita da Cunha lives in Bandra West, a fascinating community project has been long underway. Every week, since the last two years, a group of volunteers meet at an 800 sq ft park, in the middle of the busy D'Monte Park Road, to nurture an organic farm they have created inside.

Nandita's new book, *The Miracle on Sunderbaag Street* (Kalpavriksh Books) is the story of a young girl, Zara, whose life is turned around by the mission to revive her neighbourhood garden. "Mid last year, I joined my daughters on an exploratory walk around the Dream Grove, organised by their library, which is opposite the park. I recall, it began raining. Yet, the entire group of six- to 10-year-olds was so fascinated, not only by the different species of flowers, insects, organically-grown vegetables, but by gardening, re-using waste, and working together in general. So, umbrellas and chins up, they carried on for an hour," says Nandita, in an email interview.

While Nandita da Cunha's story is endearing, Priya Kuriyan's 3D illustrations bring Sunderbaag Street and its people to life

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Moved by how the residents of Bandra had created a beautiful green space within the concrete jungle, Nandita decided to revisit the idea in the imaginary derelict garden on Sunderbaag Street, which is the beating heart of her book. "Zara spearheads the project, but it's the residents of the street—the irrepressible Auntie Gappi, the hip-hop Tod Phod gang, many senior citizens who remember what the dump yard once was—who come together to make it happen," she says.



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The book, written for children aged six to eight, was due to launch in April at a literature festival in Pune, before the pandemic struck.

 Nandita da Cunha and Priya Kuriyan

Nandita da Cunha and Priya Kuriyan

Priya Kuriyan's 3D illustrations bring Sunderbaag Street and its people to life. Since she lives in Bengaluru, and Nandita in Mumbai, the duo worked on the book independently. Priya's reimagining of the ruined dumpyard, its green transformation, and quirky-looking characters, especially Auntie Gappi, makes this a pleasurable read. "Miss Gappi is a little of the many wonderful 'aunties' I have met after moving to Bandra—often heard reminiscing about the way things were, and how when sitting in their bungalow gardens, in the leafy bylanes of Bandra, they could hear the sounds of children playing, or a violin being tuned up from the house at the end of the street," shares Nandita.

She hopes that this book will "inspire a love for nature in children". "It's a gentle reminder to look up from devices and at the riches around us—even in the middle of a built-up city like Mumbai. And it's also a story about the power of community, and each individual to drive that change. I do believe we need such stories, now, more than ever."

 Residents of Bandra have been nurturing an organic farm inside a park.
Pic/Dream grove bandra

Residents of Bandra have been nurturing an organic farm inside a park. Pic/Dream grove bandra

What: The Miracle on Sunderbaag Street

To buy: Kahani Tree Bookstore, Prabhadevi; or email at info@kahanitree.com



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