

By Sidharth Mishra



"Jiye to apne bageeche mein gulmohar ke tale; Mare to gair ke galion mein gulmohar ke liye.
" – Dushyant

The early onset of summer has made the Gulmohars bloom. It's not yet Baisakhi, the day we did annual shopping for pitcher and water pots for birds, but the heat is already on us. Delhi is known for its scorching summers, but I love the season for hotter the city, greater the bloom on the Gulmohar trees, which line the avenues. The red flowers of Gulmohar trees in the national Capital are complemented by yellowish flarae from Amaltas trees.

There are several, however, in the national Capital who miss out on the riot of colours in the city. My friends ask me, where are Gulmohar trees in this city? I keep telling them,

remove your blinds, roll down your car's window, and give nature a chance. The city is not as bad as it has been reported in the recent times. We probably have been too preoccupied with our summer purchase of air-conditioners and dry-grass for the water cooler frames to notice the remains of nature that are still there in this city.

"Some green!?" exclaims Ram Khilawan, who has spent a lifetime tending the flowerbeds in NDMC's horticulture department. He has a point. The extent of greenery in the national Capital was definitely far beyond the lowly confines of 'some'. Delhi, if not "city of gardens", as Congress grandpa Jag Pravesh Chandra would have liked to see it, could definitely pride itself to be a metro with a green shade. One doubts if South Mumbai can boast of the wooded avenues as Lutyens' Delhi does.

"Sahib why only Nai Dilli, you should invite people to cross the walled city to the North to enjoy the city during the summers," says Shiv Darshan, who for years did not bother to look beyond the Delhi University campus. Shiv Darshan, too, had a point. The 'campuswallahs' squeak at the idea of moving out of their wooded haven.

You can start your morning with a jog at Kamla Nehru ridge and take a cool evening walk on the lover's avenue besides the Post-Graduate Women's hostel. The old-timers would tell you that marriages are not necessarily made in heaven but sometimes they get arranged while taking a stroll from Gwyer Hall to Central Institute of Education.

There are many who would confess that their broken heart lay among the fallen Gulmohars on Chattra Marg of North Campus. "Our heart would rise and sink like the fizz in the "banta"

bottles, the favoured drink of cash-strapped lovers," said a senior official in the government, who too lost his heart somewhere among the Gulmohars. They enjoyed the absolute bliss of being in love probably because they did not have the air-conditioners in their hostel rooms.

To beat the heat, they had no option but to take a walk down the wooded avenue. And more often than not you would meet somebody. And to meet her regularly, you had to be more regular with your walks. These walks and talks would sometimes bloom like the red-shot Gulmohar on the green top and sometimes fall on the pavement, dried, broken, and tattered. But those moments will always come back to you whenever you saw a Gulmohar in bloom on a hot summer afternoon.

A little southward of the University is the old seat of the city government -- the Old Secretariat, now rechristened as Vidhan Sabha. The city government can be faulted on many accounts but they should be complemented on at least one count – for not building covered car parking. In the summer, when you shirk even at the thought of touching the hot steering wheel, you can spend hours in the cool green natural shade of the hoary trees which line the Vidhan Sabha complex.

When former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit shifted the seat of the Government from here to the new building on the banks of Yamuna, she, for sure, missed the monkeys peeping into her conference room in the midst of most serious of discussions. I recall her Secretary in the earlier part of her 15-year-tenure, Gyanendra D Badgaiyan often finding himself tapping at his keyboard in rhythm with the footsteps of the monkeys prowling outside. "Yes, they do give you some relief," he would say to us reporters on the prowl.

A reporter who walks down to 24, Akbar Road every afternoon in this scorching summer and then to the residences of senior politicians living in the vicinity – from Tughlaq Road to Teen Murti, finds strength from the green top overhead across the roads, thanking Delhi for being so kind to the ordinary souls who can't afford the luxuries of four-wheelers. Such long walks could be fatal in other cities that care less for its inhabitants – leaving it to the mercy of skies.

Delhi, with all its brutality and insensitivity, is kind in its own way, the kindness which has been bestowed on it not by its peoples but by nature. It does rain but seldom pours, it does shiver but does not frost, it's hot but dry sparing the unease caused by muggy weather. It's free from cyclones, landslides, floods, and droughts. Delhi must not curse nature. It should be thankful.

A colleague once told me that on changing residence she started to miss the sound of the cuckoo, which would wake him every morning. "I always cursed her for not allowing me that extra bit of sleep but now I miss her. I miss the riot of colours the Gulmohar outside my window would provide," she had added.

(Sidharth Mishra is Consulting Editor, Millennium Post.)

Read more at: <http://www.millenniumpost.in/opinion>