

Remembering Shaheer Sir

If he was Dronacharya, I was definitely not one of his Arjunas. I'd call myself his Eklavya. Although, this Dronacharya never bothered about the Guru Dakshina part from any student. If you do good work, he was happy, if not, he'll just not waste his time on you.

I was totally unaware of the name Prof. Mohd. Shaheer when I applied for Masters in Landscape Architecture in SPA. I do know of my classmates who applied in SPA only because of Prof. Shaheer. My first preference was Masters in Urban Design. I couldn't make it in UD and was kept on the waiting list for my second preference, Landscape Architecture. I guess I was destined to be in SPA, to know Prof. Shaheer, and to become a Landscape Architect. One student, who got through, didn't join, and I got in.

I consider myself and my batch of students the lucky few who got the privilege of witnessing the *Shaheer Era*. It ended after our batch. We were few of the last ones who got the opportunity to listen to his spellbound Lectures on the Theory of Landscape Architecture in SPA. Those were the lectures where I would note each and every word he spoke, without looking up from my notebook. What he spoke was so deep and profound, it was impossible for me to comprehend as he spoke. There was an ease in the way he would speak about The Eras, the Names and the Examples in a flawless Landscape Jargon. I would go home and then try to understand from my notes - what actually happened in class today.

Shaheer Sir was an Institution in himself. His mere presence would generate an aura of assurance and relief. He was indeed like a Tree whose shade was a blessing.

He had a very evident sarcastic way of telling what he liked and what he didn't. It was sometimes too direct and blunt, and at other times came with a hint of humor and subtlety. He would never give a damn for any stupid questions or presentations. He would just walk out or ignore. I met his sarcasm at an age when one should rather have it from the teachers than spoil their entire life doing the wrong. This is the reason I consider myself lucky. Till date I would ask myself a question If I do this, would Shaheer Sir appreciate? This is enough to get me on the right track.

"One good teacher in a lifetime may sometimes change a delinquent into a solid citizen." –Philip Wylie

I was not one of those who had a good conversation with Shaheer Sir but whatever interaction I ever had with him was very useful and precise, with impact. I had consulted a lot of different people during my Landscape Thesis – Reconstruction of Bagh Khan-e-Alam in Agra, but it was a few of his key directions (mantras) that I had followed (meditated on) to pass with Flying Colors.

Landscape Architecture in India – A Reader, to which he contributed, is a beautiful gift for all of us.

It was after a gap of almost 10 years since SPA that I met Shaheer Sir at the Humayun's Tomb Walk by ISOLA last year. I told him I've been working and did a further study at Los Angeles. To which he said... "so it must've been a great holiday!" ...and I said "Yes Sir, it was!"
I was glad that he spoke to me with a smile!



I last saw him sitting in the crowd at the Book Release of “Naturally: Tread Softly on the Planet”, at IIC in September.

His sudden demise is a shock that will take its time to sink in. His talent, teaching style, diction and persona are irreplaceable. It's a big void he's left. May his Soul Rest in Peace.

I would like to close by mentioning about Sir's fondness for movies that he occasionally mentioned during our Design Reviews. He once scolded, rather taunted me for an incomplete sheet I had presented. I went home crying. Then the next time when I presented the finished work, he was happy with it and asked me if I had seen the movie *Sur*. Coincidentally, the whole class had watched it the previous evening. So I started to smile looking at my classmates. It was a moment I'll cherish for life. The movie is about a Teacher and how a Teacher always wants his students to do well.

Another time he was explaining the meaning of the word *Amorphous* to a classmate, when he asked him if he had seen *The Matrix*. The character Morpheus, in the movie, was so named because he could change his form and enter dreams, so that explained - Amorphous is something that cannot change its form.

Sir surely is Morpheus, I believe. He lives on with us in our hearts, in the form of his Works and Teachings.

I Salute You, my Master

Priyamvada Bugga
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