

To Sir - With Love.....

It's hard to imagine that so early on in life a day would come when I would put pen to paper to ink my tribute to the most revered Guru of Landscape Architecture - Prof Shaheer. The morning of 28th November 2015 was a devastating one. For dawn heralded the end of an era in landscape and pushed the landscape fraternity into darkness. The cold & daring enemy of life had struck & snatched away from us our most revered teacher. The doyen of the landscape profession had gone into eternal sleep. The year was soon to draw curtains on such a painful note is still hard to comprehend. Prof Shaheer's passing away remains surreal.

While paying my tribute to Prof Shaheer's mortal remains I was fighting back the fact that the tall, towering personality I had always looked up to; today lay still in sleep. Though he looked benign & at peace; I experienced a strange sinking feeling to see my hero lifeless. In retrospect I wish that day had never dawned. For, I have always cherished picturing Prof Shaheer profess and delight one and all with his sharp wit, satire and intellect.

I rue, if only Shaheer Sir had given us a chance; we would have moved heaven and earth by our prayers and compelled almighty to hold Sir back and have him amongst us. It may sound selfish; but it's a fact that all his students and professionals needed him immensely. But Almighty's ways are strange & I concede that, am none to question Almighty.

It is a grave personal loss for each student of the discipline; for Prof Shaheer's sudden untimely demise has left behind a void that will never be filled in true sense of the word. It's not only hard but seemingly impossible to find a professional of his ingenuity, a guru of his demeanor & a person as pious as him. A man of immaculate & regal persona Prof Shaheer was deservedly the one to whom the entire landscape fraternity unconditionally bowed.

All of us have known Prof Shaheer in our own way. The Guru of landscape architecture was not only a professional par excellence & the most gifted designer but an equally succinct writer. He possessed an inherent knack for reading landscapes & had been bestowed with the unique ability to connect with spaces, comprehend them and convey through his sketches and writings what they embodied. While his writings had the power to inform & shape many a young mind; his designs spelt magic, aroused awe, compelled one to reflect & inspired many.

This heartfelt tribute of mine to Prof Shaheer; comes as a mark of respect to a mentor par excellence, a thoroughbred professional who towered above all and stood as the , "Rock of landscape". Although I did not have the fortune to speak to Sir much but I carry vivid memories of our brief interaction. Though I have never been demonstrative and vocal; I confess today - **Shaheer sir you were my idol.**

Ever since Prof Shaheer's sudden & untimely demise; I have been consoling myself by thinking that our batch was the last fortunate batch to have been taught by a teacher of his stature. I can till date vividly picture Shaheer Sir walking into the department on the morning of 25th January, 2011 for our Theory of Landscape Architecture class. As I heard Sir profess; I keenly noted each word carefully, not wanting to miss out on a single word. I was overwhelmed by the fact that the God of Landscape sat across all of us at such close quarters. Though my ears had to strain to hear his low pitched mumble; it was a sheer delight to realize that a person of his repute weighed words and yet communicated effectively. The words Shaheer sir used were rather precise and were loaded with wisdom rather than being a mere banter sprinkled with jargon.

Yet another fortunate instance I recount with great pleasure & nostalgia is when Shaheer Sir took our entire batch to Lodi garden and Sanskriti Kendra. I watched him spell bound as he explained the essence of planting in design. While in studio, I remember being admonished in harsh words for not writing the complete botanic name of alternanthera spp. and wrongly indicating licuala palm. In the same breath I hold close to my heart and cherish the praise I received from Prof Shaheer for my assignment in Plants and Design. Thereon I looked forward to Wednesday mornings for our Plants & Design studio.

If and if only; Prof Shaheer had alone taught us all the subjects in the Masters of Landscape Architecture program; it would have been the most enriching and gratifying period of my life.

My heart alone knows that I silently worshipped You sir & shall continue to do so. Am at loss of words Shaheer Sir to convey what You meant to us all. Bereft of a mentor, benumbed by the suddenness of your demise & bereaved by the loss, I dedicate the following set of lines to you, **“A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops....” Thank you for being my teacher sir....**

In grief

Manavvi

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