

GOOD EARTH

Preserve the tree of life

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Living in a concrete jungle it is easy to lose touch with nature. It is for us to find little ways in which to reconnect.

Photo: Shiv Kumar Pushpakar



Watch the tree: And the life it supports.

I have spent all my life in a place that nestles in the lap of the eastern Himalayas in north Bengal. The eastern Himalayas are a very important biodiversity hotspot and extremely rich in its diversity of flora and fauna. The lives and cultures of people are traditionally rooted in nature because of that and I have been lucky to be a part of that. My recent move to Delhi replaced the green forests of Darjeeling to the concrete jungles of a city.

In front of my house is a fairly large tree. This tree is what helps me maintain my sanity! Everyday, I watch the tree and the life it supports. I have found that it is alive, vibrant and totally rejuvenating. The tree is home to a variety of birds, insects and animals, all so intricately connected with the world of the tree. Interestingly, the tree is a friend of cattle too, as a cowshed is situated next to it. The cows lie under the cool of the tree and birds come and peck their body keeping them free of all parasites. And there are two pairs of squirrels merrily running up and down the tree.

The tree is also a garbage collection point. In case of spills the dogs clean up the food waste and the remaining is taken care of by birds and insects.

Urban planning

Inspired by the tree, I thought I too should invite birds to my little home. My friend and I have placed an earthen pot with cool water and rice grains on the balcony. Watching the birds is invigorating and soul touching.

The tree is not only home to the animals but also to the old people in the area. The tree provides shade for them to sit under it, even in the peak of summer.

As I sit here, revelling in the world of this 30-year-old tree, I wonder why trees are not valued in our urban planning. They are not only aseptically beautiful, but are practically important too — for shade, for water re-charge, for clean air. Why do development planners not realise this? Why are trees being cut to make way for roads, shopping malls or stadiums for commonwealth games?

Our towns and cities are getting so far from nature it is up to us to find ways to stay connected.

What can you do?

Take time to observe nature. Watch the trees on the roadside, the birds and animals it provides a home to and the benefits we get from it.

Get bird baths or feeding bowls for birds and squirrels. When the avian travellers come to quench their thirst or feed themselves from your offerings, it will give you great happiness.

In collaboration with Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group