Valentine's Day! Differently

Sabbir Ahmed Osmani

A spring afternoon! The sky put on an azure saree to be a part of the romancing mood to coax loners like me, sitting in a corner of TSC, watching people enjoying their precious time!

And lamenting being alone! Alone, alone, all alone among the sea of *jutis* (couples. Yes, such a day, it was!

Near me was sitting a bare-footed boy who was barely seven years old with a faded red plastic basket in his hand! His peculiar green eyes seemed confused-watching what was going on all around! I was trying to feel better by redirecting my attention from the couples! So I peeped into the red basket. There were only a few roses! The colour of the withered flowers was indiscernible. They just didn't seem saleable!

I asked him what the matter was! I struggled to get the meaning of what he said. It was something like this, he collected the flowers from Shahbag wholesale flower market as he couldn't afford to buy the fresh and good ones!

As I was deserted by my friends, I tried to carry on talking with him... not for any purpose but just to feel better. But I could not understand him much!

Then I did something crazy! I gave him a 100 TK note from my pocket! No; I was not in a mood for philanthropy! It was probably desperation to do something. I did so.

Anyway, getting the note the boy rushed to the nearby footpath on the opposite side of TSC, not looking at me even for once!

I was crazy I thought! And it confused me. Haven't got the tuition money yet and my pocket was on the verge of freezing! Anyway I went behind him and saw him giving the money to a poor derelict woman with a wide smile on his face!

I felt curious and wanted to talk to her! She talked in a dialect most likely from the northern part of the country! What I understood from what she told me was that she came to Dhaka to find her husband who was a day labourer and missing for three months! She found him in the corridor of Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he was languishing for days and ultimately becoming invalid from an accident while working at a construction site. I noticed, though derelict in appearance, a strange glow of satisfaction rested on her face!

I couldn't resist the temptation of asking her whether she still loved her invalid husband or not? She became confused! Then I asked her why she didn't leave him, as he couldn't provide for her anymore! Then she said something that sent out a sudden rush of blood in her worn-out brown face! In fact she couldn't say anything- it was her expression that spoke for her...

She now makes jasmine flower garlands for the flower lovers or couples and sells them through her son to support the family! But she couldn't buy any flower today, as the price was too high! I had to leave them as I had things to take care of. So I started walking towards my student dorm.

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A study tour of greater Sylhet

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A mineralogy study tour of greater Sylhet was organised by students of '04 batch of the Soil Science Discipline, Khulna University from 9th to 14th December. It was our first voyage outside the city of Khulna. As a result, all of us were emotionally hyped-up. Four teachers accompanied us. We stayed in a guest house of BTRI (Bangladesh Tea Research Institute) in Srimangal. The beauty of the tea gardens fascinated all of us beyond description.

The next day a seminar was organised for us by Mainul Huq, director of BTRI on tea. From that seminar we learned a lot about tea. We learnt that Bangladesh produces only 2% of the overall world production, and exports 1% of it. There are 17 varieties of tea in our country. We also observed tea processing. Later that day, we visited the Lawachara National Park, a splendid gift of nature, which is a deciduous forest. We observed various types of trees, medicinal plants, flower plants and different species of birds and animals like the crimson sun bird and gibbon etc.

On 12th December we visited Jaflang in Sylhet, a pretty, natural site with a watershed channel which passes through Bangladesh and India. Everyday huge amount of igneous rock or stone and sand are collected from that river channel. However, the delicate balance of environment of that particular area is faced with destruction because of the continuous collection of stone and sand. Hills are bare now due to the anthropogenic activities On the other hand, Indian hills are unimpaired. We realised that day that we have to take immediate initiatives to protect this site. At night we enjoyed a cultural programme presented by the Manipuri tribals in Srimangal.

On December 13, we visited the Madabkunda in Moulovibazar, which is well known for its hills and waterfall. Prof. Fazle Rabbi delivered a lecture in the afternoon on rock and their composition, formation and overall location. He also discussed the present status of the watershed channel, soil characteristics and conditions of that area and the soil of tea garden.

A spectacular and fabulous cultural programme was held on the last night. All the students of Soil Science Discipline of '04 batch will remember this trip for a long time.