

A peaceful stroll into the heart of green eternity

I like walking around villages and on dirt roads, chucking the tried and tested routes till I find my way home. And rural Kerala, or maybe all villages, just cough up such trails effortlessly.

Years ago, I had walked around the farmland at Kooderi Manna and reached a railway track. City-bred me had never placed a coin and watched a train rush over it, flattening it to a thinness that was, at that time, unbelievable. And there I had, a papad crisp disk with the mild curve of the track imprinted forever on it.

The coin, now useless for all practical purposes has acquired the elevated status of 'memorabilia' which is of course, priceless to me. I liked the idea of a measly one rupee coin or one of even lower denomination gaining so much importance... And I wanted one such papad-like coin for myself, but no train passed by that day and anyway, I had no money on me.

On another such Kerala trip, again in the northern parts of the state, we walked from the homestay to the nearby river.

But back to my recent stroll. It was a glorious day, with the clouds still hanging around, not yet sure if they had outstayed their welcome. I walked along tiny canals and tripped over lazy man-made roads. The greens of Kerala meanwhile yielded more shades of green.

Walking through the paddy fields, I watched the women bent over, immersed in their morning routine. My host told me about how they would take care of the bugs and pests. By walking with a rope in their hands, running its length through the expanse of the paddy. The insects and bugs would fall into the water and drown or be eaten by frogs. And there it was. Eco-friendly pest-control!

There were special songs that would be sung as these women walked through



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the fields again and again. He spoke about how these traditions were now fading away, forgotten with every generation. I walked along a tiny stream and crossed over temporary bridges that had over time become permanent. Bridges crafted from blocks of cement to the trunks of trees, until I reached the large, expansive and muddy river.

There I paused, waiting as the rain came down in gentle droplets. And then

I turned and walked all the way back. There was no larger purpose to the stroll but a walk around the village felt very fulfilling. If you find yourself in a village, in a small town, with nothing on the horizon to occupy a morning or an evening, walk. Just walk. And then walk some more. Before a sense of home finds you.

— Bhavani blogs at merrytogoaround.com.