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PhoolWalon Ki Sair: Say It With Flowers

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Mirza Jahangir's pining mother Queen Mumtaz Mahal Begum vowed to offer a 'chaddar' made entirely of flowers at the dargah of Khwaja Bakhtiar Kaki at Mehrauli if her son was ever released (he'd been arrested by the British government). Her wish was granted, a floral *chaddar* was presented to the Dargah, a floral '*pankah*' to the nearby Yogmayi Temple and thousands walked from Delhi to Mehrauli carrying blooms. Thus was born 'Phool walon ki sair' or the 'Sair-e-gul-faroshan' a week long festival at Mehrauli village which continues today. What a lovely arrangement.

Whose Your Poppy?

This seven day festival, which begins next week, was traditionally celebrated with swings made of flowers in nearby mango groves, as well as cock fighting, bull bailing, kite flying, wrestling and swimming matches. Many of these traditions like kite flying, wrestling, qawalli sessions and beautiful floral chaddars and pankahs presented to the same Dargah and Yogmayi temple, continue.

We suggest you stop and smell the roses and take a trip through nostalgia with Delhi Heritage Walks who are organizing an early morning walk through the sites of this festival, on Sunday October 26. Awadesh Tripathi, a PhD student in Indian Literature will be conducting this walk in Hindi and Urdu to best translate a sense of life and love in this period. The walk begins at Yogmaya temple where you'll learn the legends of the Pandavas around this site.

What In Carnation?

Visit next the Jharna, which used to be a pleasure garden of the Mughals and is now merely a drain with empty but pretty water channels. Hear stories about the fireworks competition commissioned by the Mughals at Hauz-i-Shamsi, or the beautiful and tragic Zafar Mahal where the last Mughal ruler's burial place lies vacant as he died to these sad lines "*Kitna hai bad naseeb Zafar dafn key liye/ do gaz zamin bhi na mili kuu-e-yaar mein* (How unfortunate are you Zafar/ You weren't given even two yards of land in your beloved hometown)"

From here a lane leads you to the Qutub Sahib Dargah where you'll see the floral chaddar gifted annually. Along the way is a step well where water smelled like sulphur, a tank where Prophet Mohammad left a mark and a *khanqah* of eunuchs.

Participants are encouraged to dress conservatively and carry a scarf to cover their heads. Refreshments (non-alcoholic!) will be provided at the end of the walk. Awadesh shared that enthusiasts could always try to source and read (a

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hard to find account) Mirza Farathullah Begh's narration of Phool Wallon ki Sair. We recommend tucking a flower behind your ear to blend right in.

Getting There: Register [here](#) . October 26, 7.30am, Rs. 600 per person (inclusive of refreshments)

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