

## A Kaleidoscope of color

"Fall colors....." I was enlivened when one of my friends uttered this word in one of those girly potlucks we were having. Not that I was unaware of Fall, I had been one of those admirers who always had this urge to soak in some vibrant Fall foliage. Unlike India, it wasn't too hot in New Orleans; instead, a pleasant wind enveloped the evenings that would push me to go on a walk with my family. However, the idea of experiencing Fall had taken over me. In the West, there are four seasons; Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Although, as an Indian, I could relate with the first three, Fall was still novice to me. I was curious about every tiny detail of this new period, from weather to food to clothes that I was supposed to experience pretty soon.

No sooner, the day came when we waved goodbye to our friends in New Orleans and boarded a flight to arrive at one of the best places in America, New Jersey. New Jersey was warm, not only climate-wise but feel-wise too, because we had a lot of friends there, and once we stepped into this state, it felt like home. However, it took us a month to settle down in a new place, and amid this, my urge to experience Fall increased with each passing day.

"Hey Jigs, Did you go Fall shopping?" Jaya asked with a twinkle in her eyes.

"No" More than myself, Jaya looked curious, and the following statement of hers bores testimony to the same.

"Let's go then....."

She was super excited to take me shopping and how could I say "NO".... I immediately agreed and went on a shopping spree with her. Fleece, hoodies, jackets, scarves, boots.....all found a way into my bag. She even mentioned "Fall cutlery," which I avoided somehow as I knew that wasn't necessary then. Jaya briefed me about her Autumn experiences in NJ and neighboring states, and I got carried away to that vibrant, colorful, and mesmerizing world.

It was mid September, and I saw a change in leaf color for the first time. The green leaves had lost their luster; the brightness that spoke volumes was no

more there. The greenery that wrapped the entire city had left us for something better. The hot and humid weather had made way for a pleasant breeze. Sun was shining, but the harshness of its heat was gone. Instead, the air was fresh and pure. There was a big Oak tree in front of our house, and suddenly I started noticing a change in it. The leaf had started turning pale, and there was a touch of yellow to some. I had always seen that huge tree glowing in green, which was enough to reinforce my faith in the environment, but the dull color was enough to shake that up. Even the plants that graced my terrace had started turning light and dusky.

Gradually days were becoming shorter. With the chilliness in the air, Shorts, tank tops, and dresses had made way for winter stuff like Jeans and Jackets. Shades of yellow, red, and brown had sealed the entire city. Plants in my terrace had started dropping their leaves. A couple of them had become bare, with the stem being the only noticeable factor in the gigantic pot. Leaves that once clutched unto the plant holding them tight had accepted their fate and had left their guardian angel lying lifeless one above the other. The one that hurt me the most was the dilapidated state of the holy basil plant. Basil is considered auspicious, and we had grown up seeing the flourishing plant with its lush green leaves, in contrast to this dusky stick that had lost its identity.

Finally, the much-awaited day came, and we drove to Central Park in New York City to witness the Fall at its peak. We got dressed in our best outfits and were ready to explore this display of color by mother nature. First, I wanted to see the kaleidoscopic colors at the Gapstow Bridge. The bridge had trees on both sides, and it looked no less than a magnificent Artwork. The leaves had turned golden yellow with some red and brown in between, which was a visual treat to the naked eyes. The pond was a breeding place for ducks and geese who were displaying their happiness by flapping their wings, and the water was trying its best to hold on to the colors, being reflected from the enormous trees. As we walked further, we saw the breathtaking view of Bethesda Fountain, followed by the Bow Bridge. Bow Bridge gave a perfect backdrop for Fall photography. By that time, our camera must have captured hundreds of pictures of the beautiful Central Park nestled in the heart of New York City. Finally, as our kids were tired, we decided to call it a day and drove back home with an unprecedented feeling. Our heart was not content, and we spent another weekend exploring the Fall colors throughout New Jersey and Connecticut.

In my ecstasy, I had ignored the bare trees that stood tall in my neighborhood. The trees that once were voluminous had become entirely nude in no time. The trunk and the lame stem being the only noticeable attributes. Leaves were scattered, making a brown carpet underneath these giant trees. I remembered that one saying,

*"Nothing is perfect in this world. everything has its pros and cons."*

The same applied here too. Though "Fall" was appealing, its aftermath was shattering to the core. It was challenging to see trees.....naked and deceased. The city that once boasted its vegetation appeared barren and in deep slumber. Days had become shorter, and winter hibernation was about to start. Ever bustling life had got a gloomy shade attached to it, and we weren't in love with this for sure. Though it was transient, still my heart longed for spring to come, when nature would be at its best again. As my thoughts grew deep, my heart echoed,

*"If Winter comes can spring be far behind,"*