



SANJEEV VERMA/HT

STANDING TALL AT 80: The impressive Arjun tree at Tughlaq Crescent at Tughlaq Road.

# A blooming affair with trees

**Aasheesh Mangain**

A CHILD-LIKE glint in the eyes and a spring in his steps: sure signs that Hauz Khas resident Ramesh Adige has found something that busy Delhiites miss all the time. The discovery of a rare flowering tree, an old grand tree or an elusive shrub is all that is needed to make the day of this amateur but passionate botanist.

What excited him recently was the sight of a big Arjun tree at Tughlaq Crescent on Tughlaq Road.

"I just chanced upon it and was awestruck by its size, the perfect crown shape and its age."

He immediately called an expert from CPWD's horticulture department who confirmed that the tree must be around 80 years old and agreed that he was not aware of an older Arjun tree.

"That must make it possibly one of the oldest Arjun trees in

the city, may be even the country." Janpath has an avenue of Arjun trees, but they are not even one-fifth of the size of this tree, he says.

The Crescent to his surprise also had another striking presence: The Indian Coral tree or *Erythrina Indica*.

"This is a very rare tree," says Ramesh. The Indian name for the tree is Tota or Dhol Dhak and it blooms with flaming red flowers from February to May.

Ramesh immediately looked up his reference book "Some Beautiful Indian Trees" by E. Blatter and Walter S Millard, a Bombay Natural Historical Society Publication, to confirm his findings. He studied the formation of the flower, the trunk and the shape of the leaves. It was a perfect match. In fact, he found a cousin of the tree in Hauz Khas Deer Park as well.

The tree attracts birds - mynahs, starlings, bulbuls, babblers and drongos.

The tree also finds repeated mention in the Vedas and Puranas. The leaf of the tree that has three leaves bunched together is said to represent the Indian trinity of great Indian pantheon: Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Ramesh was inspired enough to buy around 20 plants of Indian Coral and plant them at Deer Park. Ramesh has been a constant factor in the sustained improvement of the green cover of the Deer Park. He spends many hours nurturing and planning the improvement of the park with the officials.

Says he, "We compete very well when it comes to the green cover with other cities in India and abroad. But sadly most of us, the authorities included, do not appreciate what we have in our midst. There are many trees like Dhaak, splendid amherstia, java cassia and brilliant gardenia that have been forgotten in Delhi, and should be planted."