

Of Geri-route

by Suchita Malik

OUR City Beautiful is known for a number of things viz. the Rose Garden, the Rock Garden, PU Campus, the Sukhna Lake, the broad roads and streets, greenery and what not. Add to it its white-collar bureaucrats nee babus, red light cars, retired people, buzzing markets and trendy sales. The list would remain incomplete without the mention of Geri-route, the most frequented rendezvous of the teenagers. Stretching from one corner of the Sector 11 market with its reach extending up to the flower shops in Sector 10, the Geri-route now finds a mention on the Chandigarh maps also. Come the evening and the 'Champ-Elysee' of Chandigarh is lined up with the latest models of expensive cars with smart guys and gals vying for each others' attention. This may be the beginning only.

The crowd thickens, the road gets

busier and the atmosphere gets charged with loud, foot-tapping, romantic music as the evening advances towards maturity. The "bunch" of boys and the "bevy" of girls slow down their open jeeps, Esteems, Opal Astras, Honda Cities, Scorpions, Octavias, the latest SUVs, and what not. Parking "etiquette" are thrown to the winds with the whiff of the hand. The bubbly enthusiasm takes over as we see the hip-hugging, low-waisted, ready-to-slip jeans, the sleeve-less spaghetti tops, the Ray Ban goggles, the loosely hung 'D&K' leather purses and the 'Gucci' shoes adding to the glamour of the evening. The careless demeanour, the lethargic gait, the sing-song accent, the dangling pony tail, the thick clouds of smoke from the "fag" and the latest dainty models of "mobile phones" define our "youth" who keep busy in "mindless chatter"

The darkening dusk, the splurge of the

dense trees on both sides of the road and its thick foliage makes the mood all the more languid, dreamy and romantic.

The stage is all set for them to fly on the "viewless wings of Poesy" and drink life to the "lees" with "beaded bubbles winking at the brim". The guys and the gals wait for each other. The "anointed" hour brings them together and they look deep into each others' eyes and carelessly walk a few steps down their favourite "geri-route". They forget their tuition travails, the ever-shortening attendance in their schools and colleges, the regular scolding of the teachers, the ever approaching exams and the eternal nagging of their 'moms'. All these take a backseat, while, the 'poor' father has, all the while, remained 'blissful' in his paradise of ignorance and work.

The cars are lazily parked on either side of the road in full view of the police.

While the cops seem to gloat over their sense of duty by stopping some insignificant, innocuous looking drivers by asking them to show their licenses et al, our "spectrethin" youth has already marched back and forth (the geri-route being sandwiched between the two posh markets) enjoying a sip of bitter coffee and croissants at the famous Barrista or chocolate doughnuts with a dollop of delicious strawberry jam at the ever popular Cafe Coffee Day. Unmindful of either time or expenses, our youth measures out its evenings with the "coffee spoons" talking of their latest crushes or fashion trends or the recent blockbusters. What a bliss!

"Oh! Long live our 'Geri-route' if it doesn't land up our children in Hell along with a cup of "Hemlock!" was all I could say with a look of derision. The feeling has dawned only after my son has joined the ranks. ■