

The dream street

Suchita Malik recounts her favourite haunt in Glasgow

The coach was arriving slowly at Buchanan Bus Station and I could spot the eager face of my husband waiting anxiously to receive me for my one-year short stint at Glasgow in Scotland.

On our way home, I could hear the name 'Sauchihall' crop up a couple of times in the conversation between the cab driver and my husband and then suddenly, my other half addressed me. Look here, Suchita, there is that busy and famous Sauchihall street!"

The cab came to a halt a few minutes later and I got down with the realisation that the street would be my jaunt for daily shopping as our home was only a few furlong away from it. Little did I realise at that time that the street would come to acquire the role of a friend and guide for me.

For one full year, it became almost a daily ritual for me to visit Sauchihall in the mornings and evenings. As one came straight from the Cowcaddens underground station towards the Rose Street to go to the Buchanan subway, one had to turn left and here you were, right on the wide

Sauchihall Street, full of busy people, a galaxy of famous stores and complete in itself.

The street remained busy from 8.30 am till at least 10 o'clock in the night. In the morning rush hour, you could see young people, dressed casually hurrying across the road towards their destinations, be it their work place, college or university. None had the time to exchange a cursory glance or a pleasantry.

The old Scottish women, dressed immaculately and sporting heavy make-up and high heels would, however, walk leisurely towards their favourite stores like Marks and Spencer, Littlewoods and Bodyshop etc for window shopping and for buying their daily food. It was interesting to see the flocks of pigeons



in the centre of the Street fluttering their wings and playing with one another. They would match the old women absolutely in carefree mood and spirit.

At noon, the street would be a wonderful rendezvous for the af-

ternoon siesta for working people. It would present a lovely spectacle of well-dressed people busy gossiping, chatting and simultaneously having their working lunch of fish and chips, French fries, pizza and burgers

which they bought from famous food chains nearby. It was like a sea of humanity celebrating together on days when the 'tricky' Glasgow weather favoured them with warm sunshine.

The evenings saw the people lively, exuberant and in vivacious mood. Young couples would hold hands, engaged in themselves, chiming sweet nothings into each other's ears. The more boisterous ones, on the other hand, would booze around and display their affections in a more violent manner by running

after one another or shouting at each other.

However, one could not miss a few music-lovers who would play on guitars, keeping their caps in front of them for some change. I regularly spotted an old

man dressed as a sartorial soldier with his head held high and with all his military medals, roaming around but keeping aloof and thwarting all attempts at conversation.

The jocular mood of the evenings would gradually lengthen into cold nights when it wasn't out of place to come across an occasional beggar or a drunkard begging for some petty cash to go home or buy some food. It was equally amazing to spot a lone but gutsy female cab driver waiting patiently for her turn to carry passengers.

But the long Sauchihall Street looked absolutely fascinating in the night, lit with soft sparkling lights and with melodious music softly oozing out of its various corners. My one year sojourn in Glasgow brought me everyday to Sauchihall Street, sometimes on purpose, sometimes otherwise.

Like Mother-Earth, it provided succour, sustenance and serene friendship while retaining its aura and fascination for those in tune with its unique presence. I came back to India after a year but Sauchihall still comes to haunt in my dreams.