

Fallen branches

Seeing the fallen branch evokes in me this feeling of happiness, kick-starting a torrent of memories from when I was a kid, waving fallen branches to fight off imaginary enemies as if I was waving mighty swords. Seeing this fallen branch evokes in me this feeling of sadness. How could a species of tree that has undergone millions of years of evolution and was as abundant as could be, now be on the brink of extinction?

I was standing underneath a tree that had seen generations of people come and go, it had witnessed its surroundings turning from a wild forest into a concrete jungle. Most of its conspecifics survived two world wars and countless other attacks, only to have their trunks chopped for wood. What would be the future of this one?

This had been a tree so abundant that it was part of most people's houses, as decoration, furniture, floor, or as walls and roof. A tree so abundant that its nuts were an integral part of people's diets. A tree so abundant that it featured prominently on flags. A tree so abundant that it became more than a tree. It became culture.

As I cast one final glance at the majestic tree in front of me, standing tall and mighty, I wondered if children to-be would be able to use its branches as makeshift swords like I had. Would they recognise the tree on their state flag?