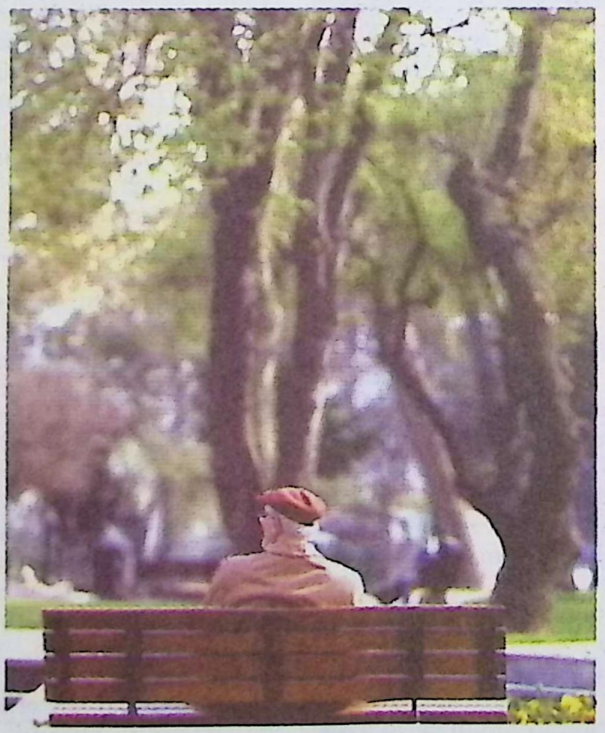


ALY ZAKER

Of Autumn Mist and Bitter Harvest!

Autumn, more accurately late autumn, known to us as *hemonto*, is my most favourite season. With the black cloud of monsoon disappearing beyond the horizon and fluffy white clouds replacing them, the season of gaiety starts to unfurl. A kind of excitement and euphoria pervades me. I usually try to get away from the humdrum of Dhaka and head for my village. Early autumn also brings with it the season of Durga Puja, something that we grew up with. Even at such a distant physical and mental proximity from the good old puja the sound of the drum seems to creep into our mind's ears, dhak-dhak, drim-drim.



I guess this is more significant for the people of my generation than that of my children. During our childhood and early youth we used to eagerly wait for Durga Puja as we would for Eid, especially if the cycle of seasonality brought both of them close together; and in the season of autumn. Both brought us excitement and pleasure in equal measure. Autumn meant going to the village home with our parents. It meant eating all kinds of *Pitha*s in profusion. Autumn meant walking miles through the paddy fields now bereft of the rice and lying idly in the sun with golden hay on its bosom. It meant spending the glorious moments in twilight in the company of doves, herons, storks or pigeons. It meant the joy of getting lost in the mist that pervaded the fields, the ponds and the village dwellings. Autumn meant bounty.

This year towards the end of autumn I ventured out of Dhaka again. I am fortunate to have my home in a village where I can immerse myself in the juice of nature in various seasons. The dust and din of the city I live in becomes a distant feature. This year there was a bumper crop. Every one talked about it. You could see an abundance of crop being brought home, fanned vigorously by men and women to clean it of the flails and worms, boiling and