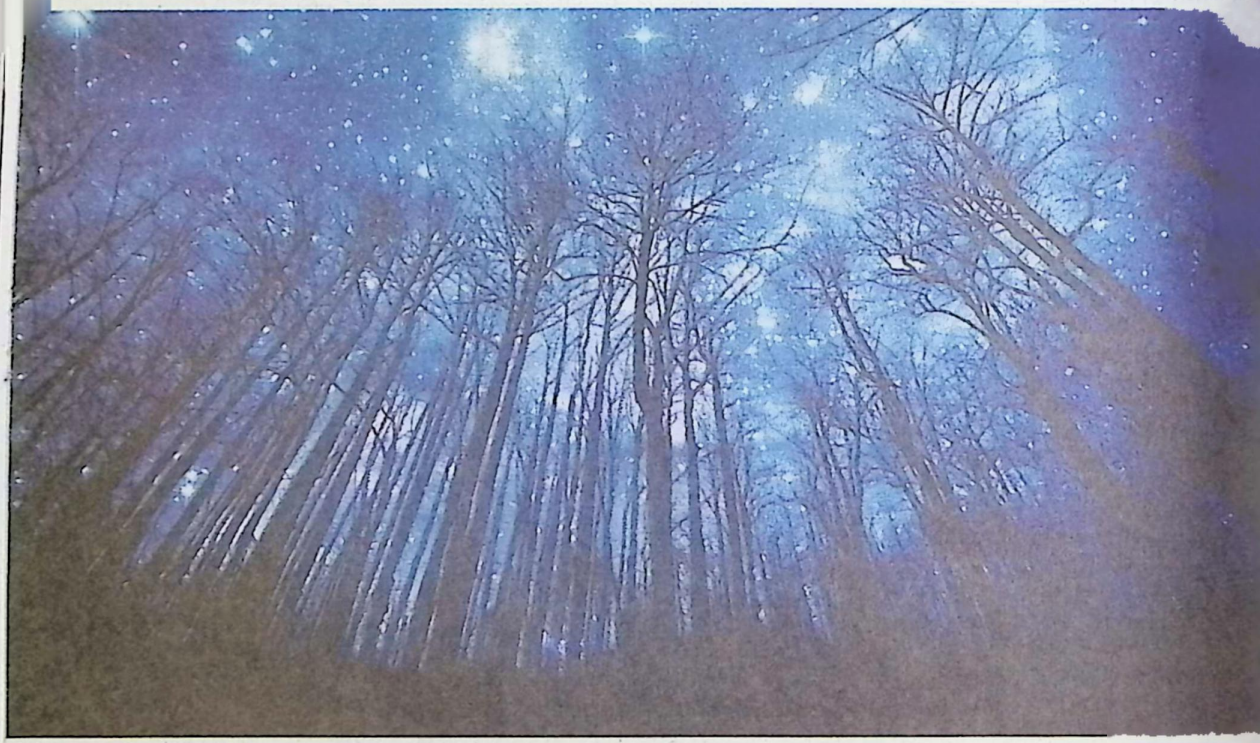
Tonight, Thursday night, the month of August begins. In the zodiac circle of planetary and stellar alignments, this is the month of Leo --of lions and lionesses. Last week, on a clear calm night such as tonight, my own lioness of a mother celebrated her eightieth birthday in her home, in the house she helped my father build brick by brick, hand in hand, through years of struggle filled with work and laughter and success which erased the fleeting dots of pain in the long journey together.



Moon Drops on My Mother's Rooftop

REBECCA HAQUE

Tonight, as I walk on the rooftop of my mother's house, my home too now, I look up at the grey cloudy shape-shifters gliding silently across the starry sky. My eyes reflect the lunar light and my heart offers praise to the Almighty for bestowing His grace and blessing upon this house. It is almost midnight, and the stars shine like the sheen of rippling mercury. The steady cool breeze ruffles my hair, lifting the loose ends of my sheer cotton *kameez*. From my wide rooftop oasis, I look across eastward at the neon-lit new modernist structure of the circular tower. I look north , across the tops of buildings on the block, and gaze at the rising monolith which dwarfs me on my dusky third-floor rooftop. The dull thud-thud of hammered rods are followed by sudden sizzling lightning flashes of the welder's craft.

On the west, the neighbour's large mango tree gives me a partial view of more towers rising to give birth to flats to house more crowds in this city's diminishing flatland. I turn to look southward, to feel the full flow of the wind's current on my face, eerie in the half-lit shadow of the two magnificent mango trees, *gopalbogh* and *langra*, planted by my mother on the edge of the lawn so many years ago, when she and my father pooled their joint savings and began putting in the plinth and the foundation of the house. Those were days of frugality and hope, never of privation and despondency, years of capital investment and gain in the growth and investiture of their four children.

There was once a third tree in the middle, grown from a sapling brought from Rajshahi by my spouse for his doting green-thumbed mother-in-law. Fate cut it down one ferocious *boishaki* night, hit by lightning in its infancy. I did not see it happen. I was far away at the time, across oceans and continents , near the Atlantic, soothed by the