

Kashful fields and starry nights: The magic of autumn in Bengal

In the grand symphony of changing seasons, autumn comes as a pause.

Summer is the time when days are long and nights are warm. It is the time of the year when the sweltering heat seems like a chastisement of the Earth and those that inhabit it.

But, as the days roll on to monsoon, Mother Nature takes a scenic look in a burst of vitality. The heavenly downpour cools the planet and gives rise to vegetation that comes as sustenance for us.

And then comes autumn, the melancholic days that pass by as a gentle interlude before the arrival of winter. True, winter-time is just a cameo, yet the days are harsh and chilly — even if for a short time.

Spring is a distant reality, once again brief but spellbinding!

Fall, in this part of the world, may not be marked by a profound stillness.

Nevertheless, even in Bengal, the season brings about noticeable changes.

In autumn, the fields get packed with slender “kashful.” As the white, feathery plumes sway along with the autumn breeze, they create a haunting image.

Out in the wilderness, the leaves here do not turn into a lovely shade of crimson, but they too, wither away as the stalks detach themselves from the stems and rustle softly on the ground. The trees, devoid of leaves, look like mere skeletons of their once lush selves!

The sky turns into a beautiful hue of blue, crisp and clear. The nights offer breath-taking views of the heavenly bodies — stars twinkle and shooting stars leave behind fiery trails against the dark backdrop as meteors burn against the Earth’s

atmosphere.

As the month of Ashvin arrives, a transformation takes place and the Hindu community prepares for their grandest celebration — Durga Puja! The Earth wakes up to a vibrant spectacle, where the boundaries between the mortal and the divine fade.

The nine-day celebration at the “pandals” plays host to the Mother Goddess and on the tenth day, bids her farewell as she once again leaves her mortal abode for the celestial home.

The air gets heavy at the pandals, with the scent of burning incense and the sounds of the beating drums. People dance to the beat and move with the music; the married folks colour themselves as they immerse in “sindur khela.”

Durga’s blessings are felt in every mortal’s smile and every shared moment as people unite in a spectacular scene of love and mutual respect.

And just as autumn exits with a note for the climate to change yet again, it leaves an open invitation for us to pause and sets the mood for introspection. It is as if the falling leaves remind us of the beauty of letting go, embracing change, and finding solace in the cycle of time. Autumn serves as the rightful reminder that even amid change, there is a space for renewal.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif

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