

How Many of Our Present-Day Children Get to Look at the Night Sky and the Stars?

When we were young we faced dog days boldly like lion cubs. We had neither air-conditioners nor refrigerators. To tell the truth we did not have even a ceiling fan above our heads. We fought summer thirst with water from earthen pots. We spent our daytime playing under a pair of two huge makizham trees, which stood in our backyard. Their thick foliage turned the hot summer sun into the springtime full moon. They not only gave us shade but also showered on our heads their tasty, orange-colored, fragrant fruits. When it comes to shade, people talk highly about mango and neem trees. As far as I have experienced, the shade of a makizham tree is the coolest and the thickest.

We used to wear only half-trousers during summer, leaving the upper portion of our bodies also bare. Parents of many of my playmates never allowed their male children to wear shirts during summer.

At 11 AM, we would assemble under the makizham trees and start our games. We would play a game or two with tops and then take our turns at the crude swing suspended from the tree branch.

At noon we would retreat to the pumpset near our well to bathe in the cool water to our hearts' content. A big tub from which water used to overflow in cascades was our swimming pool. The well we had in our house was hardly 30 feet deep. It sat on an inexhaustible water table. Daily during the hot months there used to take place a competition between the motor of the pumpset and the well. The motor would try its best to render the well dry. But the well always defeated the motor by producing more

water through a number of weeping holes, more than the amount of water the motor could pump out. Even now, after many years, whenever I recall my childhood summer days my heart gets filled with gratitude for that well-wisher well.

Summer nights, which we spent on the terraces of our houses, were unforgettably sweet. Our supper consisted of only simple stuff such as upma, and butter milk-rice with lemon pickle, but when we ate them under the star-studded night sky they became so tasty and hearty. Talking among ourselves about school, games and friends, we would slide into sleep one by one. Sometimes we would wake up in the middle of the night to find ourselves being silently and lovingly gazed upon by the moon. How many of our present-day children look at the night sky and the stars? There is zero interaction with nature.

We parents lock them away from the Sun, Moon, Wind and Rain, great gifts of God. Life's journey was undoubtedly easier when we walked holding Mother Nature's hand.



Makizham is a tropical evergreen tree also known as Spanish Cherry or Bullet Wood.



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Falling in love with Autumn

There are two types of people in this country, and their differences have nothing to do with politics. "There are those who love fall and those who hate it," says Harvard psychiatrist John Sharp, who wrote *The Emotional Calendar*, which explores how we feel about the seasons and why.

Fall marks the end of the relaxed summer, which some people mourn, and the return to routine and order, which others relish. Kim Petrolo doesn't like fall because it means shorter days. "I enjoy coming home from work while it is still light and having time to take a leisurely walk with the dogs, or at least not feel like I need to eat dinner and go straight to bed in preparation for the next day," says Ms. Petrolo, of Pittsburgh.

A street away, Laura McGaha, who grew up in Texas and worked summers for her father's home-building business, can't wait for fall: "I hate the summer months, because in Texas the low was 85 degrees at 5 AM and [I] longingly wait for the first day of fall."

Even those who live near the season-less equator or where temperatures are more constant have layers of memories and traditions associated with different times of the year that influence their emotions. In the Jewish faith, whether you live in Arizona

or upper Minnesota, fall marks Rosh Hashana, the new year, and a time of reflection and fresh starts. Personal experience, too, affects how we feel. If someone close died in the fall, the season may always carry some sadness.

The most common fall memory is going back to school, a pattern for years of our early lives. "I think it makes a lot of people feel industrious and energized about possibilities. Things become more linear, and some people find that really works for them," Dr. Sharp says. "Others don't." Thirty years after graduating, some adults still get a bad feeling in the pit in their stomach because it reminds them of leaving for college or struggling to get good grades. When September approaches, Lana Shami, also from Pittsburgh, feels uneasy. "It used to be because it meant another dreadful, challenging school year and the end of carefree summers," she says. She's been out of school for years, and her own children are eager to return to classes. But the vexing feeling remains. Now she dreads the back-to-school preparation, mothers' PTA-related responsibilities and regimented schedules.

(Source: Clare Ansberry, The Wall Street Journal)



"Autumn is a second spring where every leaf is a flower."

— Albert Camus

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