

Growing up surrounded by music

SAIF SAMMI RAHAT

Growing up, while filling out school forms, I'd fill in mother's occupation with "singer". Until pretty late into my school life, I hadn't realised that this wasn't that common.

My family's musical background dates back to my grandfather – Sohrab Hossain. Born on April 9, 1923 in present-day Nadia district, India, where he was raised in a conservative Muslim family. His only exposure to music being the gramophone. He grew up being infatuated by music and, with aid from his brother, would strip down at the banks of the Churni river in the middle of the night to swim across and back to get singing lessons from his *ustad*. The community had strictly disapproved of his attitude towards music but he did not budge.

While performing at a concert in Ranaghat, his voice was discovered by Abbasuddin Ahmed, who took him to Kolkata to meet with then-prime minister, Husseyn Shahid Suhrawardy, to get him a job as a singer. *Nana* would go on to sing till his last breath on December 27, 2012.

In my childhood, I got used to seeing my mother and aunt on TV. Often, when getting ready to go to school, I'd turn on the TV and watch, half-asleep, my mother singing on screen. Classmates would come up to me to inform me that my mother had been on TV that morning.

Once a year or so, she'd leave for India to perform on Nazrul Jayanti for a week. Those weeks would be anything but fun for me, but at least I got to eat amshotto when she came back.

An interesting story about my parents – they had gotten married in 1993 but my father had first seen my mother about seven years prior. My grandfather and mother were performing in BUET where my father was a student. Unfortunately, those two events are totally unrelated.

When COVID hit, my mom and aunt started getting calls from different people to perform in live programmes, which means sitting in front of a laptop, and singing two or three songs. My mother wanted someone to remain standby in case anything went wrong. That meant me and my sister were on duty. Some days, my mother and aunt would have an event together, meaning I sometimes had to run between two flats in case something goes wrong on one side and my sister can't figure it out. But I'd get a huge dinner at my aunt's afterwards so I didn't complain.

All that said, one would assume that I'd be good at singing. But, no. My mother tried to teach me to sing. Every Saturday morning, she'd make me sit with the kids from upstairs in front of the harmonium. Eventually, I stopped showing up and I never ended up learning to sing. Do I regret it? Absolutely.

All in all, music is pretty significant in my life nonetheless. From watching my father learn to sing and play the harmonium to recently celebrating my grandfather's 100th birth anniversary, music has been a recurring theme throughout my life, which really just makes me question why I have such bad taste in music. Maybe, my sister is right and I really am adopted.

Saif Sammi Rahat claims to have bad taste in music but also listens to Lana Del Rey. Reassure him at facebook.com/saif.s.rahat



ILLUSTRATION: FAISAL BIN IQBAL



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Soft drinks shouldn't be your go-to thirst quencher

In the sweltering heat of 43 degrees Celsius, a bottle of cold drink is hard to avoid. For someone like me, who could chug on a 1.25-litre bottle of cola by myself, it took me very little to stop myself from taking a single sip this entire heat wave. I just had to find out what was inside the drinks I was putting in my body.

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Let's look at a typical bottle of cola. It contains 44 kilocalories (kcal) per 100 ml, which is around 264 kcal for a 600 ml bottle. Although it is equivalent to a meal itself, it is adding no nutritional value at all. A cold drink followed by a meal ends up being two meals at once.

However, if you think a bottle of soft drink in the middle of the day to get rid of dehydration might be harmless, a recent study shows that hydration with soft drinks might exacerbate dehydration by discharging extra water from the body. So, rather than helping you with dehydration, soft drinks end up making you feel more dehydrated, along with renal injury and hypertension in the long term.

A typical bottle of cola also contains around 10.6 grams of sugar per 100 ml, which converts to 63.6 grams for a 600 ml bottle. If we consider the orange flavoured drinks, the sugar content is even more. According to American Heart Association (AHA), our body needs zero extra sugar daily. The sugar we consume from fruits or vegetables is enough to meet our daily requirements. However, the AHA suggests a stricter added-sugar limit of no more than 100 calories per day (about 24 grams) for adult women and no more than 150 calories per day (about 36 grams of sugar) for men. The added sugar can result in diseases ranging from hypertension to type-2 diabetes.

If you think diet drinks might be a better option, you should know that artificial sweeteners such as Aspartame, Saccharine, and Sucralose are used in diet cokes. Although Aspartame's direct link to cancer has

been debated for over the years, artificial sweeteners have been linked to diabetes, weight gain, IBS, and Crohn's disease.

In orange flavoured drinks, food colours such as E110 are often used which includes side effects such as allergic reactions, nausea, nasal congestion, kidney swelling, and even chromosomal damage. In children's diets, E110 is heavily discouraged since it agitates hyperactive behaviour and loss of concentration in children. Although E110 is banned in multiple countries across the world, Bangladesh allows it to be used under caution.

Sodium Benzoate is also used in most common cold drinks which, when in contact with light and heat, can convert to Benzene, a commonly known carcinogen.

Unfortunately, beverage companies keep trying to legalise these additives by political lobbying and continue to use these additives in countries where the restrictions are more lenient. Since consumer health is the least of their concern and heat waves aren't going anywhere, it's up to us to truly understand the effects of what we consume.

References:

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2. Dhruv Rathee. YouTube (August 17, 2022). *Dark Reality of Cold Drinks.*
3. American Heart Association. *How Too Much Added Sugar Affects Your Health Infographic.*

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com