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DID YOU KNOW?

# RAMADAN STARTS ON DIFFERENT DATES EVERY YEAR

Ramadan's dates change each year because the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle rather than the solar cycle used by the Gregorian calendar. As a result, Islamic months are shorter, lasting about 29 or 30 days, compared to Gregorian months, which usually have 30 or 31 days. Since the two calendars measure time differently, their months do not align consistently.

Because of this difference, Ramadan shifts earlier each year on the Gregorian calendar. Its beginning and end fall on different dates annually, moving back by about 10 or 11 days compared to the previous year. Although the change is gradual, over time, it allows Ramadan to occur in different seasons.



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# WHY LOVE THROUGH A PRISM IS THIS SEASON'S QUIET STANDOUT

**SARA KABIR**

Every now and then, an anime comes along that doesn't just entertain you; it inspires you to the point of creation. *Love Through a Prism* is that kind of show. Quiet, romantic, and unexpectedly affecting, it has slowly built a devoted audience not through spectacle, but through mood, character, and a keen understanding of why we still crave gentle, emotionally grounded love stories.

At first glance, the premise feels familiar. Lili, a young artist, leaves Japan to study painting at London's prestigious St Thomas Art Academy and consequently meets the magnetic, mysterious Kit Church. What unfolds next is equal parts coming-of-age and art school melodrama. It's the classic underdog setup: a new city, a new language of belonging, and the constant struggle of proving yourself against all odds. But the series refuses to rush, instead lingering on homesickness, creative doubt, and that fragile in-between where you're still forming your identity. Watching Lili navigate unfamiliar streets and form friendships, I couldn't help but think of my own days as an international postgraduate student in Glasgow – learning how to belong in a place that felt both magical yet distant, finding small anchors in architecture, routine, and the beauty of creative work.



Visually, *Love Through a Prism* is on another level. Nearly every frame feels thoughtfully composed, as though it could be lifted and hung in a gallery. The skies stretch wide and dramatic, clouds gathering with quiet weight. Historic buildings rise in careful architectural detail. Museums glow softly in filtered light. Cobblestone streets, rolling hills, windswept beaches, and even passing animals in the background are rendered with attentive affection.

And it's not only what you see. The sound design hums gently beneath the visuals, from the echo of footsteps in vast halls to the hush of open landscapes. The

music never overwhelms a moment. The voice performances are understated but emotionally precise. Even the episode lengths vary when necessary, refusing to force the story into a rigid structure.

The series' central romance is one of its strongest draws. The pairing of a warm, expressive female lead with a more reserved, quietly enigmatic counterpart is a trope audiences know well and love for good reason. Here, that dynamic unfolds slowly and organically. Feelings grow through shared routines, hesitant conversations, and moments of unspoken understanding. It is a slow-burn romance

built on proximity and patience rather than dramatic declarations.

What truly deepens the experience, however, is the ensemble cast. The anime leans into the found family trope with sincerity, surrounding its leads with characters who have their own ambitions, insecurities, and personal stakes instead of being background figures existing to support a romance. Over time, shared disappointments, disagreements, late-night conversations, and small acts of care bind them together into something resembling a family.

The early 20th-century European art-school setting adds another layer of charm. The subtle tension between nobility and ordinary lives intersecting gives the narrative texture without overwhelming its emotional core. Art, in this world, becomes a social equaliser, a space where hierarchy softens, and connections are forged. Ultimately, *Love Through a Prism* may not be the loudest anime of the season, but it's one of the most heartfelt. In a crowded media landscape, it's a reminder that softness, sincerity, and chosen family still matter – and that sometimes, the stories that glow the longest are the ones that speak the most gently.

*Sara Kabir is a dreamer, writer, and literature lover. She currently teaches English at North South University. Find her musings on Instagram @scarletfangirl.*

# Last-minute study strategies that actually work



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

basic, but there's a specific way to study smart once you know exactly what you have to study. Right away, you need to accept there's a chance you may not be able to cover everything, so from the syllabus, you need to analyse everything critically. If it's mathematics, figure out which topics form the foundation for the others. If it's a theory, make a list of the biggest chunks of the syllabus or the parts the teacher focused on most. Often, there's a central topic that acts as the backbone for everything else. Learning that foundation first, or focusing on the largest and most emphasised sections, should be your priority. When you're short on time, you need to use your brain while it's still functioning, so targeting what is most likely to appear on the exam is essential.

Trying to complete the entire syllabus with no sleep can easily lead to a worse performance and a lot of wasted hours. Instead, figure out how much time you have and divide the syllabus across that time. If it's maths, focus on only one or two problems from each chapter, preferably the hardest ones, and keep the solution book handy; use the solution book to understand the problem-solving process to follow. If it's theory, your best bet is to organise ideas through simple flowcharts, connecting concepts logically rather than trying to memorise everything.

This is also not the time to make perfect notes; it's the time to maximise actual learning. This means using active recall, talking through ideas out loud, and quizzing yourself constantly. You also need to recognise whether something truly needs memorisation or whether understanding it once is enough to reproduce it later in your own words.

Another thing during cramming is that we often end up in a strange daze after a few hours, where we're reading it but not retaining it. Reading the same pages again might feel productive, but it rarely sticks under pressure. If it's maths, actually solve problems without looking at the answers first. If it's a theory, close the book and try to explain the topic from memory, then check what you missed. The goal is to simulate the exam as closely as possible, because struggling a little while practising helps your brain remember far more than simply rereading.

Regardless of the time crunch, try to aim for a minimum of five hours of sleep; create flowcharts before you sleep to revise as soon as you wake up. If there's any part of the syllabus left, utilise each minute to understand definitions so that the premise of the topics is at least familiar if it does end up showing at your exam. Caffeine and, if possible, a shower before the exam will help; if you can, try to do a fast go-through of the syllabus with your friend before the exam.

It's not impossible to do well with less time on your hands. It's just incredibly challenging, awfully stressful, and a huge risk to take; there's nothing quite like the draining exhaustion that hits as soon as the exam ends. The biggest thing is that this is all avoidable, so while it could be a one-time thing, try not to make it a habit.

*Tinath Zaeba is an optimistic daydreamer, a cat mom of five, and a student of Economics at North South University. Get in touch via [tinathzaeba25@gmail.com](mailto:tinathzaeba25@gmail.com).*

**Another thing during cramming is that we often end up in a strange daze after a few hours, where we're reading it but not retaining it. Reading the same pages again might feel productive, but it rarely sticks under pressure.**

**TINATH ZAEBA**

There's a reason everybody recommends studying before the test instead of doing it at the last minute. There's also a reason there are so many strategies for studying effectively without leaving everything to the night before. It's the simplest way to avoid brain overload, stress, and the lack of sleep that usually comes before an exam. But if you find yourself in that predicament – barely one night or less left before a dreadful exam, and wondering whether you can even pass – there are still a few strategies you can pull off. You'll only need a lot of audacity, some caffeine, and an almost unreasonable amount of determination.

The first thing is your mindset. Don't overthink the number of hours left or countdown to them; you need to believe that you can absolutely do it. Instead of overthinking the marks you can get, you need to focus on trying your absolute best in the time left. Try to make the environment as comfortable as possible, like having lo-fi beats, lighting a candle, and creating a space where you won't be disturbed. Try to reduce distractions and de-stress, and put yourself on a Pomodoro timer to stay focused.

Before studying, it helps to pull up the syllabus. It sounds

# What happens inside our bodies WHEN WE'RE FASTING?

ZARA ZUBAYER

For younger people, Ramadan rarely arrives during a pause in life. It arrives in the middle of exams, tuition classes, late-night study sessions, or work. Unlike adults with stable routines, students are often running on tight schedules and irregular sleeping routines. Between commuting and cramming classes before iftar time, there's often a brief buffer period before easing into the routine of Ramadan.

By the time the Fajr adhan fades and we crawl back into bed, most of us aren't thinking about metabolism, insulin, or glycogen stores. We're thinking about unfinished assignments, early classes, and whether we'll survive the morning grogginess without caffeine.

But while we go about our day, attending lectures, flipping through notes, and fighting off sleep, something far more fascinating is unfolding quietly inside us.

That slightly disorienting sensation is not random. It signals a cascade of metabolic adjustments as the body recalibrates to a sudden change in daily habits. On the first day of fasting, our systems enter adjustment mode. As blood glucose levels drop and stored energy reserves are gradually depleted, students may feel the change almost immediately. The effects of this may include a heaviness behind the eyes, a slower response in class, or a dip in stamina that wasn't there the night before.

Young people often experience fasting differently, not because they're weaker, but because days demand more of them. The developing brain consumes substantial glucose, metabolic rates tend to be faster, and many adolescents are still growing. When fasting begins, all the simultaneous internal reactions can make the initial slump feel more pronounced. It's not just physical activity and intense

workload. Ongoing growth and hormonal development also demand high energy.

By the third day, the body starts settling into the flow of fasting. Digestion slows, giving the system a healthy break, while energy is gently redirected toward repair and maintenance. Fat gradually becomes the main fuel, replacing the glucose that has already been used up. Subtle changes may also emerge, like a few stubborn pimples, mild muscle aches, or heaviness in muscles.

All this can feel strange at first. Younger people notice it in their skin, while others notice a little stiffness in their legs after walking around campus. These shifts are part of the cleansing through fasting, clearing out what it doesn't need and preparing for the steadier energy that comes later in the week. Amid these changes, focus often begins to sharpen, and a clear-headed calm starts to creep in, even if the afternoons still feel a little heavier than usual.

Not only are the effects felt during the fast, but there's also a magnetic pull towards post-iftar naps during Ramadan. Stuffing ourselves with heaps of carbohydrates, fatty fried fritters, and sugary beverages results in an immediate trigger of insulin release, blood sugar regulation, and digestion. Blood flow to the digestive system increases, and what follows is often called a food coma. The sudden surge of drowsiness that envelopes us after eating is a result of that, and this is part of the reason why we're usually advised to stick to lighter eating.

Sehri proves to be a daunting task for many, especially for school and university students. The world is still half-asleep, the streets are quiet, and the bed seems impossible to leave. It arrives like an uninvited guest at dusk, demanding carbs, eggs, and water before anyone has fully opened their eyes. Skipping it seems tempting, but it's

the one meal that can keep the brain sharp and the energy from crashing before iftar. What we eat during sehri sets the tone for the remainder of the day, so it's important to be mindful of what not to eat as well.

By the second week, fasting starts to feel steadier. The body begins to adjust: fat quietly replaces the sugar that ran out in the first days, like a backup generator slowly kicking in. Blood sugar rises and falls more gently, and doesn't play tug-of-war with focus as it did before. Old aches or lingering soreness surface at times, like creaky hinges being oiled, as tissues repair and inflammation calms. Thoughts sharpen, tasks feel easier to complete, and even the afternoons don't drag as much. The body quietly learns to do more with less, like a well-tuned machine getting used to new fuel.

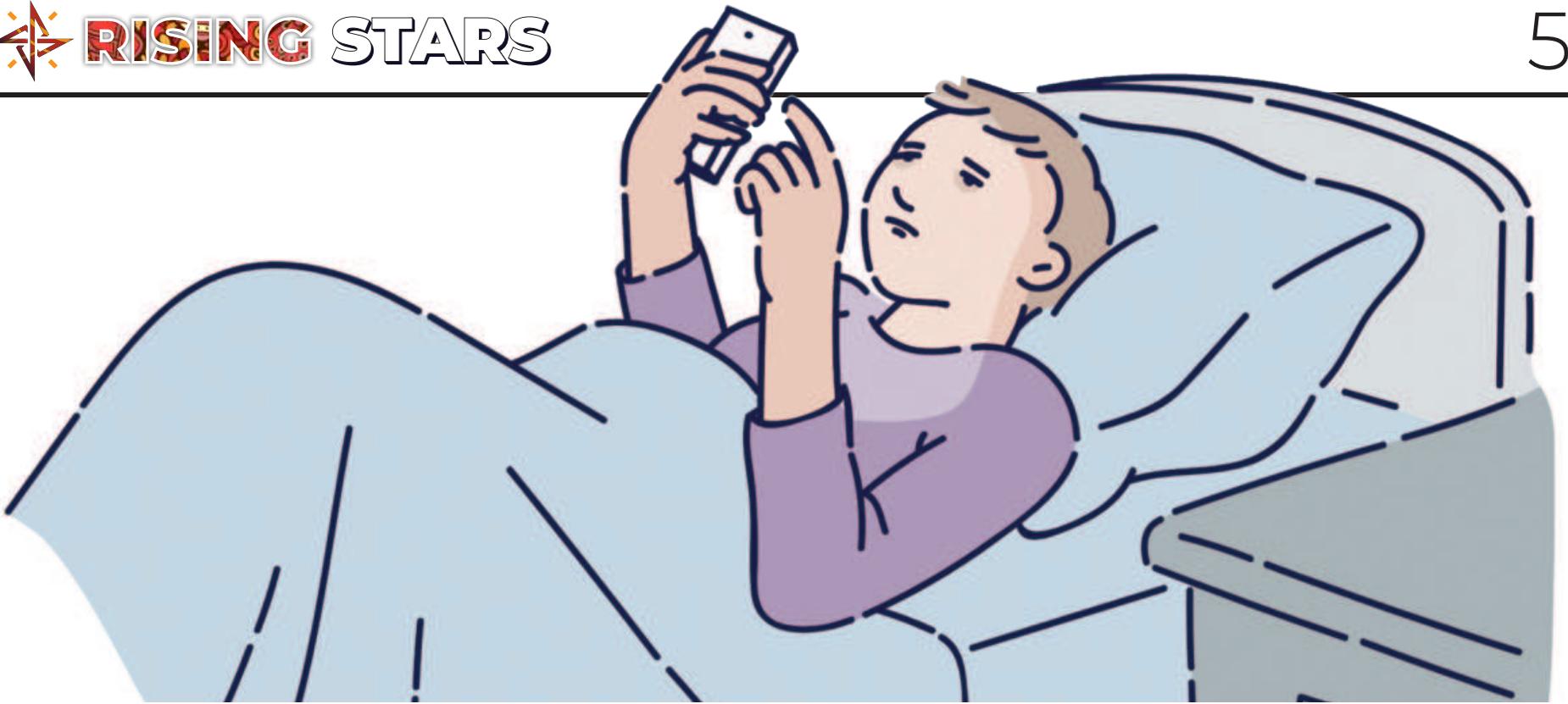
Though chaotic at first, the month of Ramadan shifts life into a stable routine that leaves one feeling empty once it's over. The calculation of rushing from classes to arrive home before sunset, the impromptu iftar plans with friends, and the spiritual atmosphere bring about a tangible tranquility. Beneath these rhythms, the body gradually learns to manage energy, repair itself, and sharpen the mind. What begins as fatigue and distraction slowly transform into clarity, calm, and endurance.

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*Zara Zubayer is a half-pianist, occasional grandma (she knits), and collector of instruments she never learns. Suggest a new hobby she won't commit to at zarazubayer1@gmail.com*





# When early childhood is spent in front of screens

## The impact of excessive and unregulated screentime

**AFRA ANIKA NAWAR KHAN AND PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR**

Wherever it is that most of us find ourselves these days, there is one scene that is common almost everywhere we go: a child lounging about, their eyes glued to a screen. It is not uncommon for children these days to be given access to screens even before they can speak in full sentences. While we may be compelled to blame parents for this choice of theirs – perceiving them to be aloof – what we must reckon with is that modern parenting is stretched thin between tiredness and social pressure. The truth remains, however, that a device used for convenience can devolve into dependence. A predicament which cannot be taken lightly for the well-being of both children and parents.

Fatema Akter Sweety, mother of two (a three-year-old and a one-year-old), recalls how her older son was once very active and loved playing outdoors before being introduced to digital devices. “Whenever we try to take him out now, he refuses and comes up with various excuses,” she says. “Sometimes he claims he is hungry, knowing he can watch videos while eating.”

Initially, Fatema avoided handing over devices to her son, but during her second pregnancy, she found it challenging to keep him engaged through other means, as she was unable to attend to him as closely as she used to be.

She does mention a few positive observations, though, stating that her son has learnt the names of colours through the videos he watches on YouTube. Nonetheless, Fatema remains wary as she still monitors her child’s screentime at all times: “Whenever videos in foreign languages pop up, or he swipes to short-form content, I immediately change it, or ask him to turn it off. Sometimes he reacts aggressively and refuses, but other times he listens. This behaviour, however, seems to be specific to devices. If I take away a book he’s flipping through, he is far more cooperative.”

For young parents, it seems the experience is a shared one. Saba Tasnim, mother to a two-and-a-half-year-old son, shares that she allows her child access to screens when he is eating: “My son is only allowed to watch YouTube Kids, and that’s mostly on the television.”

Saba further adds, “We have restricted his usage of mobile phones. It’s only when we are travelling and inside the car that he has access to these videos. Even then, it’s for educational purposes only.”

Sara\*, mother to a two-year-old and a six-month-old,

also confirms that her children are only allowed to watch YouTube Kids. Sara says, “The internet is a strange place, so it is essential that I keep a check on what they are watching on it, especially at their age. I make sure that they only watch videos from which they can learn the alphabet and poems.”

“While having access to these videos has allowed my children to learn things from a very early age, there are some downsides too. My daughter, for instance, imitates a lot of negative things from a character called Cussly,” she adds.

Screen addiction amongst children, driven by highly stimulating, dopamine-inducing content, is a growing concern, with children averaging several hours of daily screen time, far exceeding recommended limits.

To understand the impact of excessive and unregulated digital device use on children’s mental well-being and developmental growth, we spoke to Mostak Ahmed Imran, who is the first-ever and only British Association of Play Therapists (BAPT) approved Play Therapist in Bangladesh, and a child psychologist at MindSheba. According to him, when screentime replaces responsive human interaction during the early stages of development, the risk of speech delay and social withdrawal increases. While not all children exposed to screens experience developmental delays, the likelihood of such concerns rises when digital engagement substitutes relational communication.

“In one case, I was working with a school-going child who spent prolonged hours on her mobile device. Gradually, her communication style began to resemble the digital content she consumed. She spoke in dramatic tones, almost mimicking serial dialogues or YouTube characters. Spontaneous, emotionally connected conversation was limited. When advised to keep the device away after 11 PM, she agreed but responded that she would throw her parents’ phones out the window if they used theirs. This indicated not only dependency but also emotional dysregulation and modelling,” he says. “Excessive exposure can reduce attention span, increase irritability, disturb sleep, and limit social engagement. Children may prefer virtual stimulation over peer interaction, which affects social integration. Besides, children learn through observation. In clinical settings, I often notice that parents who struggle with their

child’s screen overuse also have significant digital habits themselves.”

He continues, “In a separate case, I treated another child of around three-and-a-half to four years of age, who would constantly hover his thumbs in the air resembling a scroll-like motion, even without a device present. His expressive language was significantly delayed. Later, we came to learn that, during his parents’ working hours, he was frequently handed a phone by his caregiver.”

Mostak emphasises that children require quality time with their parents but acknowledges just how exhausting it can be for parents. This remains a real challenge. However, solutions do exist.

“Sustainable alternatives could include routinely structured connection time involving children in simple household chores, rotational toys and creative play, outdoor activities, or reading together. The most powerful alternative is relational presence. When a child feels emotionally engaged and connected, the need for constant digital stimulation reduces naturally,” he explains.

Often, parents find it difficult to restrain children who have already developed a dependency on screens. Addressing this issue, Mostak explains that sudden or forceful removal of devices is not advisable, as abrupt restriction often increases behavioural resistance. Instead, he recommends more effective strategies, such as family-wide digital boundaries, scheduled screen time instead of unlimited access, starting small with device-free meals and bedtime, and encouraging imaginative and sensory play. The goal should not be punishment, but rather strategically replacing the overuse of devices with meaningful engagement.

Amidst the constantly shifting tides in the lives of parents, there is a lot they need to keep track of. In that long list, they are now required to be mindful of the ubiquity of screens as well. Although substituting them can be difficult, it is possible through emotionally engaging with them.

*\*Name has been changed upon request.*

*Afra is a student of English Literature at North South University. Write to her at [afraankhan20@gmail.com](mailto:afraankhan20@gmail.com)*

*Punomi Rahman Titir is a contributor at The Daily Star. Find her at [punomirahman@gmail.com](mailto:punomirahman@gmail.com).*



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

**PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR**

I've always wondered whether the presence of excessive noise irritates the plant population the way it does animals, birds, and, of course, humans. The area where I used to live always had some form of construction work going on, both indoors and outdoors. The constant churning of concrete mixer drums and deafening sounds of heavy machinery had become indispensable parts of everyday routine, and as someone who owned lots of plants, I couldn't help but ponder whether it affected them too. Turns out, I wasn't entirely wrong.

To understand how noise might affect plants, we first need to understand what sound actually is. Sound is a type of vibration that travels as waves through air, water, or solid objects. When something moves back and forth – like a speaker, a drum, or a machine – it pushes nearby air molecules, creating sound waves that spread outward. Our ears catch these waves and turn them into signals that our brains interpret as sound. Loud sounds simply mean stronger, more powerful vibrations.

Plants do not have ears or brains like animals do, so for a long time, scientists assumed that sound meant nothing to them. Plants were thought to thrive in silence, reacting only to light, water, and soil. However, modern research has started to challenge this idea. Plants may not *hear* in the human sense, but they can sense vibrations in their surroundings. These vibrations can come from wind, insects, animals, or even machines.

Even more surprisingly, plants themselves can produce sound waves. Recent studies have shown that stressed plants, such as those that are thirsty or injured, emit tiny clicking or popping sounds at very high frequencies. These sounds are ultrasonic, that is, above the human audible range, meaning humans cannot hear them without special equipment.

When these sounds are slowed down into a range we can hear, they resemble faint pops, similar to popcorn or bubble wrap. Scientists believe these sounds come from

a process inside the plant called “cavitation”, where tiny air bubbles form and collapse inside the tubes that carry water. In simple words, when a plant is under stress, its internal water system creates noise.

However, the story doesn't just end here. The presence of noise can also affect plants indirectly by changing how animals behave around them. In order to investigate this, a major study was conducted in a natural gas extraction area in New Mexico. Researchers handpicked certain areas that were made noisy using gas compressors, while nearby areas remained quiet. Artificial flower patches were placed in either of these locations.

The researchers focused on two important plant-related services provided by birds: pollination and seed dispersal. Hummingbirds, which pollinate many flowering plants, were found to visit flowers more often in noisy areas. As a result, plants that depended on hummingbirds received more pollen and were more likely to reproduce there. In this case, noise indirectly increased pollination.

Another bird, the Western Scrub-jay, plays a crucial role in spreading the seeds of the pinyon pine tree. Scrub-jays collect seeds and bury them in the ground, helping new trees grow. However, these birds strongly avoided noisy sites. In their absence, rodents, primarily mice, became the dominant seed removers. Unlike Scrub-jays, mice typically consume seeds rather than store them for future use. This shift meant that although seeds were still removed from the ground, far fewer were dispersed in a way that allowed them to grow into new trees.

Later on, surveys counting the number of seedlings in each of the areas supported the conclusion. Quiet sites contained approximately four times more young pinyon pine seedlings than noisy sites. Importantly, other environmental factors such as soil type, vegetation cover, and adult tree density were similar between locations. This strongly suggests that the reduced number of seedlings was a consequence of noise-driven changes in animal behaviour rather than differences in habitat quality.

These findings demonstrate how noise pollution can

reshape plant communities by altering the balance of species interactions. In a few cases, plants may benefit from increased pollination in noisy environments. In others, essential dispersal processes may collapse when key animal species abandon disturbed areas.

Over time, such changes can modify forest structure and biodiversity. Because trees such as the pinyon pine grow slowly and live for many decades, the effects of reduced seedling dispersion may take years to become visible. Nevertheless, the long-term consequences could be severe, as fewer mature trees would mean reduced habitat and food sources for many other organisms.

The mechanisms underlying these species-specific responses remain an area of active research. Birds that use low-frequency calls are particularly vulnerable to acoustic interference, as their vocal signals overlap with the frequencies produced by industrial noise.

In addition, noise may mask the sounds used by predators and prey to locate one another, increasing stress and reducing foraging efficiency. Conversely, some animals may be attracted to noisy areas because these locations offer refuge from predators that rely on sound for hunting.

Although the sounds produced by plants themselves have yet to show evidence of being intentional or functioning as forms of communication, there remains a strong possibility that human-generated noise could exert significant effects on plant life. By shifting the behaviour of pollinators and seed dispersers, sound pollution indirectly affects reproduction, seedling establishment, and long-term forest dynamics, highlighting the vulnerability of plants to the ecological consequences of persistent anthropogenic noise.

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# THE LIMERENCE OF GHATS



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## MONICA MARGARET GOMES

Two days ago, in his text, my nephew mentioned the names of the *ghats*, the launches of my village that used to touch during their journeys, and continued it till the 80s. Nostalgia embraced me right at that moment, and I rushed back to my childhood. A six-hour journey, yet hardly boring, as it glided its Alice across the Ichamati. Only this time, the *shushuks* (river dolphins), not the rabbit, guided her to the wonderland.

Every now and then, their black shiny bodies jumped out of the water, which was really spectacular. As I stood on the deck and watched this show, all seemed so unreal. With dreamy eyes, I would wait for the sight of the *ghats*. 17 *ghats* with 17 interesting names.

Each one had a distinct scenery with a warm, natural atmosphere, and as I heard a name, I could picture it

instantly. Some *ghats* had trees or bamboo bushes lined up on the edges, while some were only muddy or grassy land. People would wait eagerly for the vessels to arrive. With different purposes, some got on, and some got off. The *ghats* were 30 to 45 minutes or an hour away from each other.

Sometimes I would run to my *ma* or *baba* to ask for the names of the *ghat* the launch had just touched and the one coming next. My heart would jump with excitement at the thought of nearing our destination. At every *ghat*, vendors along with people boarded with their fish and veggies. *Jhal moori*, peanuts, boiled eggs, and a farrago of local sweets and biscuits were also there in the baskets hanging from the necks of their sellers.

My taste buds eagerly awaited munching on these all through the journey. Though I was not allowed to have outside food on a launch journey, my parents never

stopped me from having it. Maybe they wanted me to enjoy the journey wholeheartedly. The vendors got off at the *ghats* connected to the *bazars* to sell their field-fresh veggies and freshwater fish. All these seemed so magical, as if a jukebox had sprung open. Meeting relatives who boarded from various *ghats* added extra spice to my happiness. They seemed to be people from another world. They would invite us to visit their houses during our stay, and before getting off the vessel, they reminded us of our promise once again. My joys knew no bounds, as I imagined myself visiting village after village, spreading my wings and relishing each second. Breathless with contentment, I waited for the last one, our destination, to appear. And as I set my feet on the dry grassy land with a pounding heart, the wet air of the *ghat* would whisper into my ear, "It's time to write your fairytale."

At each *ghat*, boatmen would eagerly wait for passengers to hire them. We always took the boats my grandma used to send for us. I still remember one of the boatmen's names. It was "Wahid" who used to take us to the village most of the time.

There was another *ghat* called "Baloogonda", but the route to it was different. Till the 70s, people used this route to reach their villages. From that *ghat*, horses were the only means of transportation. As our launch neared the *ghat*, with my siblings, I would stand on the deck looking for horses with eyes wide open. The sight of the horses of different colours and sizes standing on the *ghat* with their guards assured us of the comfort of homecoming.

When I jumped out of the launch and landed on the sandy earth, excitement nearly killed me. Then we would start choosing horses and plead with our father to hire the ones we wanted to ride. But most of the time, our grandma sent her known horse guides for us. There were three or four of them. Among the guides, I can recall only one name, "Gobindo".

The *ghats*, each a storyteller, offered us a promise to take us to our destination. We didn't have much then, but we had a natural, stress-free childhood, which was vibrant in every way, teaching us simplicity.

Monica Margaret Gomes is an English literature and language teacher.

## Names written on lists

### TASFIAH LIAKAT

My father used to tell me  
Remember that you are human  
Even as the world tries its best to erase you  
With rote headlines, indifference, and silence  
So, I write my name in fading ink  
Everywhere I can reach  
On cracked walls, broken doors, inside my wrists  
If—no, when—I disappear  
Someone would know I was here  
My hands are busy counting the dead  
Yet I still dream of a place  
Where the sky is never angry  
And bread is always soft  
A world where names are not written on lists  
Nor mispronounced in the news

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



# The dangerous normalisation of beauty consumerism among young girls

**FARHEEN RAHMAN**

Across the globe, and as a booming trend even in Bangladesh, young girls are being drawn into a dimension that was never intended for their delicate skin or developing minds. This is not just about beautification and concerns over remaining youthful; it's more about premature consumerism without an ounce of thought given to necessity, commercialising insecurity by posing products as a solution, and brands discovering a new target demographic to boost sales and audience.

Today's girls are now introduced to the beauty algorithm, which is very easily marketed via social media. Social media algorithms aggressively push skincare routines, makeup tutorials, and aesthetic "self-care" reels to increasingly younger audiences. One click on a "morning routine" video quickly turns into a feed dominated by serums, contour sticks, and anti-ageing advice. The normalisation of 10-step skincare routines for pre-teens has somewhat redefined what childhood looks like. When a 14-year-old discusses exfoliating acids, under-eye patches or non-transferable lip stains, it is no longer experimentation; it can be termed "adultification". Slowly, but surely, the lines between playing dress-up and performing adulthood have blurred.

Abroad, the term "Sephora Kids" has emerged to describe high-end cosmetic stores being crowded by pre-teens and them purchasing products meant for mature skin. What once seemed like a Western consumer culture anomaly is now swiftly transcending borders and reaching Bangladeshi urban regions. Luxury skincare brands, serums, and cosmetics that are influencer-endorsed are increasingly visible in the hands of secondary school pupils. This has become very common as online marketplaces and international shipping have erased barriers. It has also given rise to the idea that owning trendy products is about belonging. This is how brand literacy

now starts in childhood.

Like in all eras, insecurity is one of the greatest weapons of the beauty industry, which at times is induced by them in others to pose themselves as the solutions. Even the modern marketing strategies do not simply sell products; they manufacture problems. Advertisements subtly frame pores as flaws, texture as imperfection, and normal acne as a crisis requiring immediate correction or cover-up. High school dramas and films further romanticise hyper-polished

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appearances. Teenage protagonists are rarely the age they portray with real skin, real bodies, or real imperfections.

The concept of self-care was once considered a balance between adequate sleep, a nutritious diet, physical activity, emotional well-being, hygiene, and skill-building. Today, it has been reduced to aesthetic rituals, fancy GRWM videos, that is, "get ready with me" for the day. Face masks replace fitness, serums replace sleep, and makeup replaces confidence. Self-care is increasingly mirrored with consumption. A generation

is being taught that well-being comes in a bottle instead of through discipline, creativity, restraint, or education. This reframing is particularly dangerous in developing societies, where access to nutritious food, sports facilities, and skill-building opportunities should be prioritised over imported beauty trends.

Makeup and skincare today are no longer marketed by distant, unattainable adults; they are increasingly promoted by younger models and influencers. These fresh-faced brand ambassadors with flawless lighting, carefully curated routines, and thousands of followers are positioned as relatable "big sisters". However, in reality, they are celebrities trying to promote products.

For pre-teens, admiration quickly turns into imitation. When someone who looks 17 speaks about "colour correcting" or "fixing texture", the message feels like advice from a trusted peer. Moreover, there has been a rise in child influencers who receive public relations or PR packages to advertise cosmetic products, making pre-teens believe that buying these products is not optional and it is necessary to "glow up" instead of growing up correctly.

It needs to be stated very clearly that this is not an argument against makeup. Nor is it a call to police self-expression. Experimentation can always be creative and joyful. But when beauty becomes obligation rather than play, when self-care becomes consumerism, and when childhood becomes a marketplace, society must pause. It is necessary to reconsider how aggressively beauty culture is influencing young spaces and minds. Most importantly, it is necessary to make young girls aware that their value and confidence cannot be bottled.

*Farheen Rahman is an IR student who occasionally wonders why some people suffer from colour-blindness and see everything in black and white when it comes to analyzing global events. Reach her at farheen.subah@gmail.com.*



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