

Yuvaah

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**Subverting
Expectations**



Indians don't have curly hair.

This is one of many misconceptions I've been fed since I was small. I have wild, frizzy hair that can't be contained. No matter how much oil my amma massaged into my scalp, my hair was constantly dry. Within a few hours, I would somehow have a halo of frizz on my head again.

When I think of Indians—family, friends, Bollywood actors—everyone always seems to have shiny, wavy hair. It didn't help either that I go to a mostly white school. Most of the other girls have pin-straight hair. I remember soaking my hair until it was weighed down with water, trying hard to comb it through, to pretend that it was like everyone else's—straight. Normal.

Not everyone I knew had straight hair, however. One of my best friends, Ella, has the most voluminous, curly hair I've ever seen. I'd never considered there might be similarities between our hair because it wasn't supposed to be similar.





There was one definition of “Indian” I knew—wavy-haired. That’s what I was supposed to be. It wasn’t until one conversation with Ella that she suggested I try her methods. I said I was sure they wouldn’t work for my hair type. She looked at me incredulously. “Dude. Your hair is curly.”

Ella gave me instructions: comb my hair wet, put in a conditioner, and watch what happens. I was skeptical, but figured there’d be no harm in trying. And I was awestruck. As my hair dried, it didn’t expand into the cottony frizz I’d expected. Instead, it clung together in defined curls. For the first time I realized that there wasn’t anything wrong with my hair—I’d just been treating it wrong. I’d been forcing it to do something it wasn’t made to do. I’d never realized it, but that halo of frizz had been trying to tell me something. That it wouldn’t be contained. To stop comparing myself to other people, and be who I really am. To stop limiting myself to one definition of what I could be.

I now love the hair that I used to hate. It’s taught me to reject what others tell me I should be. Now, when I look at my hair, I see my own freedom. I see me being shamelessly myself.

There are only girls and boys.

Girls only date boys.

This transformation with my hair also suddenly became applicable to other aspects of my identity, too—other misconceptions I had just accepted. It happened around the same time that I discovered that I’m bisexual and genderqueer. I struggled with this realization for quite a while; in fact, it caused me a lot of guilt. My parents had immigrated to this country from India to give me a better life, not a harder one. I knew that being closeted and queer was not what they had in mind for me when they came all the way to the U.S.

But my journey with my hair made me realize: I was living the better life my parents had wanted for me. They didn’t come here for me to be limited, but to be free to be happy. To be myself. They came here so I wouldn’t have to struggle the way that they had. So why was I making myself struggle—either by being ashamed of my hair, or staying in the closet? Why had I been so sure that straight was always best?

I learned to let go of other’s expectations. I’m queer, Indian, American, curly-haired, and none of this can fit into one box. I’ve realized that I’m multifaceted and ever-changing and therefore—not despite—I am always myself.

-Written by Dhivya Sampath &
Edited by Kerry McElroy

1988

Amid the sand,
And the waters,
Lie the remnants of war, and the debris of artillery,
Scattered and sprawled.

The shrapnels lay there,
Testaments to the destruction,
That once had grown on these borders, And in this land.

Fragmented, Fragmented, Fragmented.
We live in pieces that desperately try to cling onto one another,
By the familiarity of recalled names,
By the collections of frankincense and saffron,
By the recitations of du'ua and praises to newly weds,
By the identical patterns of *henna* stains.

The wind has uttered words that only I recognise,
Words that were heard through cars adorned with *dahab* [gold],
Words that nest and flow Off Of *hooyo's* [mum's] tongue.

Afrikaay, is maqal,
[Africans, listen to one another]
Midab gumaysi diida,
[Reject the colour of despotism]
Diida! Diida! Diida!
[Reject! Reject! Reject!]

The cost of conflict and strife,
[How long can we point these stained fingers at people
who are now only a Recollection?

At people who are merely in the memoirs of crying mothers?

- Written by Xamda

Kesariya, Reprise



Saffron is the color of love.
Aroma transcending all else, vivid
Color saturating the biryani Mother spent hours
Toiling in her rasoī for her children in our
Childhood; we rebuked cardamom besmirching our
Palate. Mother abhors the flavor of kesar fervently, yet Its
Luscious hues envelop the whole world in its shadow.

Saffron is the color of the journey.
Stigmas, ephemeral, plucked from purple croci
Reinvigorating fields long decadent, heart divorced from body
Sardine-packed into claustrophobic crates tinted red
Destined for transactions in another land, auctioned in
Farmers' bazaars and "exotic" emporiums alike.

Saffron is the color of autumn.
Fallen leaves relegate the world their canvas
Derelict trees resolve themselves of
Toxins of red, orange, yellow, brown;
Absent earthy green unveils dormant shades of saffron,
Concluding another cycle in a tree's finite, prolonged life.

Saffron is the color of flames.
Man's foremost discovery, our beacon of hope,
the Catalyst that sets ablaze splendor and squabble
Wreaking havoc on all caught by Its gaze, leaving many witnesses,
yet Clears the land, fueling new life to grow anew henceforth,
only Through conflagration emerges what's lost once more;
Its Guiding light, warmth shields us from inevitable frost,
the Funeral pyre that shall absolve my incandescent
Soul upon my impending demise, releasing me,
Laying the stones for my path to another life.

Saffron is the color of sunset, yet also sunrise.
Amidst a vibrant array of scarlet, vermillion gold, the
Horizon, extending across the visual plane, contests with
Asmaan, the infinite canopy projecting above,
Over who may usurp the privilege of being
Custodian to the rising and falling saffron luminary.

Saffron is the color of life.
Kesar manifests many forms in our natural world;
Shades of neglected leaves, hues of vindicating flames,
Contrasting tones of dawn and twilight,
Reminding us of life's cyclical nature;
Every performance has its encore, yet
What must end now must commence once more,
Evoking as much comfort as it may fear.

- Written by Sahil Gandhi

NOT JUST BROWN NOT JUST INDIAN

Getty Images x Creative Access x iStock funded project celebrating traditions and history of south Asian countries from a female perspective, of British South Asians based in London (like myself). As Eelam Tamil Woman, like most other south Asians just made the assumption I was Indian as if that's the only country to exist in South Asia and I feel our cultures and traditions are class as one (hence the name). Working with various South Asian women from their respective countries, I wanted show parts of their stories, especially during South Asian Heritage Month to really amplify these stories. Each country focus on different aspects of its culture.

- Photographed & Written by Mathushaa Sagthidas



Nepal focuses on sisterhood but also the influence and importance of caste in their culture - such as having traditional wear that reflects the caste their families are from. (From left to right) Suprina wearing Sherpa Bokhu, often worn in Eastern Nepal; Reeya wearing Gunyo Cholo, a national dress for Nepalese women; Rojina wearing Limbu dress, the traditional dress of the Limbus are mekhli and taga. Limbu dress, the traditional dress of the Limbus are mekhli and taga. Namuna wearing Sherpa Bokhu, often worn in Eastern Nepa; Ronisha wearing Gurung dress, which includes a blouse which is called as cholo that is tied on the front, over a long pleated skirt called phariyā. A band is wrapped around the waist and a head cloth completes the outfit.

Nepal (17th April 2022)
| Art Direction @suprinax
| Styling & Make Up @namii.ie

Afghanistan focused on celebrating familial love, celebrations and nostalgic traditions - something that we represented through the girls who are in shot, as they were cousins (like the team behind this particular concept), by focusing on their childhood together and close relationship through the matching dresses. We recreated memorable moments from the team's childhood - such as having tea/ chatting or even dancing.

Afghanistan (9th April 2022)
Art Direction & Styling @ha_ida |
Make Up @saida_hoss |

Models @fariaaa_r @susansherifi @farhat_draws @adria.pawz |





For India, we focused more on the celebration of Holi by letting the models create a Rangoli pattern (colourful and symmetrical patterns made out of white and coloured rice powder). This is known to be an everyday practice in Hindu households, however the colours are preferred during festivals and other important celebrations, such as Diwali. Rangoli have different names based on the state and culture, such as Kolam in Tamil/ Sinhala culture. The rangoli represents the happiness, positivity and liveliness of a household, and is intended to welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good luck.

India (26th March 2022)
 | Art Direction @radhika.photos
 | Styling @aishah.p
 | Make Up @yasitskrishy
 | Models @shaw.22 @aaliya.choudhury @yasitskrishy
 | Weave pieces by @by.sapna
 | Rangoli (Kolam) by team



Pakistan focuses more on beauty traditions such as the influence of hair oiling often for deep conditioning of the roots and tips of their hair, which leave a thick and shining hair as a result and wearing surma (kohl eyeliner), which is thought to be a natural beauty hack that does not just soothe the tired eyes or keeps eye infections away but also makes women look more beautiful with bigger, and more accentuated eyes.

Pakistan (22nd May 2022)
 Art Direction & Styling @armani_sy @marijumjeelani |
 Make Up @marijumjeelani | Models @marijumjeelani
 @_bismahsaleem @henab30 | Henna on @_bismahsaleem
 by @makeupandhennabyabidaa |



Bangladesh focused on showcasing the beauty and celebration of their New Year - Pôhela Boishakh, which is celebrated on 14 April in Bangladesh and 15 April in the Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura, and Assam by Bengalis regardless of religious faith. The importance of visiting family and friends, new year salutation and wearing Red-White Attire is essential. It was a beautiful busy shoot full of traditional food and drinks that brought back some nostalgic memories for the team.

Bangladesh (7th May 2022)
 | Art Direction @waheeda_art @asaaaaa...zz
 @waheedarahmanmair
 | Styling @asaaaaa...zz
 | Make Up @voidinayah @in.eyear |
 | Models @waheeda_art @waheedarahmanmair
 @asaaaaa...zz @mariakayum_ @tartine_

Sri Lanka/ Tamil Eelam focuses more on the history of our grandmothers and the lifestyle they had back home, whilst highlighting/ showcasing the beautiful but key differences and similarities between Tamil and Sinhala culture. Such as the difference in sari styles/ design but the value of wearing warm tone saris for both communities. The other being what gold jewellery means to us - as the Sinhala women only wear one very significant and long chain; whereas Tamils tend to wear a few essential and religious pieces.

Sri Lanka/ Tamil Eelam (23rd April 2022)
 Art Direction by @bypeoni @sahxni |
 Styling/ Draping for Sinhala Models by @sahxni |
 Styling/ Draping for Tamil Models by @keertspleats |
 Make Up by @rebeccaraveendran |
 Models @rebeccaraveendran @nirodha.perera @lourdesnavo @workbypreel

