



THE LAADLI BLOG

Why Laadliyan?

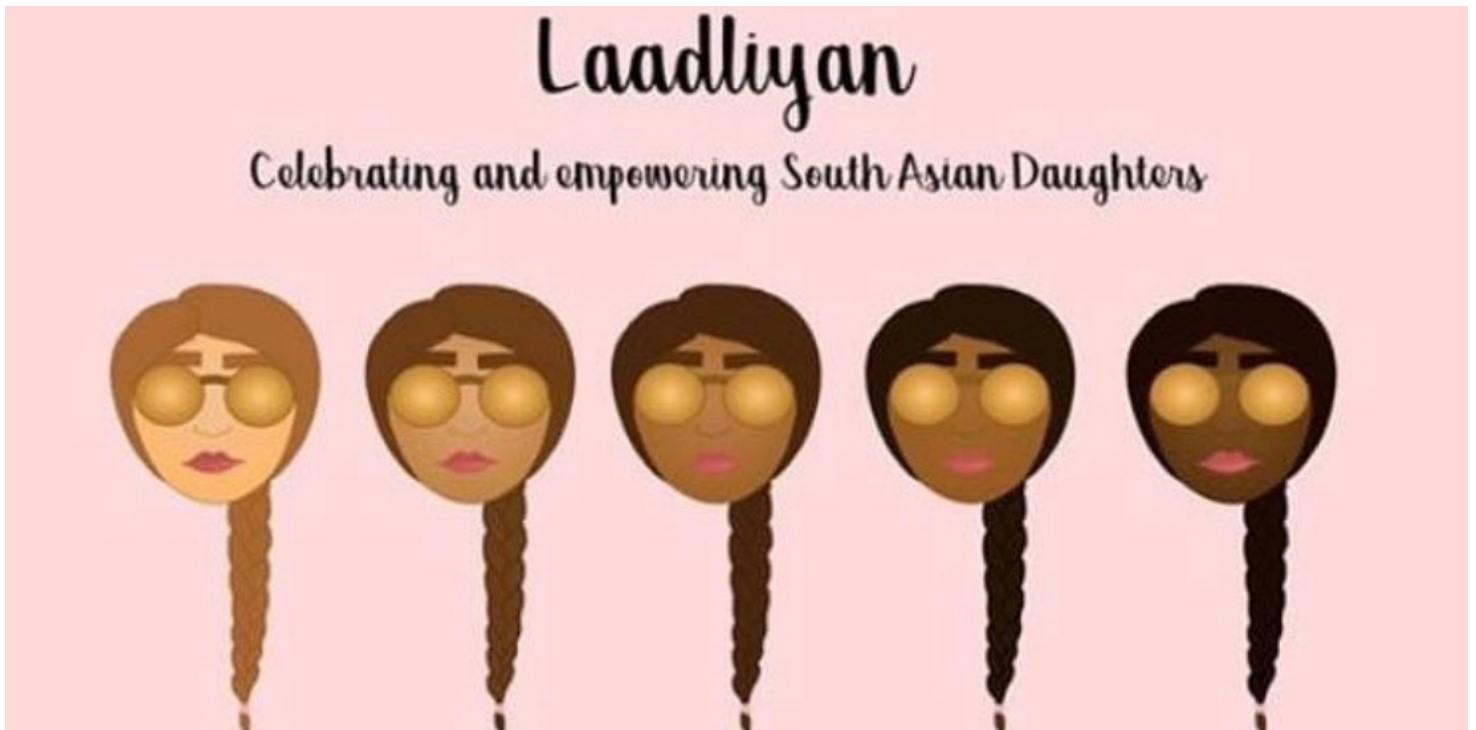


Image created for Laadliyan by ZHK Designs

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September 13th 2021

Oftentimes, I get asked why I started Laadliyan. Although I haven't yet been able to pinpoint any one reason, there have been so many different experiences that paved the path for Laadliyan's creation. A variety of things since childhood made it very evident for me that I would be perceived differently to the world because I am a daughter. It was the fact that growing up, and even today, being a daughter was always more of a reminder from others about what I can't and shouldn't do.

For as long as I can remember, my older brother has been the highlight of my extended family's world. I have aunts who have never called my sister and I their nieces. They have only ever referred to us as "our dad's daughters". It always felt as if we weren't worthy enough of being acknowledged as their family members. As if we are not a part of their lineage. That was my earliest memory of experiencing son preference.

From having been told by a male family friend to "Shut up. You don't know anything. This conversation isn't for you", to having an aunt invite my family over for a BBQ in the summer because my brother (her one and only nephew) was home for a few weeks, to having a random uncle comment on a picture of me with my dad on my dad's Facebook saying "you should be proud of your son", I have experienced son preference in pretty bizarre and indirect ways. Although it's not extreme, it still hurts. It makes me feel invisible and not enough.



For my parents, all three of their children, a son and 2 daughters, have been equally celebrated and loved. Academic opportunities, travelling, extracurricular activities, milestones like graduations and 18th or 16th birthdays were provided to all three of us. The smallest of successes have always been celebrated in our household. Not once have I heard a comment from my parents about having two daughters. For them, my brother is their laadla (beloved son) and my sister and I are their laadliyan (beloved daughters). Their support and love has given me an abundance of energy, confidence and so many opportunities. That is how and why I founded Laadliyan.

The experience of gender inequity and son preference for me has never been direct from my parents. It's always been from the outside world. I know many girls and women have experienced much more extreme versions of this outdated belief and regardless of how much the world has changed, the preference still exists. Sometimes it is very explicit such as sex selection and other times it is more subtle like my experiences I shared above. All I know is that when a daughter is loved, empowered, cherished and celebrated just like a son, she has all of the confidence and self esteem that she needs.

For me, son preference isn't just preferring sons over daughters. It's also diminishing a daughter's self confidence and self worth by repeatedly (directly or indirectly) reminding her that she is not good enough. It is also causing the daughter to believe that she is secondary to all of the men in her life. It is also reminding her that she will have to work twice as hard to be noticed, successful and valued. It also reminds her that although she cannot be the person to carry the family name forward, she will carry the whole family's honour on her shoulders until the day she dies.

Laadliyan was created to remind families of the importance of daughters, just like sons. It was created to shift the narrative of daughters being less than sons or not a crucial part of a family or community. It was created to remind daughters of all ages that they should never underestimate or undervalue themselves. It was created to celebrate each and every laadli who has felt that she was not worth it. Laadliyan will continue to exist and do exactly that until we can get rid of son preference and value and love everyone equally.



Manvir Bhangu is a gender equity advocate, community builder and researcher. Manvir founded Laadliyan at the age of 21. In 2018, Manvir was honoured with Brampton's Top 40 Under 40 by the Brampton Board of Trade. She has a BA in Human Rights & Human Diversity and Criminology from Wilfrid Laurier University and a Masters from McMaster University in Globalization and the Human Condition.