



# we are hers'

## AL LIFE STORY OF HER CHAMPION



and quick to judge a single mother, but ours was too busy making a life for us and looking at the positives. My mother was very close to her parents and they came to live with us for many years when she separated. After my grandfather passed away, it was my mother who dedicatedly took care of her mother, Surjit Kaur. Their bond was incredibly special. My grandparents were a great source of strength for my mother and to her children.

"The will to thrive led to my mother owning a fast-food business for many years, which she eventually sold for a good profit. The stability of the business helped in providing our education. Then in the mid-90s, she went back to study at adult education, qualified to be a teachers assistant, and taught at a local primary school. That strong urge to help others led her to complete an NVQ in caring, specialising in dementia care so she could help the elderly. My mother's compassion has no bounds and she also volunteers at the local cancer charity shop.

"By 2012, all us children had flown the nest. Instead of taking a well-earned rest, my mother studied further and registered as a foster-carer. She now welcomed other children from broken homes along with mothers and babies. She helped them all find permanent homes. Helping others became a core theme of our mother's life.

"The adventurous spirit never left her and she has always found ways to express herself. Soon after her separation, she took up karate and swimming classes. She's a very talented potter, a keen gardener, and in 2014, at the age of 61, ran the London Marathon to raise money for the charity Refuge, and to keep my sister company, who was also running it.

"My mother trained to become a yoga teacher in 2015, aged 63, and teaches free local classes for women at the Gurdwara every week as well as doing classes locally in the gyms. She enjoys sharing the benefits of a positive mind and good health with others. She truly has made an extraordinary life for herself and still continues to break down barriers. She has learned how to ski and even took plane-flying lessons. This is the spirit that is my mother, constantly learning, opening up to new experiences and adventurous at heart.

"If you ever meet my mother, you will be amazed at her grace and quiet tenacity. She's a woman of few



words, but when she does open up, you hang on her every word. She has inspired so many local women to want more from their lives.

"She certainly made a mark and took a huge step for the betterment of others, but I wonder sometimes the true cost of that step that she had to go through and am sure all single mothers do. I do wish she had married again, but mum says we were her priority. My mother says she is more than happy and her life is full of joy.

"We are incredibly protective of her. She is our strength and we are hers. As her children we really can call her our champion! It wasn't easy raising six children, but she did it with love, grace and no nonsense. Her dream for us was to be happy, educate and develop successful careers, which we have all done. Our dream now for her is to live her life just the way she wants, and you know what, she is."

# Women's History Month: The EE columnists and their inspirations

MARCH is Women's History Month, which highlights the contributions of women in history and contemporary society, including those who have inspired others. Here, *Eastern Eye* got some of our resident columnists to share their thoughts on the high-profile ladies who have inspired them in some way.



**Mita Mistry:** There are many strong female inspirational role models that have influenced me throughout my life. They include Oprah Winfrey, for using her platform to bring positivity, and Maya Angelou's powerful wisdom for changing generations through poetry. Also, Nigella Lawson for inspiring me to try to be a domestic goddess; Malala Yousafzai's fighting for female rights; and Mother Teresa's compassion, and charity work.

Then there is Audrey Hepburn's humanitarianism and showing vulnerability is strength. Emma Thompson and Meera Syal for humour, acting and intelligence. Jessica Ennis juggling motherhood with athletic achievements. Inspiring authors who speak their mind and write excellent novels like Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, Anita Desai and Shobha De. All women who speak their truth, follow their heart and juggle relationships, motherhood and careers inspire me.



**Shai Hussain:** Malala Yousafzai is the unstoppable voice supporting girl's education, who shook the Taliban to its core. Next door in India hailing from a village in Uttar Pradesh, Sampat Pal Devi began the Gulabi Gang at the age of 16, inspiring women from neighbouring villages to join the fight for women's rights. She's now a national hero for women welfare and empowerment.

Finally, though many are familiar with stories of celebrities like Alyssa Milano associated with the #metoo movement, few remember the name of the lady who founded it. Tarana Burke began the movement in 2006 to raise awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual abuse and assault in society and to no longer be silent. Hollywood undoubtedly made it mainstream, but Burke's contribution shouldn't be ignored. For me, nothing is more admirable than fighting for a fairer world.

**Dimple Sanghani:** There are many inspiring ladies that I admire and see as role models. I love everything about my favourite actress Shabana Azmi. She is very kind, compassionate and a strong iron-willed woman who believes in equality. She inspired me to push myself everyday and be the best version of myself. She is unique, original and I feel she is my own Shabana Azmi.

I admire Oprah Winfrey for her confidence, incredible rise from humble beginnings and ability to inspire others. I follow what Mother Teresa said: "Do things for people not because of who they are

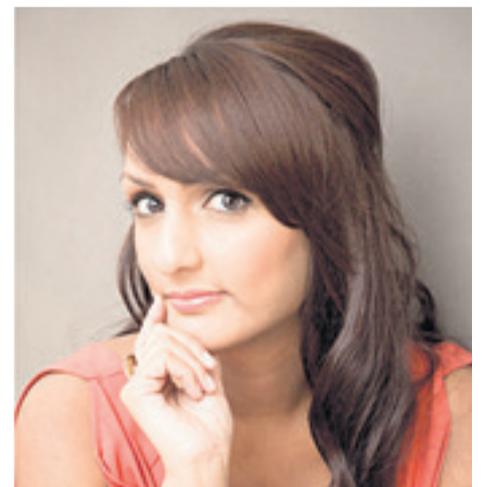


or what they do in return, but because of who you are." These ladies are true essence that defines beautiful inside and out. So they are my icons.



**Gurj London:** The inspirational Adele is beautiful and extremely talented, but also humble and connected to her British roots. She tells the world this is who I am, like it or lump it, and never conformed to society's or Hollywood's ways. Her relatable music has connected with so many all over the world and showed women they are not alone. She also shows women that you can be successful in whatever you want to do if you work hard enough, and is all about girl power.

She represents women, and for me, every woman is inspirational, no matter what size, colour, shape or nationality. Women create life, nurture families, build homes and protect their loved ones. To all the women out there, you are my inspiration and I appreciate you.



**Priya Mulji:** For me, Priyanka Chopra represents the modern Indian woman. Ballsy, beautiful and clever, she has become a global ambassador for India and done things no Indian woman has on the global level. And that inspires me to do my best! She has remained grounded throughout her rise. Priyanka you are amazing and I hope you climb to even greater heights.

I also admire the inspirational Twinkle Khanna. Her impressive achievements include producing the film *Pad Man*, which represented a huge change for Indian cinema. I am so proud she produced this movie. She is also a writer, so that makes her one of us. Mrs Funnybones is feisty on social media and written great books in her own unique way. She dares to be different and hats off to her for that. Keep shining like the star you are and breaking boundaries.