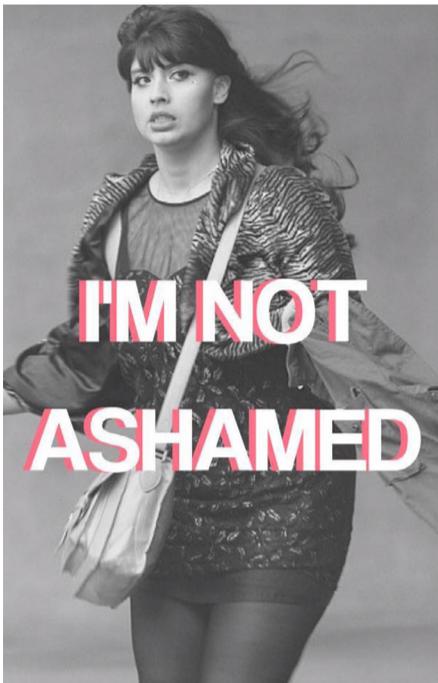




**Priya  
Mulji**

Follow Priya Mulji on [www.twitter.com/priyamulji](http://www.twitter.com/priyamulji)  
or log onto [www.priyamulji.com](http://www.priyamulji.com)



## The Jameela Jamil effect

I LOVE social media just as much as everyone else does. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, I am on it all and it is mostly a lot of fun. But there are many cons to this way of interacting with the world. However, there is currently a social media superhero who is conquering this space and that is British-born actress, presenter and future world leader Jameela Jamil, with her amazing I Weigh campaign.

The scrutiny that women face on a daily basis is enormous. Scrutiny about their weight, whether they are married or not, if they have kids or not. One of the biggest things women are made to feel rubbish about is their weight. It often starts at home with things like, 'oh, Priya you are looking healthy', which is the south Asian way of saying you have put on weight. The other place women are often scrutinised is on social media where we are victims, but at the same time, do it ourselves by judging others for what they are wearing or by commenting on their weight.

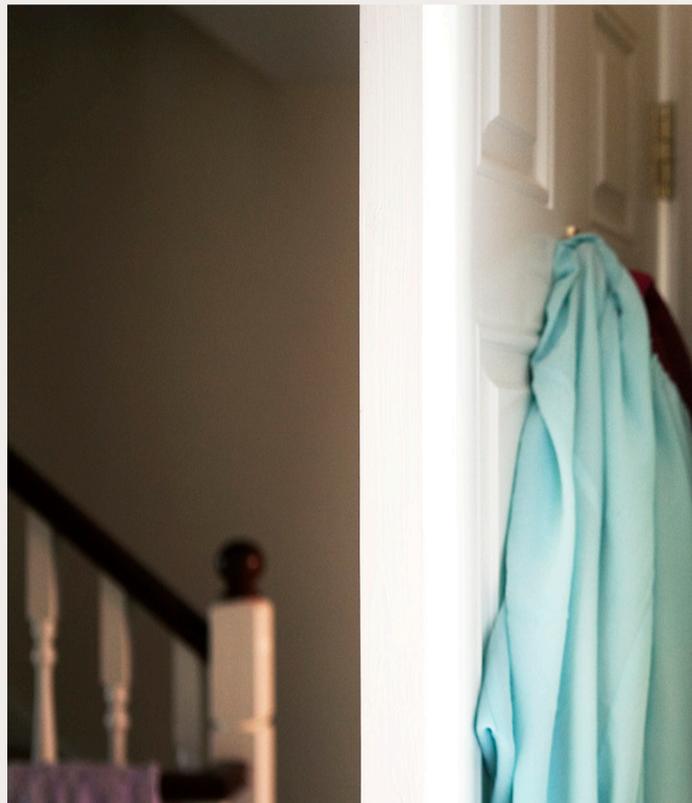
I have been following Jameela on social media for a while now. Her online I Weigh campaign has garnered a lot of interest from across the world. The campaign encourages people to share their weight in their value. For example, I would say, 'I weigh my column, my job and my amazing family and friends, and the fact I can choose a great red wine'. *The Good Place* star has called out celebrities for endorsing weight loss teas, when all they do is give you diarrhoea, and good on her for standing up to the Kardashians. Yes, they make a lot of money from these campaigns, but do they really need to?

I do think that the effect Jameela is having on women around the world is so positive. I have started seeing women sharing pictures, which they regard as imperfect and also tweeting with things like this which I saw the other day, 'tried on a few different bathing suits before I got ready for the beach today and was feeling bad until I remembered that @jameelajamil would hype me up no matter how chubby I felt, so thanks girl, love you.'

We all need to big each other up more and celebrate one another's flaws. We all need to love each and every dimple on our body, the not-so-straight teeth and our glasses. If you want to wear make-up, wear it. If you don't, you don't have to. It's about celebrating and proudly being you. Every time you hear a little voice inside your head saying, 'I think I look fat' tell yourself, Jameela would love me and if she can, I can! I am amazing, I am a goddess and I deserve all the goodness in the world!

# 'I learned that the

## HOW ACE PHOTOGRAPHER TURNED FILMMAKER REHMAT RAYATT



by ASJAD NAZIR

**ACE** British photographer Rehmat Rayatt has shown through her impressive body of work that she has an eye for the unusual and an ability to capture something unique.

She has used that visionary ability in powerful new movie *Toxification*, which premiered at the recent UK Asian Film Festival. The documentary tells the true-life story of the devastating impact of fertilisers and pesticides.

More than 16,000 of farm workers have allegedly committed suicides in a 15-year period; many farm workers also suffer from physical and mental illnesses.

The eye-opening documentary signals the arrival of a new filmmaking talent.

*Eastern Eye* caught up with Rehmat to talk about life in photography, her future plans, *Toxification* and the challenges of making it.

**What first got you connected to photography?**

My grandfather, Bhai Gurmit Singh Virdee, was a photographer. I grew up surrounded by excited conversations about shutter speed and aperture, and still remember the moment

I picked up my father's DSLR and began shooting with it, around 11 years old. The camera had been recommended by my grandfather who had the same model; a Nikon D70. My first time shooting on film was when I was 14 and needed to take an inexpensive camera with me on my first solo trip to India. From that moment, I was hooked and went on to study photography at A-levels and for my degree.

**How did you feel having your first photography exhibition?**

My first photography exhibition of all my work, in Newcastle in 2016, was extremely humbling. To have my photographs take up three floors of an entire gallery was surreal. Another huge moment was being asked to exhibit my series of work, *Don't Fence Me In*, at the Southbank Centre London as part of the *Women Of The World* festival. I feel so blessed to have been given incredible opportunities to share my work with such large audiences. It's not easy navigating your way in a male-dominated industry, and I hope that my success inspires other women to take up careers within industries that are traditionally associated with men.

**'My life changed forever'**

**Which of your photographic projects is closest to your heart?**

*Portraits of my Grandmother* is a work in progress, a project inspired by my photographer grandfather. Naturally, he took thousands of photographs of his wife, my grandmother, documenting beautifully the story of migration from East Africa to the UK. He passed away suddenly, and without knowing why I was doing it, I began almost desperately photographing my grandmother. In hindsight, it became my way of coping with the grief. For around 10 years I've been capturing my grandmother's experience of loss and connection with her faith. The series begins with photographs taken by my grandfather and continues in my photographs.

**Tell us, what is the secret of capturing the perfect photograph?**

Don't think. Just feel. It's easy to get caught up in the technical side of photography, but that's only the beginning. Go beyond that - it will free your mind to enter the state of 'flow', which is where creativity happens. One of my favourite photographers, Henri Cartier-Bresson, said, 'your first 10,000 photographs are your worst' and I think this is what he was getting at.

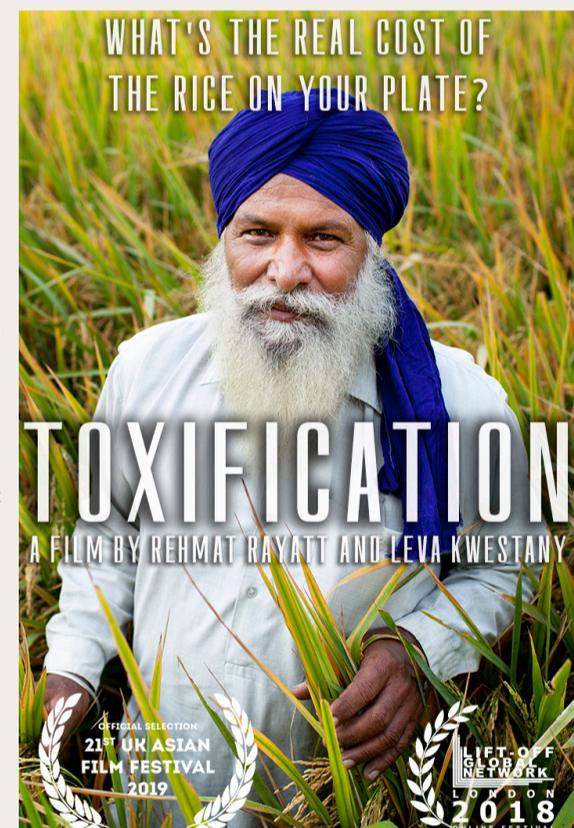
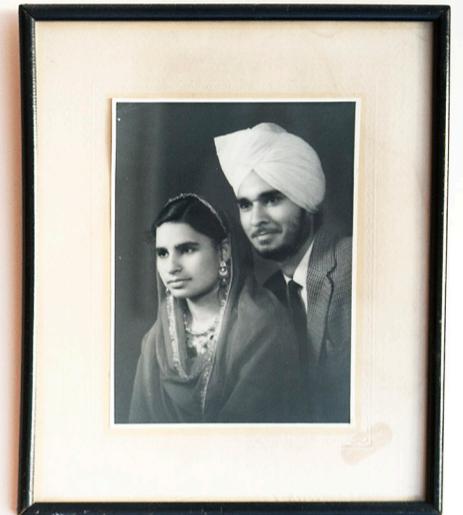
**How did you go from photography to documentary making?**

My degree was in fine arts photography, and the focus was on expression; to think critically and creatively and to push boundaries. My lecturers taught me that art has no boundaries and expression is fluid, so when I began to make films they were extremely supportive. In fact, my final piece of work, which was exhibited at The Old Truman Brewery in London as part of my graduation show *Paradalia*, was a short film.

**What led you towards *Toxification*?**

Back in 2014 when filmmaker Leva Kwestany and I discussed ideas for a short documentary, I suggested the topic of farmer suicides in Punjab. I had read statistics from scholars, but I wanted to find out at the grassroots level what the situation was.

We flew out and spent a month filming, travelling around Amritsar, Anandpur and the farmlands of Sangrur (in north India). When we began editing, we quickly realised that this was not a short film; at over an hour long it is a feature in its own right, unplanned, but extremely moving and inspiring.



**Tell us about the documentary?**

The documentary uncovers the link between drug abuse, overuse of chemicals on agriculture and farmers suicides, something that I haven't seen in any films about the subject. It is a harrowing story of mental health issues and the struggle for survival in the families left behind, but it also highlights the incredible work being done in Punjab and captures the Punjabi fighting spirit, which is about never giving up.

**Tell us more...**

We interviewed farmers, agricultural experts, government ministers and drug rehabilitation experts, and I'm proud to say that the film captures real, authentic stories. So many documentary makers have ulterior motives to steer a documentary in a certain direction, but our only goal was to amplify the voices of those whose stories need to be heard.