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T-shirt

Who am I within gender, dress, & society?

### **Bangladeshi Princess and American Dream!!**



Your identity is multifaceted and influenced by a variety of things, such as cultural norms, personal beliefs, and societal expectations. Your clothing choices may be a reflection of your style or your desire to express yourself. Social norms have an impact on oneself and how one engages with society, but also possess the ability to define and express oneself in unique ways. You are ultimately the designer of your own identity, continuously modifying it in response to events in your life and experiences with the outside world.

I found it difficult to express or accept who I am as a child. Whenever I went anywhere, I would consider what people around me would think in addition to what makes me feel at ease. It was difficult for me to live in vastly different societies. There is also so much hostility in the world that it is easy to lose sight of who you are. However, with this garment, I have tried to

present my two-dimensional identity. As a Muslim woman, my traditional and religious beliefs are part of me that can oftentimes be at odds with my American identity.

There has always been a disconnect between my two identities, which can be seen through the shirt I'm wearing. On one side, the modification I made to the garment was the shoulder and sleeves cut off, along with the bottom half, creating four small knots that give it a cropped, fitted look with a flattering dangling twist. This design not only adds visual interest but also offers a modern and edgy look while still maintaining a sense of elegance and sophistication. The cutouts and knots provide a unique and playful touch to the garment, making it a stylish choice for various occasions. However, the other half of the shirt remains fully intact, providing more coverage and showing respect when I'm around my religious family. Both are part of who I am, and just like I get excited to dress up as a Bengali princess and embrace my cultural heritage, I also duly respect the person I am without my cultural expectations. Clothes are a way to showcase my beliefs playfully and perhaps through costumes, accessories, or even adopting regal mannerisms, we can truly try to understand ourselves and the various cultures around us. Cultural costumes are also a way to celebrate one's identity and heritage while exhibiting the culture with a sense of adventure and curiosity to society. Securing the safety pins at the center of the garment signifies my commitment to holding myself together amidst life's challenges and uncertainties. Furthermore, I also wanted to include my own belief that there is a divine presence that oversees my soul, which I will eventually cultivate into embarking on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

The symbols I chose to represent my identity included the name of God in Arabic, Allah, symbolizing worship and healing. Additionally, I incorporated flower symbols to embody my feminism, with each flower carrying its unique meaning conveyed through its type or color. Recently, my favorite colors have been orange and yellow, symbolizing my outgoing nature and eagerness to embrace new experiences. To conclude, the number "22" symbolizes my current age and finally coming into myself and fostering a reality I can be proud of. Identities are a complex concoction of one's past, present, future, and societal norms. Thus, expressing anyone's multifaceted identity in two dimensions is exhilarating, to say the least. It's like an ongoing dress-up game where each day a new accessory is added to my identity. Each day brings something new, as I continuously explore different styles and embrace the ever-changing journey called life.