

# The Colourful Women of India

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Lesley J Saunders



In my March column, I talked about perception and how we all have different perceptions, and I sit here wondering if the same is such about what we believe and perceive as being colourful. Currently, it is fashionable to develop black and white prints and although many photographs lend themselves well to black and white, we can so easily lose the vibrancy of colours that represents life and emotions by trying to keep up with trends. I class myself as a perceptive photographer and my perception of life, includes colour representing emotions, red for anger or confidence, pastel colours for calm, blues expressing cool and yellows signifying sun and warmth.

India is such a colourful country, it is one of the first experiences that we encounter when arriving in this geography for the first time. You walk down the streets and experience a kaleidoscope of colours that lift your spirit. Although, we like to think ourselves as stylish, I was surprised at the number of individuals who showed a preference for the colourful photographs I had on display at my second show, The 'Real' Women of India, which was held in Delhi on March 8th 2010. The guests appeared to be pulled towards the colourful photographs as if they were magnets, commenting upon the depth of colour and the liveliness of each photograph.

The strength and emotions of the Real Women of India come alive when framed by their colourful clothing their laughter, smiles, determination and concentration is there for all to see, unlike many countries where the females wear sombre clothing and fade into the background of their surroundings, the gems of colours that envelope us in India highlight the pride and resilience of the women as they go about their daily tasks. No hiding or merging into the background.

On many occasions, I have experimented with Photoshop to change the image to black and white, only to be amazed

to find that the emotion I had captured was no longer evident. So, although it maybe trendy to produce all black and white images, one has to be careful that they do not lose the message of the picture that the photographer has painfully spent time capturing. However, in contradiction, I have found that certain images are enhanced by changing them to black and white. For example, the pensive and thoughtful images have a stronger message when displayed in black and white. There is no distraction and the focus is totally upon the sentiment of the subject.

The pride and strength of these women is strongly displayed in the way they dress and I always relate to the group of females collecting their fresh water carrying heavy containers, but dressed in beautiful ornate and bold coloured saris, their smiling reflections shining on the metal containers like mirrors. These metaphors are a delight to capture through a camera lens.

When I look around my surroundings, regardless of where I am, Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi or in Rajasthan, I find myself drawn to the bright colours such as the young woman dressed in reds, yellows, blues and greens matching the colour of her balloons. The piercing defiant look is enhanced by the colourful frame of her clothes and wares. The beautiful girl with a broad gleaming smile covered in a bright orange sari defies the hardship that she encounters while selling her goods at the daily market. The young mum peddling against all odds to get her child to school on time adorned in a bright red outfit, the determination in her face framed along with immaculate and neatly groomed hair.

Colour is fun and experimenting with colour has provided a totally new dimension to many of my photographs, the blur of the yellow rickshaw lends itself to a subtle background, the haze of the red car against the woman in her red sari adds a



further depth to the picture. Colour is very important in helping me get the message out about the strength of the 'Real' Women of India, it enhances the emotions I capture and helps to confirm my perception of these unique women. Strength, Resilience, Pride and Hope.

You can read more about my perceptions and experiences and why I choose to capture the images that I do in my travels, in further editions of *Asian Photography*. Please visit my website [www.elleje.com](http://www.elleje.com) to see more of my portrayals and to know more about ROKO Cancer.

Happy Clicking!

—Lesley J Saunders

**1. Don't You Dare!** Bangalore. At this bustling Flower Show, this remarkable young gypsy girl brought home to me that we live in a tough world and one has to be more than tough to survive.

**2. Amusing!** Nr Jaipur. The look of amusement in this young woman's eye fascinated me. She never stopped smiling. She was evidently happy with her lot. Stress, I felt had never crossed paths with her.

**3. Sheer Delight!** Rajasthan - The village was alive with activity, noise and laughter ringing in the air, banter amongst the market vendors, then I saw this vision of a young woman her face covered with a vivid sheer red fabric. Although her face was covered the beauty and dignity of this woman stood out above all others as she went about her daily task, we can all learn from such pride!

