

# Why I Decided To Go Bald feat. Preetha Balagi

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You would definitely have recognised this girl from the Goodday Television advertisement. On a completely unrelated note, I really hated that ad. It was shallow and absolutely doltish.

The person starring in the ad, on the other hand, to me is probably one of the bravest, coolest and kindest indian woman that I know in my life. Sometimes, we really do not need to look far and beyond for role-models in our life. They are just around us in plain sight. Recently, when I found out that she had shaved her head, I was naturally intrigued. Was it for cancer? Let's be honest with ourselves. An indian woman shaving her head is indeed a rare occurrence, let alone when she is married.

So, I sent her my usual what-when-why questions. Her story simply left me stumped for words. It was brutally honest and I am grateful to her for that. Her struggle and her pain is real. Her story is an inspiration to all.

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## **Why did you decide to shave your head?**

Im going to be extremely honest here. I have had a very tough time in life since my early teens as far as family life is concerned. I also have very severe eczema covering my calves and ankles on both legs. It started off as rashes at my joints when I was 12, but soon moved to my legs. I get stared at a lot as long as Im wearing a skirt or shorts. Its painful on some days, as it makes me feel like some sort of exhibit. Some people also have no compassion in the way they talk. They ask with a horrified expression on their faces, Oh my god what is that?! What happened to you?! And when I tell them that I have eczema and that I have scars due to me scratching down to my flesh sometimes, they still continue looking at it in a horrified manner. Its just human curiosity, but it can really get to a person at times when there isnt any compassion or empathy or even just sympathy expressed by the other party.

There was once a mother and child seated opposite me on a train. I was wearing my school pinafore and therefore my legs were visible. I think I was 14 at the time. The mother kept repeatedly pointing to my legs and telling something to the child. I expected her to stop after a while but she carried on for more than 5 minutes and I couldnt just sit there and not do anything. So I got up and went right in front of them and asked if they would like a closer look. That shut her up. Ive also been asked by schoolmates if I had leprosy. There are several days when Ive gone to school with

my legs bandaged because of how badly I'd have scratched them, so you can imagine that with physical pain I also had to endure emotional conflict within me from the age of 12. I have tried so many different things, but nothing has truly worked.