



INDIA PALE ALE

BY JACLYN
BACKHAUS



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INC.



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INDIA PALE ALE was originally produced by the Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer), with funds provided by the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, on October 23, 2018. It was directed and choreographed by Will Davis, the set design was by Neil Patel, the costume design was by Arnulfo Maldonado, the lighting design was by Ben Stanton, the sound design and original music were by Elisheba Ittoop, and the production stage manager was Erin Gioia Albrecht. The cast was as follows:

DEEPA BATRA	Purva Bedi
SUNNY BATRA	Alok Tewari
BASMINDER “BOZ” BATRA	Shazi Raja
IGGY BATRA	Sathya Sridharan
DADI PARMINDER	Sophia Mahmud
LOVI	Lipica Shah
SIMRAN RAYAT	Angel Desai
VISHAL SINGH	Nik Sadhnani
TIM	Nate Miller

A workshop production of INDIA PALE ALE was presented by New York Stage and Film & Vassar at the Powerhouse Theater, Summer 2018.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A whole community of people gave their time and talents to the making of this play. They deserve a dose of gratitude: why not here, forever, in the front of the book? The imprint of their impact and their work lives inside these pages, and so I hope you think of them and thank them as I do.

I have to first thank *India Pale Ale's* creative team on the original production: my brilliant collaborators, Will and Erin, as well as our team on directing and stage management: Arpita Mukherjee, Sasha Diamond, Joe Fernandez, Jr., and Oona Newman. The designers: Neil, Arnulfo, Elisheba, Ben, the dear departed Dave Bova, and their teams of assistants and associates. Team Wardrobe, Team Backstage, Team Booth, Team PM, and Team Props, who fooled everyone into thinking that the food was real (until it was!). The cast: Shazi, Apsara, Purva, Sathya, Alok, Sophia, Lipica, Nik, and Nate: you all have my heart (in a barrel of beer).

I thank the group of actors who helped dramaturg this piece over various workshops and readings, who contributed as understudies, who gave immeasurably to this process: Jolly Abraham, Adeel Ahmed, Jacqueline Antaramian, Yolande Bavan, Eshan Bay, the loved and departed Susham Bedi, Rajesh Bose, Jay Charan, Manik Choksi, Geeta "Citygirl" Chopra, Sarita Choudhury, Brinda Dixit, Ed Haaj, Anna Itty, Naheed Khan, Drew Lewis, Abraham Makany, Nikki Massoud, Michael Oberholtzer, Annapurna Sriram, Babak Tafti, and Rita Wolf.

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Raoul Bhavani, Aroon Shivdasani, Maan Singh Tinna. Natasha Sinha, Rajiv Joseph, Ankita Raturi, Yuba City (and Phoenix too). My entire Takher family, especially my sis Sheena Takher for reading that first draft. My mother, Bhira Backhaus, always my heart's center. My uncle, Amreik Singh Takher, whom we lost in 2020, and my great-uncle Darshan Singh Bassi, whom we lost in 2021.

Finally, the publication of this play is dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives to an act of hate at the Oak Creek gurdwara on August 5, 2012; to the victims of the shooting at the Indianapolis FedEx Ground facility on April 15, 2021; to Balbir Singh Sodhi, who was killed in Mesa, Arizona on September 15, 2001. To their families, and to all families impacted by hate and hate-based violence. To honor them, visit sikhcoalition.com and solidarityvigil.com and make a donation.

CHARACTERS

Batra family

DEEPA BATRA. Mother of Boz and Iggy. Once mother of Jol. Married to Sunny.

SUNNY BATRA. Father of Boz and Iggy. Once father of Jol. Married to Deepa.

BASMINDER “BOZ” BATRA. The daughter, Our Hero, 29 but goes by 30.

IGGY BATRA. Son, 25, recently engaged to Lovi.

DADI PARMINDER. Boz’s grandma and Sunny’s mamma. Speaks Punjabi and English.

*the ghosts of Batra family members,
of Jol Batra, Boz’s older brother lost to India,
& of Brownbeard, Boz’s great-great-great-great-
great-great grandfather,
haunt this play and its characters sometimes

Neighbors/Lovers/Others

LOVI. Iggy’s fiancée. 25.

SIMRAN RAYAT. Deepa’s cousin, ever the aunty, 50s–60s.

VISHAL SINGH. Boz’s ex-boyfriend. Late 20s–early 30s.

Outsiders

TIM. Some guy in his late 20s in Madison, Wisconsin (white guy).

*All characters are South Asian
(specifically Punjabi)
with the exception of Tim, who is just so white it’s honestly painful
please cast according to this*

GLOSSARY of TERMS

langar is feasting vegetarian with family and friends—Sikh tradition after services at gurdwara (temple)

everyone is welcome

doors are open to all

head covering provided if you do not bring your own. no shoes.

volunteers from the community always very thanked for their support

Sikh is a person maybe on your street!

religiously monotheistic, religion finds origins in India

it's a pretty big religion

Punjabi: person/language/item

with roots in the Punjab province of northern India (and Pakistan too!)

atta: a ball of dough used to make roti

roti: a pancake side dish in north Indian food

dhol: a sick drum used in wedding marches and bhangra beetz

samosa, dal, saag: eat some you'll know the deliciousness

chunni: shawl for Punjabi ladies, usually matches their

salwar kameez: an Indian suit for women

PLACES and TIMES

a langar hall, adjacent to the gurdwara in a small town called Raymond, Wisconsin.

a dive bar on the outskirts of Madison, Wisconsin.

a pirate ship sailing an ocean route between Calcutta and Essex, England, 1823.

INDIA PALE ALE

Prologue

meet Boz, she's 29

*she's a pirate
or at least she's dressed like one
she walks like one
she's holding a shovel like one
she's about to talk like one*

*she digs a hole in the ground
in the woodsy Wisconsin back yard
of her parents' home
(her home still
not because she is Millennial
but because she is a
Good Indian Daughter)*

*shovel
dirt
flying everywhere
put into safe pile*

*she scours the ground
she digs as she pretends
that the worms are her fellow pirates
(her parents)*

BOZ. yaar
ahoy wormies
me hearties
me home
me cabin

me crew
me mum and me dad
it is oi
yer daughter Boz
oive come to share some news
we've weathered the storms we have
together
since oi was a wee babe
suckin the teats
o! me fortunes were vast
now mum
now thar dad

oim leavin
to traverse the seven seas
to head west
to Wisconsin
oi wanna open me own bar

oi know what yer thinkin
me mum
me dad
yer thinkin
a bar? in a distant land?

to that oi say
AYE! a bar!
for beer runs in me blood
in the genetical sense!

oi embark
as Brownbeard did afore me
Brownbeard our natty ancestor
mannin the mutiny
of that East India Company vessel
200 years ago

his cargo was beer
as mine'll be!

in my bar
in Madison Wisconsin
aye, the lineage is full circle now
oim leaving home to see the world.
the world in this yar instance:
a bar that sells alcoholic drinks
in a place that is not here

oive saved up me guineas
me doubloons and me cash
oi made a down payment
and so this is ahoy

she puts her hand up, imagining protest

no no
hush now mum
hush now dad
don't afear
there's no need
my bravery
and your love
will carry me safely to my newfound home
and, this.

she looks at the hole

last bit o business afore oi depart
a lost item of treasure in the back yard

*she digs one final dig
with a guttural yelp*

YEEE-AOHH

she spots a glint of white in the soil

Jol's marble elephant—ho

*she reaches down and pulls out
a small marble elephant*

buried treasure, dug up
bears no likeness to the memory of it underground
so much smaller

INDIA PALE ALE

by Jaclyn Backhaus

4 men, 5 women

Basminster “Boz” Batra grew up in a close-knit Punjabi community in small-town Wisconsin. While her family prepares for her brother’s wedding, Boz is anticipating her move to Madison, where she plans to open a bar. Though her adventurous plans for her future couldn’t be further from her parents’ more traditional concerns, she draws strength from her ancestor Brownbeard—a swashbuckling, beer-running Punjabi pirate on the high seas. She’s eager to leave her family behind and fulfill her dreams, but she isn’t prepared for the tragic event that will call her back home.

“INDIA PALE ALE...is a cheerfully instructive work, created with the aim of bridging one of the many cultural gaps in these dangerously divided United States.”

—**The New York Times**

“You won’t soon forget the Batra family of Raymond, Wisconsin... Their story...is a vibrant and authentic portrait of a modern American family.”

—**CurtainUp.com**

Also by Jaclyn Backhaus
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