I am a guy from India, which makes me an Indian man. I have a “different” accent compared to the people I am around. I have a beard and am 5 feet and 9 inches in height. It is about 2 inches taller than an average Indian man. From my experience, the range of stereotypes for Indian men ranges from good to bad. There isn’t a specific category that persists and describes the entire race. However, ‘height’ and ‘weight’ happens to be a distinguishing factor regarding stereotypes. If the guy is about 6 feet and 2 inches tall, with not much noticeable weight, he will experience positive stereotypes like exotic, rustic, smart, etc. However, being less than 5 feet and 11 inches in height invites a 'negative vibe'. Such a category brings about stereotypes like creepy, smelly etc. Another interesting fact that I have noticed that somehow overpowers these basic common categories is having a beard. Usually, a beard is correlated with terrorism. With that in mind, I am most likely stereotyped as someone who can be dangerous. This is very noticeable in areas like airports, where I have, on several occasions, experienced random bag checks and the good ol’ “sir, could you come to this site for a moment.”

I find this singling out to be annoying. However, it isn’t something that is in my control. Doing something about it might make the situation worse. So, I usually let it run its course. This is a clear example of Stereotype threat, whereby just having a bear can be considered dangerous. The funny thing is that my beard isn’t as dense as others and even I feel uneasy when I come across people with either thick or long beards. There was a time when I was on the metro in California. I came across a gentleman having a dense beard looking at his phone. I, along with other people around him, was feeling uneasy about him being near us. To put it brutally, we did not feel safe. In a few seconds, after judging him by his appearance, he asked me in a British accent if I knew how to play chess. To my shock, I asked him “excuse me?”. He clarified by showing me a game on his phone and that he was playing chess with someone. I helped him out, which broke the tension in the air. After that, we played 2 games of chess and laughed at a stupid mistake I had made. I truly felt ashamed about what I thought of him and I am glad that he approached me. I think that we adopted this trait of implicit bias by the terrorism that has engulfed the world. This got worsened when the media made its presence known and decided to stereotype the concept of a “terrorist” and how to identify such a suspicious person.

I think us individuals must try to break such a social stigma. For some people, certain traits about them might be a style, but for others, it can be their very identity. Thus, implicitly forcing them to boycott such traits or attributes can be criminal like and should be considered an act of terrorism.

Having a beard isn’t a crime. It is not an act of terrorism. A new trend is starting to evolve where beard style and grooming are being acknowledged by society. Models with beards are getting long-lasting contracts.

One thing I know that I should actively work on is to look beyond what the eye can see. A person can be full of surprises even after a small conversation. The entire perception of a person can shift drastically after talking to them. The stereotypes that I like to identify myself as being carefree and jester-like.