Hair

Mom’s Good Intention

Renuka Upadhyay

BEFORE YOU READ: Did your parents ever have a good intention for you that didn’t work out so well? Tell the story.

I have a vivid memory of my hair from childhood. I almost forgot that part of my life. Now it’s coming to my mind.

My mom used to do my hair before I went to school. She put lots of roasted mustard oil in my hair and combed it. She parted my hair and braided it, and then she tied a piece of ribbon in each braid. My mom used mustard oil on my hair because she was brought up like that. Roasted mustard oil is good for hair growth.

My mom’s good intention became a bad experience for me. My friends started sitting far away from me. They started telling me, “You stink!” Mustard seed, when roasted, has a strong smell.

When I came home from school, I used to cry and tell my mom not to put mustard oil on my hair. After that, she started putting coconut oil on my hair which smells good.

I never shared this experience with anybody because it’s humiliating for me.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What was Renuka’s mom’s good intention? and how did it work out for Renuka?

2. Renuka never shared this story with anyone before. Yet she shares it here. Why do you think she changed her mind about it? (She does not explicitly say. You will need to infer the answer.)

Renuka Upadhyay was born in 1949 in Kathmandu, Nepal. She is a retired teacher, and she is an ESOL student at the Portsmouth Adult Education Program in Portsmouth, NH.

---

Beyond Personal Care

“Everything has to go somewhere. Nothing ever goes away because there is no such place as away.”

Environmentalist Barry Commoner

“[This is an] era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged.”

Rachel Carson, author of Silent Spring

Reflect on these quotes in the context of the article “Dangerous Ingredients!” on pp. 26-27 and the article “A Billion Dollar Industry” on p. 21.

Could the hair care industry be more beneficial to you, the environment, and your budget? If so, how?