

Cinematic Indian Fashion Portrait

The goal of this setup was to create a **dark, warm and cinematic fashion look** with controlled highlights, soft skin and enough separation from the background.

The setup uses three lights, and each one has a very specific job.



1. Key + Rim Light — Camera Right

The main light is placed **camera right, slightly behind the model**. It is a **beauty dish with a grid**, and interestingly, this single light works as both the **key light and the rim light**.

The beauty dish gives the light direction and definition, while the grid keeps the beam controlled and prevents unnecessary spill onto the background.

We then placed a **diffuser in front of the beauty dish**. Instead of using a dedicated diffuser, we used the diffusion fabric from a **5-in-1 reflector**.

This makes the source larger and softer while still retaining the directional character of the beauty dish.

So the combination is:

Beauty dish → direction and punch

Diffusion → softer skin and smoother transitions

Grid → control and separation

You can see this especially on the hair, shoulder and jewellery, where the light creates subtle highlights without making the image look harsh.



2. Fill Light — Camera Left

The fill is an **umbrella with a diffuser**, positioned camera left and slightly off-center in front of the model.

The purpose here isn't to make the face evenly lit.

We're only adding **a small amount of light into the shadows** so that the darker side of the face still retains detail.

Keeping the fill off-axis also preserves the direction created by the main light.

This is important for maintaining the dramatic look. If the fill were stronger or directly in front of the model, the image would become much flatter.



3. Background — Optical Snoot

The pattern on the background is created using an **optical snoot positioned far camera left**.

This light is aimed specifically at the backdrop, rather than the model. Its only job is to introduce texture and variation into the otherwise dark background.

Keeping it separate from the subject lighting allows us to create that atmospheric background without washing light onto the model.



Why This Setup Works

The important thing isn't that there are three lights. It's that **each light has a different responsibility.**

Beauty dish: shapes the subject and creates separation.

Umbrella: controls the shadows.

Optical snoot: creates the background atmosphere.

The result is a soft but directional light with deep shadows, controlled highlights and enough background texture to give the image depth.

The biggest takeaway: **don't add lights just because you have them. Add a light because something specific is missing from the image.**



Camera Settings

Camera: Canon R6 Mark II

Lens: 24–105mm f/4

Shutter: 1/160 sec

Aperture: f/4

ISO: 800



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