

Prison of Beauty

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Beautiful, attractive, and handsome have widely become synonymous with thin, white, clear skin and not being too short or too tall, while being ugly is commonly perceived as being black, fat, having acne, etc. Being called fat or black is no longer a descriptive term but rather something that comes from a sense of looking down on a certain section of people. It is not only limited to whether a person lets these human-made standards get to them; it is present everywhere and is bound to affect people in one way or another. The mannequins displayed in a mall are all thin, or if we compare and contrast the availability of clothes in small and plus-sizes, we'll observe the lack of clothing in plus-size. Even in online clothing websites, the majority of clothes are available in the range of S (small size) to XL (extra-large). However, famous fashion retailers and online fashion retailers like Pantaloons and Myntra, respectively, have started to include plus-size clothing after the much-needed ongoing debates that have been happening around the same issue, but individuals still have fewer options. It is difficult for them to find fashionable clothing. They still have fewer options compared to the "regular" sizes since it is still a niche market in India.

How many times has one seen a protagonist be fat in a movie unless the movie isn't based on them being fat? For instance, in the movie "Kal Ho Na Ho," the character of Jasprit, who is the best friend of the protagonist Naina, has only one role, which is being fat. She is used as a comic relief in the entire movie and is supposed to be dumb, funny, and a foodie like the other fat characters in several other movies. "Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham," where for a fat character, who only eats food, all it takes to be taken seriously is losing weight. We also have the same representation in cartoons for children like "Chhota Bheem" and "Doraemon," where both Kaaliya and Gian are shown as stupid, black, and bullies, overall, a negative character with the same characteristics, respectively. Through these widely celebrated commercial flicks and cartoons, not only fat people but all kinds of people are further stereotyped in society, which is reflected in the behaviour of people towards other people not fitting into the standards in real life.

Media and pop culture have always helped to reinforce these pre-set standards of beauty. These ingrained standards will remind you of your shortcomings, from the representation of "ugly" in the movies you watch to the weight capacity present in the unergonomic chairs present in the cafe you sit in, from the clothes you put on trying to fit in the sizes they provide, and from the contraceptives and other drugs that come with a weight limit stemming from the prevalence

of weight-based discrimination in the healthcare profession. It's everywhere. To the extent that you start normalizing it, you don't even realize that you're being discriminated against for just being the way you are and not being the way conventional beauty wants you to be to fit in. Some choose not to fit in, and some are not able to fit in, but in every case, the oppression never stops. It's not only mental and emotional, but physical health as well. A 2018 study examined the prevalence of ED (eating disorder) in the student population of Mysore, in the southern state of Karnataka, published in the Indian Journal of Psychiatry revealed that 26.06 percent of participants were prone to ED due to their abnormal eating attitudes. Though it is a fact that not much research has been done in this area, making the topic low-priority won't make it non-existent. Both oppressors and oppressed are victims of the beauty standards they have set, and it is only us who can free ourselves and others from this prison of beauty.