Be-You-tiful

Beauty & Body Image:
The Shifting Sands

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The Beauty/Fashion Industry: Empowering or Degrading?

- The beauty industry relies on consumers to promote beauty and fear 'unattractiveness'.

- Identity: reverse ageing, products for people of colour, and Eurocentric standards.

- Makeup: Is it an instrument of patriarchy/conforming to male gaze? Or a form of self expression?

- Growth of 'self love' industry: body positivity. A new way to enjoy beauty and health for all women?

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Food for Thought: Think about these questions:

Magazines, beauty/fashion industry, social media, photoshopping, filtering...?

- Ideas of beauty are not created in a vacuum. Where do these ideas and proposed ideals come from?

- In your opinion, what are the pressures and standards placed upon females? How does this make you feel?

- In your opinion, what are the pressures and standards placed upon males? How does this make you feel?

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Statistics

- 1/3 of 7-10 year old girls believe they are judged on appearance.

- 1/4 feel the need to be perfect (Girlguiding UK)

- UK Be Real Survey: 11-16 year olds- girls more likely to be dissatisfied with appearance & weight than boys.-46% of girls reported body image caused them to worry 'often' or 'always' compared to 25% of boys.

- Be Real: https://www.berealcampaign.co.uk/research/somebody-like-me

- Body dissatisfaction linked to risk taking behaviour, mental health problems, self neglect e.g. avoiding exercise

- Secondary school boys: 10% would consider steroids to achieve goals

Let's Talk About Men

- "The superhero effect": popular film culture has focused on the 'bulked up' hero. The highly defined abs we see on male superhero figures are achieved by dangerous dehydration and unsustainable exercise routines.

- Pressure to be lean, strong, muscular & tall

- Pressure to be the provider: not to ask for help

- Impact of ageing e.g. hair loss.

https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/male-body-image-problems#How-can-we-deal-with-male-body-image-issues ?

Causes of low body confidence

- Images of thin women are proven to negatively affect body image

- Body ideal internalisation. For females: thin and curvy. For males: tall and muscular (Be Real survey)

- Media: Understanding images are heavily photoshopped/filtered does not lessen negative impact!

- Parents: negative comments, eating behaviours, attitudes toward own appearance

- Peers: Trying to fit in, or experiencing bullying

Body Dysmorphic Disorder

- Anxiety disorder related to body image.

- Excessive worries about perceived flaws in physical appearance that others hardly notice

- Compulsive routines – use of mirrors, picking skin

- Disruption to daily life e.g. avoiding friends

- Approx 2% of population. Mainly Adolescents

"I became increasingly insular and erratic, making decisions that affected my health and damaged my relationships. I'd skip school, cancel plans with friends and call in sick at work."

Beauty is subjective and not fixed! Beauty standards change over time

- Ancient Greece – plumper female = fertile

- Italian Renaissance – rounded stomach = wealth/position

- Han Dynasty – small feet

- 1600s England – pale skin = wealth – lead based make up.

- 1960s – thin, willowy look.

- Compare to 2020s – large bums and BBL (high death rate).

- "The highest reported prevalence of disordered eating in US was in 1920s and 1980s, when 'ideal woman' was considered thinnest."

- 1960s 'Black is Beautiful' movement

- Bollywood – 1960s and 70s: darker skin, natural hair type. But by the 2000s, had Eurocentric ideals

- Currently – Body positivity; diversity, plus sizes, disabilities…

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The Size 0 Model

Carl Lagerfeld: *"No one wants to see curvy models. Only fat, potato chip-eating mums hate thin models."*

1960s-2010s: led to eating disorders amongst models and even deaths.

Prada banned Size 0 models after a number of deaths.

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Evidence suggests:

- Faith can be protective

- Religious practices and religious attire e.g. the headscarf can be protective

- Supportive friends are protective

However the question remains:

Despite diversity which includes modest fashion, is there undue focus on physicality?

How Islamic is that?

What are your views on 'modest' and 'sunnah' fashion?

Is diversity in the fashion and beauty industry a good thing?

?

Are there any Islamic evidences/stories that are protective against the pressure of the beauty and fashion industries?

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Beauty in Islam

Raghib al-Isfahani:

1. Beauty the mind finds attractive
2. Beauty the impulse finds attractive
3. Beauty the senses find attractive

Number 1 is most important and includes righteousness and moral/spiritual beauty.

- *Husn* shares the same root as *Ihsān*: beauty and excellence – ethical, intellectual and spiritual.
- In beautifying our character, we all become physically beautiful as well.
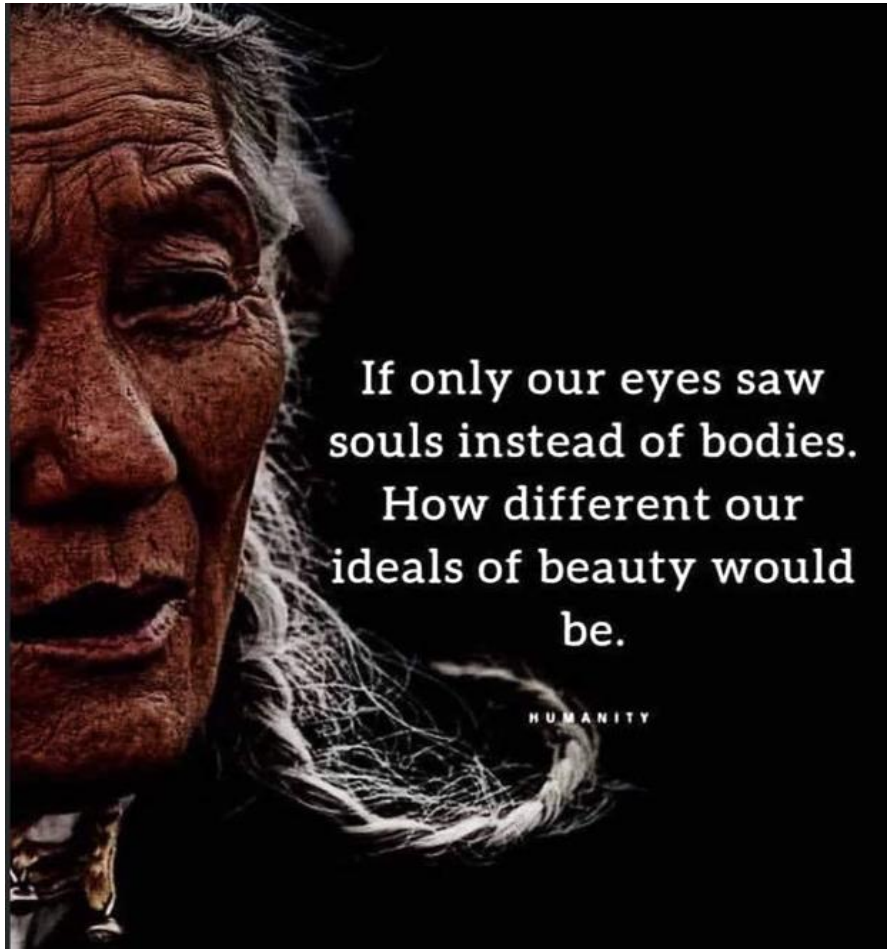
لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ فِىٓ أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾

- Surah Tin: "We indeed created Man in the fairest stature."

- We have little control over our appearance.
  If it is our only source of worth, it leads to → cycle of chasing unattainable goals.

- *"God does not look at your figures, nor at your attire but He looks at your hearts [and deeds]."* (Muslim)

- Should we neglect ourselves? –
  "'No one will enter Paradise who has an atom's weight of pride in his heart.' A man said, 'What if a man likes his clothes to look good and his shoes to look good?'
  He said, 'Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride means denying the truth and looking down on people.' (Muslim)

Modest and Sunnah Fashion

If only our eyes saw souls instead of bodies. How different our ideals of beauty would be.

HUMANITY

Pros: diversity, inclusion, halal options

Cons:

- Focus on physicality and appearance.

- Consumerism

- Fast Fashion: exploitation, environment

The Story of Julaybib RA

- From the Sahaba

- Julaybib means "small grown"

- His lineage was not known

- "Damim" means deformed

- He was married by the Prophet AS – daughter accepted the Prophet AS's proposal though her mother declined

- After a battle, the Prophet said: *"But I have lost Julaybib."* They searched for him in the battlefield.

- *"This (man) is of me and I am of him."* The Prophet AS took him in his arms, dug a grave and placed him in it.

True beauty is beauty of moral character

"The dearest and nearest among you to me on the Day of Resurrection will be the best of you in conduct."   (Bukhari)

"Verily, a man would attain, through his good character, the ranks of someone who stands the night (in prayer and supplication) and fasts a day."

Advice

- Accept ourselves, have shukr

- Adjust social media to inspire

- Befriend others with similar values

- We should be strong, healthy and presentable

- Media images are not realistic

- We do not have to fit in and conform.
  We are travellers and changemakers!

- Self-esteem: How we value and perceive ourselves. Becoming aware of negative thoughts, challenging them, using positive self-talk and practising self compassion.

You Are All Beautiful!