



Research Paper

## Body image, Complexes and Disorders – Arathi Cynthia Andrews

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When was the last time you enjoyed wearing what you wanted without thinking about what others would say, when they looked at you? When was the last time you enjoyed your favorite dish and asked for a second serving, not bothered about the people sitting at the table opposite or beside you? Do you remember the last time that you ever stood in front of the mirror and said to yourself “you look beautiful/handsome today, the day is yours”? Well, most of us reading this would have done it at one point of time, what about the others?

“Be pretty”, “Be beautiful”, they say but what do you refer to? is one question I would ask them in return. Or would like to get a clear clarification on. One must realize that physical beauty does not matter much as their intellectual and inner beauty, that is all that is required for his /her acceptance.

Considering the various physical trauma that an individual face, right from being an innocent child to becoming old and every day that goes by. Body image issues have always been a problem, it can be considered as a sickness; not only a ‘Personal sickness’ but rather a “Social sickness”. Apart from family and peer groups, society and social pressure influences or in other words forcefully mold us not only in character but also in our emotional state and physical appearance too, right from the way one dresses up, their looks, from the tip of a woman’s hair to the very shoes the men wear. who defines these beauty standards, who is responsible for these stereotypical thought’s ideas and norms?

Simple as it may sound but it all begins at a very young age when one hardly knows the harsh and bitter world around them, barely remembering their names and hardly knowing their own family members, friends and relatives etc. who tend to use phrases like “why are you so chubby”, or “you look like aladdu”, or even saying “you look like a football” or even to an extreme notion of saying “why are you so thin, don’t you eat at all “doesn’t your mother feed you well”, “put on some weight child, you’re so thin that the wind will blow you away”.

I still remember an incident which I came across while attending an house warming ceremony, there was a couple who sat across me along with their kids, I overheard their conversation as one of the server’s placed some sweets on the banana leaf the child had reached out to it in excitement and ate hastily enjoying it, seeing this the server smiled and placed another sweet and to which one of the parent (don’t want to mention specific) said, “Beta, don’t stuff yourself with sweets alone, you will become FAT!!, and all your friends will make fun of you at school and they won’t come play with you. at that instant, that very moment where all the excitement and happiness that the kid had seemed to be in, shattered and broken down to a sad face, the child placed the half-bitten sweet back at the corner of the banana leaf. She/He continued eating her/his meal, her/his face showed that there were a lot of things which crossed his/her mind, the fear of losing his/ her friend, fear of being pushed and bullied around, fear of not be accepted if she/he puts on weight, as I gazed at her/his face the same child who sat

extremely happily to have her/his meal, now sits sad and staring at that one sweet, as it is all that she/he could do.

Speaking of which, What the parent said, may sound as just mere words to any person who passes by, but does one take the time to realize what an impression or the massive impact that the child would go through as years passing by.

The concept of body image doesn’t have a specific age or gender, it can be either positive or a negative imagery of oneself, yet it all begins at the roots, when an individual is socially influenced or self-influenced over his/her thoughts, beliefs, feelings, mental and physical attitude; one’s emotion gets triggered when provoked by

certain aspects which are around them, these aspects could be referred to things like family, peers, social media, or even his/her self-view.

When an individual with low self-esteem, or who is quite sensitive to social criticism tends to get triggered, he/she tends to go through an emotional and physical state that is 'Negative body image'. Everything may seem perfect when someone looks them but to themselves, they may seem that they are incomplete, that they lack something, that they have a flaw. That is when they try to analyse what is wrong with them by either trying to figure out the way they see themselves emotionally, the way he/she feel about him/her self, the way they look at their physical appearance in front of the mirror and tend to start questioning themselves and about their flaws, how that is a major drawback for themselves, the mere thought that runs on in the back of their mind; his / her beliefs, trying hard to find flawless flaws just to please others and to be accepted by the people around them.

Every individual is unique in his or her own way, we may differ in color, size, shape, structure and even skin type, but the expectations of society and media affects the ideological mindset of the people everywhere. It is the society that expects men, women and children to be fit and slim, fair and beautiful etc.

In reality there is one in a million who exists with these high expectations, perfect characteristics. Media portrays men, women and children as beautiful and perfectly manufactured masterpieces with flawless body structure and beauty, pressurizing them to reach inconceivable or inconclusive beauty standards, where speaking in reality people like these are rarely seen in our society.

The way people are portrayed through Media influences an individual by provoking him/her to feel like they lack something in beauty standards and in other terms can be referred to as "Inferiority Complex" among or within them. which in turn causes a lack of self-acceptance, low self-esteem, and immodesty within themselves. Beauty standards or in other words great expectations which are laid down by society and media towards the concept of body image bring about a decline in social identity, and social acceptance among groups of people and individuals at large. the youth are the ones who fall prey to this and are usually labeled as the ones most affected with this aspect of "Inferiority Complex".

Media plays a major role in this aspect, especially in terms of women's beauty it portrays women to be slim, beautiful, more or less like a perfectly manufactured "Barbie Doll" which leads to great rise in beauty standards that the youth believe to blindly follow, not realizing that this will result in unhealthy lifestyles and health issues.

A study in psychology which talks about a behavioral state, a disorder known as "Anorexia Nervosa", an 'Eating Disorder' which causes people to be very cautious and obsessed about gaining body weight each and every time they consume food. It is a fear of gaining unwanted weight to which they force themselves to maintain a level of low body weight by either starving themselves, barf, or extreme obsession of exercising.

Youngsters or youth fall prey to this, they consider this as a new trend which is followed among youngsters today. this very fear leads them to believe that they are too fat and prevent themselves from consuming food or starve themselves to death so that they may get and obtain the desired "Physical structure" "thinking that this would help them in being socially accepted and socially recognized or becoming a part of the society, not realizing how much of harm and health related issues will occur to their body in the future. due to this ill and unaccepted behavior.

To conclude this article, I would say that it is simple to question about the concept of Body Image, but difficult to find an exact answer or an absolute solution. It is not a single person's opinion or an individual's quest ... Body shaming has had an impact on us right from what we eat, how much we eat; thereby affecting our health and making us feel inferior to our own selves ... it's always been us we are the reason that gives an open opportunity for media, society, family, friends and other to judge us, and criticize us. Society and Media's expectations will never end or cease. It is our time to break these stereotypical thoughts, rules, norms and beliefs, by never giving a thought towards these talks and comments, "Self-Acceptance, Inner Beauty, Intellectual Beauty and, Self-Love", should be our main priority lets break the Social Beauty Standards laid down by society and create a better future for our future generations.