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# The Objectivity of Beauty: A Post-structural Study of the Hyperreal Screen of Media

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**Abstract:** *This paper attempts to bring out the biggest objectivity of beauty by evaluating the norm of ‘beauty standard’ from psychoanalytical and post-structural lenses. Beauty depends on cultural interpretation. Media and film industry play a key role in shaping the audience's psychology and rules the audience to be selective about the beauty tones and aesthetic ideals by rejecting the multiplicity and hybridity of beauty tones available in culture. This formation tends to shape Jacques Lacan's ‘image’ in human psyche and Judith Butler's ‘performativity’ in social theatrical context by building a certain standard of beauty. From Erik Erikson's point, the image and performative role prepare one to possess the selected standard when one stays in ‘role confusion’ and lack of ‘ego identity’. This paper deconstructs the entire motive and outline of the contribution of media to the objectivity of beauty and its effect on psychology, through psychoanalytical and post-structural analysis; and establishes a larger form of the objectivity of beauty that may eliminate the scopes of racism and alienation.*

**Keywords:** *Beauty Standard, Culture, Objectivity, Media, Image, Ego Identity, Role Confusion, Hyperreality Etc.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Is beauty objective or subjective? It's a long debate even in philosophical stands, but we should have a psychoanalytical understanding based on our social phenomena. We become fascinated when we see different domestic or foreign beautiful actors and actresses on social media. But if the same person lived in a slum in real life, would we treat him/her in the same way or feel the same fascination? Or what if we find the same beautiful actress working as a mason in real life? Well, “How beautiful is my mother in comparison to other women?” Has anyone ever thought in this way? And, does sudden fall in love exist?

The Media and Film Industry shape the psychology of the audience. What they show, is neither real, nor unreal, rather hyperreal. They bear the motive of blurring the real spectrum of the multiplicity of beauty tones that exist in the real world. The audience selects a specific beauty tone, assumes it as the ideal beauty structure and alienates the other tones in the culture. In this process, the mass culture culturally denies its own reality of multiplicity. As a result, the harsh



objectivity, alienation and racism is culturally legitimized, almost in every culture which is colonized by its media. This research deals with the problem of the cultural practice of the objectivity of beauty and establishes a new, larger objectivity that may leave no scope of alienation and racism.

### **Research Objectives**

General Objective: To identify what is the biggest objectivity of beauty which humans cannot see because of the consumption of sociocultural screening by the media and film industry.

Specific Objectives:

1. To identify the biggest objectivity of beauty.
2. To explore the hyperreality of sociocultural screening of media in Bangladesh.
3. To find out the reason for psychosocial categorizing behind sudden crush to the selected beauty standard?

### **Research Question**

1. Is beauty subjective or objective? To what extent, can there be the objectivity of beauty?
2. How is the sociocultural screening of beauty hyperreal?
3. What can be the psychosocial categorization behind sudden crush?

## **2. DISCUSSION**

There are multi-tones of beauty in one culture. Generally, society selects one as the best or nearly perfect. People love that selected one and also love to fall in love too to the person with the culturally selected one. Media and film industry amplify this norm of valuing one tone, portraying it in their idealistic manner. This approach of media affects the psychology of the audience in possessing the image, the perfect that reflects in their performative acts too. In this process, selective beauty tones become culturally objective, but there is a larger Objectivity, which we cannot see.

The discussion part is divided into three parts. The first evaluates the multiplicity and hybridity of beauty in one culture. The second brings up the hyperreality of the media screen. The final part finds out the reason behind the psychosocial categorizing of beauty.

### **Multi-tones of Beauty in Culture**

The spectrum of beauty is always determined by the cultural motivations. The culture, tradition and society put some specific attributions to judge beauty. We call beauty subjective. Scottish philosopher, David Hume (1711-1776) argued that Beauty does not lie in "things" but is completely subjective, and "depends on beholder" an issue of sentiments and feeling (David Hume on the perception of beauty). According to Physicist David Deutsch, It's "built into our brains or instilled by culture look just as beautiful to us as those that are objectively beautiful" (Sainani). Beauty lies in the psyche of the individuals seeing the object, and what is beautiful to one may not be so to another. This injection in mind is possible by the construction of 'ideal'. Naomi Wolf, in *The Beauty Myth*, says "all too familiar with the idea that "ideals" are too tough ... that they are unnatural, and following them too slavishly is neither healthy nor cool" (Wolf:6). For Wolf, we cannot call following the ideals as progress, rather to talk, criticize and be selective on ideals with proper consciousness is progress. But unconsciously, we hardly stay out of objective qualities to define beauty. Naturally, in the Indian subcontinent, people are not



thoroughly born being so white as British. We have a good mixture of different beauty tones like white, pale white, olive, brown, dark brown and black. Even siblings can have different tones naturally. But still today, our general wish is always to have brightness as if we seem brightness only means being 'white', though each of the colors has its own sort of brightness. From this view, we define lighter means white and darker means black. But dark skin also has its own light too which a cultural eye cannot catch. We are too colonized to have an obsession of a racial identity that is performative over centuries.

### **The Hyperreality of Social Screening**

Media and film industry patronize colonized standard, received through multicultural access, what is rarely present in culture but ideally present in people's mind. In the movies of Bangladesh, people of brown, dark brown and black skins are rarely found as actors or actresses. In most cases, actresses are chosen according to the whiteness of their skin. The so-called 'romantic' category songs of movies are too romantic that love is unimaginable without a certain race. We call the portrayal of the movie is not real and it's just an act. But we also cannot deny what Baudrillard claimed. According to Baudrillard, movies are not real or even not unreal. They are hyperreal since people take the portrayal of movies as the ideal or nearly perfect model which people culturally follow or want to be like. Hyperreality is the term coined by Jean Baudrillard which refers the state of copies of copies, that lost its connection to the origin through the process of simulation (Nayar 49-50). In this case, for the audience who take the portrayal is real, as they copy the actor or actresses and want to be like them. They invest time and money to watch movies because for them the movie is idealistic real. On the contrary, the director, who makes the movie, copies the society and social phenomena to portray in the movie. His/her primary focus lies on what happens in reality. So, for him, the movie is an act, an unreal, rather the society is the real. That means, a group, what that is shown on screen is real. For another group, what is shown on screen is unreal. Now to come to conclusion, what can we call the screen? Real or unreal? It is hyperreal, a state where real and unreal is amalgamated and cannot be distinguished. Therefore, movies and media do not portray the reality, rather it is based on the hand which controls, but the society consumes it.

For Jacques Lacan, in the journey of symbolic order from mirror order, we alienate our 'self', the unconscious and stay holding our conscious 'image', the ego. This imaginary platform starts to create a social image from the beginning of a child's mirror stage. In the journey to the symbolic order, the human starts to be socialized. The more he is socialized, the more the psychosis increases to achieve perfection. This image functions a key role to prepare one's gender performativity in theatrical context which exists through historical reproduction. Judith Butler writes in her essay, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, that the gendered norms exist in society through the performative acts in theatrical context and nontheatrical context (Butler 520). Theatrical means the context in which one has to perform in front of the society embodying the social norms and codes. The society performs as the audience and gives value to the performance of the performer's theatrical act. The person starts to maintain the performative act in non-theatrical context when he/she embodies the gender norm as 'a style of being' (Sartre) or 'a stylistics of existence' (Foucault)" (Butler 521). That means, we have a subconscious aptitude to catch the theater, what is shown, for our theatrical context that gives us a well-performative valuation in front of the society. Such social demand brings silent frustration even in the nontheatrical context of those who naturally do not meet the beauty



standard. Therefore, these industries are holding the hypocrisy, an unreal world, not representing the commons, but unfortunately culturally consumed, valued and followed by the commons, whereas the Indian subcontinent is the (only) region of the world where people of multiple beauty tones exist.

There are thousands of traditions and beauty standards around the world. Each area follows its own beauty standard. A beautiful black Nigerian is much praised and accepted naturally in Africa. If even a gypsy is born in a Bangladeshi village, he/she is not considered very beautiful where the same person would simply be considered beautiful in another part of the world. In this way, a person's beauty can get different interpretations from different lenses of different areas of the world. On the other side, if one is identified as object of beauty, the subject of one is not appreciated identified. According to Crispin Sartwell, "If we treat beauty as a property of objects apart from subjects, we seem to omit the transport of soul, or at any rate the pleasure, with which we associate beauty" (Sartwell:303). The idealism cannot reach to the subject, rather alienate the subject. It's a practice of inclusion and exclusion. Those who are disable, from abled and ideal gaze, they are seen not disable, rather unbeautiful, monstrous and burden. According to Lennard J. Davis, "Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society" (Davis:198). Therefore, if any person's beauty is not appreciated properly in our own area, the same person can inevitably get the highest appreciation of beauty in another part of the world. In this way, we can consider that everybody is beautiful regardless of his/her culture, race, class, profession, position, and birthplace. That is why beauty has universal objectivity that everyone is beautiful.

### **The Sudden Crash (Crush) on Appearance: A Psychosocial Categorizing**

A very common issue related to the subjectivity of beauty is 'falling in love' at first sight, though it is not possible for any 'human' in the world to have unchanging permanent love for the whole life to a complete human being just having a look on the appearance. Yes, some may think that it happens. That is not love for a human, but a sudden attraction to his/her beauty of appearance or actions. In this regard, German American psychologist Erik Erikson writes the reason behind sudden fall in his book, *Childhood and Society* (1950). For Erikson, in adolescent stage (age 11-19), 'role confusion' and the lack of 'ego identity' creates a vacant space in one's identity to attach with someone who seems more perfect than the self because in this stage, one explores ego identity and tends to fill up the gaps. It makes one prepared to fall in love. That means, in this stage, a person stays psychologically prepared to fall and keep exploring. After this age, in young adulthood (age 19-40), the form of exploration changes and one wants mutuality or a mutual partner with whom the conscious condition of wanted beauty matches the best and, for Erikson, this mutuality is shaped in our conscious by the influence of society and culture (Erikson, 234). That means that sudden fall in love is just a desire in something/someone which is beautiful or matched to the ideal figure inherent in one's consciousness, an image created by society. It's highly rare to find one to fall in love suddenly to an unknown who does not meet the social beauty standard. One personally finds attractive and wants to possess. It results in the person's specific categorizing qualities of beauty. When he/she finds some of those qualities matched in one person, he/she feels attracted to the person. In this way, our mind specifies some outer qualities as beautiful and alienates some other qualities as unlovely. For example, if somebody is fat, some people alienate him/her as ugly. This



alienation happens from the unconscious part of our mind and everybody's alienation is not the same. However, anything of our unconscious mind is modifiable through altering the conventional practice of mindset. For example, our unconscious part does not put any force to this alienation in case of the beauty of our parents. Does anyone ever think in this way or with the same beauty fascination of actors/actresses, "Is my father beautiful? How beautiful is my mother?" Certainly, every mother is the most beautiful woman to her children and the affection also does not require any subjectivity and alienation. In this case, the unconscious part supports humans to go beyond the essentials of beauty standards. That is why, as a natural being, humans can love without the consideration of any traditional beauty standard. Therefore, the traditional judgements and wishes for some categories among us are modifiable through conscious alteration of the conventional practice of our mind.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The idea of 'beauty standard' itself is a legitimized ideal, ideally thought, consumed and followed by media which changes with the course of time. Media constructs an ideal, that is not present but followed in the real. Anybody may follow any decent standard to make his/her appearance decent and beautiful. But the categorization for selection, separation and alienation is a stereotypical colonized approach. We should not categorize any standard and color as the 'objective criteria' of defining anybody's natural beauty. The 'objective factors' or 'criteria' which still today people apply to define beauty, according to the culture, society, and tradition, put margin into the profound natural beauty and that leads to alienation and racism. We should realize that the whole mankind holds the objectivity of beauty that 'every-single-body is beautiful' regardless of birthplace, profession, class, and race and celebrate natural beauty and painted in different way in different colors of nature. We just need to come out of the box of cultural and traditional judgements. Now, it is the matter of a beautiful mind to be able to find beauty in everybody. In the total humankind, all are differently and objectively beautiful. That is the biggest objectivity of beauty.

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