



Body Narratives from Posters and Popular Culture

Dr. Aparna^{1*}

^{1*}Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Raffles University, Neemrana 301705 E-Mail: o7aparnayadav@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The dichotomy of physically fit to fit in physical standards has emerged as a new question. Does the bikini industry promote the idea of appealing sizes or competitions that show beauty pageants and bodybuilders on popular media? The body has always been the contested site of people as whenever we meet someone after the first acquaintance, they ask *why you are so thin. Or why do you look so fat?* This narration is now changing into the new mold of being fit into that new dress. What if it doesn't, the detrimental effect of not losing or not fitting into the set criteria has emerged in new disorders. The most recurring is the body dysmorphia which evolves due to the rule created by these competitions. *Double XL* movie produced in 2022, showcases a narrative about the body and for the body. *Fashion* movie produced in (2008), on models and beauty pageants that tries to cover the deformity of being the best yet ruins the foundation of being human. Bodybuilders and beauty pageants either create history and fame through steroids, unnecessary medication, and surgeries or just distort themselves physically as well as mentally. Physical attractiveness, prowess, and aesthetic appeal are just words that would wipe but talent, capability, and personality would stay forever. Thus, the body is nude yet crude, and therefore, the paper attempts to unwrap the problems staying in the heads of pageants and bodybuilders.

Keywords;Body, beauty pageants, body builders and dysmorphia

Introduction:

The paper will not pandulate back in the history as it opens with the curtain of contemporary era where the body is shining more than the mind. The body was made beautiful not for aesthetic appeal but for its transformation. The productive change in the body has an arrow towards men because the change in the women's body whether it's through clothes or make-up, it has been targeted due to the increased interest in men. Women's body acted as power to control men, and this was realized after a great humiliation. Charles Dickens sketched a character in *Great Expectations*, Estella who says, "I am what you designed me to be. I am your blade. You cannot now complain if you also feel the hurt". The women when revolted has suffered insignificantly as they were acting against the wind but when there was no one to listen they took the humility as their strength and started striking through their body. This story started from corsets, full-coverage, heavy gowns, heels, and pancakes baked on the face. The journey from a girl to lady was difficult but the most annoying act was women discouraging women. *I went through the tide so, let the world know how the tide look like*. With this mind-set all the women suffered even more, then there was a voice which came forward and little by little everything changed. Furthermore, the body was free but only for its own eyes and not for men.

The body created many eyes,
then the same body fought many eyes,
but still there are eyes left,
don't change the body, but the eyes

After decades the body is not installing nudity but celebrating the freedom which was once the part of natural order when we were nomadic tribes. "Beauty is not universal or changeless, though the west pretends that all ideals of female beauty stem from one Platonic Ideal Woman; the Maori admire a fat vulva, and Padang, droopy breasts" (Wolf, 2015). The women wearing bikini by choice becomes her freedom but if she wears it for competing, movies, entertaining others becomes a humility. The force changes the course of action, because in

advertisement or marketing women's body seems like a product which is being modelled for male gaze and selling. The diplomacy of men in the market created a new sign for beauty according to their demands, as they desire their standards making their dominance, as Naomi Wolf shares in the text *Beauty Myth* (2015), women are just the beauty puppets in the hands of men. The men judging any 'fashion show' would always showcase the cultural defects and predicts the supremacy of male and therefore, discomforting women paddling in the western outfits which itself is difficult to adopt for the women coming from the background where clothes become honor for the family. The question arises, that if we promote these shows and women being slim with all the desired skin care and surgeries the business will not decline but if we normalize the body of woman and spread this myth named beauty, will it be accepted by everyone?

Models as Mannequins

The body is farthest to the human as when the body moves or showcases different parts from the costume it is often highlighted that the woman is never praised but the body or the costume. As we dive into the songs of Ed Sheeran "Shape of You", we analysis that the man is interested in the body not in the woman. "I'm in love with your body", in the same way Honey Singh "Blue Eyes", "choti dress mein bomb lagdi menu", "yeah katal kare tera bomb figure". The body wrapped in songs, designer clothes and masking the identity has a cascading effect on the personality as well as on the generation of AI. The camouflage seen in the lives of models has been studied and through their confession it is measured that the paint of their life is faded.

Karee, the model once expressed about the harassment which she faced during her struggling time. The cameraman who shoots for the magazine or posters asks for unnecessary poses. One day she went for the shoot of some advertisement for children's product but, Karee was asked to take off her shirt and when she resisted the producer said, that she is no more in the advertisement. The profession of models is highly distorted and when they start realizing this fact, the time gets over with nothing in hand.

Tara who always dreamt of being a supermodel from the beginning of her career was stuck into the caldron of beasts. On every step she had to either pay a prize or sell her body to achieve the greater position. Sometimes long shoots without food, and other times she used to vomit to reduce the bloating during her periods. She needed to be very careful with all the chemicals and surgeries. She was just the doll who was decorated according to the demand of the judges. The life was not just about the shows but beyond it was a life in which they were rated and were assigned work to impress business tycoons.

Kalpna started her journey by entering the world of fantasy wherein she imagined her crowned personality and luxury life. Unfortunately, the reality was way different than she structured. She was caught in the web of sexual abuse and humility. Moreover, she was once pricked by some sharp object in the dress and the whole team was worried about the dress should not be stained. It was awful that the model was not important but the clothes. Sometimes the weight becomes highly tormenting if the weight is increased by an inch, then they are replaced by the other model.

Likewise, the popular culture, media, and TV shows, portrays a different picture. The film *Fashion* (2008) structure the blocks of an aspiring fashion model that depicts the life of woman who tries to transform herself to be a supermodel. The 'body' in the world of fashion is depicted in the complex canvas wherein it goes beyond the morals of a woman. The women are treated like hangers who are there to hang designer clothes and are used, humiliated the way businessman wants. The struggle of woman in this field is intense and therefore, they should be curated about it. The movie features the glamour of the body which not only translates the feminine qualities of the women but also highlights the image silhouetting in the darkness of the male world. The modelling agencies uses the body of models to entertain the tycoons as if they are also the part of décor in the party.

The postmodernists views emphasize more on the discourses, but the materialist feminism focuses on the economy, social conditions, and the politics. In the materialist feminism the added feature is that of class. As emphasized in the movie that the high-class men want beautiful female bodies around. This, not only considered in the box of oppression but, it has been categorized to picturize that how wage and work alters gender power and relations. It is argued in the text *Women, Class, and the Feminist Imagination* (1990), that the women's oppression can be attributed to both patriarchy and capitalism (19). In the male-dominated social structure there are numerous inequalities that are determined by the class affiliations. The fashion Industry is one of the highly classed industries, wherein a woman gets everything overnight like the protagonist in the movie which deteriorates the mindfulness of the woman. She feels the economic power, but the reality sits in the hands of capitalist who knows how she can be cracked among the fortunes. There are arguments that clearly foreground the material conditions of gender roles. If the exploitation of the labor is due to the growth of capitalism, then feminists argue that the labor of woman on the shows, TV and entertainment has often been neglected by the authority. The people in the power of the authority are majorly comprises of men and thus, the women are being controlled and unacknowledged.

The representation of females has always been enclosed into mother, procreative, sexual, and seductive material. There are some attributes of the women's body which are valued in the patriarchal society and women assimilates these values. Thus, in the text *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* (2010) it is explained that how feminists have observed and noted several kinds of objectification.

"Beauty contests commodify the woman's body for the men's gaze. Cosmetic surgery and body adornment become 'feminine' modes. Thinness associated with feminine beauty (seen in advertisements, films, fashion) drives young girls to drastic measures to lose weight. The country is itself imaged as a woman's body('motherland') that demands perfection by men" (99).

The conditioning of the women is so deep that everything is already discovered and decided, and 'she' has no say, even though it is her body. The movie *Double XXL* (2022), issues the same message as we see that the protagonist's mother speaks in the similar voice like that of a man that she should care about the fat, body which would be a constraint in her marriage. On the other hand, the other protagonist loses her boyfriend as she was not fit to be in a 'sexy dress'. Therefore, the phenomena of women's body have always covered as the object of study, control, discipline, and gaze. The subject of women has never been individualized by women but by the masters. Her desires, sexuality, and identity has been determined by the social norms produced by the society.

In the movie, we can observe and analyze few scenes that how men rule and gives the standards of the body. How should it be for job? How should it be for marriage? How should it be for meeting friends? How should it be for designer dresses?

In one of the conversations of the women in the party, everyone discusses the protagonist and comments the relationship as "the man using her girlfriend as a fluffy mattress as she is fat". Both the women protagonist shares a common fight of body, and both are extraordinary in their respective fields. So, the question in the front row is whether the dreams are bigger than the size of the body. As everyone in the society just restrict themselves to the weight no one sees the dream.

The mother of the protagonist also shares the same story as she expresses, when she was 30, she was trying to lose but couldn't be able to control till she turned 55. She recites this to her daughter that if she is not married during her 30s, she would remain unmarried forever and society would curse her for this.

When the women protagonist reaches for the job interview with all the confidence and passion she was rejected without the interview as the candidate gets selected on the bases of appearance and demeanor. This leads to accusation of 'self-esteem' as she was shattered and furious on the criteria projected in the policy of selection.

In the movie both the women protagonist helps each other to push the rock of Sisyphus as both were in the category of passionate women who sees the picture of success more than the size of the body. They helped each other to be successful in their career and changed the standards of the designers and fashion shows. 'Saira' says that models has only one definition 'you can't see a piece of meat on them' – only bones. Rejecting the fundamental hypocrisies of fashion and shows she came up with the idea of uplifting the women by not just making clothes for every shape but also making comfortable in their body with the great event of fashion show. Radical feminist noted within the discourses that women's body is central because it is the body that has suffered (in terms of sexuality, labor, procreation). The true subjectivity can only be gained when the women take control over her mind and the body.

Muscularity in Males

In the past research we tend to ignore one angle of body as it was influenced by muscles. Men view their body as hairless, muscular and their masculinity is shaped by body itself. Moreover, the drive for muscularity may be associated with an increased risk of anabolic-androgenic steroids and other supplements whose utility is not clear. Over the decades it has seen that even men becomes the part of societal pressure wherein they have to have a body with muscularity beaming in it. In men the physical anxiety and high-level depression is common as studies have agreed with the fact that men and boys have high desire to be muscular. As being muscular gives the impression of masculinity.

In the article "A Review of Body Image Influences on Men's Fitness Goals and Supplement Use" (2007), the author tries to unveil the reality of men's body image and a drive towards muscularity which further leads to different consequences.

"With regards to the relationship between men's body image and their fitness goals, we can reach the following conclusions: (a) for men to achieve a muscular ideal, they engage in fitness activities that build lean muscle mass and diet to lose weight and gain mass; (b) some men striving for a muscular body develop MD (muscular dystrophies), which is associated with excessive strength training and dieting, as well as AAS (anabolic-androgenic steroids) use, to support their goal of becoming more lean and muscular; (c) men may engage in various types of risky dieting behaviors, including diet cycling and nutritional supplement and APED (Performance enhancing drugs) use, to maximize their desire for a muscular body; and (d) men may engage in body depilation to maximize their muscular appearance" (313).

The risk is more in gay men than in heterosexual men as body image is everything for this population which sometimes annoys the lean body.

This 'body' issue can be ruptured by the change of mind and the focus should shift from body image to mind image. In the modelling if the men and women suggest something they are sealed by saying that don't use mind but the body to influence.

Conclusion:

The bodybuilders and models should adopt and promote a healthy body which would involve fostering awareness and encouraging a balanced perspective on physical appearance. One aspect would be to educate with the proper information about risks involved in extreme body image like body dysmorphia and health issues. There should be a challenging fashion show likewise described in the movie *Double XL*(2022) to highlight diverse body types in the fashion industry to change the standard given by the society. Mental health should be given priority as this support is needed to address all the concerns related to body image and other disorders. A positive mind and fit body should be promoted rather prioritizing physical ideals showcased in movies, fashion shows etc. Advocate for responsible industry standards that prioritize health and well-being over unrealistic body expectations. Cultivating a culture of balance and self-acceptance can contribute to a more positive and inclusive environment in these fields. Yoga is one of the most positive attribute of being at peace, thus, this temple need to be calm and serene to understand the standard which an individual chooses according to his/her priority.

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