



SPOTLIGHT

How old are you?

Dove is on a social mission to create a world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety. The brand's global research in 2013 reveals that only 1 in 10 women are proud to disclose their age and most women believe they have to be young to be considered beautiful. As a result, age is a source of anxiety for all women which generally peaks in their early thirties, but may be felt as early as their teens.

To further explore the issue, Dove carried out a social campaign: How Old Are You?

As part of the campaign and to understand the depth of the concern, Dove hosted a roundtable discussion at The Daily Star Centre on the October 18, 2016 with eminent guests from different sectors of the profession world as panellists.

Azra Mahmood, renowned model, choreographer and emcee moderated the event.

The occasion began with discussions on the pressure existent in the world of fashion and beauty.

Sadia Moyeen, famed make-up artist and the creative mind behind La Belle, took the lead to say, "I would admit that the pressure is more evident in this world. Women feel a sense of anxiety which leads to a lot of stress. My suggestions would be to take responsibility in teaching our children, especially girls that they are beautiful in every way and that physical aspects of beauty must never define them".

Then as the conversation gained

momentum, Fahima Choudhury, Managing Director of Ogilvy and Mather, Bangladesh asserted, "I realise that the responsibility falls largely on us to refrain from making anyone feel impracticable. I also realise that it is very important for us to break social stereotypes and keep the conversations alive so that people can come to us with their concerns and we can diminish them together".

Delving into the social context and trying to understand how things were in the rural context, Sara Zaker, actress, social activist and Group Managing Director Asiatic, pointed out, "In the rural areas of Bangladesh age discrimination issues are widespread. There is a preconceived marriageable age for girls; beyond that particular age, parents have to pay significant dowry to get their girls married off. This horrible practice results in rampant child marriages causing early pregnancy and complications during labour, which at times even lead to death." She also went on to conclude that Dove's self-esteem projects were way forward prospects showing light. "To keep the conversations truly active there must also be parallel programmes for the men to slander the trigger at its roots."

To further understand the impact by the world of media, Bipasha Hayat - artist, actor, and playwright was consulted. She contributed a lot with her thoughts. "Age brackets don't concern me at all because my mother installed enough confidence in me to boost

my self-belief forever." She added, "I wouldn't particularly suggest that the discrimination is on women rather on human beings in general, age should never define an individual; rather their work should provide a framework to the classification of their character".

We had to have some input from other panellists to understand their perspective regarding the issue. Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, Director, Institute of Disaster Management at University of Dhaka, concluded, "I believe mothers have a major role to play in diminishing the narrow-mindedness. I have never seen my mother complain about old age and its difficulties, and hence all the girls in our family, including my sisters, inferred that age was never an issue of inconvenience."

Choudhury Tasneem Hasin, Nutritionist, United Hospital, added on "I have met many desperate and prejudiced parents in my line of profession who came to me seeking solutions to reduce their daughter's weight, not because they were concerned with obesity related issues but because they wanted their daughters to look good for their husbands. This kind of absurd social pressure creates unnecessary strain on the women, breaking their confidence and often making them suffer from depression."

The session was concluded with remarks from the younger generation who shared their views regarding the subject matter.

Nazifa Raidah, student, Viqarunnisa Noon School and College said, "My parents, especially my mother, helped me appreciate human values and boosted my confidence to such a point that I never felt desperate for other's approval.

In our prejudiced world the typical stereotype is that women are pretty while men are strong and successful. I believe the media has a strong role to play in order to break those prejudices".

Mithi Chowdhury, student, I.B.A, inferred "Thanks to my parents I have learned from a young age that people will value me based on my sense of self-worth. I will not say that beautifying oneself is wrong, I might be interested to get dressed up, and even dolled up for an occasion but I cannot assume that people will draw a conclusion of my worth based on that only. There's a message that must be put through to everyone. Before we are women, we are also human beings".

Azra Mahmood the moderator helped wrap up the event with the conclusion that women could prevent the anxiety connected to beauty by being more self-assured and confident about themselves. They need to take good care of their health, which would ultimately help them in realising their full potential in all aspects of life.

**By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Rashed Shumon**



Sadia Moyeen



Fahima Choudhury



Sara Zaker



Bipasha Hayat