Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the fairest of all?

Shejuti is a 27 year old executive working for two years at a reputed company. Because of her nine to five job, she peeks at a mirror less but is more consumed with the digital screens; which by the way is a sanctum of her friends and social media influencers flaunting their filtered bodies and faces. Although she never had the urge to undertake any drastic procedures, the urge to be trendy haunted her. At last, one fine day, she went back home, glanced at the mirror, and started searching online for beauty clinics to board the trend ship.

From fantasy stories to reality, the standard of beauty has been evolving like all other aspects of life. During the fifteenth century, renaissance women used cosmetics and devoted much time for their hair. Conversely, men became symbols of power. They flaunted their power through their obese physique. During the eighteenth century, women became more modest by concealing their breasts. Medications became the desired salvation to rejuvenate their bodies. During the twentieth century, the invention of machines brought about a new beauty, the beauty of consumption. Fashion canons represented the beauty of consumption by posing for pictures in magazines and billboards; starring in runway shows, movies, television shows, and commercials. Consumers were bombarded by the propaganda made public by fashion canons. Consumers wore designer jeans and

clothing and made up their hair and makeup to resemble the model on a glossy magazine cover. Mass media brought upon a new mode of beauty attention.

Negative body image has been a topic of intense debate amongst men and women of all ages since sixth century BC. Body image is a multidimensional concept that widely describes the internal and subjective perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours about an individual's appearance.

Individuals strive to be accepted by his or her peers, such as by having the "right" hair, body, clothing, and essentially anything that is considered acceptable by their peers. When rejected by his or her peers, individuals being subjected to constant daily teasing and torment, especially at a young delicate age, slowly changes his or her patterns of behaviour. These factors can lead the victim to isolate themselves and adopt extreme diet restrictions and unhealthy weight control practices, cosmetic surgery, aesthetic procedures, etc.

Today, society relies on social and mass media more than ever, as users are now hyper active. Media sources have a very important relationship with an individual as they have the unique ability to connect the individual with an abundance of information, such as an image one desires, news, fake news, celebrities, friends, family, online communities, and more.

The individual has the power to constantly ask, "Why a Negative Body Image?"

Both avenues have influence over the way the individual perceives him or herself and the desire to become what society presents as the ideal persona. The impact of social comparison to thin models in advertisements creates a negative face, body perceptions. Negative body perception is likely to be found while comparing oneself to extremely thin models. Negative

perceptions transfer to the individual via social media, mass media, technology, and by peers by shaming and bullying individuals with undesirable characteristics. Hence, using filters on mobile phone apps to going through different aesthetic/cosmetic surgery at an early age has become very common and trendy in Dhaka. There are so many salons, spas that are offering these services without proper experts or doctors that it is something to be a concerned about. If someone needs it, wants it, and at the right age, it's his or her wish, but when young ladies in their mid-20s get interested, they are losing their natural youth, natural beauty, and not to mention these procedures have to be maintained regularly, and not a one-time thing.

The constant access to media brings body image concerns to the forefront now more than ever. Mass media and social media has enabled the frequency of social comparisons. An individual can face harsh judgments towards him or her when images are encountered, which facilitate obsessive grazing or unenthusiastic thoughts and emotions. We can see that on the comment sections of the social media influencers to celebrity posts, that can categorically be called cyberbullying!

Will graceful ageing soon become a myth to the society?

Art: Tanziral Dilshad Ditan

Body image, mental health condition and the influence of media: The pertinent trio

It is common knowledge that the most relevant perceptions and notions (that matter) in our lives are primarily shaped at the crucial age of adolescence. This is when we are at the beck and call of the media, our friends and even siblings; everything that we consider as 'valuable' during this specified period of time influences us for the long haul. So, if a teenager witnesses her favourite singer endorse an idealised body size, her mind will forever be etched with the notion that there is 'only one perfect size,' which is meant for all. This concept applies to teens of all genders, races and upbringing. Hence, experts usually target young adults when they especially want to motivate a generation to change perceptions.

"It is always better to start early than to rectify late," says Farin Daula, Mental Health Practitioner and Life-skills Educator (Adolescents and Youth) and also the founder of One Circle (a life-skills education institution).

We recently interviewed Daula for a better understanding of the ideology behind body positivity, and what it actually meant to the youth of today and how their influences could be affected to make them less susceptible to overall negativity and depression.

How can people celebrate their bodies every day?
Just like our personalities, our bodies are unique as well. The world would be a

very boring place if we all looked the same! Every time we get a negative thought about our bodies, we should try to remember the unique aspects of our own bodies instead. Additionally, we should also try to shift focus to 'what our bodies can do' rather than 'what it looks like' – helping to augment our self-belief.

What kind of people makes a person feel bad about their body and why?
People who body shame others are often extremely critical of their own bodies as well. This is detrimental for both the person experiencing it and the person doing the damage. Body shaming is a learnt behaviour. Society teaches us definitive notions of beauty, such as too fat, too thin, too dark, too

pale etc. and we criticise anyone who doesn't fit that notion. Culturally, it has been accepted to body shame ourselves and those around us. There are friends and family who believe that they "mean well" when they body shame others around them. We can stop this by immediately calling them out and voicing it to them on why it's completely unacceptable to shame someone about their looks.

Why are adolescents more susceptible to the outside pressure to looking good? How can they be motivated in a positive way during their formidable years?
Media, including social media, plays a huge part in shaping young people's views on unrealistic beauty standards. This comes in

the form of photo shopped celebrities, skinny models, and an unaccommodating six-pack culture. Media glorifies and celebrates beauty of only a certain type, weight, height, skin colour etc.

There is also a drawback to putting too much emphasis on body positivity since the focus is still on physical appearances. Instead, society as a whole should shift the focus to personality, positive character, and skills. We have to stop drawing parallels between our looks and our sense of self-worth.

Body positivity is a very common term that we frequently use nowadays to influence the youth of today. What does it actually mean?
Body image is how and what we think about our bodies. A positive body image is about accepting our physical appearance, and being satisfied with the way we look. Body positivity means accepting ourselves and others around us the way we are and understanding that there is no single notion to being beautiful. Positive body image is important for self-esteem, mental health and a balanced attitude towards healthy eating and an active lifestyle.

We often see adults suffering from severe depression because their insecurities had not been addressed earlier. How can these people be helped?