

#BEAUTY

Most of us know for a fact that our school and college years are the most formative years of our lives. This is when we are encouraged to follow a set lifestyle and consider it as 'the ultimate way to be.' This is the time when certain 'media certified' and so-called 'perfect body' images are infused into our minds and we start to believe that any deviation from the specified measurements or ideology must be incorrect.

Beauty is all SHAPES and SIZES



This is also when all sorts of problems begin to arise, one by one, because in reality, we find ourselves way different from the specified trajectories. We feel disappointed, neglected, and often depressed, blaming ourselves for failing to be as 'perfect' as deemed by the society.

So, here we are today, trying to tell people all over the world that being different is normal and being different is being real. And that there are no hard and fast rules to be the same as everyone else. The regressive thought process has only been concocted by a select few whom it benefits, when the real truth is that every body type, shape and personalities are beautiful and we must be open-minded enough to celebrate our differences.

Star Lifestyle recently interviewed a few wonderful women; leaders and torch bearers, who consider themselves as different and yet, more beautiful than the fake interpretations of the perfect woman. **Tashnuva Anan Shishir Actor, News Presenter, Model, Dancer** Tashnuva Shishir had a hard time convincing society that she was as much part of the society, as any cisgender person.

"I have tried to prove over and over again that I can do anything as a transgender woman that any other person in the world could do. I had to prove to them that I could 'also' be a model and broke all the stereotypes attributed to the term conventional!"

According to Shishir, there is no specified definition to beauty, all these have been manufactured over the years, as an end result to 200 years of colonialism.

"We are all South Asian people; we belong to the tropical areas. Why must our skin colour be as fair as Caucasians? Why must we be as tall as them? Isn't it because we were made to think that way?" said Shishir.

Shishir also stated that the modelling

industry all over the world was obsessed with a fixed set of looks which almost always discouraged the unconventional looking transgender men and women to take part in the profession.

"It's extremely hard for us to get in, we have different types of skin, some of us have unique heights and body measurements," revealed Shishir.

According to the multi-talented performance artist, God has made every individual unique and people in general should proudly flaunt their differences instead of hiding behind the veil of similarity.

"We must all be encouraged to think beyond the box. In a world that is so advanced, it is extremely prehistoric to stick to ideologies so ancient."

Nazia Hassan Fitness Coach, Nutrition Expert

To Nazia Hassan, body positivity means much more than an emphasis on the external body image. According to the fitness coach, the term is more related to self-love and mental satisfaction instead.

"I respected myself too much to ever think that my body composition was flawed," said Nazia.

During the conversation, Hassan revealed that she had been through a lot of ups and downs in life and that every stage of her life demanded a different body structure.

"I used to be into weightlifting and my body type was completely different back then. After that, I became pregnant and then I had a completely different body type and today, I am much leaner but I wouldn't call any of these stages flawed. They have been all perfect and exactly what was needed at the time," said Nazia.

Being a fitness coach means that clients come to her with body issues that need to be corrected and Hassan has a different approach to deal with her clients.

"I tell every single one of my client to

be healthy, fit, and energetic instead of becoming a certain body type. Most of my clients, when they come to me at first, want to drop 20KG or 10KG to become a certain weight deemed attractive by the society; I teach them to be healthy instead. Once they get used to my style, they realise how much more important being fit and energised is compared to just dropping down a few sizes," revealed the fitness guru.

Shababa Rashid Self-Employed

"For the longest time, I kept my hair straight, thinking that it was the only way to look trendy and fashionable," admits Rashid. "I even damaged my hair irreparably by trying to straighten it every day," she said, highlighting the lack of confidence in her God-gifted features, including a thick set of curly locks.

"The funny thing is, once I stopped following the norms and began to take care of my natural hair, people actually started to compliment me more. This actually meant that all this time, I was worried about nothing at all! So, basically it wasn't them, it was more me lacking self-confidence," admits Rashid.

Today, Rashid believes that she is much more confident than before and wants to share her story with the world. "Please don't follow what others are doing. Instead, be yourself and people will find you more interesting than ever."

Prejual Chakma Model, Communication expert working at a local company

Prejual works at a marketing firm, while doing stints of modelling as a hobby. "People are always telling me that I starve myself to be lean. See! It's not easy being a model at all. I have always been a little on the lean side and many people found a problem with that. So, it isn't any specific structure that the rest of the world wants you to comply with, rather it is their own unhappiness that bars them from accepting you as you are," said the

confident model.

In her profession, she has to meet a lot of people and they come up with a variety of odd conversations.

"There are so many people calling me a budget Korean model and that is so offensive. It seems like these people are completely uneducated about the many indigenous cultures that exist in Bangladesh.

I proudly belong to the Chakma community and I don't like it when somebody confuses my heritage without checking with me first. That's just rude," said Prejual.

The popular model clearly states that the grass is not greener on any side. "Trust me, I just want to be myself, conforming to a certain size, shape and body type can be a constant pressure that takes major toll on the psychology of a person. So I tell everybody in general. Just be yourself and that's the best way to be."

Maisha Samiha Professional Photographer, Entrepreneur

"I have always been petite! This is who I am. But people seem to have a problem with this. I remember one person just randomly making a comment that I was tiny because my mum didn't feed me enough during my childhood," said the well-known photographer.

Claiming to have been equally chided for her olive toned skin colour, Samiha said she found a worthy coping mechanism to deal with the negativities.

"Sports gave me wings; it gave me enough confidence to overcome any sort of



Sharreen Reza Faculty, International School

"I have been wearing the hijab from the age of fourteen, completely out of personal choice and yet, people keep on asking me improper questions like: why do you wear the hijab? Have you been forced...," confessed Reza.

"Most of the time, I have walked away from such nonsensical questions. I have taken part in the national volleyball team in my hijab and it was my choice. Plus, when people can't get through to me on this note, they start commenting about my height. Calling me too tall and whatnot. At first, these sort of comments used to get to me, and then I realised these comments actually come from really dissatisfied people. You know just like they say, if you can't do, comment," stated Reza.

Reza confessed that negative comments don't hurt her anymore because she realises that the pain inflicted on her by others are actually desperate cries of unhappy people.

Having spoken to all these wonderful ladies, we have come to the conclusion that however the world may like to portray us, we only shine when we are truly ourselves – body type, image, size, shape, and personality.

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Models: Tashnuva Shishir, Nazia Hassan, Prejual Chakma, Maisha Samiha, Shababa Rashid, Sharreen Reza Wardrobe: Retail Remedy Styling: Isha Yeasmin Makeup: Farzana Shakil's Makeup Salon