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<p style="text-align:center">Does colorism affect the mental health of South Asians?</p>

Colorism, the act of discrimination against someone based on their skin color, has been an ongoing issue in South Asian culture. This act was initially created due to European colonization in the mid to late 19th century, as stated by the *Office of the Historian*. After the expansion of Western ideals and culture, South Asia's beauty standards began to shift from having a darker complexion to a fairer skin tone. What was once considered the complexion of beauty, began to morph into a category that was only possessed by one group of people: the lower socioeconomic class. Eventually, over time this advancing change of mindset slowly fueled a negative change of attitude toward people with darker pigmentation. Different sources of outlets such as cultural values, social media, skin-fairness advertisements, etc all point out how having fair skin is an advantage, leading the brown-skinned group into a state of mental distress and dilemma. Colorism places uneven standards on skin tone, economic burdens, and social isolation on South Asians which contributes to lower mental health levels.

The most notable skin-fairness cream, "Fair and Lovely", often brought out the stereotype that lighter-skinned people were to achieve more success than someone who has a darker complexion. They also heavily implied ideas that having a fair skin tone should be considered a prestigious luxury. The more these advertisements became prominent the more

these ideas became ingrained in society. Furthermore, these advertisements are one of the reasons why darker-skinned people have a hard time climbing the social ladder. On page 5 of, "Occidentalisation of Beauty Standards," multiple authors state that, "...distinction was meant to be employed by the British to understand the people, it polarised the society by introducing systematic oppression so that those from deep within South India struggles in their livelihoods and attempts to climb up." This quote perpetuates the fact that there is a clear behavioral distinction between different colors of skin since South India has a darker complexion compared to the north. The more society values these ideas the more mental burden is placed on South Asians with darker pigmentation due to the fact that society wouldn't nearly value a dark-skinned person compared to a fair-skinned person.

As mentioned previously, people with darker skin tones were often categorized into the lower socioeconomic group. This process will eventually lead them to become more vulnerable to skin-brightening cream commercials. Sohail Kamran, an assistant professor in marketing, discusses how skin-brightening creams are only targeted to the lower socioeconomic group since a vast majority of people in that group have darker tones. Since most of them can't afford pricey luxuries such as dresses and gold jewelry they have to opt for a more affordable option. By constantly buying a multitude of creams, numerous South Asians are forcing themselves into an economic burden, which is closely tied to their mental health level since brown-skinned people realize that they have to utilize outside sources constantly to fix what's "broken".

Last, but not least, the concept of colorism can bring social isolation. Several women in India have faced discrimination and isolation due to their skin tone. In *Marketing Marriage and Colorism in India,* author Komal Dhillon-Jamerson informs the audience that women with darker skin face a disadvantage in the marriage sector. He goes on to quote, "Women with darker skin

often experience limited marital options across castes because their skin is frequently perceived as less valuable." Rejection of skin tone can often lead to becoming an outcast in society because brown-skinned people are facing the feeling of being unwanted.

Since times are changing constantly, several might argue that the colorist mindset shouldn't be applied to the region of South Asia as a whole. The reason is that each family has been through different experiences and upbringings so some families shouldn't have the colorist mindset, to begin with. However, the colorist mindset should be used across the nation since statistics (according to Ranjit Baghwad at the University of New Jersey) have shown that having a darker skin tone is often associated with having low self-esteem. Even though some families may not practice colorism, society at a large scale will, which can further deteriorate the mental health of many.

Overall, the mental health of South Asians can be changed through the concept of colorism. It can place uneven standards on skin tone, economic burdens, and social isolation upon numerous South Asians which lowers their mental health levels. In order to stop this ongoing issue, society as a whole needs to change. If South Asia once valued dark-skinned people, who is to say that this change won't happen again in the near future?

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