

Analysis of Food and Gender Roles

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Introduction

Food is an essential part of everyone's lives. It gives us the energy and nutrients to grow and develop, be healthy and active, to move, work, play, think and learn. From ancient to modern times, we are aware of our food practices. We have varied varieties of food for each and every season. Some foods are meant only for men as well as some for women. The diet which men use are different from that of women. Women want to be fit and slim, so they always are fond of taking more fiber foods during their dieting, like green vegetables and fruits, whereas men want to be more strong to do every sort of heavy work, so they take many fatty foods.

This kind of dieting is practiced not simply in modern era. If we see history, men used to go for hunting and eat raw meats whereas women did plantation works and tended to eat vegetables. If we are born as women we have to be fit and slim, otherwise we may not get married and survive in this society.

Samah Visaria portrays the marginalization and suppression of fatty women through her character Madhurima Pandey in her book *Encounters of a fat bride*. This paper portrays how fatty women face problems in the society.

Fat Girls

I always think why all the works including sculptures in our world portray women as thin. Does it mean to say women are frail or beautiful? Is that being fat means to say they are firm or ugly? Even in literature writings, it is hard to find fat female protagonists. There are all around restrictions for them including food. Being fatty does not solely depend on their food practices, but also on their genetic cause.

"I spent my whole single life trying to be thin just to find someone who'd love me once I got fat" -Stephanie Klein.

The Marginalization of Fatty Girls

There is all around the world we could see the suppression and marginalization of fatty women in many fields. There won't be any interconnection between knowledge and physique.

But in many fields, they tend to select the members through their appearance not of their knowledge. Women are considered as the pleasure giving machine. If they want to shine in their fields, they not only want to improve their knowledge but also want to be fit. These kinds of restrictions are not for men in many fields. Because of these restrictions, women face many health and mental problems.

India is popular for dowry system. If the bride was overweight, then they have to give more dowry to satisfy the groom. But it's not the big issue in the case of a groom. The groom may be of good or bad character, handsome or ugly, black or white, thin or overweight but that won't be a matter for concern. But the bride should be thin and beautiful. If they were not, then they have to do many workouts which their body couldn't tolerate. They have to be in heavy dieting, here I mention heavy diet not healthy diet. The groom and their family need only thin and beautiful bride not healthy and chubby bride. Because of satisfying their future fiancée and his family, all the women will undergo this challenge. This leads them to face many physical problems in their future.

Even they don't have liberty to eat foods as of their choice. Before they order their food, they have to think of their work place and about the society. Though they are intellectual and positive attitude women, others commenting on their physique make them to think inferior. They will feel mentally ill and become frail both at their work place and at home.

“If any female feels she needs anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already giving away her power to be self-defining, her agency.”

- Bell hooks, Feminism is for everybody

Samah Visaria and Her Story

In the novel, we could see the general struggle of fatty women through the character of Madhurima who is 25-years-old with 93 kg weight. In India there has been the age limit for both the gender to get marriage. For girls they have to marry before the age of 25. But Madhurima didn't get married because of her overweight. For her surprise Harsh accepts to marry her; she thought that he may be an alien or homosexual. The topic of dowry also began. A car was bought, with the plan to be given to the boy. Talks, between the parents seemed never to end. And so, the engagement is broken off by Madhu, when she does find out about the dowry.

Anyway, with time comes calm in Madhu's life. She begins her own journey and discovers many things. But most important she does find love in Harsh. She may have rejected him before, but now with knowledge and insight gained, she loves him. Where once both

families were enthusiastic about the marriage, now both are opposed to the union. But all's well that ends well.

Despite her many accomplishments, society will still limit her being called a “lovely, sweet girl. Fair complexion. Big eyes, healthy figure, heavy chest, long hair. Respectful, graduate”. These words are ones that her grandmother used to describe her on her matrimonial profile.

“You’re not too fat. You’re not too loud. You’re not too smart. You’re not unladylike. There is nothing wrong with you.”

– Jessica Valenti, Full Frontal Feminism

The Lessons from Madhurima’s Life

The most important thing from this story is that none of us is perfect. Nothing is perfect. We can dream about perfect clothing, romances, because we need everything perfect in our life. Madhurima also wanted romance, a perfect figure, a perfect life. But once she realized that not having a slim waist doesn’t undermine her worth, she is happy. As of her, grass will always be greener on the other side of all our lives.

“The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own.”

-Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique

Conclusion

Encounters of a fat bride exposes the struggles facing by the fatty women in the society. Every woman is physically weak and mentally strong than that of men. Everyone can’t be perfect in all the way. We shouldn’t judge the book by its cover likewise the fatty women always won’t be firm or ugly. There is no interconnection between physique and knowledge. we shouldn’t be judgmental in our physique. Life is given by God. All human beings have the rights to live, eat of their wish. We should live our life in healthy and happy manner. The external flaws won’t judge our nature. The pure heart and helping mind are important to shine in our life. I conclude by saying that life is that one lives as you wish, not to impress others. There is difficulty to live as you are. So, don’t change your character or physique for anyone. No one can’t play the role of yours. So be you always with all positivity.

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