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# Incongruent Premodern and Modern Beauty Ideals: A Case Study of South Korea and India's Reconciliation of Current Beauty Trends With Foundational Religious Ideals

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**CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE**

**INCONGRUENT PREMODERN AND MODERN BEAUTY IDEALS:  
A CASE STUDY OF SOUTH KOREA AND INDIA'S RECONCILIATION OF  
CURRENT BEAUTY TRENDS WITH FOUNDATIONAL RELIGIOUS IDEALS**

SUBMITTED TO

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AND

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BY

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FOR

SENIOR THESIS

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## INTRODUCTION

The fairy tale known as the Ugly Duckling is one that has been translated into numerous languages and has been read globally. It is the story of a young bird that is considered ugly because it is dark and different from the rest of his duckling siblings and is miserable. Later on, though, it discovers that it was never a duck, but in fact a beautiful swan. The moral of the story: what is considered beautiful depends on what is used as a reference. Moreover, being “ugly” is not a permanent state; anyone can become beautiful. This moral ties in well with how Western societies view beauty and what is considered beautiful. Western societies tend to stress the individual and the beauty found in each individual’s uniqueness. Hence the creation of the phrase, “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.” This phrase signifies to society, but even more pointedly to women, that everyone is beautiful in their own right—we just need to find that beauty. Eastern societies, on the other hand, tend to be more collectivist and stress community. Due to the diminished importance of the individual, there is tends to be more conformity in order to allow the society to be one cohesive unit. Beauty, and what is considered beautiful in these societies, is no different. In fact, a study done by J. Walter Thompson’s advertising team found that women in villages and towns that their “conventional media and normal distribution” could not reach were still able to buy their Pond’s products, and did. This further reinforced the idea that “the desire for beauty was universal.”<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of the society, be it individualistic or collectivist, being “beautiful” is something that all women strive towards. Kathy Davis, in her article on cosmetic surgery

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<sup>1</sup> Sutton, Denise H. *Globalizing Ideal Beauty: How Female Copywriters of the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency Redefined Beauty for the Twentieth Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

in *Negotiating at the Margins: the Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance*, states, “Although the aesthetic ideals of feminine and countenance have varied greatly from culture to culture and shifted dramatically over the years, the underlying assumption always seems to be that beauty is worth time, money, pain, and sometimes even life itself.”<sup>2</sup> Women have been taught through various social constructs that beauty is linked to numerous crucial aspects in life such as success, ease of upward mobility, and happiness. Why is being beautiful so crucial? Well, historically, most societies are male-dominated. Males occupy the majority of positions in politics and generally hold the highest positions in the workforce. Therefore, males are the ones who set the standards which women need to abide by in order to get ahead socially, politically, and economically. Moreover, men set the ideal that women must meet. Women who fail to meet this ideal, or refuse to do so, suffer the likelihood of not progressing and advancing to their full capabilities. Of course, this is not always the case, particularly in modern, progressive societies, thanks to suffrage movements and gender equality reforms. However, there are still instances where women are subliminally or outright coerced into altering their appearances to become more “beautiful” in order to achieve a higher status. In fact, Kathy Davis gives a wonderful example in her article. She speaks of a woman named Joanne who is a successful businesswoman in her early forties who will be undergoing a face-lift in the near future. Joanne justifies this face-lift by saying,

“I’ve worked in several organizations and I’ve seen what happens to older women—they end up in some out-of-the-way place in the organization. I’ve seen how

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, Kathy. "Cultural Dopes and She-Devils: Cosmetic Surgery as Ideological Dilemma." *In Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993. 23-47.

they are driven crazy—not to the extent that they have to be committed, but just completely shoved into the background. That kind of process—and it definitely has to do with whether you are seen as someone who is attractive, who still counts—and if you refuse to play the game, well, it’s a game the whole damn thing is a game.”<sup>3</sup>

Joanne’s quote illustrates well the pressure placed on women, particularly those who are middle-aged or older, to stay attractive in order to maintain their status. Joanne’s example takes place in America, which is supposedly one of the best countries when it comes to gender equality. In more collectivist and/or developing societies, the pressure on women to be beautiful is even greater. Kim TaeYon discusses this phenomenon in her article *Neo-Confucian Body and Techniques: Women’s Bodies in Korea’s Consumer Society*. She states, “The more beautiful a woman is, the more her value increases in both the marriage and employment market: ‘Korea, in particular, has rewarded beautiful people with well-paying jobs, improved marriage prospects and respect. In such an environment, choosing to alter one’s body is a necessity rather than an option. Again, beauty is compulsory.”<sup>4</sup>

### **What is considered beautiful?**

Unsurprisingly, specifics on what is considered beautiful differ from country to country and culture to culture; what *is* surprising are the numerous, striking similarities in beauty standards found despite these barriers. For example, fairer skin, large eyes, full lips and an angled nose are characteristics found in beauty ideals across many cultures.

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<sup>3</sup> Davis. “Cultural Dopes and She-Devils: Cosmetic Surgery as Ideological Dilemma. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Kim, TaeYon. "Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women's Bodies In Korea's Consumer Society." *Body & Society* 9, no. 2 (2003): 97-113. 108.

Why and how were these specific characteristics chosen to transverse cultural beauty standards? According to Kathy Davis, “[o]riginally the culprit was sought in the system of cultural beauty norms which demanded eternal youth and impossible beauty from women: slender but voluptuous shapes, faces unmarked by the passage of time, and, most of all, an appearance in keeping with the conventions of upper-class, Western femininity.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the origin of these facial characteristics is the West, more specifically America and Western Europe. A quick Google search of the western beauty ideal reveals that there is wide consensus among the search results on what that entails. Specifically, a symmetrical face that looks youthful, fair skin, almond-shaped eyes, straight hair, a long nose with small nostrils, full lips, thin eyebrows that have been well arched, and a low waist-to-hip ratio are common criteria found.

How was this western ideal proliferated across the globe? Originally, it was through colonialism. The main players during the age of imperialism were Great Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal; however, the star was definitely Great Britain. When these explorers landed in a foreign land, they shocked the natives with their pale skin and delicate features. Additionally, whenever a country was made into a colony, the imperializing country set the standards for the natives to aspire to. This is true for more than just beauty—it extended to wealth and prosperity, fashion, etiquette, and modernization. However, in this modern age, this western ideal is still maintained in countries that were colonized and even those that were not, despite a shift in global economics. This is largely due to the media. Those countries that were once the colonizers, including the United States, have the medias with the strongest global

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<sup>5</sup> Davis. “Cultural Dopes and She-Devils: Cosmetic Surgery as Ideological Dilemma.” 23.



influence. Other nations are influenced by these medias and desire to be more like the images that they see. This is because they want to keep up with these powerhouse nations and rise in status. However, many countries that were once colonized and have since risen to a status that rivals their old colonizers, such as China and India, still continue to have beauty standards that are suspiciously similar to the western ideal. This shows that this desire to “keep up” economically is not the only factor at play when discussing the hold the western ideal has in other nations.

### **Which countries have taken the Western ideal and applied it to their beauty standards?**

Truthfully speaking, almost all countries have adopted some version of the Western ideal (albeit they add/subtract some aspects) as the basis of their own beauty standards. However, for the purpose of this paper, I will be dealing specifically with two case studies: India and South Korea.

India is one of the strongest, largest, and most populated countries in world. It is also a one of the most religious countries. Currently, India has several religions that are practiced (i.e. Christianity, Buddhism, etc.), but Hinduism is the most widely practiced religion in India. This could be due to the fact that there are several different schools of thought located within Hinduism, so each person can choose one best fit for their lifestyle. In fact, when the British landed in India to colonize, they were so startled by some Hindu practices they saw that it sparked numerous British ethnographers to travel to India to document what they saw. Unfortunately, many of the accounts written by these ethnographers depicted the various Hindu practices as barbaric and backwards, thus

angering many Indian scholars and Indologists. And so, as India modernized, many discourses on Hinduism portrayed it as the polar opposite to the West's Christian beliefs. Hinduism was polytheistic, Christianity is monotheistic. Hindu practices were dirty and barbaric, Christian practices were wholesome, sanctimonious, and clean. Thus, Hindu scholars and Indologists flipped this negative, orientalist perspective on Hinduism and used Hinduism as a point of nationalist pride. Now, India has progressed and modernized and currently rivals or surpasses England in the global competition. However, despite their rough past with England, India's current standard of beauty for women bears a striking resemblance to the Western ideal. "The female had to be perfectly manicured in order to be presented in public, with makeup and a fit figure. In addition to developing a new body, Indian women had to expand their cultural horizons. They needed to be independent and driven women, with strong intellectual capabilities. At the same time, Indian women were not allowed to let go of their cultural heritage. They were still expected to obey the previous gender norms about female chastity and modesty. Thus, the new Indian woman of the media combined a global exterior with an Indian core."<sup>6</sup> Thus, we see a dualism created due to the adoption of the western ideal. Indian women are expected to have a western exterior, with an Indian core.

A similar trend can be seen in South Korea. Korea's religious foundation is Confucianism. Confucianism is more than just a religion, however; it is an ideology. The teachings of Confucius, the founder of the ideology, covered more than just rituals, and expanded to engulf the way his followers led their lives. Confucianism sought to

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<sup>6</sup> Nisuresh. "Indian and Global: New Ideas about Beauty in India." Globalization Seminar Davidson. <http://sites.davidson.edu/anthro/global/2013/05/16/indian-and-global-new-ideas-about-beauty-in-india/> (accessed February 22, 2014).

“[provide] the moral foundation for both private and public life”.<sup>7</sup> Confucianism sought to make people follow the “true way of life.” Confucianism was the state religion in South Korea until the late Koryo. It was then reformulated and revived and subsequently known as “Neo-Confucianism.” This Neo-Confucianism was the ideological foundation South Korea operated on as it progressed into the modern age, and still continues to operate on today. However, Korea, like India, has adopted the western ideal as the basis for their beauty standard. According to Kim TaeYon, concerning beauty,

“Media represent the new codes of proper body management and presentation, and are as meticulously followed as Neo-Confucian codes used to be. The result is that the female bodies seen in the streets of Korea are nearly identical to the bodies depicted in media portrayals...Beauty in Korea has become a *requirement* of decorum for women rather than a vanity. The cultural pressure to harmonize as one—the ideal of *subjectlessness*—means that fashion tends to compel conformity rather and individuality. The Neo-Confucian values of harmonizing as one, proper behaviour and self-cultivation, re-emerge in the guise of conformity, propriety and self-improvement.”<sup>8</sup>

Like women in India, women in Korea must deal with a dualism between the religious foundation of the country and the adoption of the western ideal as the standard of beauty. Here, unlike with India, the primary exterior force is the media, not colonization. Interestingly enough, this quote vividly illustrates the extreme to which beauty is being stressed in Korea today.

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<sup>7</sup> Deuchler, Martina. *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Kim. "Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women's Bodies in Korea's Consumer Society." 107.

**What are the standards of beauty according to those religions?**



Figure 1: Female figure, Yasodhara Cave 1. Ajanta mural, c. 500 A.D.

There are several passages found in the *Silpasastras* and the *Meghaduta* concerning beauty that hint at what the ideal beauty would be in Hindu terms. Kālidāsa, the author of the *Meghaduta*, states: “Slim, youthful, with fine teeth and lips (red) like ripe bimba fruit, attenuated in the waist with eyes like those of a frightened doe and a deep navel. Slow of gait by the weight of the hips and slightly bent by her (full) breasts she is at it were the first and best creation of the feminine by the Creator.”<sup>9</sup> All of these characteristics are described so, because they are the direct result of the body being in

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<sup>9</sup> Kālidāsa. *Meghadūta*. Cited in: Anand, Mulk Raj, and Krishna Nehru Hutheesing. *The Book of Indian Beauty*. [New] ed. Rutland, Vt.: C.E. Tuttle Co., 1981.

perfect equilibrium due to yogic practices. Deva Gosh elaborates on this in his book *Kama Ratna: Indian Ideals of Feminine Beauty*. He explains, “[t]he fleshly body is in a state of the highest spiritual tension with yogic breath control leading to a smooth roundness of the limbs. The head and forehead are well developed; the mouth is full-lipped and relaxed; the shoulders and chest are broad; the waist and hips are slim; the face is oval; the eyes long; and the eye lids heavily lowered with the mind concentrated on the inner vision and experience”.<sup>10</sup> There is a clear connection between religion and beauty. The religion shaped the beauty ideal, not the other way around. Women were seen as beautiful if they were good Hindus. Their inner relationship with the divine could be seen in their outward appearance.

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<sup>10</sup> Ghosh, Deva Prasad. *Kama Ratna; Indian Ideals of Feminine Beauty*. New Delhi: R. & K. Pub. House, 1973.



[www.mu-um.com](http://www.mu-um.com) 뮤움

Figure 2: Pre-modern Korean woman; Confucian ideal

In the case of South Korea, Confucius did not discuss beauty at length, so the information is much more limited. He did state, however, that “[o]ur bodies, to every hair and shred of skin, are received from our parents. We must not presume to injure or to wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety. When we have established our character

by the practice of this filial course, so as to make our name famous in future ages and thereby glorify our parents, this is the end of filial piety.”<sup>11</sup> This passage in particular stresses the importance of maintaining the body as is. Confucius stressed that any alteration of the body is the greatest sin against our parents. Neo-Confucians believed the body was sacred. Since it was bequeathed by one’s parents, in accordance with filial piety, the body had to be respected and remain unaltered.<sup>12</sup> According to Confucius, filial piety is one of the most sacred responsibilities any individual has. Filial piety is a mode by which *ki* and societal harmony is maintained.

It has already been established that both South Korea and India’s current beauty standards are based on the western ideal. However, the native peoples of South Korea and India generally do not possess many of the characteristics that constitute the western ideal. For example, while the Western ideal calls for large, almond eye, most Koreans naturally possess what is known as a monolid—they lack a visible crease above their eye. The western ideal also calls for fair skin, and both groups of people are naturally darker skinned. Thus, there are several practices both countries have adopted in order to achieve that western ideal. But do these new, modern practices align with religious foundation of those countries? This paper aims to answer the question, first and foremost, of whether or not current beauty practices found in South Korea and India align with their religious foundations. Secondly, if they do not align, how are the people in those countries justifying their deviation from the religious ideal? For the purpose of this paper, I will only be dealing with two common practices found in both countries: cosmetic surgery

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<sup>11</sup> Confucius. *Xiao Jing (The Classic of Filial Piety)*.

<sup>12</sup> Kim. "Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women's Bodies in Korea's Consumer Society." 98.

and skin lightening.



## **COSMETIC SURGERY**

Cosmetic surgery is defined as “[s]urgery that modifies or improves the appearance of a physical feature, irregularity, or defect.”<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, when “cosmetic surgery” is referenced, it is not including surgeries done for medical purposes (i.e. removal of tonsils, removal of appendix, etc.). It also does not include reconstructive surgeries done post extreme trauma. Cosmetic surgery, as it is being used in this chapter, refers to any optional surgery done to an individual for the purpose of enhancing the individual’s perceived beauty.

There used to be, and still is in some countries or circles of people, a stigma attached to having cosmetic surgery done. Kathy Davis asserts, “within contemporary feminist discourse on beauty, cosmetic surgery tends to be regarded as a particularly dramatic illustration of the oppressive nature of the feminine beauty system.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, it is expensive, painful, and not guaranteed to bring the individual the satisfaction they hope to get. So, it is understandable, to a certain extent, why we are taught to approach cosmetic surgery hesitantly and analyze all aspects before going ahead with the surgery. However, in recent years there has been a boom in the cosmetic surgery world and leading the way are, among other countries, South Korea and India.

### **SOUTH KOREA**

As stated earlier, according to Confucius, any alteration of the body is forbidden because our body was given to us by our parents. Maintenance of our body in its pure

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<sup>1</sup> “Cosmetic surgery. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Houghton Mifflin Company. [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cosmetic surgery](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cosmetic%20surgery) (accessed: March 26, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Davis. "Cultural Dopes and She-Devils: Cosmetic Surgery as Ideological Dilemma." 24.

state is the greatest display of filial piety possible. If we alter it in any way, we are therefore being ungrateful for all our parents have given us. Regarding cosmetic surgery, South Korea has jumped wholeheartedly on the bandwagon, so to speak, and has even gone so far as to lead advancements in surgical techniques. In fact, one of South Korea's many nicknames is "The Plastic Surgery Capital of the World" and most of the surgeons with the highest acclaim are Korean.



Figure 3: Before and After pictures of Miss South Korea 2012 Kim Yu-mi

South Koreans used to be very wary of any form of body alteration; for example, piercings, tattoos, and surgery were considered very taboo. However, once Korean music artists began engaging in those taboo practices as a way to appeal to a more global community, those practices lost their taboo. South Koreans have gradually adopted a very positive view towards cosmetic surgery. About 10 years ago, if someone were asked

whether or not they had received cosmetic surgery, he or she would heavily deny such accusations. Nowadays, the society has become more open about having surgeries done. In fact, when I studied abroad in South Korea, the subways and streets were littered with advertisements from the numerous surgery clinics located around Seoul, most prominently in Apgujeong and Gangnam. Surgical procedures have essentially become routine and expected, especially with women. For instance, double eye-lid surgery is one of the most common surgeries performed and is usually given as a graduation gift to young girls and sometimes boys. The surgeries have become so ordinary that the meaning for the term for cosmetic surgery in Korean, 송형수술 (pronounced song-hyung-su-sul), has changed. The term used to refer to any type of medical procedure done to alter an individual's perceived beauty. Now, "[t]he term cosmetic surgery (*songhyung susul*) is used in Korea to refer to invasive practices, rather than common, quick fixes, such as laser removal of facial blemishes, Botox injections to reduce wrinkles, or to shrink the jaw muscle creating a desirable V-shaped face."<sup>3</sup> This quote illustrates the denial that Korean society has adopted when addressing their current obsession with plastic surgery and its blatant incongruity with Confucian belief. The term "cosmetic surgery" is inherently in discord with Confucianism because it intrinsically means alteration of the body. By referring to only invasive procedures as "cosmetic surgery" they are reducing the magnitude of incongruence with Confucian ideals. Referring to smaller procedures, that others may see as plastic surgery, as just a "procedure" (*shisul*), they are making them seem more necessary and placing them in the same category as, for example, a

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<sup>3</sup> Holliday, Ruth, and J. Elfving-Hwang. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea." *Body & Society* 18, no. 2 (2012): 58-81. 57.

Lasik eye operation. This is important because Lasik eye surgery could potentially adhere to Confucian belief because one is not changing the body. Meaning, the eye itself is not being physically changed, it is only being heightened. And, one goal of Confucianism is to make people “better”.

Another interesting thing to note is the recent rise in popularity of physiognomic surgery (*gwansang susul*) in Korea. Physiognomic surgery is a type of cosmetic surgery done with the aim of achieving not necessarily a more “beautiful” face, but rather a more “auspicious” face. The practice, originally done in “indigenous folk religions and practice ...[has] undergone a revival during the past three decades and physiognomy as a prominent form of Korean divination has been enthusiastically embraced. Around half of all Koreans believe that one can read a person’s character by looking at their face (Kim, 2005). With the growing affluence of Korean society, the inauspicious face, previously having doomed its bearer to a lifetime of bad luck, can fortunately now be fixed.”<sup>4</sup> Koreans believe that by looking at a person’s face, you can tell certain characteristics about them just based on their facial features. A face with features that are thought to imply future success, wealth, happiness, and other positive things would be considered “auspicious”. The ultimate goal is to have a face that is both auspicious and beautiful, but recently, more weight is being given to an auspicious face over a beautiful face.

### **How does an auspicious face look?**

There are nine main features that are considered to be auspicious and thought to signify great wealth. The first and most important facial feature is the symmetry of the

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<sup>4</sup> Holliday, R., and J. Elfving-Hwang. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea." 70.

face. Having a symmetrical face signifies balance in your life and having a very easy-going life. The second feature is a high, prominent forehead that is “gently curved, round, high and even slightly protruding.”<sup>5</sup> A high forehead not only signifies intelligence and ability to think well on your feet, but it also indicates coming into wealth early on in life, wealth brought from heaven. A high forehead also is also associated with authority and power. The forehead is a yang area: an indicator of a person’s potential. The third feature is the nose. The nose, opposite to the forehead, is a yin area. The larger, higher, and rounder the nose, the more wealth that individual is thought to receive in the future. Next, what is known as a “pearl lip.” Pearl refers to the rounded, small, bump found on the upper lip. Not everyone has this feature on their upper lip. The pearl indicates “effortless” good fortune and the possession of speech (e.g. well-spoken, eloquent, and tactful). The fifth feature also deals with the mouth. Having what is known as a “lotus mouth” is considered especially auspicious. A lotus mouth means having a mouth that is small, soft, and delicate. The mouth should also never appear to be dry because it signifies having wealth/luck dry up as well.

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<sup>5</sup> "Nine Indications of Wealth on Your Face." *Feng Shui World* Jan/Feb (2011). [http://www.wofs.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=935:nine-indications-ofwe..](http://www.wofs.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=935:nine-indications-ofwe..) (accessed March 29, 2014).

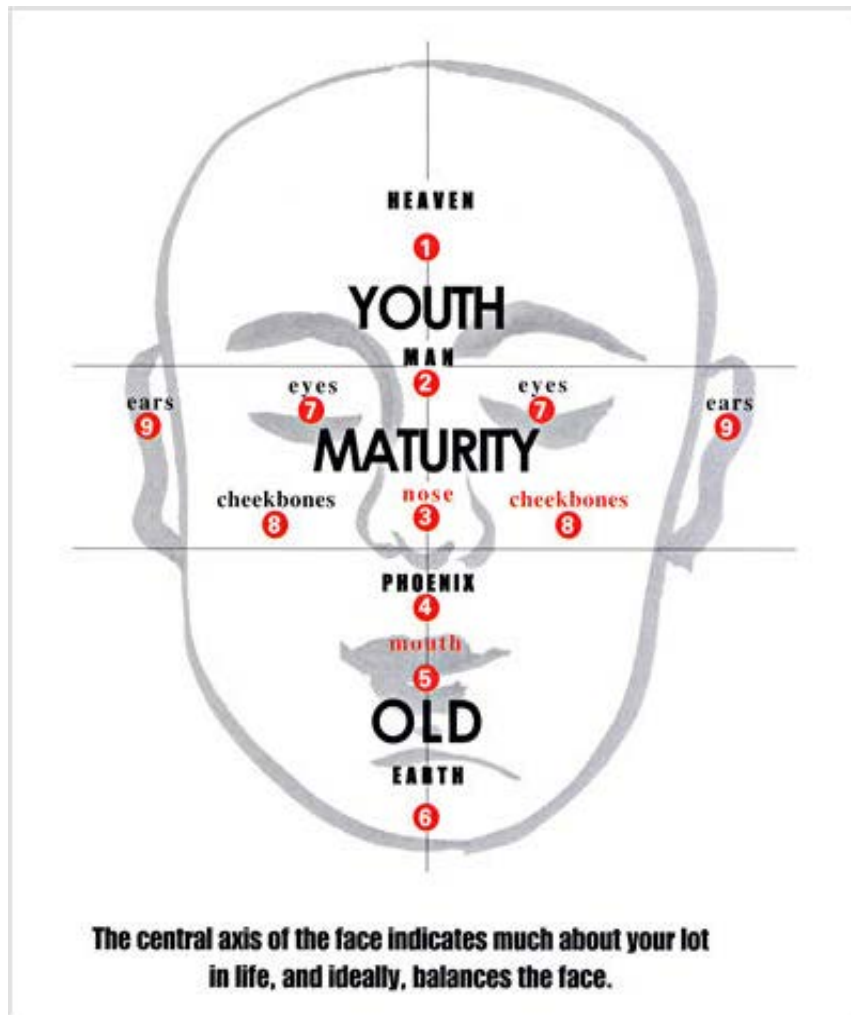


Figure 4: An auspicious face

Following the lotus mouth, the prominent chin is the next feature considered to be auspicious. The chin is thought to be a mountain on the face; therefore a prominent chin expresses a strong base mountain for the face. The chin is also thought to be where the wealth of the individual is stored. Thus, a prominent chin is suggestive of a person who can accumulate asset wealth. An auspicious chin is “slightly protruding, quite fleshy and looks like a ‘mountain’.”<sup>6</sup> The jawline must also be very strong and prominent. The next auspicious feature is a combination of both the eyes and the eyebrows. Having bright

<sup>6</sup> “Nine Indications of Wealth on Your Face”

eyes is thought to be very auspicious; but, for one's eyes to be bright, they must appear bright, alert, and shiny. Not only that, but they should be protected by well-arched eyebrows. The eyebrows should not be too sparse, thin, or overly arched. Having both bright eyes and well-arched eyebrows is indicative of good health and prosperity. The next feature is plump cheekbones. The cheekbones should be prominent, but never bony. The cheekbones should be round, shiny, and have quite a bit of flesh on them, enough so that someone could pinch them. They should also appear pink and luminous. This suggests good fortune in life. And the last feature is the ears. Ears that are "well formed and proportionate" signify good fortune and wisdom in that individual. The ears are also "said to represent the flow of the *Yellow River*....Long, well-defined ears that are not overly fleshy are a sign of class and the high-born."<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note that moles on or around any of the described features are considered unlucky, excepting the mouth. Moles in general are perceived to be signs of bad luck, especially black ones. Red moles are preferable to black ones; however, having no moles on the face, except around the mouth, is ideal. Having moles around the mouth indicates that the individual will never lack food.

**Are the most popular cosmetic surgeries performed ones that result in more auspicious features?**

The answer to this is both no and yes. No, in the sense that the most popular surgeries since the boom in cosmetic surgery have been surgeries that run contradictory to what constitutes auspicious features. Holliday et al state that "[t]he most popular cosmetic surgeries in South Korea are eyelid surgeries (blepharoplasties) and nose jobs

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<sup>7</sup> "Nine Indications of Wealth on Your Face"

(rhinoplasties), although jaw reshaping - performed using oscillating saws to reduce the angular prominence of the mandible (Lee, 2007) - is becoming increasingly popular (and affordable). Blepharoplasty refers to the creation of a visible palpebral fold to the eye lid where one is not already visible (Sheng, 2000), but also more generally to the widening of the eye or lifting of the eyelid.”<sup>8</sup> As the quote shows, the most popular surgeries in Korea are blepharoplasty (double eyelid surgery), rhinoplasties (nose jobs), and jaw reshaping surgery. The purpose of double eyelid surgery is to create a larger-looking eye by creating a fold above the eyelid. Korean people prefer double eyelids to their traditional, and more common, monolid eyes. However, auspicious “bright” eyes do not necessarily mean large eyes. In fact, “It does not matter what the shape, size or colouring of the eyes are—more important is the inner vitality that shines through.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, double eyelid surgery does not necessarily create a more auspicious “bright” eye; no surgery could. More importantly, “Korean physiognomy has traditionally characterised round eyes for women as suggesting lasciviousness, yet round eyes are currently desirable” among Korean women.<sup>10</sup> As far as rhinoplasties go, most Korean people undergo the surgery to achieve a narrower, smaller, higher nose, with a more prominent nose bridge. But, the auspicious nose is one that is wide, big, round, and high. So, this surgery, like the double eyelid surgery, does not lead to a more auspicious face. Finally jaw reshaping surgery: most Korean women who undergo this surgery want to achieve a smaller, narrower, face that has a very small, v-shaped chin and soft jaw lines. However, an

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<sup>8</sup> Holliday, R., and J. Elfving-Hwang. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea." 57.

<sup>9</sup> "Nine Indications of Wealth on Your Face"

<sup>10</sup> Holliday, R., and J. Elfving-Hwang. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea." 69.



auspicious face has a very prominent jaw due to the prominent chin. Moreover, as Holliday et al. point out, “a large moon face has historically connoted fertility and therefore value for women, yet women are now having their faces narrowed.”<sup>11</sup>

However, there are some surgeries that have only recently gained popularity that do, in fact, lead to a more auspicious face. For example, there has been a recent increase in surgeries that insert a plate into the forehead to make it higher and more prominent, which aligns with Korean physiognomy. Also, Koreans frequently have surgery to remove any moles, freckles, or acne that they may have on their face.

### **Summation**

So, Korea’s recent infatuation with cosmetic surgery is highly contradictory to their Confucian foundation. Korea seems to have dealt with this blatant incongruity by doing two things: redefining terminology to be less inclusive of certain operations, and using the ruse of physiognomic surgery as justification. As stated earlier, Koreans have started referring to certain surgical operations, which could otherwise be counted as cosmetic operations, as “procedures” rather than cosmetic surgery. “Procedures,” as opposed to cosmetic surgery, do not necessarily mean changing the body, and they have a connotation of being necessary and routine. The term “cosmetic surgery,” in contrast, intrinsically means changing the body. Moreover, it has a more negative connotation. Additionally, cosmetic surgery is thought of as being completely optional, rarely ever “necessary,” and a very drastic solution.

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<sup>11</sup> Holliday, R., and J. Elfving-Hwang. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea." 69.

Their other coping mechanism is via physiognomic surgery. These surgeries are geared toward creating a more “auspicious” face, which in turn leads to greater wealth, fortune, and prosperity in the future. All of those goals, except perhaps wealth, are goals that Confucianism has for its followers. Confucianism holds that people can become perfect if they lead their lives accordingly.

## **INDIA**

A not-so-well-known fact about India is that it is the home of Aishwarya Rai, also known as, “The Most Beautiful Woman in the World.”



Figure 5: Aishwarya Rai as her role in the Bollywood hit, Devdas

Aishwarya Rai has been hailed in India, and around the globe, for her stunning beauty ever since she took home Miss Universe crown in 1994. Since then, she has won numerous awards for her beauty, including being voted Most Beautiful Miss World twice. Since then, she has set the standard of beauty within India. Her fair skin, full lips, big, bright eyes, dark, luscious hair, slender nose, and voluptuous, sexy figure have been both desired and envied by Indian women across the nation. In fact, beauty in general has increased in importance for Indian women in recent years, much more so than in time period prior. All Indian women are now expected to look like Mrs. Rai in order to be considered beautiful. But, because Mrs. Rai's features are not typical within the country, Indian women (and men as well), have turned to cosmetic surgeries in order to make up for that.

### **What are the most common cosmetic surgical procedures done in India?**

It was not until very recently that cosmetic surgery became popular and commonplace in India. Dr. S. Keswani, a cosmetic surgeon in India, outlines three main reasons for this phenomenon. He explains, “[t]he techniques are easily available in metro towns. People are aware of them. Most importantly, people have more disposable income than before to spend on looking good.”<sup>12</sup> Keswani's first reason speaks to the emerging metropolises that continue to appear in India while the second one deals more with availability of information to the general public. (And, perhaps, with increased literacy in India.) The final reason addresses the emergence of a strong middle class within India

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<sup>12</sup> [TNN. "Craze for plastic surgery puts India in top five - The Times of India." The Times of India. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Craze-for-plastic-surgery-puts-India-in-top-five/articleshow/6290542.cms \(accessed February 4, 2014\).](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Craze-for-plastic-surgery-puts-India-in-top-five/articleshow/6290542.cms)

and simply a general increase in wealth per capita in India in recent years. All of the reasons given by Dr. Keswani are a result of modernization and economic growth within India. This implies that cosmetic surgery is a product of modernization. It follows then that cosmetic surgery should not occur in undeveloped or developing countries.

The majority of the most popular surgeries performed in India are surprisingly not ones that deal with the face, but rather, the body. Breast augmentation, hair mesotherapy, liposuction (body contouring), fat grafting, abdominoplasty (tummy tucks), and Gynaecomastia correction (male breast reduction) surgeries are extremely popular procedures done. But, of course, there are some facial procedures that are quite popular. For example, rhinoplasty (nose job), Botox and other fillers, and chemical peels are also quite popular.<sup>13</sup> Looking at the list, it would appear that Indian people are more concerned with having a nice overall physical appearance than just with having a nice looking face. South Korea, as described earlier, is the complete opposite. The majority of cosmetic surgical procedures performed are almost exclusively restricted to the face.

### **What do Hindu texts say regarding cosmetic surgery?**

To recapitulate the beauty ideal for Hindu women as stated by the great poet Kālidāsa, the ideal Hindu woman should be “[s]lim, youthful, with fine teeth and lips (red) like ripe bimba fruit, attenuated in the waist with eyes like those of a frightened doe and a deep navel. Slow of gait by the weight of the hips and slightly bent by her (full)

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<sup>13</sup> BLK Super Specialty Hospital. "Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery." Cosmetic Surgery India, Hair Transplant, Breast Implant Surgery, Delhi, India. <http://blkhospital.com/speciality.php?id=60> (accessed April 25, 2014).

breasts she is at it were the first and best creation of the feminine by the Creator.”<sup>14</sup>

However, as far as blatantly forbidding cosmetic surgery, other than extreme ascetics and sadhus, such a strict forbiddance does not seem to exist in Hinduism. And, in the case of the ascetics and sadhus, these individuals have pledged their life to having no desire for material possessions or to remain in this corporeal world. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna explains that renunciation is a normal, and in fact the final stage, of life. “The giving up of activities that are based on material desire is what great learned men call the renounced order of life (*sanyasa*). And giving up the results of all activities is what the wise call renunciation (*tyaga*).”<sup>15</sup> There there are different types of ascetics who adhere to different practices. For example, *Sanyasis* retreat to the forests and are allowed to live with other *sanyasis*. *Jangamas* are among those that stand out the most and are thought of as being the stereotypical ascetics. These people usually have wild, long, matted hair from years of negligence. Some walk around naked and some have chains on their feet. There are also *Yogis*, who just practice yoga and are constantly meditating. Regardless of the type of ascetic, all forms are simply lifestyles of renouncing everything that keeps you connected to the corporeal world. This includes jobs, relationships, dreams, emotions, and family. The goal is to have no attachment to anything, and more importantly, no desire to be attached to anything. Thus, maintenance of appearance is not allowed in asceticism. If one is putting forth a conscious effort to maintain one’s appearance, it stems from a desire please others and continue to be part of the material world. Cosmetic surgery is therefore in strict contradiction to asceticism.

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<sup>14</sup> Kālidāsa. *Meghadūta*. Cited in: Ghosh. *Kama ratna; Indian Ideals of Feminine Beauty*. 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Bhagavad-Gita*. 18.2

However, traditionally, women were not allowed to become ascetics because of their duties as householder. And the gender inequality seen here, where women are refused participation in rituals, is present in most Hindu sects, except for Shakti worshippers. In fact, even as far back as the Rig Vedas, women could not participate fully in Vedic rituals out of fear of contaminating the ritual. It is not so much that Hindu texts expressly forbid cosmetic surgery, excepting asceticism, as that it is not mentioned at all because women were not placed at, nor allowed at, the focal point of most religious practices. Moreover, female beauty was not heavily emphasized, and any reference to feminine form is usually done so in two ways. The first of which is that the ideal is stated as just that, an ideal. The female form is glorified and is ascribed many alluring adjectives. The female, or her individual parts, are metaphorically compared to numerous lovely images, such as a lotus, deer, or flower. But the texts do not go further to state that the female should actively pursue that ideal, nor do they state whether or not altering the body to achieve that ideal is allowed. Alternatively, the female form is described as mainly a vessel by which the ritual is to take place. There is little to no romantic language used. Additionally, though the female is perceived to be the focal point of the ritual, this is not really the case. The female is just a mere instrument.

**Are the most popular surgeries performed in India ones that result features that are also in the Hindu texts?**

For the most part, yes, they are. Using Kālidāsa's quote as a reference, the criteria for ideal beauty include: full lips, full head of hair, small waist, large eyes, full breasts, and wide hips. Among India's list of popular surgeries include injection of fillers in the

lips, which would lead to full lips. Hair mesotherapy is intended to increase both density and volume to hair, so it too leads to a Hindu ideal set out by Kālidāsa. Breast augmentations increase the bust and both liposuctions and abdominoplasties lead to a smaller waist. And finally the usual fat graft performed is one around the eye area, which leads to a bigger, more awake-looking eye.



Figure 6: Before and after picture of fat grafting done around eye

Something to note is that Kālidāsa's quote above speaks directly to women, but the popular surgical procedures discussed above are popular among both men and women (except breast augmentations). This could imply that not only is there a consolidation of beauty standards among women globally, via the widespread adoption of the Western ideal, but there may also be a convergence of male and female beauty standards.

### **Summation**

In summation, because most Hindu texts, except asceticism, do not expressly prohibit the alteration of the corporeal body, it can be assumed that cosmetic surgery would not be a problem, had it been in existence when these texts were written. Moreover, regarding the feminine ideal set out by Kālidāsa, and exemplified in

Aishwarya Rai, many of the cosmetic procedures that are commonly done in India do in fact result in features that are ideal.

Another key point to note is that much of Aishwarya Rai's popularity, abroad and domestically, is due to the fact that her true character very much resembles the characters that she plays on screen. When *60 Minutes* dedicated an episode to Mrs. Rai, correspondent Tricia McDermott reiterated this idea: "Unlike some of her Hollywood counterparts, Rai's very much like the women she portrays: wholesome, dutiful and deeply religious."<sup>16</sup> This relates back to the point made in the Introduction about the relationship between beauty and religion. Hinduism calls for a strict adherence to one's dharma, as dictated by one's class and caste. And all sects of Hinduism, excepting Shakti worshippers (particularly Kālī worshippers), expect women to take a background role. The women are expected to perform their duties as the head of the household, remain chaste until marriage, and remain faithful and subservient to their husbands. Traditionally, divorce is not an option for women; even when her husband dies, a woman is not supposed to remarry. Even in death, the woman is supposed to remain loyal to her husband. In fact, it used to be commonplace, and somewhat expected, for a woman to throw herself on the funeral pyre of their deceased husband as a symbol of her faithfulness. Most Hindu goddesses exemplify this ideal, and those who do are most commonly prayed to by women. An excellent example of this would be the goddess of wealth and Vishnu's consort, Lakshmi. Even women who are not goddesses, but who exemplify this ideal, are praised and celebrated at various festivals. In William Sax's

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<sup>16</sup> Rai, Aishwarya. "The World's Most Beautiful Woman?" *60 Minutes*. CBS News, CBS, December 29, 2004.6



book, *Dancing the Self*, he discusses the dichotomy of the sexually promiscuous, violent female versus the docile, submissive housewife generally used when discussing women's role in Hinduism. He refers to this model as the "split model." His example for the docile householder is none other than the mother of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata, Kuntī. Sax says that, "...during the first twelve years when the brothers roamed through the jungles and mountains of Garwhal, Kuntī fed and protected them and rescued them, from many dangers, all through the power of her *sat*, her 'truth' or 'virtue'. So closely is Kuntī identified with truth and virtue that the normal epithet for her is "Truthful Mother Kuntī" (*satī mātā kuntī*), or sometimes "Devout Kuntī" (*dharmā kuntī*), and her "truth" is even objectified, becoming a kind of ritual object."<sup>17</sup> Though Kuntī is not a goddess, she is given special recognition and is worshipped for her nurturing, vegetarian, and chaste nature. While all other female roles during the festival can be, and usually are, played by males, not only is the role of Kuntī exclusively reserved for a female, but the female given the role is generally the oldest, most respected woman in the village. The fact that Aishwarya Rai's popularity and beauty is widely-accepted as the ideal throughout India could be due to the fact that she too exemplifies this ideal. So, it is apparent that having a religious nature does make a woman appear more beautiful in the eyes of Indians. This speaks back to the comment made in the Introduction that Indian women must be dichotomous; they must both be physically beautiful, with a western appeal, while maintaining an Indian essence at their core.

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<sup>17</sup> Sax, William Sturman. "Violent Women." In *Dancing the Self: Personhood and Performance in the Pāṇḍav līlā of Garhwal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 134-156.143.

## SKIN LIGHTENING

Skin lightening is a desire to have one's complexion be fairer. This phenomenon arose as a result of colorism, which that is found across cultures. Essentially, colorism is the belief that fairer-skinned peoples are better or more attractive than their darker-skinned counterparts. Eric P.H. Li, Hyun Jeon Min, Russell W. Belk, Junko Kimura, and Shalini Bahl conducted a study called *Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Cultures*. They reported that:

“According to a study of the Human Relations Area Files more than 20 years ago, of 312 different cultures, 51 used skin color as a criterion of beauty, and in all but four of these lighter skin was preferred (Van den Berge and Frost 1986). Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) note that while white is associated with purity, righteousness, decency, and auspiciousness, black is associated with wickedness, villainy, menace, and illegality.”<sup>1</sup>

It is clear from the quote that, in terms of skin tone, the general preference is for fairer-skinned people. And Asia is one area where this preference is most visible, particularly in Japan, Hong Kong, India, and Korea, which are the four cultures focused on in Li et al's study. The most common argument is that the stress on white skin in these cultures happens as a result of Western imperialization, as stated in the Introduction. What is clear is that—even before the colonial era—across various cultures, when there are two different groups of people who come to occupy one region, rather than the two

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<sup>1</sup> Li, Eric, Hyun Jeong Min, Russell Belk, Junko Kimura, and Shalini Bahl. “Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries.” *Advances in Consumer Research* 35 (2008): 444-449. 444.

immediately intermingling, a hierarchy tends to be formed placing one above the other. And, the one most frequently placed under is the darker skinned of the two groups. Moreover, as a way to establish dominance, the fairer-skinned of the two groups describes the darker group using very negative adjectives, such as primitive, barbaric, ugly, and backwards, just to name a few. This phenomenon is seen throughout the colonial period, and can even be seen within racial groups occupying the same region (i.e. Han Chinese and Taipei). Thus, throughout time, the word “black,” or any similar word such as “dark”, has come to have very negative connotations, while “white” (and similar words such as “fair”) has a more positive connotation.

One intriguing point brought up in Li et al’s study is an argument presented that differentiates between the concepts of “whiteness” and “paleness”. These concepts are related but very distinct from one another. Paleness is portrayed as being part of historic concepts of feminine beauty. Thus, paleness is not influenced, by nor is it a result of, colonialism. In fact it predates any contact that these countries, in particular, have had with the West. Whiteness, on the other hand, is a social construct that is a direct result of colonization. In fact, it is defined as an “imperialist, racialized value of superiority.”<sup>2</sup> This point seems to be an argument that is intended to give more independence of thought to those nations that were colonized. The typical argument of imperialization leading to desire of the imperialized to be whiter, particularly in Asian cultures, makes the imperialized appear as thoughtless victims. Meaning, once they were imperialized

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<sup>2</sup> Goon, Patricia , and Allison Craven. "Whose Debt?: Globalization and Whitefacing in Asia." *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* Aug, no. 9 (2003). <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue9/gooncraven.html> (accessed March 20, 2007). Cited in: Li et al. "Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries." 444.

they completely changed many aspects of their culture to align with that of the imperializing country. It makes the imperialized appear to have made very little effort to maintain aspects of their culture in the wake of imperialism. This argument, with respect to beauty ideals, refutes that. By claiming that the beauty ideal of having fair skin predates colonization, it not only shows that the imperialized were capable of maintaining aspects of their own culture, but it also takes away from the perceived power the colonizers had over the colonized.

Moreover, this emphasis on definition and usage of words is key because it could speak to a larger issue of translating ancient texts that discuss complexion and a preference of one complexion to the other. If a non-native speaker is translating an ancient text into their own native language, there is a lot of room for mistranslation due to factors like the speaker's lack of a native speaker's range of vocabulary; deviances in the meaning of a word throughout time; and normal translation errors that arise when direct translations are not possible.

## **SOUTH KOREA**

South Korea is one of the world's largest producers of beauty and skin products and many of these beauty and skin products contain skin-whitening agents. Furthermore, many models used for various domestic products, beauty products included, are white. "In June 1944, changes in laws allowed the Korean advertising industry to use foreign models and celebrities (Byun, 1997: 32-3), which quickly led to a sharp increase in the

used of foreign models to sell domestic wares.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Western ideal of beauty can easily permeate, and has easily permeated, throughout the society. Many beauty icons that young Korean girls aspire to be like are white. Beauty icons that are of Korean descent often reach that status because they have achieved a look that is considered “Eurasian.” “While there does seem to have been a gradual increase in recent years of Korean models in domestic advertisements, these Korean models nearly all have features that have already been reconstructed to meet the prevailing standards of beauty which, if not totally white, are at least a melding of Asian and Western features, the ideal encapsulated by the increasingly popular ‘Eurasian’ look.”<sup>4</sup> And, one crucial aspect of this Eurasian look is the being extremely fair.

### **What does Confucianism say about skin complexion?**

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<sup>3</sup> Kim. “Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women’s Bodies in Korea’s Consumer Society.” 103.

<sup>4</sup> Kim. “Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women’s Bodies in Korea’s Consumer Society.” 103.



[www.mu-um.com](http://www.mu-um.com) 뮤움

Figure 7: Pre-modern Korean Confucian Ideal beauty



Figure 8: Empress MyeongSeong

Examine the two photos shown above. One is a painting of an ordinary Korean woman from the Choson period and the other is the renowned Korean Empress, MyeongSeong. Both of these women were considered extremely beautiful in their time and upon analyzing their faces, they bear a striking similarity to each other. Both women have facial features that would be considered auspicious, as discussed in the chapter on cosmetic surgery (i.e., large nose, prominent ears, delicate mouth, high forehead, etc.). Moreover, the fairness of their skin is something to note. While Confucius never directly

spoke on complexion, having fair skin has been a crucial aspect to beauty standards in South Korea since Korea's history began to be documented. "In Korea, flawless skin like white-jade and an absence of freckles and scars have been preferred since the first dynasty in Korean history (the *Gojoseon Era*, 2333-208 B.C.E). Various methods of lightening the skin have long been used in Korea, such as applying *miansoo* lotion and dregs of honey."<sup>5</sup> And having fair skin has been heavily tied to the Confucian ideal (which is not necessarily a beauty ideal) for women. This ideal, which I will be referring to as the "Good Wife, Wise Mother" ideal calls for a woman whose only duties were related to fulfilling the desires of her husband and teaching her children the Confucian classics so that they might be good people. The woman's domain was the private sphere and the man's was the public. In fact, at one point, no woman could be seen walking the streets without a male accompanying her. However, even though the woman was contained to the private sphere, her responsibilities of maintaining the house were of the utmost importance. "The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home."<sup>6</sup> Because the woman was in charge of passing on Confucian values to the children, who would then become the future of the nation, the fate of the nation hinged upon the strength of the mother's faith. Thus women, to a certain extent, had to be "better" Confucians than the men.

### **So, how does this Confucian ideal woman relate to skin complexion?**

The reason behind this is two-fold: having fair skin signified purity and there

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<sup>5</sup> Jeon, Wankil. *The Cultural History of Make-up in Korea*. Seoul, Korea: Yeolhwadong, 1987. Cited in: Li et al. "Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries." 444.

<sup>6</sup> Confucius. *Lî Kî*



appears to be relationship between studying of the Confucian classics and skin tone. Purity, according to Confucianism, is a virtue that every woman who is truly a believer should possess. "Faithfulness is requisite in all service of others and faithfulness is especially the virtue of a wife. Once mated with her husband, all her life she will not change her feeling of duty to him; hence, when the husband dies, she will not marry again."<sup>7</sup> While Confucian texts do not explicitly state that a "pure" woman must be fair-skinned, it can be inferred by attitudes toward dark-skinned women. Women who were darker complected were seen as extremely promiscuous. This is because of the inherent negative connotations dark skin had throughout Korean history. And it was thought that women became darker skinned from spending too much time out of the house; and the women who were constantly wandering the streets and not in the home where they belonged were thought to be prostitutes.

Regarding socio-economic status, the wealthier an individual, the more learned they were. Rather than having to spend their days out in the sun toiling the land, they could afford to stay indoors and read the Confucian classics. Reading of the Confucian classics made one a better person because they showed how to become a virtuous person and lead a virtuous life. "The superior man thinks always of virtue; the common man thinks of comfort."<sup>8</sup> While this notion is applied to both genders, more exceptions are made in the case of a man, than for a woman. For example, if a man was poor and thus spent his time working in the fields and could not study the classics, it could be forgiven because the man belonged in the public sphere and as such his duty included providing

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<sup>7</sup> Confucius. *Lî Kî*

<sup>8</sup> Confucius. *Lî Kî*

for his family. However, if a woman is poor and has to work in the field, that means that she is not only failing to take care of her home, but also that she is not using her time to learn the Confucian classics to pass along to her children. Thus, she is not maintaining the “Good Wife, Wise Mother” ideal. Therefore, the women who were forced to work in the fields were not considered ideal women. More importantly, as a result of having to do such work, the women’s complexions ended up being darker. Thus, fair skin became an inferred method to gauge the ideal Confucian woman.

### **Summation**

While Confucianism does not explicitly state that the ideal Confucian woman must be fair-skinned, in order to uphold other aspects of the Confucian ideal, a fair skin is preferred. And the methods used traditionally to whiten skin do align with Confucian belief of not altering the body, because the white skin is a result of adhering to the Good Wife, Wise Mother ideal for women. Through remaining in the private sphere, studying the classics, and passing the knowledge on to her children, the woman actually spends very little time outdoors and therefore does not have the opportunity to grow tan. Additionally, during early periods in history where Confucianism was the state religion, such as the Choson Era, women actively participated in activities that would whiten their skin. Interestingly enough, practices to whiten the skin predate even the institution of Confucianism. “In the long tradition of Korean shamanism, a person with white skin is respected. The myth of the Buryat Mongol of South Central Siberia, where Korean shamanism originated, tells that the first superhuman was born white.”<sup>9</sup> So, it could be

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<sup>9</sup> Li et al. “Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries.” 445.

argued that the practice of skin whitening influenced the religion, rather than the religion influencing the practice.

## INDIA

There is no doubt that India, one of the largest countries in the world, is a hotspot for diversity. Due to its sheer massive population, it is not surprising that there are a wide variety of languages, practices, and skin tones found within its borders. However, if the only contact someone had with India was via the Bollywood Industry, they would probably think that India was a land consisting mainly of fair-skinned peoples. The leading actors and actresses in Bollywood are all very fair, and in fact, the darker-skinned actors and actresses are usually given the roles of villains. “The fact is that in the wide spectrum of shades Indians are made in, only a tiny segment appears in popular culture as Indian. The arrival of the dark person always signals someone oppressed or villainish.”<sup>10</sup> Nisha Susan continues on to give the example of actor Aditya Pancholi: “The fact that the fair and green-eyed Aditya Pancholi is playing Ravan in the new *Ramayan* by Mani Ratnam is food for much thought. You could be comforted that, for a change, Ravan is not being played by someone dark. Or you could worry that with even the space for evil ceded to the fair, we may not see dark people on screen at all.”<sup>11</sup> Nisha Susan brings up two very important points that hint at different possible social attitude changes. The first is that fair-skinned actors are now playing villains, which could mean that the attitude toward darker-skinned people in India could be changing. The current trend of having

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<sup>10</sup> Susan, Nisha. "Colourism, Beauty Standards and What it Means to be Indian." Livejournal. <http://ontd-feminism.livejournal.com/181937.html> (accessed March 29, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Susan, Nisha. "Colourism, Beauty Standards and What it Means to be Indian."

villain roles played by darker-skinned people only intensifies the stereotype that dark-skinned people are “bad” and “dirty.” And by having fair-skinned people play these evil roles, it could possibly reinforce the idea that evil is not dependent upon skin tone, and evil people come in all shapes, sizes and colors. The second, and more sinister, point is that by now giving fair-skinned people roles that were once traditionally given to darker-skinned people, the Indian media is slowly trying to eradicate dark-skinned people from the acting world and perhaps the media altogether.

### **Has skin complexion always been important in Hindu texts?**

The answer to this is a very shaky no. Distinctions among skin tones have been seen to appear in some Hindu texts. For example, “[i]n the *Ṛgveda* the word *Varṇa* has been originally used to signify skin-colour and has been applied to distinguish the two main tribes like *āryavarṇa* (white colour) and *dāsa-varṇa* (*ḷṛṣṇa tvaca* or *asknī*--dark colour).<sup>12</sup> So, skin color and the discrimination between the two are present in even the earliest of Hindu texts, but they are mentioned not so much in reference to which is preferable, but rather as a statement of fact. However, Franklin Southworth discusses the dynamics of the relationship between the *āryavarṇa* group and the *dāsa-varṇa* group found in later Vedic texts and various arguments made on how it stood. Most scholars believe that *dāsa-varṇa* group was treated like aliens. In fact, those belonging to that tribe were labeled as “godless” (*adeva*) and nonbelievers in Indra (*anindra*). Those in the *āryavarṇa* tribe perceived themselves as superior to those in *dāsa-varṇa*.<sup>13</sup> But there are

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<sup>12</sup> Chaudhri, Mamata. "White Skin-coloured People in Ancient India." *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society* 14 (1979): 239-243.

<sup>13</sup> Southworth, Franklin C.. *Linguistic archaeology of South Asia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005.

other scholars who believe that the *dāsa-varṇa* group referred to a specific group of people, not just those who are dark-skinned. Also, the meaning of the term differed depending upon which religious group was discussing the *dāsa-varṇa group*.

“Apparently the Brahmans of Aryavarta, which had the Ganga-Yamuna doab as its center, regarded as *mleccha-deśa* any region in which Sanskrit and brahmanical rituals were not sanctioned—whether the language of the area was a form of Indo-Aryan or not—whereas to the Buddhists the term meant primarily those lands in which non-Aryan languages were spoken.”<sup>14</sup> Here *mleccha-deśa* refers to the lands inhabited by the *dāsa-varṇa*. Needless to say, the people belonging to the *dāsa-varṇa* group were not held in the highest regard. However, there is no explicit statement made that these people should change their skin tone. In fact, changing their skin tone would not change how they were viewed. The issue appears to be less that they were darker-skinned and therefore bad, and more that they engaged in practices that were “bad” and just happened to be darker-skinned. There is no explicit indication that these people should become fairer-skinned.

What is interesting to note is that the fact that the original meaning of the word *varṇa* was to signify skin color. This is interesting because the contemporary meaning of the word is caste. Moreover, as the quote illustrates, there were originally only two *varṇas*: *āryavarṇa* and *dāsa-varṇa*; but now there are four main castes: brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra. These four *varṇas* were used to stratify Indian society and were very constricting. Your *varṇa* heralded your career options, marriage options, and dharma as well. These limitations affected the quality of life for those in the lower *varṇas*

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<sup>14</sup> Southworth, Franklin C.. *Linguistic archaeology of South Asia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005.

more so than those in the upper ranks, but provided limitations to all nonetheless. Thus, it would be intriguing to track how the meaning of *varṇa* came to change. However, despite the slight change in the meaning of the word, skin tone has always been an asset linked if not to one's class, then to one's *varṇa*.<sup>15</sup>

### **Do Hindu texts mention which complexion (fairer or darker) is to be preferred on women?**

The Indian poet Kālidāsa sings in his famous work *Meghaduta* that the ideal woman should be “moon-faced, elephant hipped, serpent necked, antelope footed, swan waisted, lotus eyed.”<sup>16</sup> Kālidāsa's “moon-faced” comment could be interpreted as referring to either the shape of the face, or the complexion of the face. Moon-faced could refer to a preference for a woman with a round face, or a preference for a woman with a face that is pale. However, as Mulk Anand and Krishna Hutheesing state in *The Book on Indian Beauty*, “[t]he ideal face is ‘golden oval’, says the poet Kālidāsa.”<sup>17</sup> They continue on to say, “And there is popular belief that the smaller the face of a person relative to his or her head, the more highly refined the person is, from the point of view of cultural hereditary.”<sup>18</sup> This leads me to believe that Kālidāsa was referring to complexion and not shape when he stated that the ideal woman should be “moon-faced”; meaning, a pale complexion. Indeed, when analyzing Indian artwork depicting women throughout

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<sup>15</sup> Leistikow, Nicole. "Indian Women Criticize 'Fair and Lovely' Ideal." eNews. <http://womensenews.org/story/the-world/030428/indian-women-criticize-fair-and-lovely-ideal> (accessed January 22, 2007). Cited in: Li et al. "Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries." 444.

<sup>16</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, and Krishna Hutheesing, *The Brides Book of Beauty*, Bombay. 1946. 13. Cited in: Ghosh. *Kama ratna; Indian Ideals of Feminine Beauty*. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Anand, Mulk Raj, and Kṛṣṇa Nehru Hutheesing. *The Book of Indian beauty*. [New] ed. Rutland, Vt.: C.E. Tuttle Co., 1981. 47.

<sup>18</sup> Anand, Mulk Raj, and Krishna Nehru Hutheesing. *The Book of Indian Beauty*. 47.

time, if the women are depicted with human-like skin tones, they are usually given fairer complexions over darker ones. Of course, the extent of the fairness of their skin depends on the time period in which the painting was created. The more modern the painting is, the fairer the skin is in comparison to the older paintings. This is not to say that women are never depicted as darker-skinned in artwork, but the overwhelming majority of the time they are depicted as fairer-skinned.

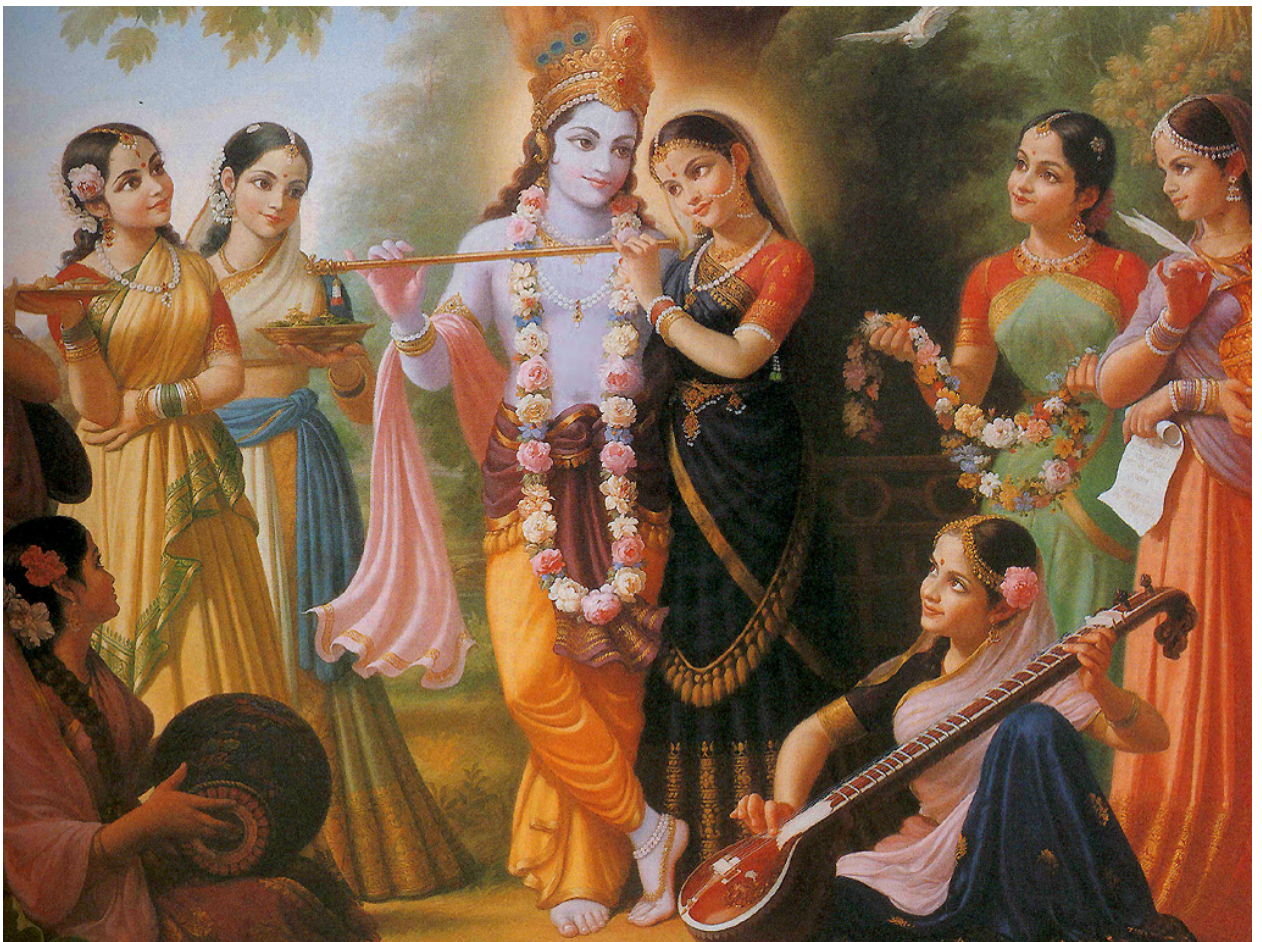


Figure 9: *Ṛṣṇa*, his consort *Radha*, and other *gopis*.

## Summation

India, despite housing numerous skin tones, does have a history of favoring fairer-skinned people over darker-skinned people. Even as early as the Vedic period, the darker-skinned people were pegged as the “other” and their practices were seen as barbaric. This bears a striking resemblance to the British colonists’ view of India during colonial times. Thus, the fairer-skinned people were made the norm and the ideal to strive toward. This is still maintained in modern-day India, but the desire and importance of having fair skin has been heightened because of the new advancements make it possible to change one’s skin tone. Now, women who are darker-skinned are seen as choosing to be ugly because they could easily change their complexion via the many skin-lightening beauty products found in India. Interestingly enough, according to Eric P.H. Li and his colleagues, “[i]n India, the words for fair and beautiful are synonymous.”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, because of the negative connotation dark-skin has in Indian and Hindu culture, which is exemplified in the goddess *Kālī* symbolizing cruelty, ugliness, and destruction, darker-skinned Indian women now have negative associations attached to them.<sup>20</sup> So the social pressure to be lighter is much stronger in modern-day India than it was before.

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<sup>19</sup> Li et al. “Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries.” 444.

<sup>20</sup> Li et al. “Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries.” 445.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, some of the current beauty trends found in both South Korea and India do align with the notions of ideal beauty of the founding religion, but some do not. In South Korea's case, the obsession with cosmetic surgery is in blatant incongruence with Confucianism. However, as stated earlier, their method of reconciliation is twofold: redefining certain terminology, as well as reviving the practice of considering auspicious faces to be of particular importance. Regarding skin lightening, while there was no outright mention of paler skin being preferred, pale skin happened to be an unintended consequence of pursuing the "Good Wife, Wise Mother" ideal. Moreover, whitening of the skin does not necessarily involve "altering" the body, and so it adheres to Confucianism code of not altering the body as a means of showing filial piety. Thus, their pursuit of white skin does adhere to Confucianism.

In the case of India, references in various Hindu texts suggest that pale skin, especially on women, is preferred. This can be clearly illustrated in Kālidāsa's assertion that the ideal women should be "moon-faced". In fact, skin complexion was shown to have a correlation to not only class, but also caste. Regarding cosmetic surgery, my research suggests that the pre-modern beauty ideal is in fact being maintained. The majority of the most popular and frequently performed surgical operations lead to features outlined by Kālidāsa.

**Why were these two countries chosen?**

South Korea and India were chosen as my two case studies for multiple reasons, the first of which is my own familiarity with them and with their relative religions. I have done quite a bit of research on Hinduism in pre-modern India, and I was curious to see the extent to which it still governs modern-day India. I have also done quite a bit of research on Confucianism, and as such, could have chosen China, Hong Kong, or, to a certain extent, even Japan; however, I have done extensive research on South Korea and have even studied abroad there over the course of 10 months. So, I was most comfortable and confident in pursuing this topic as it related to those two countries.

Secondly, the sheer prevalence of skin-lightening beauty products sold in each country played a factor in my choice. There appears to be a correlation between size and strength of economy and usage of skin-lightening products in Asia. In fact, “[f]ueled by increasing Asian wealth and growing consumer cultures, skin whitening and lightening products have recorded dramatic growth in Asia during the past several decades.”<sup>1</sup> This quote highlights the importance in rise of consumerism had on the beauty standards. It also highlights the rise in accessibility to various beauty products as a result of modernization. This quote implies that it was only post-modernism that these countries started desiring whiter skin. However, it has been shown that methods of skin lightening had been practiced in both these countries long before the age of modernity. For example, “historically, women (especially married women) in South India bathed with turmeric.”<sup>2</sup> Li continues on to say that “various methods of lightening the skin have long been used

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<sup>1</sup> Ashikari, Mikiko (2005), “Cultivating Japanese Whiteness: The “Whitening” Cosmetics Boom and the Japanese Identity,” *Journal of Material Culture*, 10 (March), 73-91. Cited in: Li et al. “Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries.” 444.

<sup>2</sup> Li et al. “Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries.” 444.

in Korea...”<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, economy and prevalence of skin-lightening products do appear to be related. Li et al. realized this correlation and focused on the four Asian countries with the strongest economies for their study: Hong Kong (China), Japan, India, and Korea. And though China and Japan may have stronger economies than both India and Korea, per capita, India and Korea utilize skin-whitening products to a greater degree. In Korea, more than 40% of the population admits to using products with skin-bleaching agents for the purpose of whitening the skin. And “India’s domestic cosmetics industry is set to grow to US\$3.6 billion by 2014, according to the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India. The skin-lightening cream market alone was worth US\$432 million in 2010 and growing at 18 percent annually.”<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, the high percentage of cosmetic surgery performed in both countries influenced my choice. Both South Korea and India are ranked in the list of top 10 countries that have the highest amount of cosmetic surgical procedures done. “According to a global survey released on Tuesday [August 11, 2010], India ranks among the top five nations for cosmetic surgical and non-surgical procedures....The statistics, released by the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, shows that cosmetic surgery is becoming popular in countries with emerging economies, such as India and China.”<sup>5</sup> Even more surprising is the fact that, despite its small size, South Korea has been affectionately nicknamed the “Plastic Surgery Capitol of the World”. Ruth Holliday

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<sup>3</sup> Li et al. “Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Countries.” 444.

<sup>4</sup> Tan, David. “Who’s The Fairest Of Them All?” Asian Scientist Magazine Science Technology and Medicine News Updates From Asia RSS. <http://www.asianscientist.com/features/skin-whitening-products-asia-2012/> (accessed April 24, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> TNN. “Craze for plastic surgery puts India in top five - The Times of India.” The Times of India. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Craze-for-plastic-surgery-puts-India-in-top-five/articleshow/6290542.cms> (accessed April 24, 2014).

notes, “The most recent official statistics put the percentage of Koreans undergoing cosmetic surgery in 2008 at around 20% ([www.nationmaster.com](http://www.nationmaster.com)). However, the actual number is likely to be considerably higher as only a fraction of surgeries are actually recorded. Surgeries offering discounts for cash transactions, though common, are rarely documented. Moreover, other surveys consistently estimate significantly higher rates and in 2008 alone, around 30% of women between the ages of 20 and 50 underwent some form of more or less invasive cosmetic treatment.”<sup>6</sup> To speak on my own personal experience, while I was in Korea, judging on what I witnessed and heard from native Koreans, I too believe the number to be much higher. In fact, within my own friend group of native Koreans, about three-fourths of the girls had had some type of cosmetic surgery. In addition, about a fourth of the males had had some type of cosmetic surgery. Due to the nation’s current obsession, South Korea has made the greatest number of technological advancements to the field of cosmetic surgery. The most well-respected and acclaimed surgeons in the field are Korean. In fact, people travelling to South Korea for cosmetic surgery purposes constitute a large portion of the tourism Korea gets each year. An interesting thing to note is that although both India and South Korea have a high volume of cosmetic surgical procedures performed yearly, there is a big difference in the types of surgeries that are most popular in each country. In South Korea, surgical operations on the face are the most prevalent (eye, nose, and jaw surgery), whereas in

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<sup>6</sup> Holliday, R., and J. Elfving-Hwang. "Gender, Globalization and Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea." 56.

India, surgical procedures on the rest of the body are more prevalent (i.e., liposuctions, breast augmentations, hair transplants, etc.).<sup>7</sup>

Fourthly, the historical context that the relative religion played in the foundation of the country affected my decision heavily. India is considered to be one of the most religious nations in the world. And, within the nation's borders, there is a vast array of religions currently being practiced. However, despite this fact, many Indians also consider themselves Hindus even if they also identify with another religion. I think this highlights not only the nature of Hinduism as a religion, but also to the extent to which it permeated Indian society and, in turn, molded the nation. As stated in the Introduction, Hinduism is a conglomeration of various religious sects, all of which have different requirements and different understandings of the world. For example, though Samkhya yogins and Advaita Vedantins disagree across ontological and various other aspects, both are considered to be Hindu practices. It is Hinduism's all-inclusive nature that I believe ensured its lasting presence in India. Because there were so many different sects to choose from, it seemed that each individual could choose a sect that was customized to fit their beliefs and lifestyle. Moreover, as India modernized, Hinduism followed suit. The adaptive nature of Hinduism allowed it not only to survive throughout time, but also to become integrated into other aspects of society that religion normally does not occupy. A common example is the social stratification of India: the caste system. Rules of caste are dictated by rules of Hinduism. And though India has modernized, the caste system is still in existence and, though notably to a lesser extent, maintained. Furthermore, India entered into modernity against the backdrop of having been a colony of England, and as

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<sup>7</sup> TNN. "Craze for plastic surgery puts India in top five - The Times of India."

such was constantly being portrayed as England's opposite. This juxtaposition of these two nations and cultures is often portrayed as the stereotypical example of the Orient versus the Occident model. As such, India and Indians, by default, were often ascribed adjectives that were given to the Orient, such as exotic, emotional, erotic, and backwards. The major factor used by the British, and other Europeans for that matter, to categorize India as such was Hinduism, particularly the more extreme Hindu practices that they saw. Despite the negative stereotypes held against Indians, which were particularly exacerbated by the fact that the British people who occupied India during colonialism held a higher status than most native Indians, many Indian scholars used these stereotypes to foster a sense of nationalism among the Indian population. And it was via this nationalism that they were able to rally the Indian people under, break free from British rule and gain independence. As a result of this history, many Indians have grown to see themselves as Hindus, even if they do not practice the religion. In a sense, Hinduism can be seen as an integral part of the Indian identity.

South Korea has an interesting relationship with Confucianism that is very different from India's relationship with Hinduism. If someone were to search the current distribution of religions in Korea, they might be shocked to learn that less than 2% of Koreans have been reported as practicing Confucianism.<sup>8</sup> This is due to the nature of Confucianism. Confucianism, as stated in the Introduction, is more of a moral code than it is a set of religious beliefs and practices. Confucius created a set of guidelines which society should adhere to in order to be good citizens. Confucianism was first introduced

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<sup>8</sup> KOCIS. "Religion." Religion.net: Gateway to Korea. <http://www.korea.net/AboutKorea/Korean-Life/Religion> (accessed April 22, 2014).

to Korea during the unified Silla dynasty when scholars were sent over to Tang China to observe it being used. These scholars wrote extensively on the subject matter and brought these materials back to Korea where they were read by the literati. Though Buddhism was the official state religion, the governmental structure was built and operated according to the instructions detailed in the nation's Confucian literature.<sup>9</sup> It was during the Choson dynasty that Confucianism was officially made the state religion. It remained the state religion until the Japanese officially annexed the small nation in 1910. The annexation lasted until WW2 when Japan surrendered to the Allies. However, Confucianism was chosen as the state religion because it was ideal for maintaining the governmental structure, or status quo. Confucianism stressed the importance of lineages, which further legitimized the emperor's rule. It taught people to always practice filial piety. It was a very patrilineal system, so it placed women subordinate to men. It also hashed out difficult issues that Korea had previously struggled with, such as succession and inheritance.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the Choson dynasty was the last time period in Korea's history during which it maintained its independence and freedom. Until the annexation of 1910, South Korea had never been fully invaded by any outside force. It was also the last time Korea was unified. So, in that sense, the Choson dynasty is incredibly important to Korean people. The Choson dynasty is also considered, by most South Koreans, to be the best time period in Korea's history. It was during that time period that South Korea's favorite emperor, Kim Sejong, ruled and with his rule came many scientific inventions, including Korea's own alphabet. It was also during the Choson that Korea's literati thrived and great emphasis was placed on preserving "Koreanness" and a distinct

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<sup>9</sup> KOCIS. "Religion."

<sup>10</sup> Deuchler. "The Confucian Transformation of Korea". 7.

“Korean culture.” So, it was during this time period that the Korean identity was born. And, due to the pervasive nature of Confucian ideology, Confucianism, or at least Confucian ideals, was integrated into that Korean identity. That identity is what helped the Koreans through the period of Japanese occupation. That identity, as with the Indians under British colonization, is what the Korean people rallied under to perform acts of resistance in an effort to regain their independence. For those reasons, Confucianism, though no longer practiced heavily as a religion in South Korea, still has a tight grip on the South Korean society and mindset and is still being instantiated in Korean culture. Examples of this can be seen in common cultural norms in Korea (i.e., deferential speech used depending on age or status, bowing, heavy emphasis on education, etc.), and also in various holidays celebrated in South Korea.

And lastly, both of these nations have a high percentage of the population who still follow and/or identify with the religion (Hinduism in the case of India, and Confucianism in the case of South Korea). Various censuses on India show that roughly 80% of Indians identify as Hindu.<sup>11</sup> And, as stated above, even though fewer than 2% of the Korean population identify themselves as practicing Confucians, most Koreans acknowledge the fact that many of the ideologies and practices that govern social interactions, mannerisms, governmental policies, etc., in South Korea today are a direct result of Confucianism being used throughout the nation’s history.

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<sup>11</sup> India Online Pages. "Hindu Population in India." - Current Hindu Population in 2014- Total. <http://www.indiaonlinepages.com/population/hindu-population-in-india.html> (accessed April 23, 2014).



**What do my results say? What implications can be drawn from my results regarding the future of the religions in their relative nations?**

While I was in South Korea, many people, particularly those who were in their teens-young twenties, had no interest in maintaining the Confucian traditions that had guided Korea through the age of modernity. In fact, many of them thought of the practices as being “archaic,” “constricting,” and “unnecessary.” They took the greatest issue with traditions like: living with your parents until marriage and always being subordinate (and speaking deferentially) to someone due to age or some other difference they thought to be frivolous. In fact, a Korean friend of mine once said to me while in a coffee shop,

“Because of Confucian traditions, there are a lot of things that we [as children and young people] have to do that put a lot of stress on us. If we speak to an elder incorrectly, we are seen as being rude and it reflects poorly on our parents. And the only reason why this is so, is simply because that is the way it has been for a long time. It doesn’t make sense, right? So, that’s why I don’t like Confucianism. I prefer Christianity.”

She echoes the sentiment of many young people. In fact, upon closer inspection of current trends springing up in South Korea, many of them are against Confucian ideology. For example, when their parents retire, rather than housing them in their house, many Koreans are now turning to hospice care and nursing homes. Confucian tradition says that part of a child’s filial duty is to take care of their parents in their old age. Additionally, many people are now living on their own despite not being married, which

is forbidden in Confucianism. So it would appear that Confucianism and its influence on Korean ways will dwindle, and perhaps vanish altogether in the near future.

This is important because it provides an explanation to why I reached my results. As far as South Korea's current trends of cosmetic surgery and skin lightening go, only skin lightening adheres to Confucian ideology. And even so, it is not directly stated in texts, but rather a somewhat repercussion of other Confucian ideals for women. Cosmetic surgery, on the other hand, is in outright opposition of Confucian ideals. Even though I identified possible forms of reconciliation of this on the part of Koreans, South Koreans themselves do not seem to have an issue with their current trend and it does not seem as though this trend will die out very soon. In India, too, it does not seem that these two trends will die down soon. But in the case of India, both of the trends agreed, to a certain degree, with the beauty ideal set by ancient Hindu texts. So, it seems that the beauty trends are mimicking the general trend of the society's attitude towards the religion. South Korea has more incongruity between the two beauty ideals (current and religious), but the society's attitude toward the religion itself is becoming more negative. South Koreans may not need to reconcile the incongruence because they are starting to view the ideal set out by Confucianism as "bad," which in turn is because they are starting to view the religion as a whole as "bad." India had little to no incongruence because the majority of the population still views the religion as "good." Religions thrive only when there are those who believe them to be both "true" and "useful." Confucianism is slowly starting to lose its truth and usefulness in the eyes of the Korean youth, so it is in danger of disappearing in the near future when the younger generation takes over Korea.

Conversely, Hinduism is still viewed positively across all age ranges in India, so its future is more secure.

### **Why is the connection between beauty and religion important?**

Due to the breadth and depth that each of these religions impacted their relative societies, it can only be assumed that the religions helped to shape the standards of beauty during each country's pre-modern era, which has been shown to be the case. But, now that the countries have both reached an age of modernity, the society in each country is now being influenced by forces outside of the country in addition to the domestic and/or historical ones. And yet despite these new, outside forces, the people within these two societies generally hold the belief that the foundational religion is still governing aspects of their society. Beauty and art, and its appreciation, is considered to be the highest form of culture. Additionally, human beings are considered the highest form of life, with women being the more attractive of the species. It follows that the standard of beauty for women in a certain group would be the highest form of that group's culture—the pinnacle of that culture. In addition, facets of the beauty standard shine light on other, various aspects of that culture. In materials gathered on the earliest civilizations, evidence exists of a general trend of participation in some practices or rituals that seem religious in nature, even before a true "civilization" had been established. In fact, some scholars hold that religion precedes culture. Thus, religion constructs the culture, and as a result, the beauty ideal for women. So, maintenance of this beauty ideal set by the religion can be seen as equivalent to maintenance of that group's culture. And so, the trend of adopting the Western ideal for beauty that many nations and cultures are participating in has a

deeper, more sinister implication regarding the future of that group's culture. The discarding of their native beauty ideal for the Western ideal signifies the discarding of their native culture in lieu of the Western culture. If this trend continues uninhibited, the global community could soon end up being a homogenous world, devoid of any sort of diversity or uniqueness. This is of course quite a stretch. But, more realistically, the discarding of one's native beauty ideal for the Western ideal does open the door for the discarding of other aspects of one's culture. To summarize, standards of beauty are dictated by religion. Furthermore, changing beauty ideals and trends within a country not only reflect the society's changing attitudes toward the religion, but also have greater ramifications on the purity of that culture in the future.

## APPENDIX

### Figure 1:

- Female Figure, Yasodhara Cave 1. Ajanta mural, c. 500 A.D.
- Photographer: Unknown
- Found in book: The Book of Indian Beauty

### Figure 2&7:

- Pre-modern Korean woman; Confucian ideal
- Photographer: Unknown
- Found online: <http://www.mu-um.com/Files/Art/Sample/201006/1277190956.gif>

### Figure 3:

- Before and After pictures of Miss South Korea 2012, Kim Yu-mi
- Photographer: Unknown
- Found online: <http://generationyxz.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/kim-yumi2.jpg?w=586&h=243&crop=1>

### Figure 4:

- An Auspicious Face
- Photographer: Unknown
- Found online: <http://wealthymatters.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/lucky-face.jpg>

### Figure 5:

- Aishwarya Rai in her role in the Bollywood hit, Devdas
- Photographer: Unknown
- Found online: <http://www.apnatimepass.com/aishwarya-rai-hd-wallpapers-2.jpg>

### Figure 6:

- Before and After pictures of Fat Graft
- Photographer: Unknown

- Found online: <http://blkhospital.com/speciality.php?id=60>

**Figure 8:**

- Empress MyeongSeong
- Photographer: Unknown
- Found online: <http://bashapedia.pbworks.com/f/1297910289/3351017.jpg>

**Figure 9:**

- Kṛṣṇa, his consort Radha, and gopis
- Photographer: Unknown
- Found online: <http://lightwaves.cc/wp-content/gallery/gopala-christmas/krishna-and-gopis.jpg>

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