

'We shouldn't be expected to conform to beauty standards'

Having lent her face to wellness website, Bhumi wants to redefine idea of beauty by endorsing "self-love and inclusivity"

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BHUMI Pednekar played a confident plus-sized woman in *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* (2015), thus shining a light on society's unrealistic standards of beauty in her very first film. As she is roped in to be the brand ambassador for beauty and wellness platform Boddess, the actor says the idea is to instill the values of self-love and body positivity among the masses. "We, women, need to create communities that endorse self-love and inclusivity. We shouldn't be expected to conform to social standards of beauty. My first film gave me confidence, and Sandhya [her character] made me fall in love with myself. Beauty is about finding your own happiness, which includes [attaining] mental and

physical well-being."

The actor is proud that the definition of beauty has undergone a much-needed overhaul globally. Closer home too, the ripple effects can be felt — the country, once obsessed with fair skin, is slowly leaving its archaic thoughts behind. Pednekar, who fought the 'fair is beautiful' notion head-on in *Bala* (2019), says she has actively steered clear of endorsing whitening creams. "I say no to fairness cream [ads] because I don't want young women to feel lesser because of their skin tone. When I do a *Bala*, I want to empower people who are told they are not good enough because of their skin colour. The obsession with fairness has reduced slightly. The conversation will [result in change] only when we have enough people talking about it."

From refusing to adhere to unrealistic beauty ideas, to choosing diverse roles in movies, Pednekar says she is determined to be her own person. "Off-camera, I refuse to let anyone dictate [terms to me]. I have never had a filmmaker tell me how to look for the camera. My decision has to come from a place of creativity."



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