

# **DARK IS DIVINE**

## *Unmasking Colourism — A Truth Worth Telling*

— A Blog for Every Child Who Was Ever Told Their Skin Was 'Too Dark' —

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### **The Mirror Doesn't Lie — But Society Does**

Imagine walking into a room and the first thing someone notices about you is not your smile, your intelligence, or your kindness — but the shade of your skin. Imagine a child coming home from school, confused and hurt, asking: 'Am I ugly because I'm dark?'

This is not a hypothetical. This is the daily reality for millions of children, women, and men across India. It has a name. It is called Colourism — and it is time we looked it straight in the eye and said: Enough.

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### **What Is Colourism?**

Colourism is the discrimination or prejudice against individuals with a darker skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group. Unlike racism — which is discrimination between races — colourism operates within communities, families, classrooms, and even mirrors. It whispers in matrimonial ads that say 'fair bride wanted.' It shouts in fairness cream advertisements that promise promotion and marriage with a lighter complexion. It bruises a little girl when she is called 'kaali' as an insult at school. It is insidious. It is cruel. And it is everywhere.

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### **The Historical Roots of Colourism in India**

#### **The Ancient Varna System — Misread and Misused**

The word 'Varna' in Sanskrit literally means colour. Originally, it referred to one's qualities, conduct, and occupation — not to skin tone. But over centuries, this spiritual classification was deliberately distorted to create a hierarchy of birth and appearance.

## The Colonial Wound

When the British colonised India, they systematically promoted the idea that lighter skin was superior, more civilised, and more suitable for leadership. They employed fairer-skinned Indians in administrative roles and treated darker-skinned Indians as labourers and servants. This colonial conditioning seeped deep into the Indian psyche — and we are still healing from it, 75 years after independence.

The tragedy? Many Indians began policing each other's skin colour. The oppressor left, but the oppression stayed — internalised, normalised, and passed down through generations.

## The Fairness Cream Industry

India became one of the largest markets in the world for skin-lightening products. Brands made fortunes selling insecurity. Advertisements showed dark-skinned women being rejected, ignored, or laughed at — and then transformed into confident, successful people only after their skin became lighter. This was not beauty marketing. This was psychological warfare on an entire generation.

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## The Science of Skin

*"Our dark skin is not a flaw. It is evolution's masterpiece."*

### MELANIN: THE NATURAL SHIELD

Melanin is the pigment that gives our skin, hair, and eyes their colour. People from tropical countries — including India, Africa, and Southeast Asia — have evolved over thousands of years to produce higher amounts of melanin. And melanin is extraordinary.

It acts as a natural sunscreen, absorbing and neutralising up to 99.9% of harmful UV radiation before it can damage your DNA. It is one of nature's most efficient protective mechanisms. People with higher melanin content have significantly lower rates of skin cancer, premature skin ageing, and sun-related damage.

## THE IRONY OF FAIRNESS CREAM

People in colder, northern countries — where sunlight is weak and limited — evolved with less melanin because their bodies needed to absorb as much sun as possible to produce Vitamin D. This is why Caucasian skin is lighter. It is an adaptation to their climate — not a sign of superiority.

In fact, when fair-skinned individuals are exposed to tropical sun without protection, they face very high risks of sunburn, skin damage, and melanoma. They use sunblock creams — artificial protection. We were born with natural protection. Built-in. Permanent. Free.

Think about it: our melanin-rich skin is a biological superpower that took thousands of years of evolution to perfect.

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## Dark Skin in the Divine — What Our Scriptures Say

*"Krishna means dark, the all-attractive. His complexion is described as the beautiful blue-black of a rain-bearing cloud."*

Here is something profound that we often overlook in our rush to buy fairness creams: our most beloved deities are dark-skinned.

◆ **Lord Krishna:** His very name means 'dark one' or 'the dark-complexioned one.' He is described in scriptures as Shyamsundar — beautifully dark. He is the most beloved, most worshipped deity in Hinduism. Millions light lamps for him, sing for him, and weep in his devotion. And he is dark.

◆ **Lord Rama:** Depicted with a dark blue or dark complexion in ancient temple art and scriptures. In Valmiki Ramayana, he is described as dark-hued — the ideal man, the perfect son, the compassionate king.

◆ **Goddess Kali:** Her name literally means 'the black one.' She is the most powerful, most fierce, most liberating deity in Hindu tantra. Black skin, unlimited power.

◆ **Lord Vishnu:** Described across the Puranas as Shyam — dark blue, dark like the ocean, dark like the infinite sky.

Our ancestors looked at the dark sky, the deep ocean, the fertile dark earth — and saw divinity. Somewhere along the way, we forgot this. It is time to remember.

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## Dark Skin, Extraordinary Lives — Icons Who Shattered Limits

*"The darker the skin, the deeper the roots, the stronger the soul."*

Let us celebrate with pride and joy - some of the most extraordinary human beings our world has produced. Every single one of them is dark-skinned. Every single one of them changed the world.

### Icons of India

◆ **Rajinikanth:** Born Shivaji Rao Gaekwad, he worked as a bus conductor before becoming the most iconic superstar in Indian cinema. Dark-skinned, unconventionally styled, and absolutely magnetic — Rajinikanth became a cultural phenomenon not despite his appearance but through his talent, charisma, and extraordinary screen presence. His fans worship him like a god. The lesson? Talent laughs at skin colour.

◆ **Vadivelu:** One of the most beloved comedians in Tamil cinema, Vadivelu rose from extreme poverty to become a household name across generations. His dark complexion never stopped him from becoming an icon of joy, wit, and brilliance. He proved that the ability to make people laugh is far more powerful than any shade of skin.

◆ **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:** The architect of the Indian Constitution, a man who faced not just colourism but caste discrimination his entire life. He earned multiple doctorates from Columbia University and the London School of Economics — at a time when dark-skinned Indians were denied basic rights. He wrote the law of the land for 1.4 billion people. Let that sink in.

◆ **A.P.J. Abdul Kalam:** The Missile Man of India and former President — born in humble circumstances in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. Dark-skinned, simple in appearance, and one of the greatest scientific minds India has ever produced. He inspired an entire generation to dream. His legacy is written in the stars — literally.

◆ **M.S. Dhoni:** Dark-complexioned, small-town boy from Ranchi who became one of the greatest cricket captains in the history of the sport. He led India to victory in the 2007 T20 World Cup, the 2011 Cricket World Cup, and the 2013 Champions Trophy. In cricket, you win with your mind and your skill. Skin colour doesn't take wickets.

◆ **Ilaiyaraaja:** The musical genius from a tiny village in Tamil Nadu who composed over 1,000 film scores and is considered one of the greatest composers in world music. His dark hands created melodies that made millions cry, dance, and fall in love.

## Icons of the World

◆ **Nelson Mandela:** Imprisoned for 27 years, he walked out and became the President of South Africa — forgiving his oppressors and building a rainbow nation. His dark skin bore the marks of struggle. His spirit bore the light of the entire world. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

◆ **Barack Obama:** Born to a Kenyan father and an American mother, he became the 44th President of the United States of America — the most powerful office on earth. He served two terms with dignity, intelligence, and grace. His dark skin was not a barrier. It was a banner of history.

◆ **Serena Williams:** Considered the greatest tennis player of all time, she won 23 Grand Slam singles titles — more than any other player in the Open Era. She was told she didn't look like a tennis player. She became the tennis player against whom all others are measured.

◆ **Oprah Winfrey:** Born into poverty in rural Mississippi to a teenage single mother, she grew up in extreme hardship. She became the world's first Black female billionaire, the most powerful woman in media, and one of the greatest philanthropists in American history. Her dark skin has graced the covers of every major magazine in the world.

◆ **Naomi Campbell:** Often called the world's greatest supermodel, she graced over 500 magazine covers and walked for Versace, Chanel, and every iconic fashion house. In an industry that initially resisted dark-skinned models, she didn't just enter — she conquered.

◆ **Lupita Nyong'o:** Academy Award-winning actress from Kenya, named People magazine's Most Beautiful Person in 2014 — the year after her Oscar win. She has spoken movingly about growing up wishing for lighter skin, and discovering that dark skin is beautiful. She is now a global symbol of that beauty.

◆ **Lewis Hamilton:** The most decorated Formula One racing driver in history with 7 World Championship titles. Dark-skinned, British, and brilliant — he races at speeds of over 300 km/h and wins. His success has nothing to do with his skin colour, and everything to do with his extraordinary skill, focus, and determination.

◆ **Usain Bolt:** The fastest human being ever recorded on earth. 9.58 seconds for 100 metres. He didn't run away from his dark skin — he ran INTO history.

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## Colourism Today — The Battle Is Not Over

Despite all the achievements of dark-skinned individuals, colourism continues to cause real, measurable harm in India and around the world.

Studies have shown that darker-skinned children in Indian schools report significantly higher levels of bullying, lower self-esteem, and greater anxiety about their appearance. In matrimonial markets, darker-skinned women are routinely rated as less desirable. In Bollywood and media, dark skin has long been airbrushed, lightened, or simply excluded.

This is not just an aesthetic issue. It is a mental health crisis. It is a social justice issue. And it begins — and can end — in classrooms exactly like yours.

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## What Can We Do?

**Here is what we can do, starting today:**

◆ **Challenge the language:** When you hear someone use 'dark' as an insult — speak up. Language shapes reality. Change the language.

◆ **Celebrate every shade:** When you compliment someone, go beyond their appearance. Celebrate their mind, their courage, their kindness.

◆ **Question the products:** The next time a fairness cream advertisement comes on television, ask: Why is it suggesting that dark skin needs to be fixed?

◆ **Educate your family:** Share what you have learned. Sometimes the most important change begins at the dinner table.

◆ **Own your skin:** If you are dark-skinned — look in the mirror and say it out loud: I am beautiful. My melanin is a miracle. I am enough.

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## A Final Word — From One Human to Another

*"You are not too dark. The world's perception was just too narrow."*

The greatest civilisations in human history — the Egyptians, the Indus Valley civilisation, the Dravidian kingdoms, the Nubian empires — were built by dark-skinned people. The earth itself is dark. The night sky that holds all the stars is dark. The richest soil, the deepest oceans, the most fertile land — all dark.

Darkness is not absence. Darkness is depth.

Our gods are dark. Our heroes are dark. Our history is dark and glorious. And if you are dark — you carry within you a legacy more ancient, more resilient, and more beautiful than any fairness cream could ever promise.

Wear your melanin with pride. It is not a burden. It is your birthright.

◆ *Dark is Divine. Dark is Strong. Dark is You.* ◆

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*Written with love, for everyone who needed to hear this.*

*Ms Sruthi S*

*School Counsellor*