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## **RECONCEPTUALIZING WOMAN BEAUTY IN THE DRAMA SERIES *MY ID IS GANGNAM BEAUTY***

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### **Abstract**

Women and beauty are a unity. Beauty as the characteristic of femininity has taken root in a wider social system. It is culturally programmed. The modern beauty myth which is centered on women's bodies is reproduced continuously. The most dominant way of reproduction is through the media. The beauty myth is represented through advertisements, idol appearances, films, and TV series. Beauty myths are felt torturing women, so lately the movement to free women from the shackles of beauty myths is increasingly being voiced. This effort is carried out in various ways for example through writing, criticism, and popular culture. One of them is a drama series *My ID is Gangnam Beauty*. It is a Korean drama but watched by people around the world, dubbed in many language versions, including English. It carries out a universal issue: the beauty myth. It deconstructs the definition of woman beauty. This paper analyzes what and how beauty is defined in this series. The descriptive qualitative method is used in the analysis process. The result shows that in this series, beauty is still put as women's identity and allure, but beauty is defined as kindness and good behavior. The female main character has an ugly face so she does plastic surgery. People then call her a plastic monster, but she is loved by the most popular boy on her campus. Through this story, the audience is told that true beauty is not good-looking, but it is about attitude and behavior.

**Keywords: Attitude, Beauty, Behavior, Deconstruction, Women.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Film is the modern form of literary work which is presented in a more attractive medium. Like written literature, the film either in the form of a movie, soap opera, or TV series functioned as an entertainment and message delivery agent. Nurdin in Wardhani

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(2018:8) explained that film as one of the mass media can spread messages almost instantly at an unlimited time because of its ability to overcome the barriers of time and space. The film can contain a message, critique, ideology, or depict reality and social phenomena. Film as a medium of entertainment is loved by most people thus it can bring psychological impact to the audiences and changes their behavior. In the context of wider society, the popularity of a film can change the trend. Wardhani (2018) said that as a medium of mass communication, the film should be able to stick messages to audiences' minds in an impressive way. While The theory of communication, Hypodermic needle theory said that mass media (including film) can influence people (Wardhana in Mahliana, 2019).

In 2019 there is a Korean drama series that raised the issue of woman's beauty. The title of this drama series is *My ID is Gangnam Beauty*. Although this drama is starred by beautiful actresses, it seems like this film wants to break the traditional definition of beauty. This drama series deconstructs the woman beauty myth by presenting the conflict between the protagonist Kang Mi Rae who does plastic surgery and her friend Han So Ah who has natural beauty.

Kang Mi Rae is a college student who does plastic surgery after spending her teenage years bullied by her friends because she was not beautiful. In fact, after being beautiful she is still bullied by most of the people around her because they know that Kang Mi Rae did plastic surgery. But, even though her real face is not beautiful, she is kind-hearted. She always sincerely helps people around her. She cares for and loves the people around her. She even forgives and helps So Ah who is always mean to her. On the contrary, Han So Ah is a girl who is beautiful by nature. She is admired by almost all men around her because of her beauty. Many men want to be her boyfriend. Han So Ah uses her beauty to ruin other women's relationships. In that way, she feels herself greater. But she fails to get Do Kyun Suk and Yeon Woo Young's attention where these two guys are the most popular men on their campus. These two men fall in love with Kang Mi Rae. Do Kyun Sok even hates Han So Ah because he knows that she is not as kind as her pretty face. In the end, people find out Han So

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Ah's badness and her friends stay away from her.

The story of an evil beautiful girl and the ugly but kind-hearted is a common phenomenon in our society but it is usually forgotten because we focus on fulfilling the beauty standard which is constructed by media. This drama series rises this phenomenon to be directly seen by the audience and it can be a reminder so that the audience can see the beauty myth rationally

Beauty standard is another form of hidden woman oppression. The women buy many kinds of cosmetics again and again. They try various skin cares which are claimed can make their skin brighter and glow. The move from one product to another. Slowly but sure women lose their self-control even their identity. The effort to meet beauty standards to strengthen their self-esteem ended by fading their identity.

It is really important to make women realize the hegemony of beauty myth. Baudrillard (2006) said that for women today, beauty is an absolute requirement, a religious requirement, beauty is no longer the influence of nature, nor is it a secondary moral quality, but a fundamental quality of the nature of women who maintain their face and slimness as their soul. In fact, they are being exploited and oppressed by that beauty standard

Considering the importance of the beauty myth issue in women's life, thus the research question of this research is how woman's beauty is deconstructed in the drama series *My ID is Gangnam Beauty* so that the audience can get a message that beauty is more than face and body. Beauty means behavior and attitude. The purpose of this research paper is to see the strategies used by the drama series *My ID is Gangnam Beauty* in showing the deconstruction of the meaning of women's beauty to the audience.

Beauty is no longer relative but universal, following a standard of "beautiful" characteristics. There is a metanarrative standard, that a woman is valuable because she is beautiful and fragile, not because she is a woman who has various particularities beyond what appears on the surface of her skin. Beautiful means body dimension. Saguni and Baharman (2016) explain that the beauty myth which is well defined is the beautiful body of the woman.

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Besides a beautiful face, it is also synonymous with white, smooth, and toned skin, a sharp nose, slim body that shows the plumpness of particular organs. certain things (especially chest and hips) perfect, sensual lips, and other descriptions.

Women are required to be beautiful, even though she has to go through that beauty with misery. According to Naomi Wolf, the beauty myth is an attempt by the patriarchal society to control women through their beauty. The beauty myth is a tool of feminizing women that make them imprisoned in dissatisfaction with their bodies, a sense of not being able to satisfy men, and even hating themselves (Wolf, 2002). Beauty can oppress women when they are constructed to look beautiful to attract men and fulfill men's pleasures so that they always try to look beautiful in various ways. Women are required to have certain aspects to look beautiful. In this case, it can be seen that there is a demand for uniformity in mental attitude, so that women will always experience the feeling that something is wrong with them because of their inability to meet an associated beauty myth.

The beauty myth is considered "a golden child" which is the patriarchal society proud of. It is constructed into socio-cultural norms and values, so what is said by this beauty myth becomes the absolute truth. The construction of patriarchal culture, on one hand, empowers men to give recognition to women's femininity and on the other hand, makes women always seek recognition of their femininity from men (Prabasmoro, 2003). The beauty myth that has been injected with patriarchal hegemony is constantly being reproduced. Women are physically and psychologically assaulted regarding their roles by placing them in inappropriate and uncomfortable feelings (Wolf, 2002).

Women are often said to be free and have experienced emancipation, in fact at this time they are actually constrained by the existence of a "beauty system" formed by the mass media as a means of public information. Beauty myths are maintained and promoted on a large scale by the mass media. We enjoy the beauty myth through female figures in printed and electronic media as well as the beauty hegemony that we watch every day and repeatedly (Mufarrihah, 2015). The status of women is reduced to a commodity object that is consumed

visually. Women's selves in the form of social and psychological aspects are excluded because they only pay attention to the visuals (Aprilita & Listyani, 2016). The form of oppression against women has shifted from the form of feminine mystique (where successful women are the ones who can carry out their domestic roles) to women with beauty myths (a myth about women must be beautiful to be accepted by their environment).

Constructed beauty myths have exploited women's potential and tried to destroy women's minds. This is supported by the media which present a new identity in the name of beauty through several appearances. Therefore, Wolf (2002) argues that the women's movement should shift from fighting against feminine mystique to becoming a fight against beauty myths that have standards for the new image of women, namely slim, beautiful and fashionable. As the construction of beauty, idealization is not eternal. It changes according to the times and interests. a myth will only live if it is maintained and the community agrees. If this myth is not immediately forgotten, it will turn all women into the same doll (Mufarrihah, 2016).

This research uses a descriptive qualitative design. Various information is disclosed with a careful and thorough description through analysis and interpretation. This study is intended to identify, describe, and analyze how the meaning of "beautiful" is deconstructed in the drama series *My ID is Gangnam Beauty*. The data in this study are in the form of qualitative data either words, phrases, or sentences come from the drama series *My ID is Gangnam Beauty* which was released in 2019.

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### **Deconstruction Strategy of "Beauty" In *My Id is Gangnam Beauty***

The first strategy which is applied in this drama is to present two main female characters who are in contrast to each other. Kang Mi Rae is ugly but kind-hearted and Han So Ah is beautiful but has bad behavior. Because of her ugly face, during school, she was

nicknamed Kang Orc, an ugly monster. Therefore she had plastic surgery. But, after she had plastic surgery, she was gossiped about by people around her because she was considered to have lowly behavior.

Mr. Park : "... and I'm not interested in someone who looks so cheap" (*episode 11: 45.08*)

Kim Chan Woo: "people like you are everywhere in Gangnam. Gosh, you plastic monster."

Kim Chan Woo: "that crazy witch. Hey!" (*episode 2: 1.00.03 – 1.01.01*)

Even though her face is ugly, Kang Mi Rae is very kind. Kang Mi Rae's kindness is shown in the form of her empathy for those around her and her open heart to always forgive others. The quotes below show Kang Mi Rae's empathy for the people around her.

Na Hye Sung : "the favor I asked you must've stressed you out. I'm sorry"

Kang Mi Rae : "No, it's okay. I really wanted to do it for you." (*episode 6: 26.56*)

Kang Mi Rae: "...Other 's happiness can give me this much joy."

Kang Mi Rae: "I'm so happy for them. What a relief." (*Episode 9: 58.04 – 1.00.11*)

Do Kyun Suk : "I've had this thought all along, but I wish you are less nice"

Kang Mi Rae : "I'm not that nice"

Do Kyun Suk : "if you are nicer, it means you're a fool." (*episode 15: 14.09*)

Unlike Kang Mirae, the beautiful Han So Ah actually has a bad character. She is full of tricks and hides many things. She made up a fake story about her body and background as shown in the quotations below.

Kim Chan Woo: "we must've misunderstood her until now because of her looks." (*episode 14: 45.18 – 45.22*)

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Kang Mi Rae : "she was flustered. Why? Why did she lie that she never put on weight?" (*episode 13: 22.22*)

Yoo Eun : "the apartment in dogok-dong, was it all a lie?" (*episode 9: 27.26*)

Hyun So A : "I guess everyone in the school thinks I'm a psycho now. I even lied to you. My grandma is alive. (*episode 15: 42.51*)

In fact, she is full of fear and insecurity so she constantly makes efforts to convince herself that she is great and perfect. She takes advantage of the people around her and spoils other women's relationships to cement her status as the most popular woman. It can be seen in the quotations below.

Go Ye Na : "who was that?"

Kang Mi Rae : "Hyun Soo A."

Go Ye Na : "that weird girl? I think she is really weird. I just can't believe she invited Yong Chul over without knowing. (*episode 10: 49.51 – 49.55*)

Kang Mi Rae : "I think I was mistaken and that I was fault for judging you in a bad way. But I wasn't mistaken. You've hated me from the beginning (*episode 10: 1.03.04- 1.03.36*)

Jang Won Ho : "yes, I guess. It just means that she totally made fool of me." (*episode 13: 10.06 – 10.12*)

Jung Dong Woon : "she made it seem like she liked me as well. Was she just having fun with me? I'm so angry." (*episode 13: 10.27 – 10.34*)

Kang Mi Rae : "I know that you don't like me. I also know you can't stand the fact  
Kyun Suk likes me. But you are better not use him. Do not meddle in  
his life.

Hyun So A : "I'm meddling in his life? What are you talking about?"

Kang Mi Rae : "everyone knows that he is the most handsome, competent guy. If he  
dates someone else, you won't be in the spotlight anymore. That's why  
you try to make sure he can't date anyone if he's not going to go out  
with you"

Hyun So A : "that's right. From the moment I was born, and for the rest of my life, I'll  
be different from you." (*episode 13: 29.00 – 29.30*)

At the beginning of the story, Kang Mi Rae is positioned as someone full of fakes  
because she completely changes her face. But after Han So Ah's lies were exposed, it was  
clear who was the real fake. The fact that Kang Mi Rae had plastic surgery is known to  
everyone. But Han So Ah's lies were completely invisible. So he is the real fake.

Women's beauty is constructed as an attraction to attract men. In order to the  
patriarchal audience can more clearly see the definition of beauty placed on Kang Mi Rae, the  
second strategy used in this drama is presenting two popular men who fall in love with Kang  
Mi Rae even though they know how ugly the real Kang Mi Rae is.

Kang Mi Rae : "why would a guy like you have feelings for someone like me?"

Do Kyun Suk : "what do you mean by a guy like me and a girl like you?" (*episode*  
*12: 43.25 – 43.33*)

Yeon Woo Young: "I hate studying... and I like you." (*episode 12: 56.47 – 56.49*)

Prabasmoro (2003) said that The construction of patriarchal culture, on one hand,

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empowers men to give recognition to women's femininity and on the other hand, makes women always seek recognition of their femininity from men. In this drama, the definition of beautiful and ugly is directly presented through the point of view of these two popular men as shown in the quotations below.

Seo Yoo Jin : "is she ugly?"

Do Kyun Suk : "No"

Seo Yoo Jin : "she is pretty?"

Do Kyun Suk : "she is neither pretty nor ugly. She's just herself." (**Episode 12: 58.26 – 58.35**)

Yeon Woo Young : "what's wrong with being attracted to good looks? It doesn't have to be about good looks.

Kang Mi Rae : "I told you that I got plastic surgery all over my face. I used to be very ugly to the point that you can't even imagine"

Yeon Woo Young : "so what?"

Kang Mi Rae : "so why...I have no idea why you're attracted to someone like me."

Yeon Woo Young: "someone like me"? because you are attractive. I just like you as who you are. (*episode 12: 58.38 – 1.00.01*)

Do Kyun Suk : "to me, you are just yourself." (*episode 12: 1.00.23 – 1.00.26*)

Hyun So A : "I didn't know he'd be like that. Who on earth came up with that nickname? How could they do that to a girl? She wouldn't have been that ugly, you know."

Do Kyun Suk : "she was cute. Kang Mi Rae was cute." (*episode 6: 20.16 – 20.48*)

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Do Kyun Suk : "could we have been friends?"

Kang Mi Rae : "you'd never have wanted to be friends with me. There were many pretty girls in our school."

Do Kyun Suk : "looks aren't everything." (*episode 7: 6.21 – 6.47*)

Han So A : "you should've added your photo. Your appearance plays a big part when you're job searching. You should know after the interview you did yesterday"

Do Kyun Suk : "Looks don't get the work done." (*episode 10: 08-21 – 08.28*)

Student president: "you don't need to lose weight. I don't like girls who are too skinny. There are many men who are like me. Guys like me find cute, chubby girls like you are attractive. Well, I'm not just talking about looks. The way you talk and do things too. You're cute in many ways. Anyway, you don't need to change. So, don't let it stress you out." (*episode 6: 25.21 – 25.50*)

The third strategy is that the definition of beauty is conveyed directly in the form of a message, either explicitly or implicitly through parables shown in the quotations below.

Na Hye Sung : "No matter what anyone says, you are the most precious person to yourself." (*episode 6: 30.55 – 30.57*)

Na Hye Sung : "the true beauty of perfume lies in the fact that it can't be seen. The Scent is the one and only beautiful thing that can be felt even with your eyes closed. I believe this intangible beauty will be somewhat of a consolation to those who are sick of this world that only focuses on our beauty." (*episode 4: 25.32 – 25.49*)

Perfume is the image of a woman and its scent is the true beauty. it explains that true beauty is not in what we see with our eyes but in what we can even feel without being able to see it.

Na Hye Sung : "... and nobody puts on perfume before doing any of those things. However, there are times when this invisible last step ends up lingering in people's memories for a very long time. It's hard to remember a certain person's hairstyle or outfit from a long time ago. But you do remember their smell. And that stays in your head long with that person's image. (*episode 12: 09.26 – 09. 42*)

The quote above explains that real beauty is the beauty that will always keep an impression in the memory of those who know her.

### **Meaning Ratioalization of “Beauty”**

The drama series my ID is Gangnam beauty tries to show the meaning of beauty from a different perspective. Through its deconstruction strategy, this drama offers a more rational definition of beauty. The meaning of beauty here is directed to inner beauty, namely beauty that emanates from attitude and behavior.

Patriarchal society considers that a good woman is physically beautiful. To refute that, this drama features an evil beautiful character and an ugly character with a kind-hearted. this kind of position indicates that body dimension is not correlated with good and bad values. Kang Mi Rae who used to be ugly turns beautiful after plastic surgery. Meanwhile, Hyun So Ah is beautiful but full of deceit. it conveys a message about the meaning of true beauty. The body as the outermost dimension is easy to tinker with and change. The face does not give any value to a person. The true value of a woman is within her. Face and body are nothing while a person's attitude will affect her social interactions with the people around her. In the end, Kim Chan Woo realized that they had been tricked by Han So Ah's beauty all along and Jang Won Ho says that Do Kyung Suk made the right decision to choose Kang Mi Rae over

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Han So Ah. That is basically, the beauty of the body is nothing. We have been too hegemonized that we are obsessed with beautifying our faces in various ways. In fact, people judge us by our behavior.

A beautiful face does not provide value and benefits without a beautiful attitude and behavior. On the other hand, an ugly face becomes beautiful in the eyes of others because of kindness and empathy. This message was conveyed through the character Do Kyung Suk who fell in love with Kang Mi Rae. This message is further strengthened by the characterization of Do Kyun Suk who several times shows his point of view that the face is not something important. It has been shown in the quotations in the previous section. At the same time seems it reminds us of the fact that beautiful women are not the requirement for finding a perfect and handsome man. If we look at the reality around us, there are many women who, even though they are far below the standard of beauty myths, still find good partners. This is evidence that although patriarchal society gives men the authority to recognize women's beauty and women's beauty is directed at attracting men, in reality, men do not only judge women through their beautiful faces. They also tend to look for women who with attitude and character that matches them. It seems that only women who are intoxicated by beauty myths and fear that they will not be loved if they are not beautiful.

The message about beauty means an inner beauty emanates from someone's attitude and behavior is emphasized again through the character Na Hye Sung. Na Hye Sung, link a beautiful woman to perfume. The appeal of perfume lies in its fragrance. it is invisible but can be felt and is more imprinted on the mind of the person who smells it than the clothes worn by the perfumer. The fragrance that we can't see is as same as a person's inner beauty. Beauty that is not visible to the naked eye. Beauty radiates from attitude and behavior. Although it is not seen, it is felt and leaves a sincere and deep impression because kindness can touch the hearts of those around us.

## CONCLUSION

The drama series *my id is Gangnam beauty* intends to deconstruct the meaning of beauty that has been attached to the female dimension. Through several deconstruction strategies, such as bringing up a kind-hearted woman with an ugly face and an evil beautiful woman, showing male idols who fall in love with an ugly woman, and through the parable of perfume as a woman. From all these strategies, it is clear that this drama series wants to lead women's view toward seeing beauty as inner beauty, that is beauty emanates from attitude and behavior. This drama wants to tell the audience that the beauty of the body is something that has no value and is not essential. The body is a dimension that cannot determine a person's worth.

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