# currentkids

# The Fair & Lovely brand will get a new name – what is the fuss about?



Credit: feminism india.com

**This week, Hindustan Unilever announced that it will drop the 'Fair' from 'Fair & Lovely', the name of the largest skin care brand in India that is used by 1 in 3 households.**

**Colourism, which is discrimination based on skin colour, is something people experience across the world. Most recently with the brutal killing of George Floyd, the #BlackLivesMatter movement is back with renewed force as a voice against the racial prejudice black people face due to the colour of their skin in the United States.**

In India, being fair equals being beautiful. This deep ingrained bias of fair skin being more desirable is tied to the human aspiration for power and wealth. The genesis of this goes back many centuries. As per the norms of the caste system (described as 'varna' or 'colour' in the vedas), and its classification of work, people of higher castes did not physically toil in the sun and were naturally fairer. In Hindu mythology, Gods like Shiva, Rama and Krishna are depicted with blue-ish skin and not as completely dark, which is reserved for the evil asuras. Add to that our long history of being ruled by fair skinned invaders, the last of which were the Mughals and the British. All of this has perpetuated this deep seated notion of fair skin being superior. So aside from being a historical beauty ideal, fair skin also became aspirational as it connoted a higher place in the social hierarchy.

Bollywood which sets the standards and definitions for beauty in our country still celebrates and reinforces 'gora' or 'fair' as beautiful.

**Traditionally, brands have grown out of a consumer need.** In the 70's, matrimonial ads often said " Wanted fair & lovely girl as a bride". Fairness was an accepted beauty ideal and the biggest expectation that consumers had for their skin. This is how the brand Fair & Lovely was born! Since 1975, skin cream brands have built upon, reinforced and benefited from the consumers' need to look fairer by actively portraying the benefits of lighter skin.

In the last decade or so, a movement to change the conversation through campaigns like **'Dark is beautiful'** and **#unfairandlovely** have mushroomed in India and some celebrities have taken a stance that they will not endorse fairness. For this deep rooted belief to change, people have to look beyond the colour of a person's skin in defining who they are, and not let that come in the way of opportunities in their life. This needs widespread action from many facets of society to build awareness and education to drive impactful change, and the current generation can play a significant role.

**Brands have always played a role in changing the narrative.** However, removing 'fair' from the name of the cream alone will not remove the aspiration to be fair amongst the billion Indians. For a leading brand, this is indeed the first step in the right direction towards a more inclusive idea of beauty. Will Fair & Lovely and its ilk go as far as saying dark is beautiful? That remains to be seen. Let us hope it spurs a recalibration of beauty ideals by leading the change and neutralising the role that skin colour plays in all walks of life, paving the way for a more 'fair & equal' world!



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