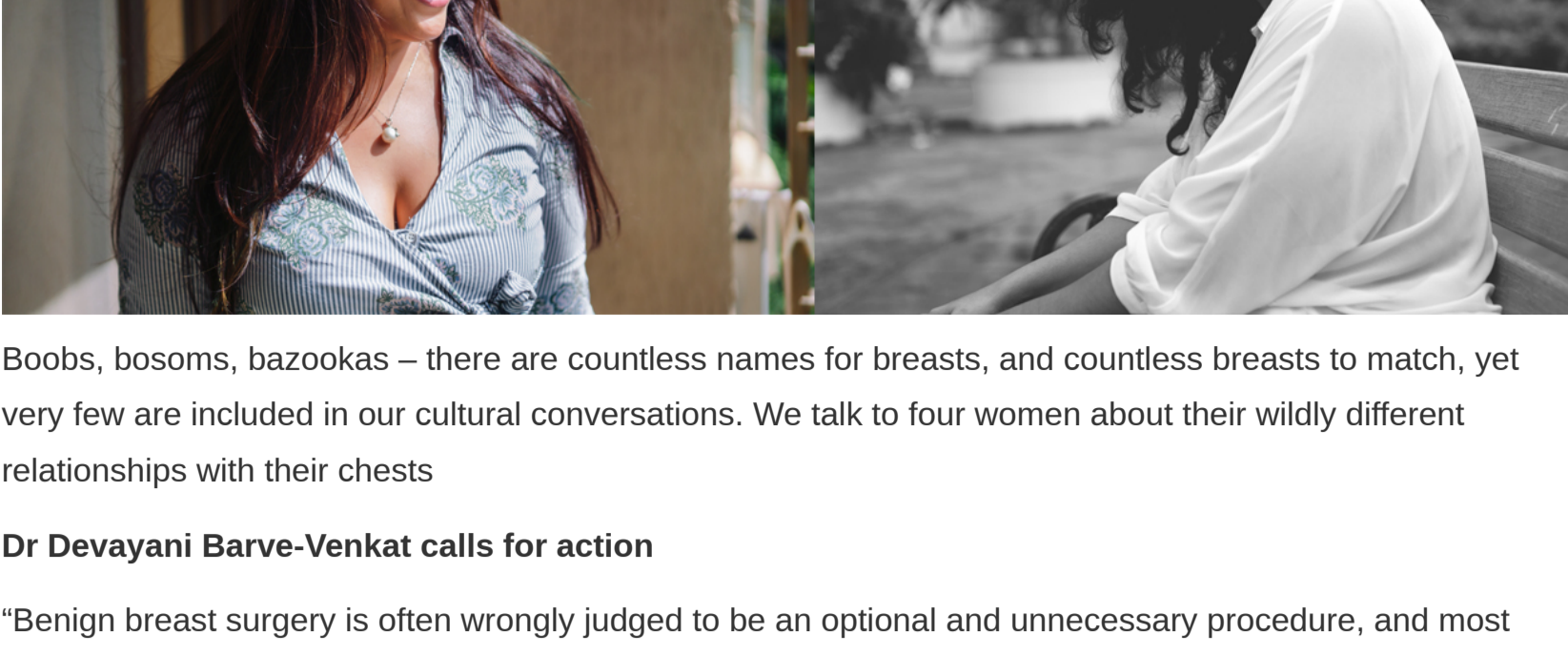


There is no such thing as perfect breasts and here's why

It's time to include breasts in our cultural conversations

ELLE By BY ELLE TEAM October 16th, 2019



Boobs, bosoms, bazookas – there are countless names for breasts, and countless breasts to match, yet very few are included in our cultural conversations. We talk to four women about their wildly different relationships with their chests

Dr Devayani Barve-Venkat calls for action

"Benign breast surgery is often wrongly judged to be an optional and unnecessary procedure, and most often this judgement isn't even passed by the patient. As a female plastic and cosmetic surgeon, I see a lot of women who suffer breast ailments on a daily basis, and have shied away from seeking medical attention because they're worried what people may think of them. In these instances, the suffering is individual and the decision to undergo surgery should be individual as well. Still, a large part of my job involves counselling the patient's family, most understand, some don't.

Due to the stigma attached to breasts, women often silently battle physical and psychological trauma. Disproportionately large breasts and asymmetric breasts are the most common issue. A close second are breasts that are too small, sagging or deformed.

Shaped by a lack of self-awareness and archaic concepts of female attractiveness, oversized breasts are often neglected by Indian women despite the debilitating effects like shoulder, neck and back pain.

They can restrict a woman's physical activity, and tight bras often lead to ulcers and rashes. Case in point: Wimbledon champ Simona Halep's breast reduction surgery is a vastly underrated and misunderstood procedure. In interviews, she has famously said, "It's the weight that troubles me. My breasts make me uncomfortable when I play, and I didn't like them in my everyday life either. I would have gone for surgery even if I hadn't been a sportswoman.

In recent years, more women in their 30s and 40s are being diagnosed with breast cancer. For every woman who chooses to spend a lifetime with reconstructed breasts, there is someone else who chooses to 'live flat'.

As a plastic surgeon, my goal is to present patients with all the options and make sure they make an informed decision. It's important we start a conversation that reclaims breasts as a natural and integral part of our anatomy. They are a part of the human body, as much as the heart or liver, and the fact that they define gender and body image make them even more special."



Dr Devayani Barve-Venkat is a practising plastic, reconstructive and aesthetic surgeon

Sandra Nandiebam on being a role model

"I've always wanted beautiful breasts, ever since I started transitioning—they are a symbol of my femininity and sexuality. I used to be embarrassed at shoots, in the changing room with other girls.

I felt incomplete as a woman, but with breasts I now feel much more confident and proud as a woman.

Right now, I'm happy with my hormone therapy. The secondary female physical characteristics make me feel like a step towards everything I have dreamt of feeling and being.

I hope my struggles and experiences can help anyone who, like me, is growing up as a transgender in India.

My career in fashion and advertising might help in the advocacy of trans-rights, and someday I hope to use my reach in a bigger way."



Sandra Nandiebam is a trans model with Feat Artists

Rytasha Rathore recalls her very confusing foray into puberty

Early discovery: "My sister and I were both breastfed, so I guess I always knew that breasts existed to feed babies. I may have even tried to breastfeed my doll as a child—so I kind of knew about that part of the anatomy but not really. What really fascinated me was the fact that women needed a piece of clothing for that region: a bra. And as a seven-year-old I tried on my mum's bra over my clothes just to get a feel of it—I thought it was pretty cool."

Tender moments:

"Having an older sister also meant I saw a trailer of what was coming my way. However, when puberty hit, I wasn't confident or happy about it.

It was just a thing I had to go through while wearing a sports bra. My sister used to call my boobies 'water balloons', which made me feel like they were too saggy or weren't normal. Even mainstream media made perky, firm breasts the ideal. Then, a friend once called me 'whale cleavage'—in jest, of course. At the time I laughed it off, but in hindsight teenage me felt pretty bad about it. It seemed like everything was coming in the way of my self-love journey."

Cue to adulthood: "I'm finally in a place where I love my boobies! My relationship with my body, in general, has improved over time. When I put on a lot of weight and later lost some of it, my breasts were the first to be affected.

They're soft and still a little saggy, but also beautiful and totally normal. Now my own breasts are my favourite breasts."



Rytasha Rathore is an actor and body diversity activist

Sameera Reddy on why she spent years stuffing her bra (and hating it)

When I was fitted for my first portfolio shoot, a fashion designer gave me my first set of jellies. I was always conscious of my A cupsize, but it made me feel ashamed of my small breasts. Soon after I was obsessed with buying the best bras, pads, silicones, double-sided tape—I would causally joke that I had the biggest collection of falsies in the film industry.

It's okay to find humour in it now, but back then I was struggling with the disparity between the real size, and the public perception of being a big-chested girl.

Stuffing my bra became second nature, not just while I was on camera but in my day-to-day life as well.

There was a time when I wore padded bras to the gym just to keep up the illusion. Like many young girls, I too believed that big breasts are a requirement to fit into the box of the perfect woman.

I hit a low when multiple people suggested I get breast implants—I can't believe I even contemplated it. Looking back, I'm grateful I found the strength to fight it off.

My perception finally changed in 2014, when my stylist Meghna Bhalla explained how I could experiment with different outfits once I embraced my real size. Thanks to her coaxing, I got comfortable with my body and started loving my breasts for what they were. Two years ago, I finally threw away my extensive lingerie collection and stuck with what really works for me.



Sameera Reddy is an actor and body positivity activist behind the Instagram campaign #ImperfectlyPerfect

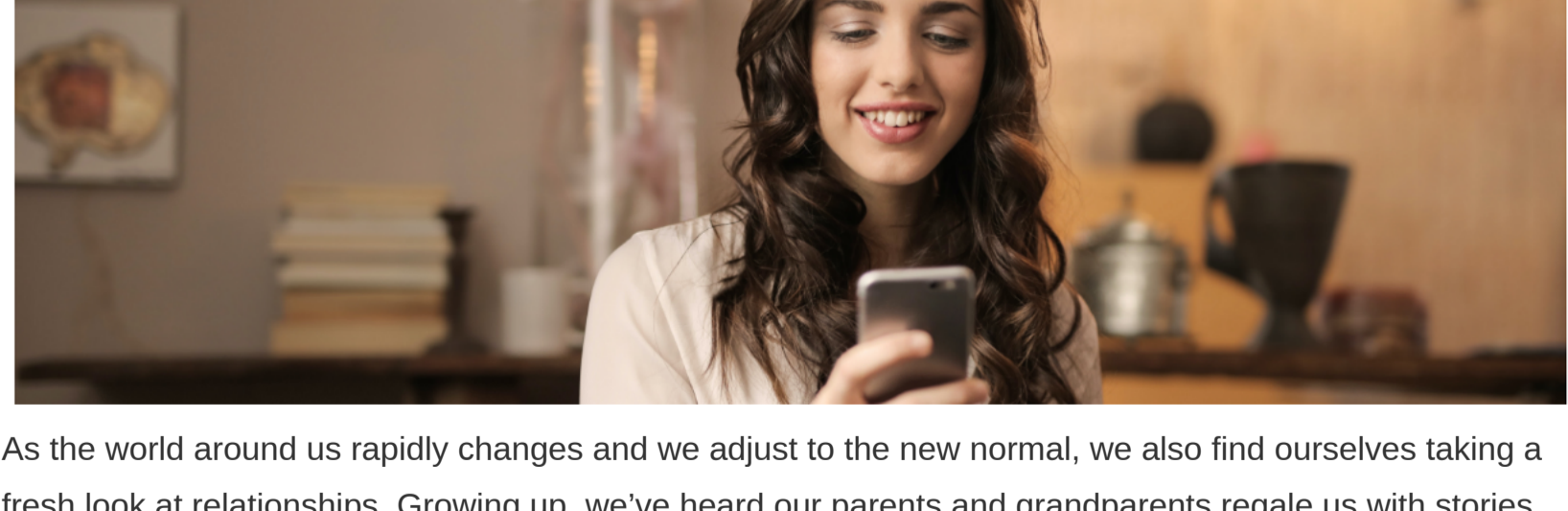
-As told to Mamta Mody

Photographs: Anees Ali (Rytasha Rathore), Mommy shots By Amrita (Sameera Reddy) and Bhanu Pratap Singh Rathore (Sandra Nandiebam)

Old school romance is making a comeback and we're here for it

It's the stuff classic movies are made of!

ELLE By Bumble June 4th, 2020



As the world around us rapidly changes and we adjust to the new normal, we also find ourselves taking a fresh look at relationships. Growing up, we've heard our parents and grandparents regale us with stories about their courtship period. During this uncertain time, we're rethinking the ways we connect with each other and how we get to know someone over days and weeks, before meeting in person.

To the hopeless romantics among us, we say: this is what you've been waiting for, a meaningful connection and the foundation of a strong relationship. To the cynics, we hear you too. Old school romance may feel like something that belongs in fiction but why not give it a shot in these tricky times? Today, we have a chance to recapture that magic.

Thanks to apps such as Bumble, you now have the power to make the first move. Rather than waiting for love to find you, now is the time to be proactive in seeking out a relationship. Take a leap of faith. Begin the conversation with your new match and see where it takes you! Only women can start the conversation, so make sure you do it within 24 hours, before the match with that cute indie musician expires.

A (Virtual) Meet-Cute Moment

If you're unsure of what to say (and definitely don't stick to a boring 'Hi'), choose one of Bumble's 'Profile Prompts' and kickstart the chat on an interesting note! The way our parents and grandparents wrote long letters to each other, go the slow dating route and get to know each other over long conversations. One way to do it would be to play the super fun Question Game on Bumble and over time, open up about yourself and also find out about their quirks, habits and personality traits.

Beyond Borders

Right now, it's the perfect opportunity to give yourself the time to get to know someone. Since meeting up right away isn't an option, there's an element of mystery that will remain intact — something that's missing in today's fast-paced modern life. Bumble has extended distance filters, which means you can now connect with potential matches all across the country, giving you a chance at finding a partner you may not have crossed paths with otherwise.

In these unprecedented times, be open to discovering and forging genuine connections. While (virtually) meeting someone new can feel daunting, let's remember to just be ourselves and have fun with it. The best part? With safety at the heart of Bumble, you can just call, video chat, or send a voice note via the app — no need to share your phone number.

Get Creative

Once you check off long phone calls from the list, take things a step further and set up a virtual date. In the times gone by, a trip to the single screen theatre was the ultimate date so why not try a virtual movie night without either of you leaving the house? Pick a '70s movie, grab some popcorn, hit play at the same time, and keep that Bumble video call on so you can catch a glimpse of your date laughing (and maybe shed a tear, depending on the movie). Thank god for technology, right?

With all the changes going on right now, why not embrace the change of pace and try connecting virtually. You never know where it might lead...

[Download Bumble on the App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#) now.