

CONFRONTING BEAUTY

A COMIC BOOK ADAPTATION

BASED ON - 'BEAUTY & FASHION: CONFRONTING COMMODIFICATION, ADVANCING ALTERNATIVE (PART 1)'

AN ARTICLE BY - ALESSANDRA MONACO

ILLUSTRATED AND ADAPTED BY
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CONFRONTING BEAUTY

a comic book adaptation by
SHAUNAUK SOKEY



This comic is based on the article 'Beauty and Fashion: Confronting commodification, advancing alternative (Part 1)', by Alessandra Monaco, available at <https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/beauty-fashion-confronting-commodification-advancing-alternatives-part-1>

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Inputs and comments for this publication have come from: Alessandra Monaco and Vasudha Varadarajan

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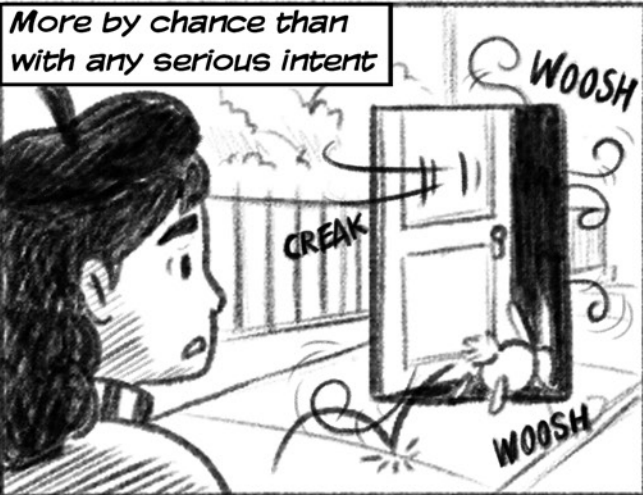
About 17 years ago...



I entered the world of Fashion

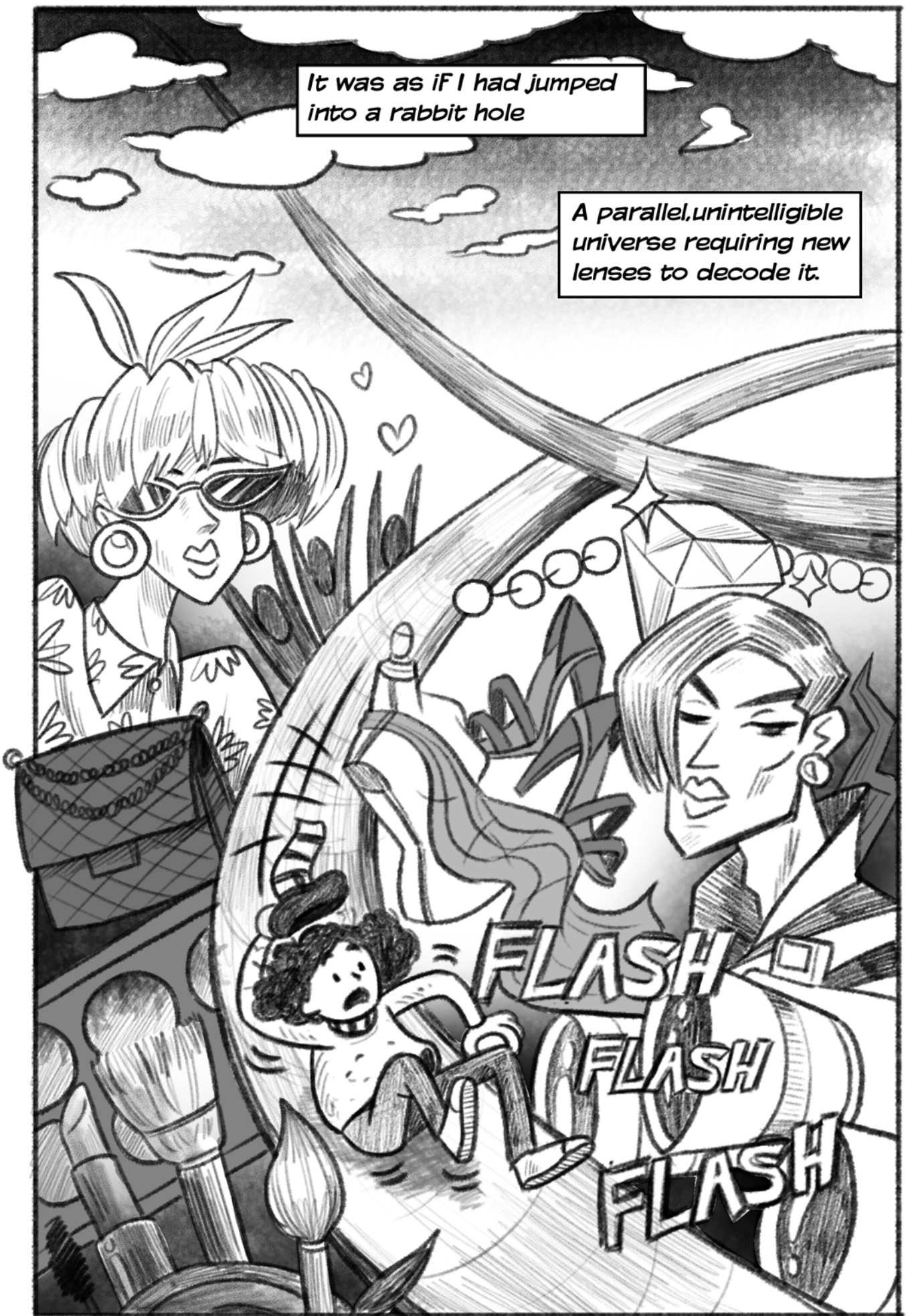


More by chance than with any serious intent



*It was as if I had jumped
into a rabbit hole*

*A parallel,unintelligible
universe requiring new
lenses to decode it.*



While I lived through many adventures in the Fashion industry...



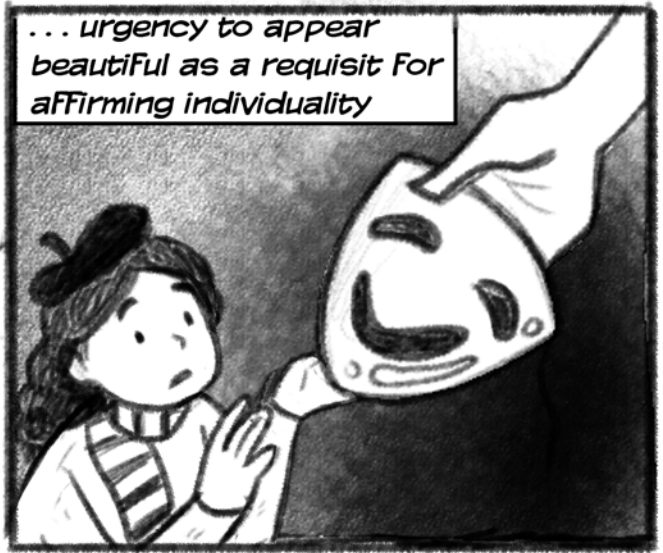
The Feeling of something being amiss accompanied me through all those exciting times



This new world I had entered pushed the ...

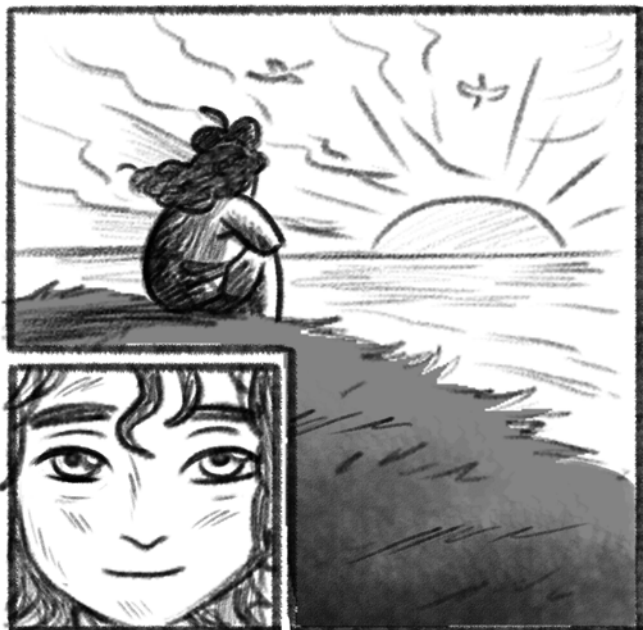
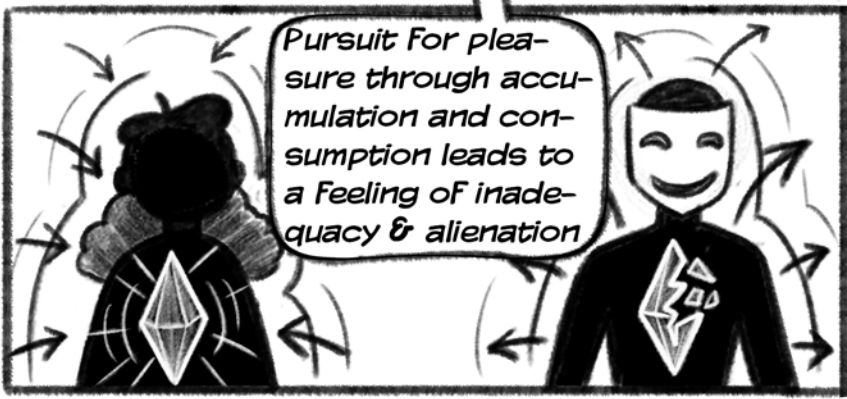


... urgency to appear beautiful as a requisit For affirming individuality

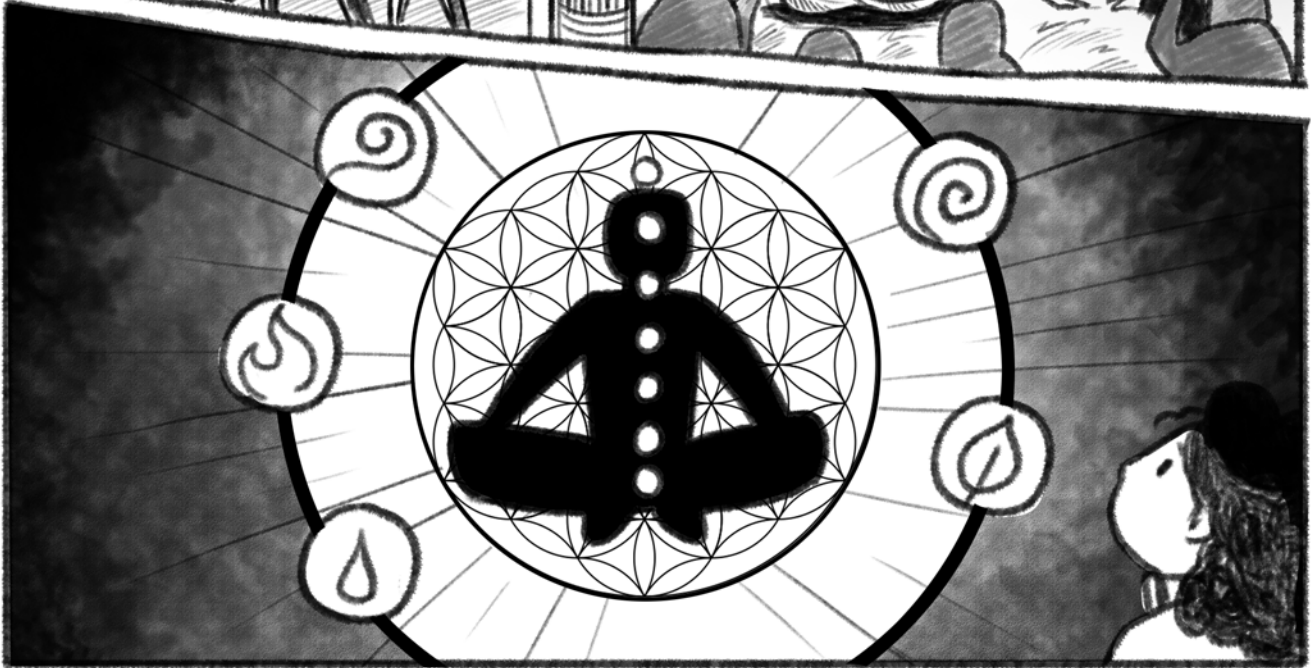




Eric Fromm explored the ability to focus on being and taking care of our inherent needs, and shed light on the tendencies of consumerist societies to accumulate material wealth, and power



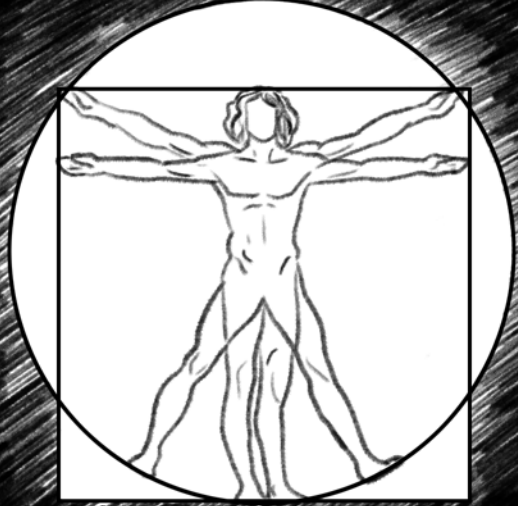
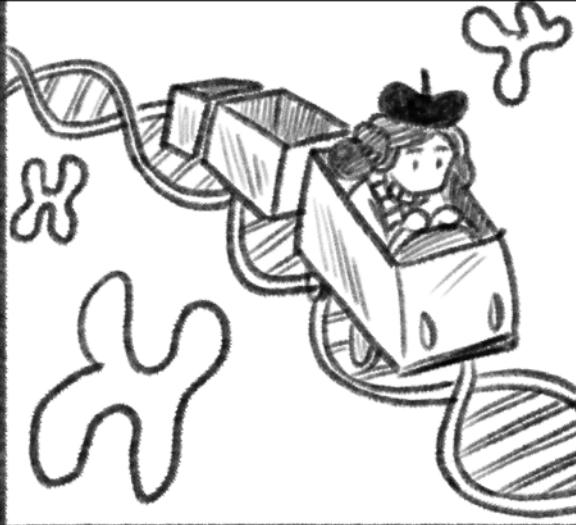
For millennia, people have strived and struggled, to find a way to cultivate and grow their inner being and also aim for something "higher" in life.



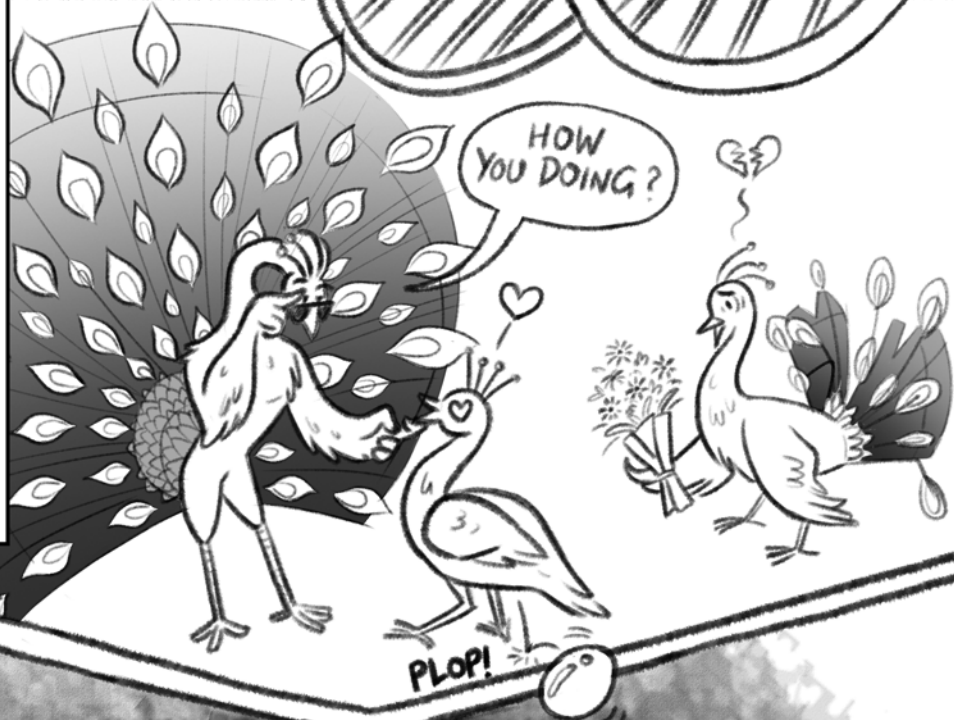
But contemporary societal aspirations undermine that noble intent by putting value on exterior appearances as the necessary condition for social appreciation.



Throughout human evolution, certain physical traits were seen as "beautiful" because they could signal good genes and health.



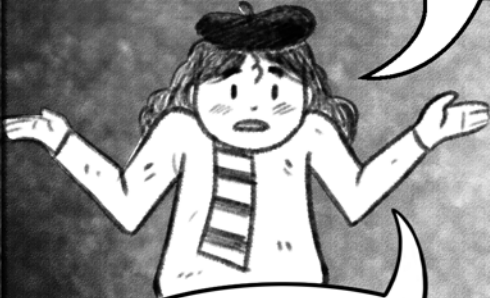
This was a shared characteristic in nature: the elaborate plumage of the male peacocks, signal their "superior" genetic quality to potential mates, and mate selection is key to the perpetuation of the species.



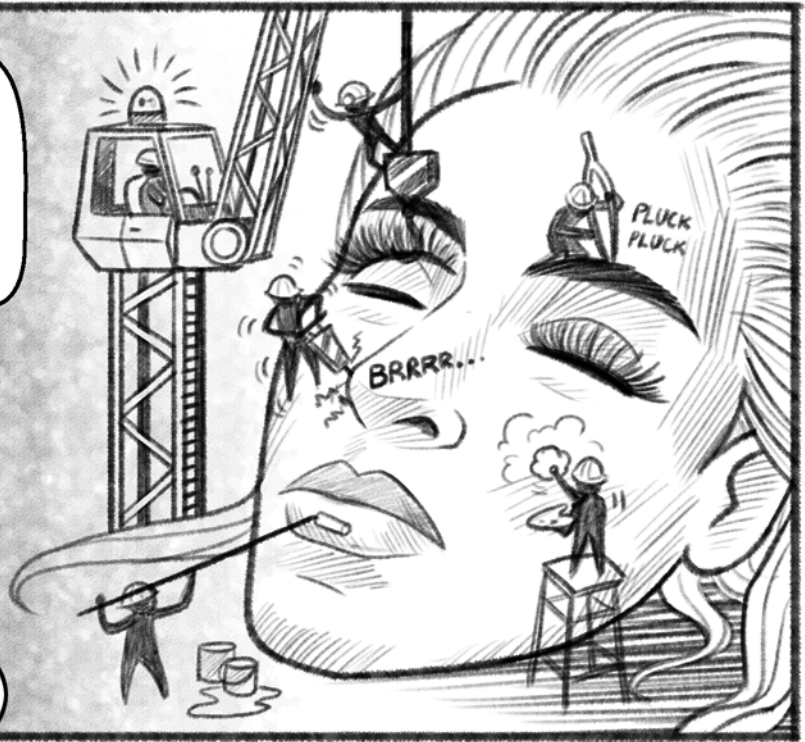
Different cultures have had varying ideals of beauty, often reflecting the values and the priorities of their societies. Though what is considered attractive today may differ significantly from its conception in the past.



The concept of beauty as we understand it today, with exclusive reference to specific physical characteristics, did not really exist...



Clothing did not play a central role in defining beauty.



What should I wear?



Don't worry too much about your appearance, just be yourself

You're always right! Thanks kittycat



I know

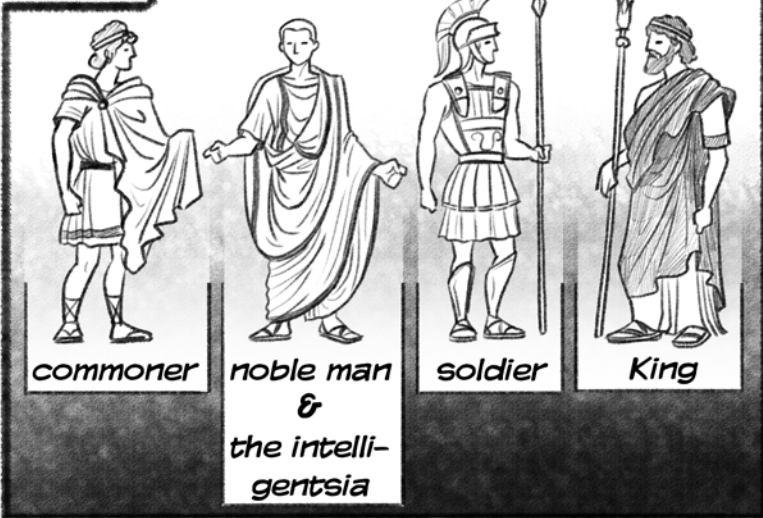
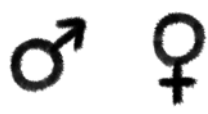
PURR!



The history of beauty had preserved that concept of beauty beyond an idea of clothing

ANCIENT GREECE

Clothing at that time didn't have a specific aesthetic value, rather it was functional, and allowed to easily identify the sex and function of a member of the community.



commoner

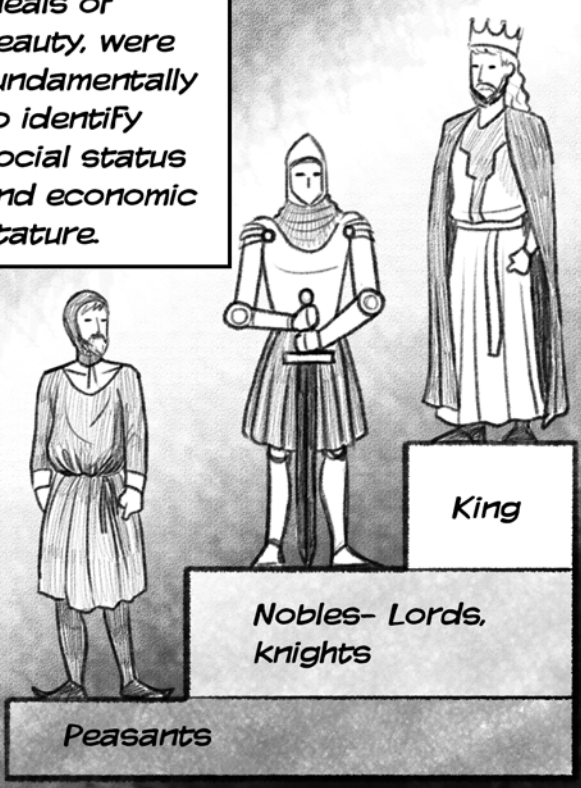
noble man & the intelligentsia

soldier

King

MIDDLE AGES

During this age clothing and ideals of beauty, were fundamentally to identify social status and economic stature.



Peasants

Nobles- Lords, knights

King

BAROQUE

The Baroque period was characterized by excess, artifice and wonder. Fashion not only became a means to indicate social status, but also became an expression of excessive luxury.



Over time the idea of beauty began to evolve in accordance to the transformation of the political and economic characteristics of the era. In subsequent historical eras we continue to see a link between external beauty, and both the values that represent the spirit of the time as well as the functional role of social classification.

The Greeks used 'Kalos Kagathos' which went beyond the physical appearance and emphasized the importance of harmony between outward appearance and inner qualities.



HOMER

kalos-beautiful
kagathos-good



Ancient Greeks thought proportionate faces were the most beautiful and lean athletic figures for men and soft gentle shaped features with long wavy hair were considered beautiful for women

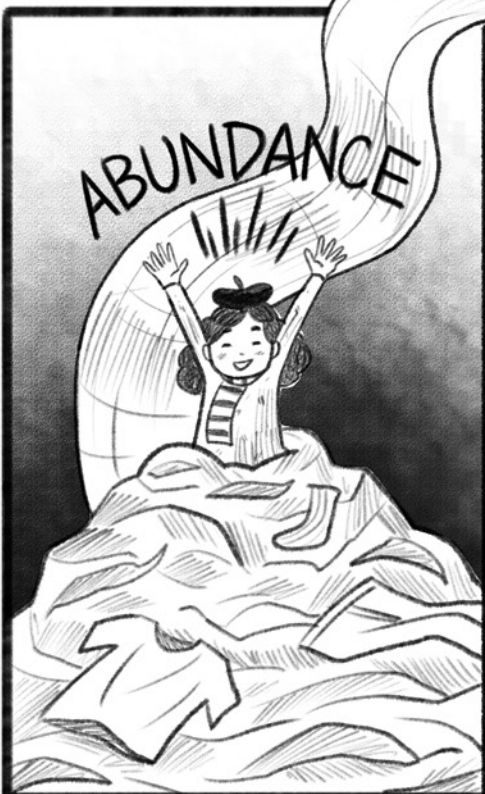
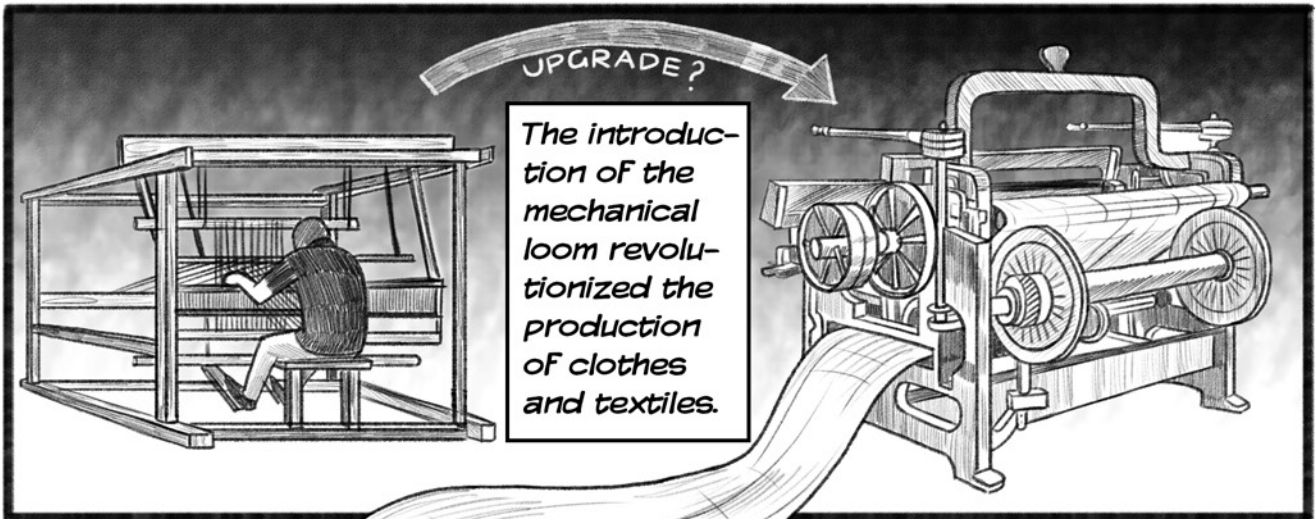


Even though Greeks had preferences to physical appearances they understood that, a beautiful body was considered to be a direct evidence of having a beautiful mind.

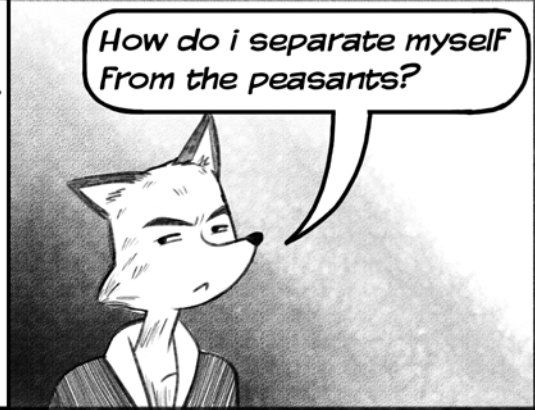


The idea of beauty was enrapt amidst different ideals such as beauty, virtue, and an emotional sentiment. . . .

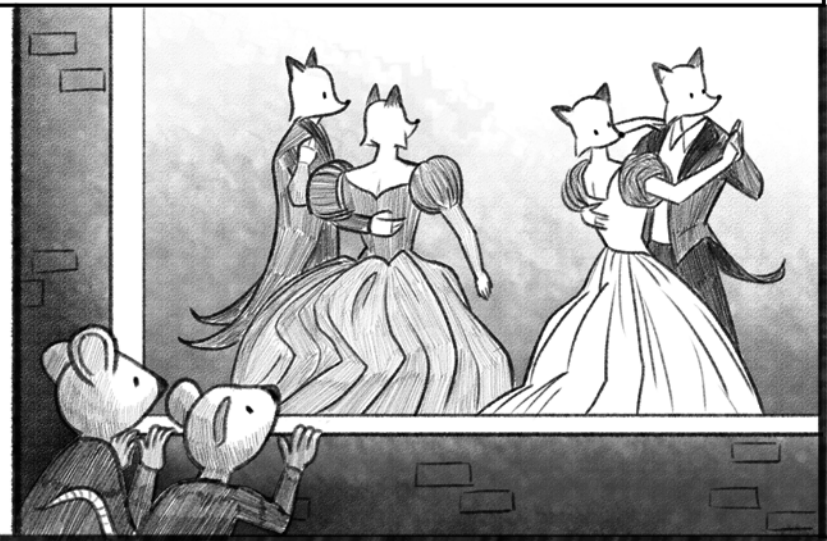
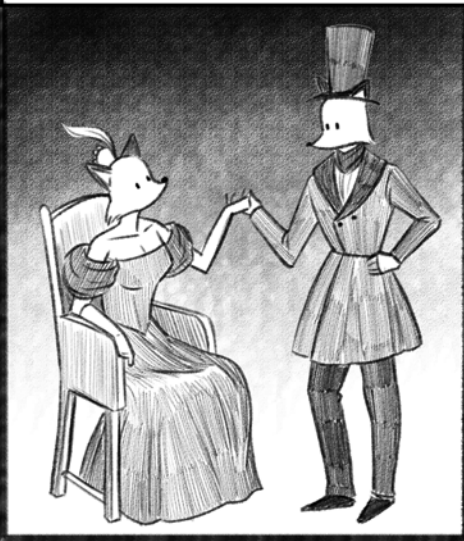
.... but this saw a rapid shift in the 18th century onwards. Significant events such as the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the rise of the bourgeoisie reshaped Fashion and the concept of beauty itself.



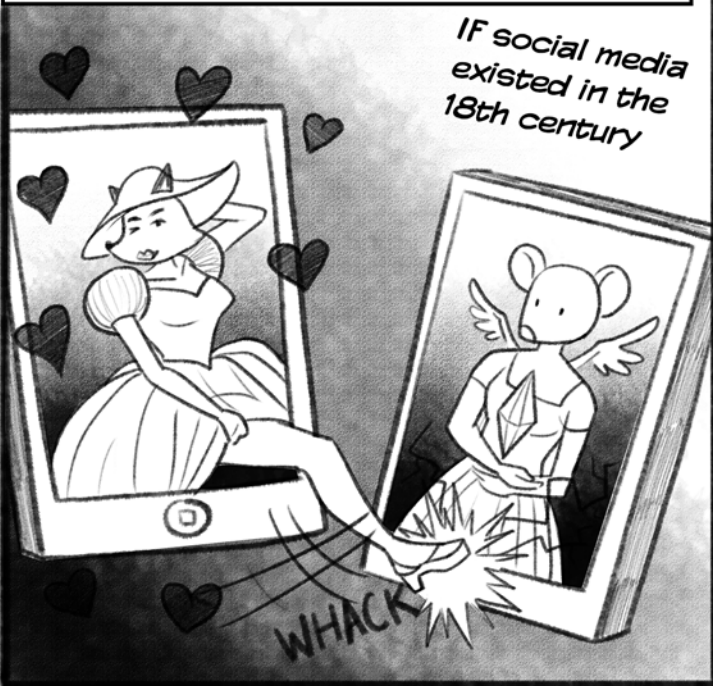
This technological progress, while ushering in a modicum of social equality, also ended up distancing the society from nature resulting in the loss of moral symbolism in the concept of beauty.



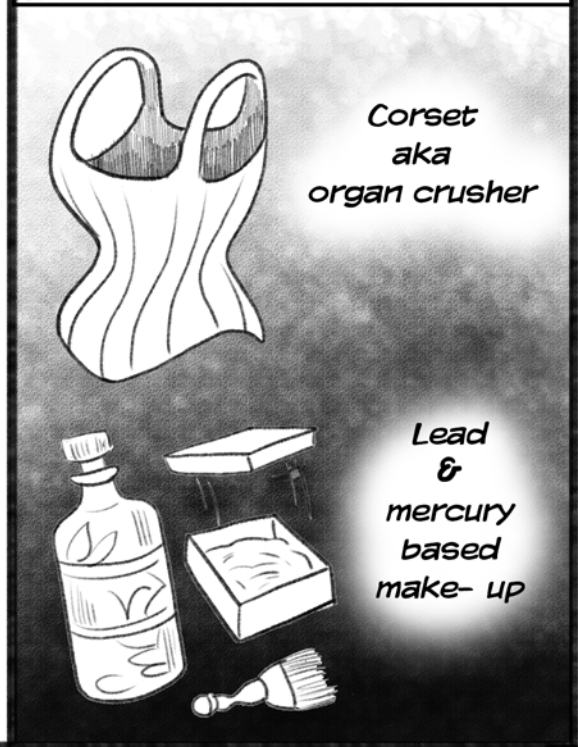
With mass production, a part of the bourgeoisie sought to set themselves apart from the masses, giving rise to dandyism.



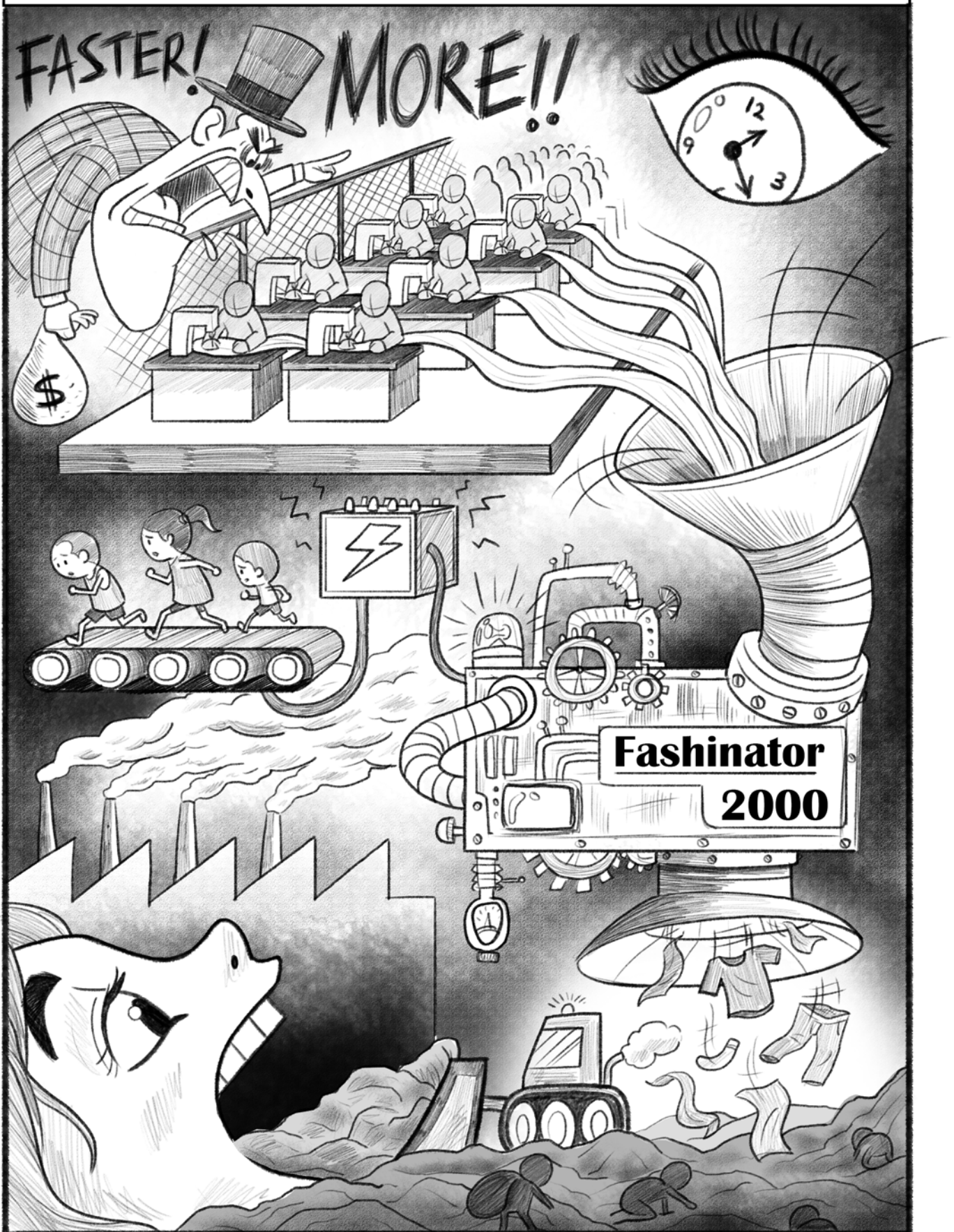
Both Dandyism and Decadence, emphasized aesthetics as an end in themselves, idealized beauty as an absolute, while favouring the artificial over the natural.



At the time the idea of appearing beautiful was taken to the extreme.



The Industrial Revolution further propagated factory systems based on exploitation. The frantic pace of production, continual and deliberate lowering of quality and durability, quick disposal of garments, contraposition between "Lumpenproletariat" and the elite, further classifying and discriminating.



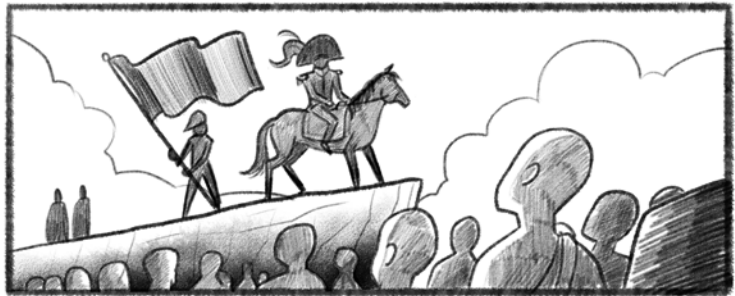
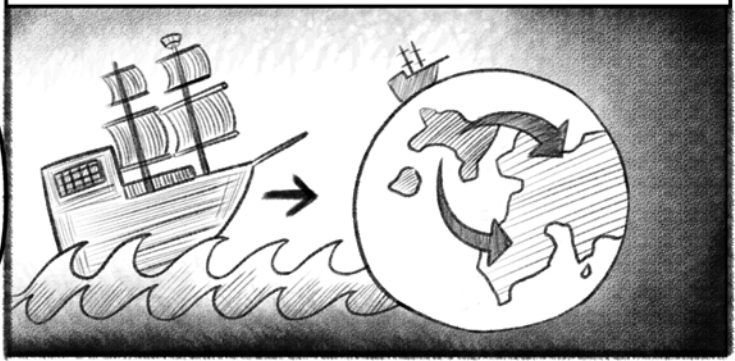
Fashion perfectly embodies the capitalist model of consumption that continually invents new needs and desires for more.



The murderous, meaningless caprice of Fashion *

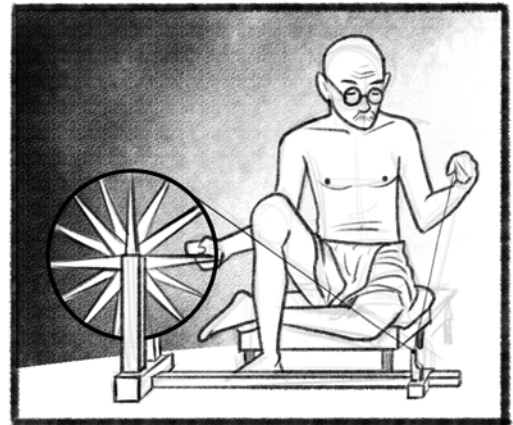
* is what Karl Marx called the Fashion machine. He considered the natural need for clothing as a contrast to Fashion as an ugly symbol of class stratification.

As a logical next step of Capitalism, imperialism became a reality in the 16th century.



It was imperialism that imposed a new set of radical standards on the coloured world to psychologically impair the people in the regions with 'beauty' related anxiety, fear of inferiority. A new cultural paradigm on the world: white, European stereotype as the archetype of beauty and Fashion.

Fashion however played a positive role in India's journey to independence. Gandhi began the peaceful Swadeshi Movement, which promoted traditional Indian textile and boycotted imported European textile.

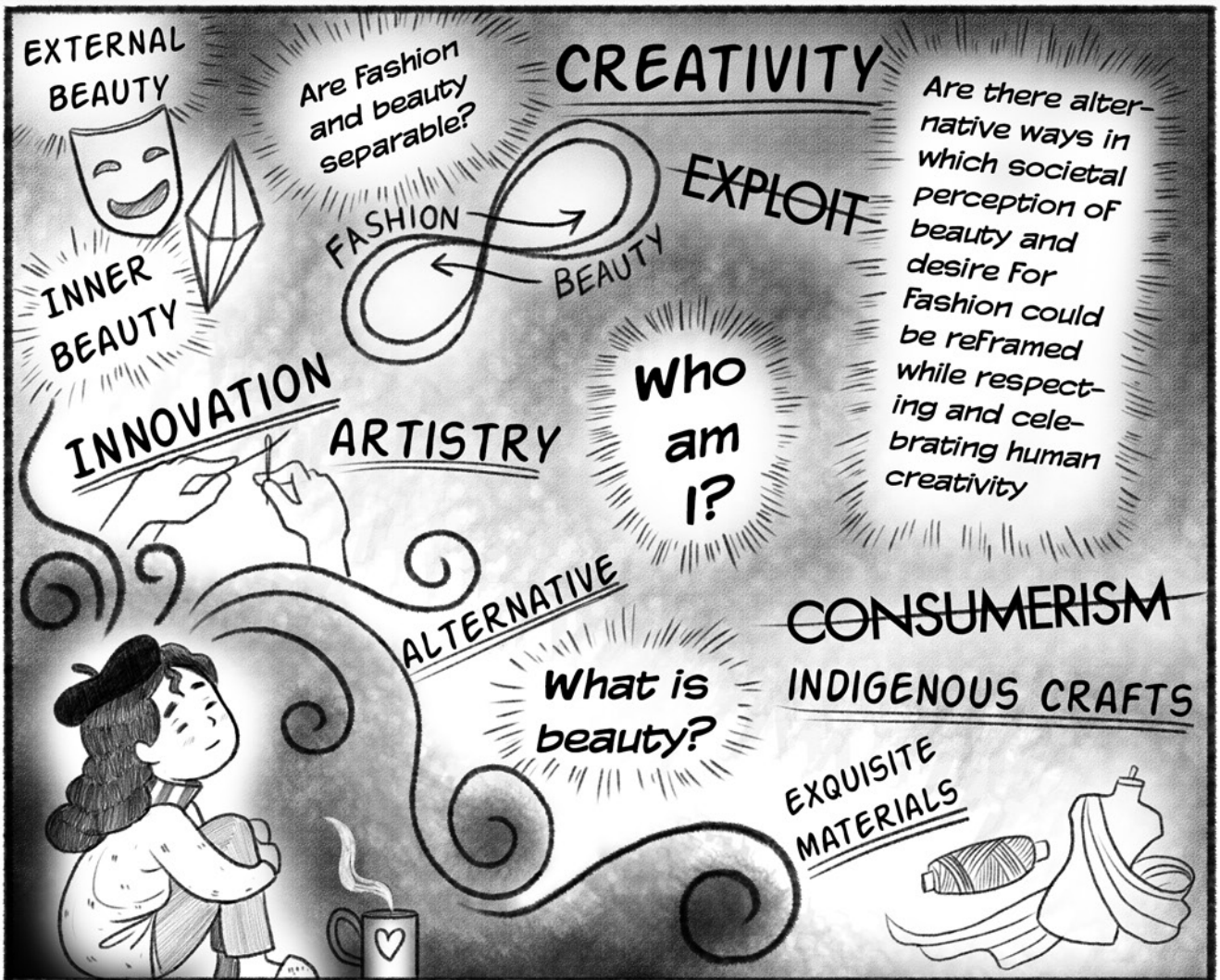


There is no beauty in the finest cloth if it makes hunger and unhappiness





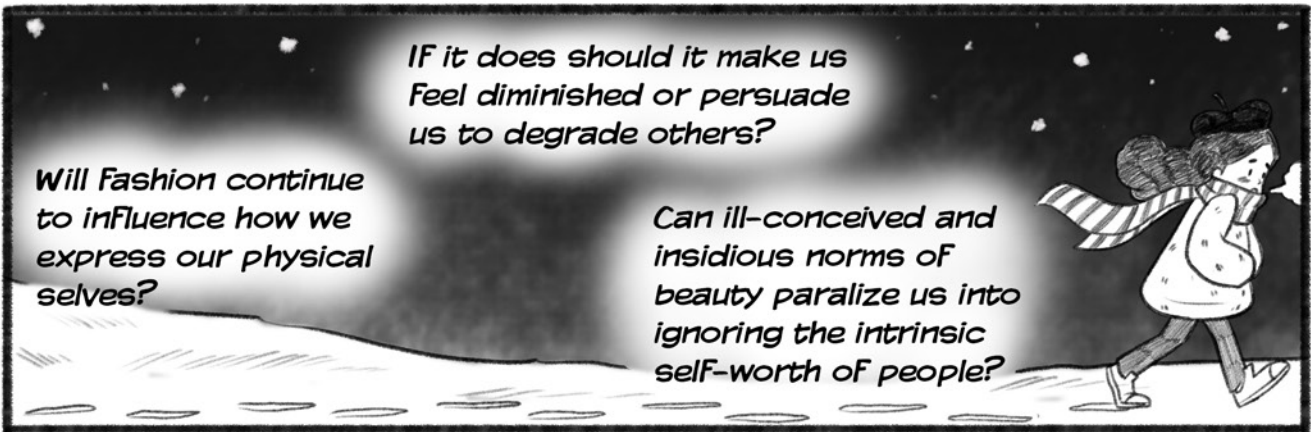
Leaving behind the odd and extravagant world of Fashion, I now had a much needed pause to reflect upon my time spent there.





Was it ever possible?

*Possible to repel
the commodification
of beauty demands.*



*IF it does should it make us
Feel diminished or persuade
us to degrade others?*

*Will Fashion continue
to influence how we
express our physical
selves?*

*Can ill-conceived and
insidious norms of
beauty paralyze us into
ignoring the intrinsic
self-worth of people?*



*To have
or
to be ...*



To be continued. . .