

Beauty is only skin deep

Meaning: Don't be led by the exterior. Give more attention to what lies beneath the skin.

Alternative: Appearances are deceptive.

Illustrative Story:

Ranadil was the begum of Dara, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan, and hence the rightful heir to the throne.

But his hopes were dashed when his brother Aurangzeb rose in revolt. Dara went out to quell the revolt.

Both the princes knew that it was a fight to the finish.

Aurangzeb emerged the winner. Dara was killed. The news reached Ranadil. She wept inconsolably. She too had lost all.

On his return to Agra, Aurangzeb detained Emperor Shah Jahan at the Agra Fort and seized power.

He remembered that victor took all. Why should not he claim Ranadil as his own?

He sent a message to Ranadil through a courtier. The courtier told her, "Accept the offer. Enjoy life.

You are young. You are beautiful." Ranadil rejected the proposal.

The courtier went back to Aurangzeb and reported the result of his mission.

"Go again. Tell her I can't live without her. She has bewitching charms.

What bright eyes! What rosy skin! Her face is indeed her fortune," Aurangzeb sang in praise of Ranadil.

The courtier met Ranadil again and appealed to her to accept his

master's offer. She smiled, wanly. "Your master says that my face is my fortune. Is it really so?

Let me check," she signalled to the courtier to wait and ran to the full-length mirror in her bed room.

She surveyed her face. "The face is indeed my fortune.

But I don't need this fortune any more," she mumbled, picked up a dagger and ran it several times across her cheeks.

Bleeding from every pore, she walked back to the presence of the courtier.

She wiped the blood with her dupatta and handed it to the courtier and said, "Give this to your master.

Tell him that my face is no longer my fortune. That fortune was only for my Lord, my dear Dara. So I have destroyed it.

Now, I have a face bleeding from cuts. Soon these cuts will turn into scars."

The courtier turned his face away, unable to stand the gory sight. It took him time to regain his voice.

Then he told her, "You are great, Oh daring Begumsahiba. Prince Dara would be proud of you and your loyalty."

She watched him till she could see him no more. Then she ran back and collapsed into the bed and cried her heart out.

Thus Rana held Aurangzeb at bay by sending him the message that beauty was only skin deep. He did not bother her again.

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