

To what extent does  
cultural background  
influence ones  
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beauty...

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To what extent does cultural background influence one's perception of human beauty? "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." This famous quote simply expresses the universal concept of beauty has no intrinsic or definite meaning. From this, one can derive that beauty can be nothing more than the subjective perception of human individuals-it is all based on one's predilection and proclivity. However, it is not just to say that anything can be considered as beautiful, thus contradiction does not exist in perceptions of beauty.

As one can see, there are certain guidelines to beauty. Whether it is the inner or outer beauty of a human being, the concept of beauty that society imposes is all shaped from general consensus. Then perhaps "Beauty is not one's own, but a reflection of one's culture". Even though nothing can be defined as absolute beauty, due to the limitation of one's cultural backgrounds created from the subjective nature of perception, human beings in the end will still unite their perception of beauty to a universal degree of understanding.

The rift in the perception of physical beauty between cultures can be placed on two ends of a spectrum. In both Western and Eastern Culture's ideology of beauty, having a slender body is crucial to be considered as an attractive woman. However, as we shift our view to the third world countries in Africa, this measure takes a drastic turn and becomes weak and meaningless. In those countries where poverty and diseases are the plays a key role, plumpness-being the sign of health, wealth and fertility is the ideal beauty of a woman.

Moreover, a culture's own tradition of beauty cannot be overlooked. Padaung women of the Kayan people wear a special ornament called neck rings around the neck of an individual to create a visual appearance of a stretched long neck. This tradition of elongating necks to achieve beauty is probably not accepted by others. Furthermore, the influential power of media cultural also alters one's perception. The concept of beauty in men displayed by the Japanese pop idols with distinctly feminine features is also one of the rare occurrences in perception.

Despite the range of different perception of beauty presented in various cultures, they are all collided to establish one fact—that is to be accepted but the general consensus within their culture. However, speaking of acceptance, all the rift between culture's perception of physical beauty are stirred together to create the universal acceptance of the inner beauty of mind and heart. "Beauty is only skin deep." The acceptance of inner beauty goes beyond the subjective norms of beauty that varies between the different cultures one is exposed to.

Gibran had concluded that "beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart". When it comes to these values of love, compassion and moral code, humans' emotion, conscience and perception are unified to form a common knowledge. As described in Plato's *Philebus*, the measure of beauty was structured and related to intelligence. One understands what is to be considered as a lovable person not only by their outward appearance but by tying the strings of the inner quality that one possesses as well.

With this commonality, the barrier of subjective beauty is broken down. As one gives and receives love on a daily basis, following the universal idea of moral code and intelligence, their perception is broadened to a degree of understanding that the “ Miss Universe” Pageant” can be hosted based on this commonality beyond cultural differences. Therefore, one can say that the universal acceptance and emotion unifies the human belief of a beautiful person.

Although the universal concept of beauty has no definite meaning and can alter from one perceiver to another. It can also be viewed that “ human beauty is a reflection cultural perception and ideas of aesthetics and indigenous to that area”, but one cannot deny that there are certain values built upon a common understanding. With this common understanding, the rift of perception between different cultures becomes narrower thus in the end, allowing one's perception of true beauty to be united to a universal degree of understanding.