

The perception of beauty in different cultures

[Health & Medicine](#), [Beauty](#)



They say “ Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. This means that beauty is Relative. Each one of us has his own perception for this word. What if this difference in perception was seen among different cultures?

Before Western ideals of beauty took over, each culture had its own identity in beauty. For example:

A. Arabian beauty was related with Black eyes

B. Chinese beauty with white face

C. Corsets and silk garments were worn III. But what I came to inform you about today is much more interesting.

In my research I went deep into some cultures to find more about the most extreme practices done under the name of beauty. Which made an interest to media now, like: Oprah show, National Geography episodes, BBC news and others. In this speech I’m going to take you far away from the cultures and traditions you’re familiar with in a unique cultural expedition to meet 5 of these unusual practices. Let’s first start with a widespread trend that we’re familiar with, the tattoo.

However, what I’m talking about is not the tattoo that we know; it’s the body scarification. In Karo tribe in Ethiopia, a whole new type of tattoos is worn, its scars. Yes, the same body scars that we try to hide.

As stated by Sharon Guynup (2010), there, body scars are an authentic sign of cultural pride, status and beauty. In fact, they developed this practice to consider it a form of decorative art. Using a thorn cut from a bush, a metal or

a shell they would curve scars in a specific pattern which can be sometimes symbolic. Such body alterations are usually done during rituals and celebrations for both males and females to embrace the transitional state into adulthood:

a) indicating fertility

b) indicating national belonging.

Moving from body scarification, all over the world, women have always had this passion for accessories. In Karen people of Burma (which is located just near Thailand) women wear a lot of rings, but not on their fingers, it's on their necks! You see there women are known for their long necks and giraffe looks. According to R. Waddington (2002) they think a long neck makes a woman more appealing. So, from the age of 5 they would make a girl wear a neck ring, and they would gradually add more rings as she grows up. In library. thinkquest. org they stated that by making women wear these rings they would be exposing the valuable metals in the family and thus, showing wealth.

You must be wondering, how can a neck be stretched?

With wearing these rings the neck doesn't really stretch, because they may weigh about 10kg the shoulders and the collarbone would be pushed down. The neck of a woman would reach 25-35cm long. I think it is logical to figure out that a woman there is unable to look at the sky or drink because of the weight on her neck she would fall down.

In some African countries like Burkina Faso and Mauritania the bigger the girl, the more she is considered attractive. Men there simply like fat women. Having layers of fat is thought to make desirable and more wanted.

According to BBC news, it is so important for a girl there to be fat to the extent that they send the little girls to fat farms where they are literally force fed. They would make them indulge about 16000 calories a day. Because Mauritania is a poor country, chubbiness there indicates wealth and high economic state. Girls fall under a lot of pressure from their parents in case they do not have “ big enough” size for getting married.

From seeing beauty in big sizes, let's move to see the complete opposite in the ancient civilization of China IV. According to BAI YANG, 2010 more than 800 years ago what sexually attracted men in a woman's body were her feet. They used to be aroused by seeing women wear small silk slippers. Poets used to praise a woman for her white and small feet. And so, to seduce men, women resorted to feet binding. It literally means binding a woman's foot to make it smaller. They used to compress it with bandages. According to Julie Wise (1999), women's feet had certain specifications for being perfect one of them was having a length of 7cm.

Having seen the body scarifications, neck rings, fattening camps and feet-binding, let's now move to the most shocking practice in my research. The Mursi tribe is one of the most unusual tribes ever. A. Disregarding that they barely wear anything on, paint their faces and body, or that have very long earlobes, women there wear a wooden or pottery disc on their lower lip that can reach 12 cm in diameter!

Without these discs you would see the girl's lip dangling with a big hole inside. How do they do that? According to Mursi. org and Latosky (2004), when the girl reaches puberty her lower lip is cut and a wooden plug is placed. As the girl ages she wears a bigger plug than the disc. This stage of her life indicates that she is no longer a girl but sexually mature woman. For these people, wearing a bigger disc has great value. It makes a woman more beautiful, increases her bride wealth (this means the size of cattle given to her parents before marriage) and makes her earn the respect of her husband and mother-in-law.

CONCLUSION

As for now, some of these tribes like the Mursi are unaffected by the invasion of the West, and some, continue mainly for touristic purposes. But most of these body modifications have now come to an end. Many calls were raised to stop them for the fact that they are seen to be too aggressive, and women are no longer objects found to serve men's desires. Not to forget that globalization played a major role in making only one beauty ideal for the whole world.

You and I, it's no doubt that we see these practices offensive, abusive or intimidating, but it is important for us to acknowledge that they are very sacred for each of the cultures, and to remember that Nietzsche once said " And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music", and so, we should learn to hear their music.