

Multicultural Society

What is culture?

Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society.

E.B.Tylor (Primary Culture)

What is culture?

Culture is the way of collective living of people who are in a particular area. Rituals, customs, habits, morals, social institutions, arts and religion depict their culture.

Prof. Wimal Dissanayake (Critiques)

Culture is the totality of whole, acquired by man on knowledge, beliefs, customs, arts and livelihood.

What is a multicultural society?

- A society with diverse ethnicity, religions, languages, arts, beliefs and rituals is called a multicultural society.
- Migration related to tourism, education, trade and development projects cause the complexity of cultural diversity.

Features of a multicultural society

- consists of different ethnic groups
- has different religions
- uses different languages
- has different customs
- has different cultural heritages

Cultural diversity in Sri Lanka

- Different ethnic groups
 - e.g Sinhala, Tamil, Muslims, Malay, Burghers and other communities.
- Different languages
 - Sinhala, Tamil, English
- Different religions
 - Buddhism, Hindu, Islam, Roman Catholic, Christian
- Different cultural traditions
 - Customs of weddings/funerals

Sri Lanka is a multi cultural society

- Customs and traditions related to different religions and their festivals
 - Buddhism - Vesak, Poson
 - Hindu - Thaipongal, Deepavali
 - Islam - Ramalan, Hajj
 - Christian - Christmas, Good Friday

Reasons for having a multicultural society in Sri Lanka

- Geographical location
- Migration
- Invasion
- Trade
- Cultural relationships

Cultures based on religion

- Buddhist culture
- Hindu culture
- Catholic/ Christian culture
- Islam culture

Buddhist culture

- The doctrine of Lord Buddha discloses the way for a better life and to achieve spiritual freedom.
- Five precepts are the compulsory precepts to be followed by laymen.
- The custom of the Buddhists is to lead day-to-day life by doing religious observances, appreciating the qualities of the Buddha.

The most important three religious festivals of the Buddhists

- Vesak festival
- Poson festival
- Esala festival

Religious festivals of the Buddhists

- Vesak festival is very important for the Buddhists since it is for commemorating three events of Buddha; the birth, the enlightenment and the Parinibbana (Passing away).
- It is believed that the Buddhist mission led by Arahath Mahinda Thero arrived in Sri Lanka on a Poson full Moon Poya Day
- After attaining the Great Buddhahood, Lord Buddha preached his first sermon on an Esala Poya Day.

Hindu culture

- The Tamils whose religion is Hinduism perform their religious observances according to Hindu culture
- The Hindus conduct Poojas for their gods such as Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha and goddess Kali
- Some of the religious festivals of the Hindus are as follows
 - Thai-pongal
 - Deepavali
 - Maha Shivarathri

Catholic/Christian culture

- Festivals
 - Christmas
 - Easter
 - Feasts of saints

Catholic/Christian culture

- Christmas is held on the 25th of December in order to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.
- Good Friday is for the commemoration of the Crucifixion and Easter is for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Baptizing a child and making him a child of God is an important religious custom of every Catholic/ Christian.
- Engagements as well as weddings and all other important occasions are done in church.

Islamic culture

- Milad un-Nabi festival
- Ramadan festival (Id-ul-Fitr)
- Haj festival

Islamic Culture

- Giving alms to the poor and beggars to commemorate the birth of Mohammed Nabi is done in Milad un-Nabi festival.
- Fasting from the dawn of the day to dusk continuously for a period of 30 days is a custom followed during the Ramadan period.
- At the end of the fasting period, Ramadan festival is held.
- Haj festival is held to celebrate the holy pilgrimage of the Prophet Mohammed's to Macca, the holy land of the Muslims.

Other multicultural countries

- India
- United States of America
- Canada

ethnic and religious composition of India

Races	Languages	Religions
Tamil, Urdu, Bengali, Muslim, Banjara, Chakma, Marathi, Munda	Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, English, Marathi, Malayalam, Panjabi, Thelingu, Gujarati, Kannada, Sanskrit	Hinduism, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Shaivism

How india ensures harmony among different ethnic groups:

- Treating all ethnic, religious and language groups equally.
- Using English and Hindi as official languages (Tamil Nadu state does not accept Hindi as an official language.)
- Having knowledge on another language except the official languages by every citizen.
- Taking steps to safeguard the rights and freedom of individuals to follow their own religion.

Multicultural nature of the United States of America

Ethnic groups	Languages	Religions
The White, the Black, Asians, Red Indians, Alaskans, Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders	English, Spanish, Samoan, Cameroonian, Karuk, Hawaiian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, German, French, Russian, Italian	Protestant Christians, Roman Catholics, other Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jewish

Steps taken by the United States of America to maintain multicultural nature of the country

- Recognizing English as the official language
- Not recognizing any religion as the state religion
- Granting equal rights for all citizens
- Accepting democracy and working according to it

Cultural identity

Every ethnic, religious and language group has its own special culture. A particular culture can be distinguished from that of another through cultural identity.

Advantages of building national harmony and sustainable peace

- Conflicts are minimized by working with mutual trust and understanding ^{2\} Harmony is ensured among ethnic groups
- Everyone contributes for the development of the country
- People are compelled to work collectively and harmoniously
- People contribute to the development of the country as they engage in productive economic activities.
- One is compelled to fulfil one's duties while respecting cultural diversity