

Culture:

Definition:

Culture refers to beliefs, values, behavior and material objects that, together form a people's way of life. Culture is the abstract, learned, shared rules and standards for generating behavior and understanding experience. It includes customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious, or social groups.

It is something that unites people. Culture is us. We make it. We shape it as we love it too be. The word culture is first used in this way by the pioneer English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, Primitive Culture, published in 1871.

“that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society”

Characteristics of culture:

- The sum of total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct the consumer behavior of members of a particular society. A society's personality

- Culture is the sum total of acquired traits which man acquires by socialization process. Thus, culture comprises good behavior patterns of people in the society.
- Culture is transmitted from generation to generation. Each generation is free to modify the cultural heritage and then transmits it to the next generation
- It is a social heritage of man. It represents group's expectations. Man cannot create it bereft of group's influence. Therefore, it has not its individual connotation.
- A culture which does not meet the recurring needs and demands of mankind is obsolete and outmoded. As such, a culture is good if it gratifies the social and ethical needs of man.
- Culture is not static but dynamic. It receives good things from other culture. Thus, there is

A culture synthesis or integration. As a result, culture gets refined and influences the life styles of individuals. It is subject to change and grow. So, culture is adaptive in nature. Culture changes as civilization changes.

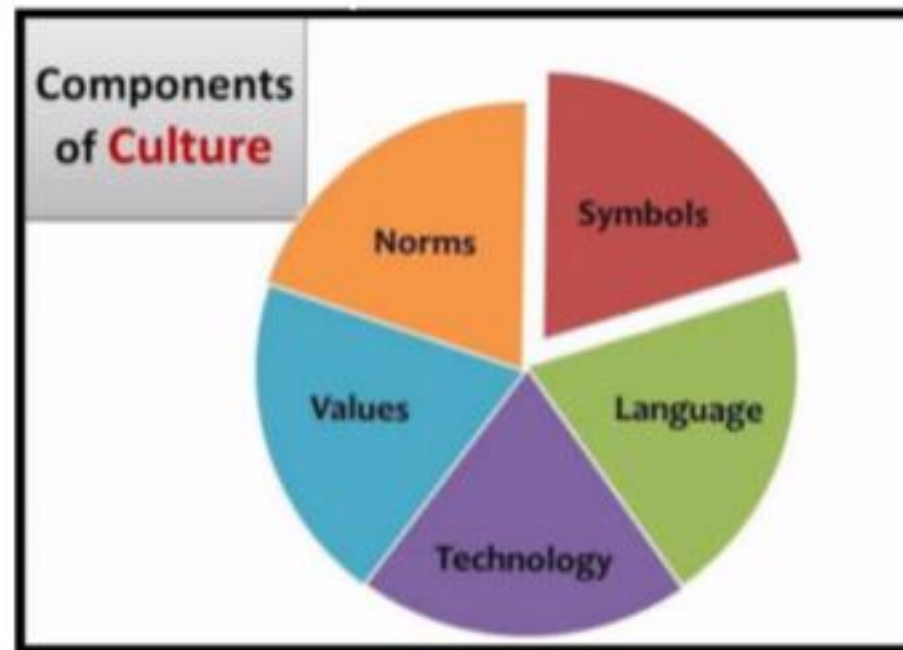
- Culture has quality of becoming integrated. Various parts of culture are integrated with each other. It welcomes new element to be incorporated in it.
- Culture is manifestation of individual's mind in different environments and circumstances. Man is interwoven with cultural mainstreams and becomes part and parcel of it.
- Culture is diffused among various groups. As a result, there is seen how one group accepts another's culture in their styles of living.
- Culture is modified and renewed in the light of new experiences.
- Culture is shared and social, not personal and individual. It is learned, not genetically programmed.
- Culture is rules and patterns, whether conscious or unconsciously followed. People decide how to behave using their culture's rules and patterns.
- Culture is shared and transmitted. Culture is social and gratifies human needs. It is cumulative and tends towards integration.



Components of culture:

Culture may comprise of different components which may include

- Symbols
- Languages
- Values and beliefs
- Norms
- Material culture now includes technology.



1. Symbols:

Anything that stands for or represents something else. This includes: symbolic words, phrases and images associated with social movements and ideologies, which can evoke powerful images and emotional reactions. Symbols form the backbone of symbolic interaction. They condense very complex ideas and values into simple material forms so that the very presence of symbol evokes the signified ideas and values. A symbol is anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share culture. Some symbols are actually types of nonverbal communication, while other symbols are in fact material objects. It commonly conveys friendship and is used as a sign of both greeting and departure. Probably all societies have nonverbal symbols we call gestures. In United States, e.g. if we nod our head up and down, we mean yes, and if we shake it back and forth, we mean no. In Bulgaria, however, nodding means no, while shaking our head back and forth means yes.

Some of our most important symbols are objects. Here the Pakistani flag is a prime example. For most Pakistanis, the flag is not just a piece of cloth with green and white color along with a crescent and star. Instead, it is a symbol of freedom, peace, companionship and other islamic values and accordingly, inspires pride and patriotism.



2.Language:

Perhaps our most important set of symbols is language. It forms the core of all cultures. When people share a language they share a condensed, very flexible set of symbols or meanings. In English the word chair means something we sit on. In French the word chaise means the same thing. As long as we agree how to interpret these words, a shared language and thus society are possible. Different languages can make it difficult to communicate. As this scenario suggests, language is crucial to communication and thus to any society's culture. Humans have a capacity for language that no other animal species possesses. One of the most important developments in the evolution of society was the creation of written language. Language is the way to communicate with other people. For example, Urdu is the language mostly spoken and understood across all of Pakistan that creates a fine environment for our cultural harmony leading to peace. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, language is linked to all the human-life aspects in society and understanding of the surrounding culture plays an important role in learning a language. Moreover, language allows the organization and evolution of cultural values. He says that when a language is lost, a part of the culture gets lost as well as culture is significantly encoded in language.



3. Values and beliefs:

Values are defined as culturally defined standard of desirability, goodness and beauty which serves as broad guidelines for social living. The values people hold vary to some degree by age, race, ethnicity, religion and social class. Values are another important element for judgments of what is good or bad and desirable and undesirable. Cultural values play a vital role in our life. These are the ideals of society. They hold supreme position among them. These values give a shape to the culture and society. Cultural values include:

- Personal control
- Time and its importance
- Equality/Egalitarianism
- Individualism, Independence and Privacy
- Self Help
- Competition
- Future Orientation
- Honesty/Integrity
- Education
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Cooperation



Examples:

In Japan a central value is group harmony. The Japanese place great emphasis on harmonious social relationship and dislike interpersonal conflict. When interpersonal disputes do arise, Japanese do their best to minimize conflict by trying to resolve the disputes amicably. In United States of course the situation is quite different. The American culture extols the rights of individuals and promotes competition in business and sports and in other areas of life. They value competition and individualism.

Another important value in the American culture is the work ethic. Americans had come to view hard work not just as something that had to be done but as something that was morally good to do.

4. Norms:

Norms are rules and regulations by which a society guides the behavior of its members. Norms are standards that define the obligatory and expected behaviors of people in various situations. Norms are often divided into two main types

- **Formal Norms**
- **Informal Norms**

Formal Norms:

Formal norms are called mores and laws, which refers to standard of behavior considered the most important in the society. They are customary behavior patterns which have taken on a moralistic value. Laws are the mores deemed so vital to dominant interests that they become translated into legal formations that even nonmembers of society are required to obey.

Examples:

In the United States includes traffic laws, criminal codes and in a college context, students behavior codes addressing such things as cheating and hate speech.

In Islamic culture there is a teaching that we should not cheat, now it has been transformed to become law. So if you are caught cheating in the examination then its legal for the authorities to take action.

Informal Norms:

Informal norms, also called folkways and customs, which refers to standard of behavior that are considered less important but still influence how we behave.

Example:

Table manners are the common example of informal normss, as are such such everyday behaviors as how we interact with a cashier and how we ride in an elevator.

Moreover shaking hand in our Islamic culture is also a common custom that is used in greetings.



5. Material Culture:

Material culture refers to the physical objects, resources, and spaces that people use to define their culture. These include homes, neighborhoods, cities, schools, churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, offices, factories and plants, tools, means of production, goods and products, stores, and so forth. Technological advances also change the way cultures behave. Technology is changing every aspects of our lives. The benefits provided by new digital approaches and having a huge impacts in our societies. However, one of the greatest business challenges is not about the devices, software or solutions it is about how we manage the process of cultural changes. Many facets of global communications today are influenced by cultural differences- be it email, skype, social media or technology of course, we have the global leapfrogging phenomenon where technologically less-advanced countries jump generation of legacy technologies to adopt more advanced solution.

Example:

Pottery and coins of any culture are the elements of their material culture to which their own unique history is associated.



Cultures of different countries and Regions

➤ Western culture:



Figure 1 Western World

The term Western culture has come to define culture of European countries as well as those that have been heavily influenced by European immigration, such as the United States. It is an

incredibly broad term used to describe the social norms, belief systems, traditions customs, values and so forth that have their origin in Europe or based on European culture. The whole world has been changed, redesigned and destroyed to accommodate western culture. Cultural groups and traditional lifestyles struggle in this new western world. Traditional tribal living has often been replaced by poverty living. French culture, Spanish culture and British culture are sub- categories under the broad, loose category of Western culture. Western culture is a pretty fluid and loose term because it compasses so much. Some of central characteristics of Western culture includes:

- Democracy
- Rational thinking
- Individualism
- Christianity
- Capitalism
- Modern Technology
- Human rights
- Scientific thinking

Westerners pride themselves in having their own unique identities. The Christian religion is a huge component of Western culture. Another key moment in the development of Western culture was the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that took place between 17th and early 19th centuries. The Enlightenment emphasized things like reason, science and skepticism. It included a range of ideas centered on the sovereignty of reason and the evidence of the senses as the primary sources of knowledge and advanced ideals such as liberty, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government and separation of church and state. The values and attitudes we hold today are largely products of Enlightenment and the ideals of it provide the foundation for the American government.



Figure II the comparison between Western and Eastern culture

Pakistani culture:

Pakistani culture is very diverse. Pakistani culture is a composite of the events and people that have shaped this land. There are difference in culture among the different ethnic groups such as dress, food and religion, especially where indigenous pre-Islamic customs differ from Islamic practices.

Characteristics of Pakistani Culture:

Pakistani culture has following characteristics.

- Islamic values and traditions
- National and regional languages
- Mixed culture
- Rich literature
- Male dominated society
- Variety of Dresses
- Fairs and festivals
- Sports
- Handicrafts

Social Harmonies:

Social harmony is defined as a process of valuing, expressing and promoting love, trust, admiration, peace, harmony, respect, generosity and equality upon other people in any particular society regardless of their national origin weight, material status, ethnicity, color, gender, race, age and occupation etc.

God made this world a beautiful place to live and sent his best creations such as human beings to live on this earth. He wanted his men to live on this place with mutual love, respect and cooperation. All the religious systems and cultures of the world whether it is Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism etc. from the day of their origin always preached for righteous relationship among the human beings to enforce peace and harmony. Social harmony is an ideal to be aimed at by good governance and pragmatic effective rules of behavior in all walks

Of social life. A society is based on trust and that is based on hope; the hope we can trust others in our society to treat us as we would trust them, ethically and morally and according to the rules of law.

Purposes of social harmony:

The importance of social harmony is indispensable. It promotes equitable and rapid economic development. Secondly, social harmony improves peace and cohesion among the nation. Lastly, social harmony helps the citizens to abide by the law and respect rights and freedom. Social harmony is the mental and emotional agility to avoid conflict even at present various international bodies like UNESCO, SAARK, UN, and World Bank etc. are working at the levels and positions best to promote social harmony among different nations of the world.

- Developing Empathy:

Empathy denotes a deep emotional understanding of another feelings or problems. If it could happens, there will be no rapes and rapists, no poor and snatchers, no pendency and corruption etc. in such society only peace and harmony can prosper

- Social Grouping for Friendship:

Any group may be chosen by a person according to his own interest like men's and women club, child fun centers, social activities centers etc. but the aim should be to talk to others to know them better, sharing mutual goals, work for each other, understanding each other's and making connections.

- Strengthening mutually:

We all have specifically talent, skills and abilities. The specificity is our strength as well as weakness too as we are good for certain things only. Strength lies in being together. This belief may lead to harmonious relationship for longer.

- Acquiring Allies:

People who show trust and care for each other and use knowledge based awareness to progress do not need to fear. Smaller groups may merge to become larger groups and thereby help to survive and grow each other. If we won't do so we will face threats from desperate people in near future. These allies have to be sorted out with harmonious and righteous relationship.

- Bridging the gap:

The whole universe is split into duality. But the need is to bridge the gap and move people to the direction of creation only. Generally, when we consciously choose to serve others and at the same time, respect their freewill to choose also, we favor the spirit of creation and the universe will also respond in harmony