

Our Culture



• Introduction

By studying this chapter it is possible to develop many skills related to culture and daily life. As sons and daughters of mother Lanka in a society with various ethnic groups, religions, customs and practices it is necessary to coexist in unison and peace. Through this it is possible to develop the required knowledge, attitudes and skills. This will be helpful to obtain skill development required to become a proud citizen protecting one's national identity as Sri Lankans.



Our Culture

Culture is defined as the pattern of life of our society. It is also known as the system of living of the people. It includes how we eat, drink and dress as well as various relationships with others. Techniques involved in living with the environment are also included in it. Poems, verses, songs and dramas are included in culture. Accordingly culture means a combination of things that are developed activities, enjoyment, customs and practices etc. It is a complex process reflecting the pattern of life.



8.1

Worship elders

At once, it is difficult to understand what the culture is. Think what you do, what you talk at home and with how many people do

you exchange views once a day, with how many people you transact various activities, with the family members as well as outsiders. What advice do you get from your parents and elders? What are the various activities you participate in? They all are linked with culture.

Earlier we learnt much about our family and our community. We saw that nobody lives in isolation. In order to live with mother, father, grandmother, brothers and sisters we maintain various relationships. The patterns of eating, drinking dressing and conversing styles of each family may differ from each other. Sometimes, persons of various ethnic groups may be found among them.

Customs and practices followed by them may vary. Very often there are different attitudes and beliefs. Also, there are religious rituals, rules and regulations which should be followed when living in society. Constructions, fine arts, habits and practices, skills, achievements and knowledge are included in culture.

Various languages, religions, customs and practices and festivals are linked to these. All these are known as culture.



8.2

Salutation

Very often we have visited places of worship. Think about one such instance. It is customary for a person to make himself clean and wear fresh clothes before visiting such places. Thereafter the person is concerned about taking the materials required for worshipping, with him. Before entering a shrine, shoes and caps are removed. They will also refrain from fun and conduct themselves in a dignified manner.

During our childhood our parents and elders taught us how to behave ourselves in such places. After that we had to know what was right what was wrong and follow the right things as customs and practices. These are parts of culture.



Activities

1. What are the rituals that you should follow when you enter a sacred place?
2. What are the important items of cultural heritage you can see at a sacred place in your area?
3. What are the cultural festivals conducted in your area? How do you take part in those?



Introduction to Culture

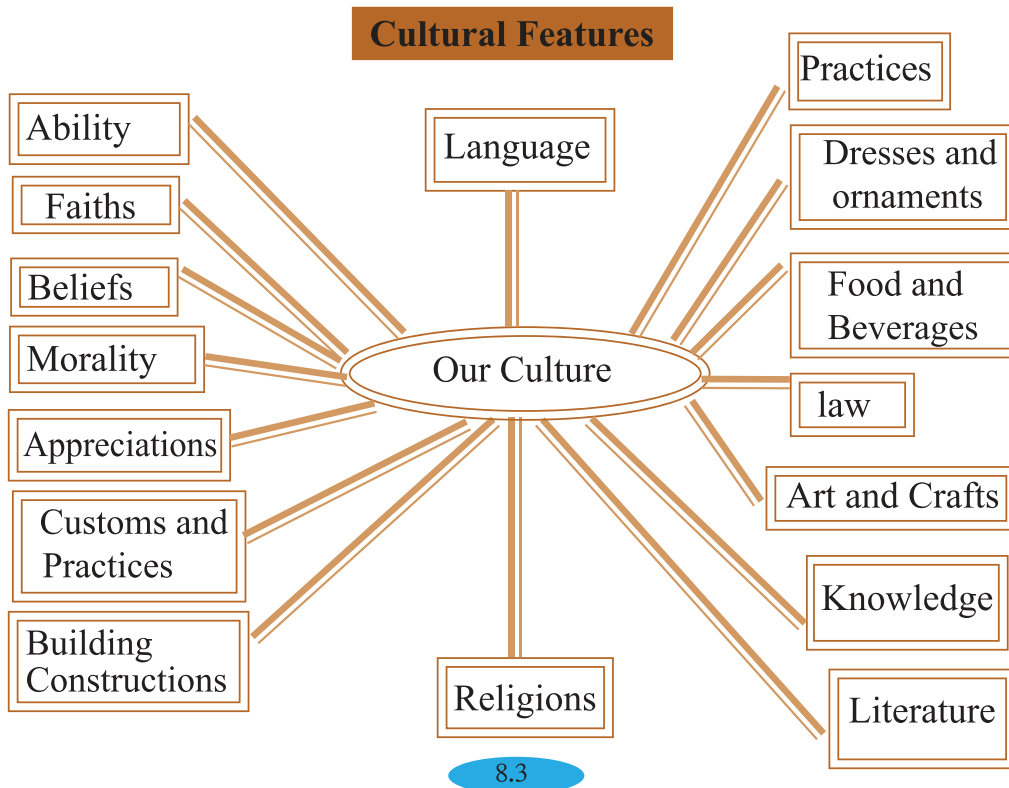
Various definitions are given about culture. Culture is the system of living of the members of a community. In order to explain culture, various definitions have been given after taking a broad view.

E. B. Tylor - a well known anthropologist had defined culture as follows,

“Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge beliefs art morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a members of society”

According to this definition many things are included to describe culture. Knowledge, beliefs, Arts, laws, customs, practices and achievements are the main things. Taking these into consideration try to understand what culture is.

Our country has a culture dating back some 2500 years. We have inherited a Sinhala Buddhist culture which has been nourished with coming of the Aryans and influence of Buddhism. The Hindu culture of Tamils, who came here later also has been added to the Sri Lankan culture. Thereafter, the Islamic culture of Muslims who came as traders influenced. The English language, Catholicism, Christianity, various foods and beverages, and customs were included in our culture. As a result of this today we have a multi cultural society which consists of various ethnic groups, religions and languages.



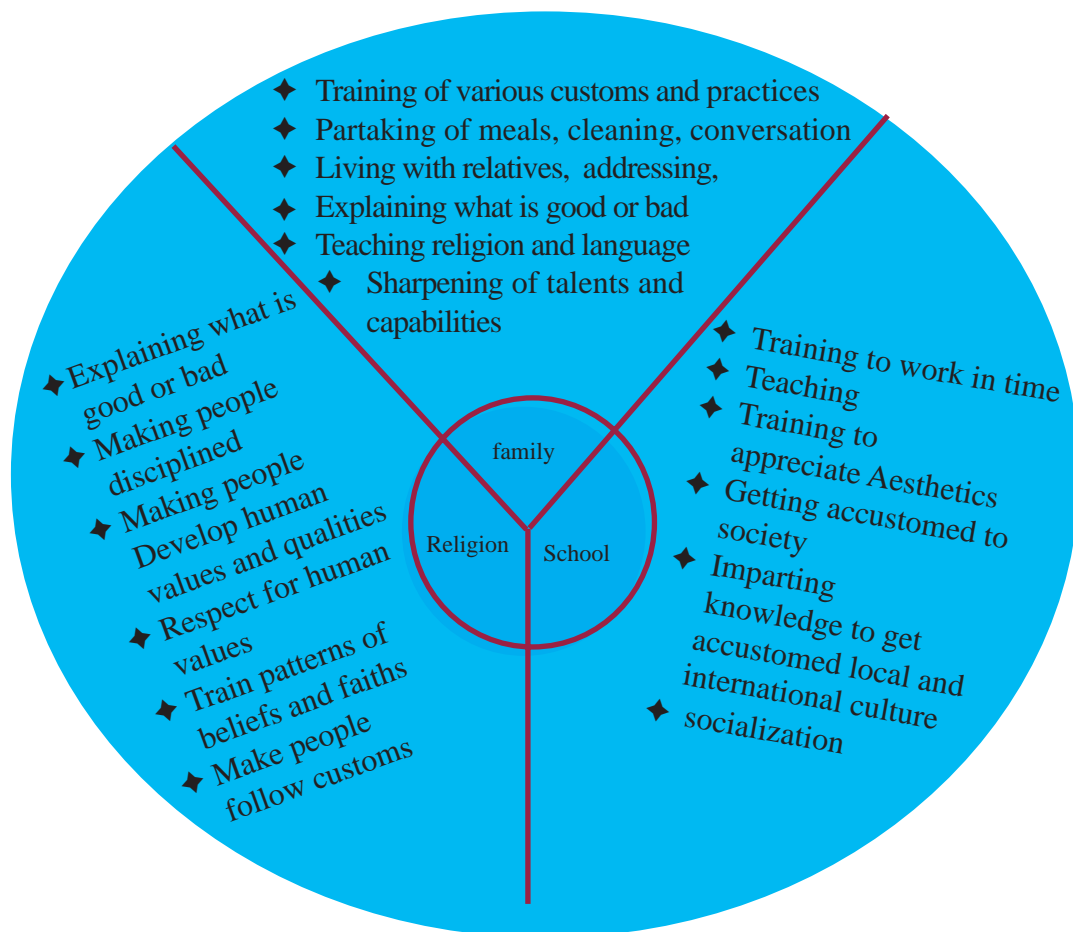


Activity

Obtain a list of government holidays from January 1st to December 31st and mark the days with cultural festivals. Compile a report explaining the importance and special reasons for these festivals.

Bestowing Culture

Culture is subjected to changes due to new creations and discoveries and the development of culture rests on the manner in which the life of existing society flows over to future generations. There are several institutions to transfer culture. Family, educational institutions (School) are foremost among these. How culture is transferred by each of these establishments is shown in the note given below.



8.4

When living in a society, culture is acquired through various activities related to the environment. Food taking patterns, conversation styles and behavioural patterns make the people get accustomed to the culture.

Special Features associated with different cultures

Sri Lankan society is culturally diversified. There are several ethnic groups Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Burgher, Malay and others. Religions are Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Christianity. There are several languages, Sinhala, Tamil, English, Arabic and Malay. There are various types of food and beverages, clothes and ornaments, customs and practices, beliefs and faiths among them.

Each of these ethnic and religious groups live with its cultural identity. Given below are some of the cultural festivals of various religious groups. Study them and discuss the specialities involved.



8.5

Link together as a chain



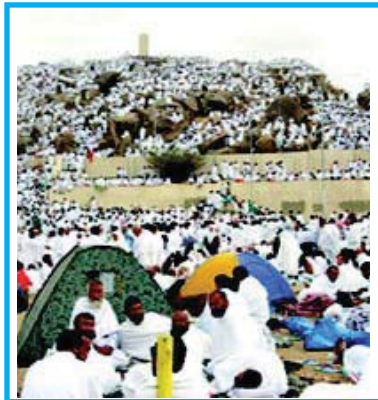
8.6

Kandy Dalada Perahera - Great pagent



8.7

Religious festival at Katharagama



8.8

Islamic festival



8.9

Christian festival



8.10

Hindu festival



Activities

Sinhala and Hindu New Year is a festival connected to two ethnic groups. Compile a booklet containing information with regard to it.

The livelihood of each of these ethnic groups is different. Farming, fishing, commercial planting, industries and various services are among these. There are various beliefs, customs, practices and faiths linked to these livelihoods. The “new rice festival” is one such famous custom linked to Sri Lankan society. This festival is connected to the cultivation of paddy, and is held after harvesting. Similarly, various language styles, folk tales and customs linked to each of these occupations have enriched the culture.



farming



Gemming



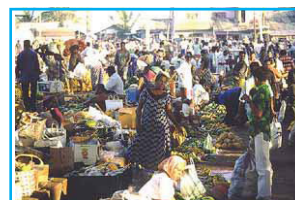
Fishery



Rubber Cultivation



Chena Cultivation



Trading

8.11

Our culture has been enriched with skills such as art, sculpture and carvings. This is evident from the old temples, Dagabas, religious shrines and constructions. Today they remain as our cultural heritages.



Sigiriya



Ruwanveli Seya



Galvihara at Polonnaruwa



Nataraja



Moon Stone



A Tank

8.12

Cultural heritage of Sri Lanka



Features common to all cultures

Based on each ethnic group, religion, social class, caste and creed culture also differs. Anyhow you cannot say that one culture is higher or lower than the other. Everybody should respect the other cultures in the same way he respects his own culture.

Some common features are visible in all cultures. Use of language, religion, beliefs and faiths, art and crafts, clothing and ornaments, jobs, various life styles are among them. There are special letters, dialect, rules of writing, figurative elements peculiar to each language. Similarity can also be seen in the various forms of worship, places of worship, customs, rituals followed by priests. When you take all ethnic groups and religions some features are common to all. All ethnic groups of all cultures, without any difference participate in economic activities. This is evident when you consider various people who have made cultivation, animal husbandry, fishery, industry and various handicrafts as their occupation.



Activities

1. Explore information regarding the cultural heritage (in your area) bestowed by ancestors which reflect community life of the past.

It is very important for the people who belong to different cultures to live unitedly and peacefully. They must respect each other. They must contribute to and attend to economic, political and social activities together. It will assist one to understand a culture positively. All cultures without exception serve to train one in good customs and practices and human virtues too needed for the good conduct of society. Adjustment of culture to suit the changing environmental conditions is a common feature seen in every culture. Women employment, taking medicine to heal diseases by going beyond myths and getting involved in educational and economic activities are some important aspects of adjustments.



Elders bless children



Family members partaking meals

8.13



Activity

Give some examples of various jobs where people are engaged in, irrespective of gender differences.

Culture teaches us how to adjust to the environment. For example construction of large tanks to collect water to be used in a drought can be cited. Our ancient irrigation system is a good example for this. Invention of machinery is another important example. Construction of houses to protect oneself from sun and rain is the other important one. Man who lived in caves has now built palaces to live in. This is the change in culture.



National Identity and National Unity

Just as in Sri Lanka, in most countries of the world there are who citizens who belong to different ethnic groups, different religions and many communities that speaking different languages.

To gain independence for Sri Lanka, leaders of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities worked unitedly. Leaders like Sir ponambalam Ramanathan and T. B. Jayah worked together with sinhala leaders to gain independence for Sri Lanka.

If people living in this country work unitedly and jointly as a nation it will help in the development of the country.

The symbols depicting the national identity of Sri Lanka are the National Anthem, the National Flag, and the National Emblem.



Activity

Make a list, of the leaders who pioneered the movement to gain freedom for Sri Lanka.

National Anthem

Sri Lanka Matha
Apa Sri Lanka, Namō Namō Namō Namō Matha
Sundara siri barinee, Surandi athi soba mana Lanka
Dhanya dhanaya neka mal palaturu piri jaya bhoomiya ramya
Apa hata sapa siri setha sadana jeewanaye matha
Piliganu mana apa bhakthi pooja Namō Namō Matha
Apa Sri Lanka Namō Namō Namō Namō Matha
Apa Sri Lanka Namō Namō Namō Namō Matha
Oba we apa vidya
Obamaya apa sathya
Oba we apa shakthi
Apa hada thula bhakthi
Oba apa aloke
Apa ge anuprane
Oba apa jeevana we
Apa mukthiya oba we
Nava jeewana demine, nithina apa pubudukaran matha
Gnana veerya vadawamina ragenā yanu mana jaya bhoomi kara
Eka mavakage daru kala bavina
Yamu yamu vee nopama
Prema vada sama bheda durarada
Namō, Namō Matha
Apa Sri Lanka, Namō Namō Namō Namō Matha

The National Anthem of Sri Lanka was composed by Ananda Samarakoon. Our National Anthem was sung for the first time on Feb. 04th 1948 at the first independence day celebrations.

Through the National Anthem it is expected to inculcate respect, devotion and pride for the motherland and to promote national unity.

The National Anthem is played at State functions, national festivals, school ceremonies, sportsmeets and seminars with Sri Lankan representatives.

When the National Anthem is played, you should stand at attention and show your respect for it.



Activities

1. Make out the words in the National Anthem, which refer to fertility and environmental features in Sri Lanka.
2. Give extracts of the National Anthem related to National Unity.



The National Flag

The National flag as well as the National Anthem are symbols depicting National Identity. The National Flag of Sri Lanka used now, was designed on the recommendation of a committee appointed by Hon. D. S. Senanayaka (6th of March in 1948) the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.



8.14

National flag

The following colours and symbols on a red background are included in the National Flag.

- * Lion with sword in hand
- * Four Bo leaves
- * Orange border and Green border
- * Yellow border around the whole flag



Occasions on which the National flag is hoisted

- ◆ State functions
- ◆ National festivals
- ◆ Functions of a school or institution
- ◆ Other important festivals



Rituals to be adapted when hoisting the National flag

The National flag should not be kept on the ground at any time. Before hoisting it should be fixed to the cord folded and kept at a height. When the National flag is exhibited, it should be given the highest recognition. It should be hoisted in a place where it is clearly seen by all. If it is hoisted at a height it should be illuminated with electric lights. When hoisting it, the two horizontal borders should be kept parallel to the post.



8.15

Hoisting the National flag



8.16

A national festival

When hoisted with Divisional flags, school flags etc. it should be hoisted at the highest place at the centre between all the other flags. When the national flag is hoisted with religious flags it should be hoisted at the same elevation.

When it is hoisted in the middle of a street, the symbol, lion should be kept upright and the flag should be hung vertically.

Hoisting and lowering of the National flag should be done slowly and respectfully. When the National flag is hoisted the members of the armed forces in uniform should pay due respect, ordinary people should remove their headgear. Everyone should stand at attention facing the flag, paying respect.

When the national flag is hoisted at a ceremony, playing of Magul Bera and blowing of Conch shell could be utilized, whenever possible.

Immediately after the hoisting of the National flag the National Anthem should be played or sung. When carrying the National flag in processions its staff should be raised and kept upright. It should not be lowered to respect anybody. If it is taken in a pocession with other flags it should be taken on the right hand side of the procession. You may have seen instances where the national flag is hoisted on platforms where speakers address the audience. In such instances it should be hoisted on a flag post fixed on the right hand side of the speaker facing the audience. If not, it should be hoisted leaning against the wall behind the speaker.



Half mast of the National Flag

The occasions where national flag is flown half mast is decided by the State. When the national flag is flown half-mast the flag should be raised for a moment and then it should be lowered to the point of half-mast. (It should be lowered up to one third from the top of the flag post)

The National flag should not be used as a dress or a bedsheet. Hence it should not be used as a covering for the ceiling. It also should not be used as a wrapper. It should not be used in commercial advertisements.

The symbols on the National flag should not be knitted on pillow cases, mattresses or handkerchief or similar items. It should not be used as seat - covers.

The National flag should not be fixed, exhibited or stored allowing it to be torn or damaged. Discoloured or damaged national flags should not be exhibited.

No part of the national flag should be used as a dress or sports wear. A symbol of the national flag can be stitched on to the uniform of the Fire Brigade.



8.17

National flag half mast.



Activity

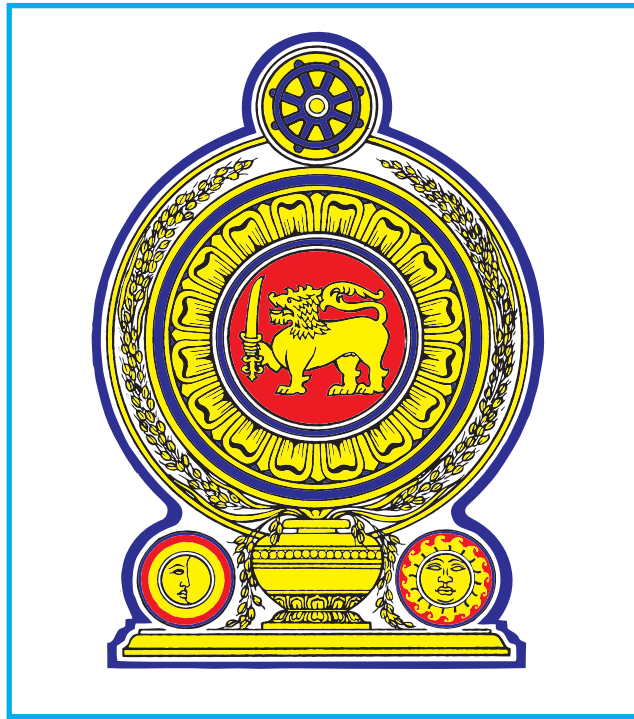
Prepare a report on what the symbols and colours of the national flag represent. Get the support of your teacher



State Emblem

The symbol depicting state authority and property is called the State emblem.

The present state emblem came into use after Sri Lanka became a Republic in 1972.



8.18

State Emblem

The State Emblem has the following symbols.

- ◆ Wheel of Dhamma
- ◆ Lion
- ◆ Full water pitcher
- ◆ The Sun and the Moon
- ◆ Pods of grain
- ◆ Lotus petals



Activities

01. Identify the symbols on the state emblem by observing a coin or a picture which includes the state emblem.
02. Get to know from your teacher what are depicted by the symbols on the State Emblem.



National Tree

The National Tree of Sri Lanka is the Na Tree (Iron wood). The Na Tree is a tree with an elegance. The Wood is hard and heavy and lasts long. Normally the wood of this tree is not used for the construction of buildings. These trees are particularly grown in places of worship and can be considered a long lasting tree. The Na Tree is a tree which has a straight trunk and slow growth. The Tender Na leaves are red in colour. Na-petals are white in colour and consist of a lot of pollen. During night the flowers blossom and spread a sweet fragrance.

Botanical Name - *Mesua Nagassarum*

Sinhala	- Na
Hindu	- Nagakeshare
Tamil	- Naka
English	- Iron wood tree

Bark, roots, flowers, pollen and seeds of this tree have a herbal value.



fig. 8.19

Na tree (Iron wood)



National Flower

The Nil Mahanel (Blue Water Lily) is the National flower of Sri Lanka. The Botanical name of the flower is *Nympha Stelata*.

In Sinhala - Manel, Nilupul

Hindu - Neelothpala

Tamil - Neelothpala

English - Blue water Lily

It is an aquatic plant which has round leaves floating on water. The stems of the leaves are long. Nilmanel flowers blossoming at the end of the long stems can be visible on the surface of water. It flowers throughout the year. Seeds are edible and have a herbal value.



fig. 8.20

Nil Manel flower
(Blue Water Lily)



The National Sport of Sri Lanka

Volley-ball is the National game of Sri Lanka. It is a team event.



fig. 8.21

Volley ball



National Bird

National bird of Sri Lanka is the Wild Fowl.



fig. 8.22

Wild fowl



Virtues of a Good Citizen

The survival of a virtuous society rests on the goodness of its members. If it has members of good conduct, entire society will be transformed into a virtuous society. In society which we live in, there is a code of conduct accepted by society. There are some identified virtues, customs and practices related to it. The good qualities accepted by the entire society are called Virtuous Deeds.

There are many good qualities we should follow as members of society. If are followed it will help build good social relationship and create a good society. Accordingly, those qualities that contribute to the existence of a meaningful society that enhances individual and social life and promotes virtues and cultural values, are called virtues.

Inculcating those human qualities in each and every person will benefits the life of individual as well as the society.



Virtues to be developed in an individual

- Discipline
- Simple living pattern
- Honesty
- Perseverance
- Patience
- Condescension
- Generosity
- Flexibility
- Justice
- Environmental friendliness
- Friendliness
- Impartiality
- Kindness
- Benevolence
- Respecting customs and traditions
- Sharing and caring
- Peace
- Unity



Activity

Present your ideas on “Good deeds build up a good character”



SYNOPSIS

Community groups which belong to various ethnic groups speak various languages, follow various religions, with various qualities and life styles, live in a society.

All that is included in the life style of a community group could be termed as culture. Several definitions have been given in exploring culture. For the transfer of culture, the family, the school and various religious institutions have been instrumental. There are occasions various activities, festivals, which display the culture. Cultural diversities are seen inside a country as well as among other countries in the world.

National Anthem, National Flag, State Emblem are symbols depicting national identity, national unity, harmony. When people are living unitedly in a country with various communities it will benefit the society as well as the country.

Living in society as a good citizen is helpful to build up a just and peaceful society.