



Introduction

Sri Lankan society is of multi cultural in nature having different ethnic, language and religious groups. Specific cultural features of each ethnic and religious groups can also be identified. There are also some cultural features common to all these ethnic and religious groups. This unit develops the competencies and skills necessary for a Sri Lankan citizen, who identifies cultural similarities and differences, ensures peace, co-existence and social integrity.

Identifying Culture

Every society has a culture which is specific to it. Aggregation of behavioural patterns, habits, customs, rituals, attitudes and beliefs of people in any society is culture.

Culture includes the way people live in a social system, too. Different people have explained the word culture in various ways. Therefore a precise definition cannot be presented.

We all have a culture. The aggregation of our behavioural patterns, different habits and addictions, customs, traditions and, faiths can simply be defined as culture.

Culture includes food habits, customs related to marriages and funerals, religious observances, ways of worshipping, etc. These features differ from society to society. Consequently, one culture can be distinguished from another.

Definitions presented on Culture

There is no common definition presented on culture. Different anthropologists as well as sociologists have defined culture in different ways. Given below is one such famous definition.

'The culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.'

-E. B. Tylor-

The above definition proves the fact that culture includes all human activities. It makes people to be adapted to a common system of morals or it is the instrument which predominantly controls man. Therefore man cannot be controlled in the absence of some kind of a culture. The fundamental task of culture is to provide the strength needed to control human society in a formal manner. Culture teaches us do's and don'ts and guides us how to follow them. Study the following dialogue to have a better understanding of culture.

Grade seven subject teachers and class teachers of Namal Yaya Maha Vidyalaya decided to take their students on an educational field trip. It was arranged as a two day trip covering two historical cities, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. Here is a part of the conversation that took place between the class teacher and a few students.

Dewni : When I left home in the morning, my mother asked me to visit all the eight sacred places in Anuradhapura and study the importance of them. She also asked me to describe them to her and father once I get back home

Janutha : Is it so? Even Though I have heard of the eight sacred places, even I do not know what they are. Let's ask our teacher.

Dewni : Teacher, will you tell us about the eight sacred places, once we reach Anuradhapura?

Teacher : Yes, children. I will explain you the importance of our trip as well as the historical value of the places we are visiting. That is why I asked you to bring a notebook and a pen.

Ansar : Teacher, do the eight sacred places belong to our culture?

Teacher : That's right. Very good. Hope you all listened to Ansar. Ansar has already understood the facts by reading books. All artistic creations and tanks in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa are part of our culture. They are our cultural heritages. Not only Buddhists, but also Hindus have contributed to these creations.

Devi : Teacher, I have heard that Shiva Devala in Polonnaruwa is a construction of Hindus.

Teacher : Yes, there is a belief that Shiva Dewala depicts Hindu Culture.

Nimesh : Teacher, then is it only religions, stupas and wewa belong to culture?

Teacher : That's also a good question. Not only those, culture consists of customs and rights of people, beliefs, food habits, clothing, ways of speaking and behavioural patterns of the people.

Fathima : Teacher, are they common to all ethnic and religious groups?

Teacher : No. you must understand this correctly. Every ethnic and religious group has a culture. However their cultures differ from one another. But some cultural elements are common to all of us. Do you know them?

Janutha : Teacher, I know.

Teacher : Well, then, tell them Janutha.

Janutha : Language, religion, arts and crafts, clothes and dresses customs and rituals.

Dewni : Teacher, though these are common to all, the way they are performed differs from group to group, in terms of their ethnicity and religion, aren't they?

Teacher : Yes, Dewni, explain your idea, so that all your friends can understand.

Dewni : See,.... clothes and dresses are common to all of us. But Sinhalese wear osariya, Tamils wear saree, Muslim women wear saree and furdha. That is why I told that though there are common features, some differences exist among them.

Teacher : Well, Dewni explained it with good examples. There can be some others who still cannot understand. I will explain further for them.

We have a culture. It varies from one ethnic group to the other. It also varies from religion to religion. Sometimes it may vary from area to area and from society to society. Therefore one's own culture is known as cultural identity.

Hope you all understand. Everyone should take action to safeguard cultural identity which is always a good thing. Now you all know what cultural elements are. You also know what cultural identity is.

Now let me ask a simple question.

Fathima : Teacher, is it a homework?

Teacher : No, you must answer it now itself. Let us give a clap to the one who tells the answer first. Here is the question. Give a simple definition for culture and say it aloud so that all can hear.

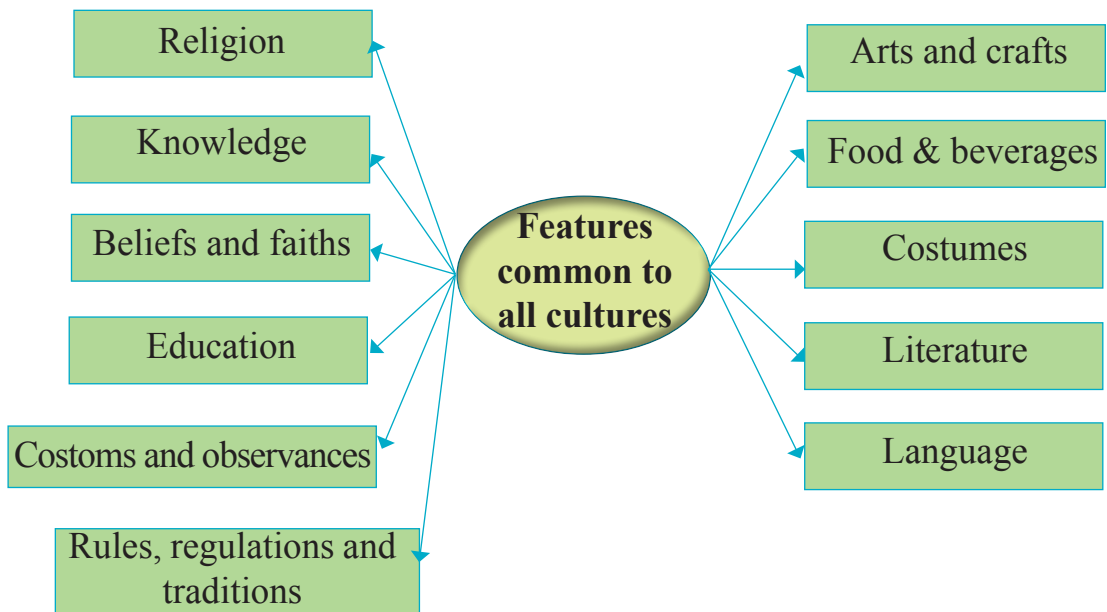
Nimesh : Teacher, culture means, not only the things we eat, drink, wear, speak, behave and worship, but also our arts and crafts, customs, rituals and all such other activities.

Teacher : Very good. It is a better answer than I expected. Do you understand it now? Others should also keep their definitions in mind and write them in their books later.

Elements of culture

Service rendered by culture for the existence of any society is very important. It is also subject to changes with time. Culture also changes from society to society. Therefore, there are specific features unique to each culture.

However, there are several elements which can be seen in every culture. They can change from time to time. Language, religion, literature, dress are some of the examples for cultural elements. You can get a good knowledge about elements of culture by studying the following diagram.



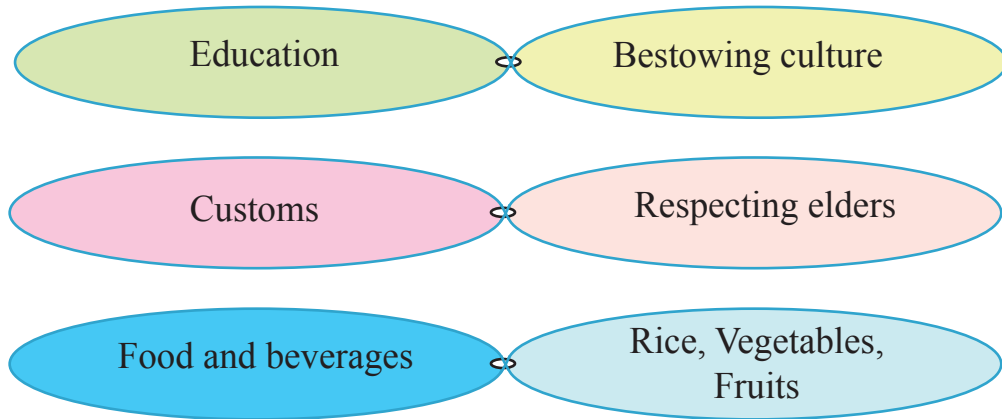
Activity 3.1

- Form a simple definition with what you understood as culture.
- Name three cultural events and supply each an example.

Features common to all cultures

Culture may differ from society to society. Therefore, one culture differs from another. However, there are also many features common to all cultures. For example, language, religion, customs and traditions, cultural features and rituals, are common to all cultures. Especially as a member of a multi - cultural society, it is important to identify features unique to each culture as well as features common to all cultures. Features common to all cultures can be identified by studying the diagram given below.

Example -



Features specific to each culture

You have already learnt that there are features common to all cultures. We can also notice features specific to each culture.

Ethnicity, religion, languages and occupation are a few factors that bring about differences between one culture to another. For example, Sri Lanka consists of many ethnic groups such as Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Burgher and Malay. It can be pointed out that every ethnic group has its own culture and cultural features inherent to it.

Reasons for cultural diversity

- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Language
- Occupation

One culture differs from another culture. Based on the factors such as ethnicity, religion, language and occupation,. The ability to distinguish one culture from the other based on the above factors is known as cultural identity.

It is essential to identify this cultural identity when we live in a multi - cultural society. Identifying cultural features and respecting them and not condemning them should be of paramount importance in such a society. It will build a strong inter relationship among cultures. It will make a good society and minimize conflicts in the society.

Cultural diversity in Sri Lanka

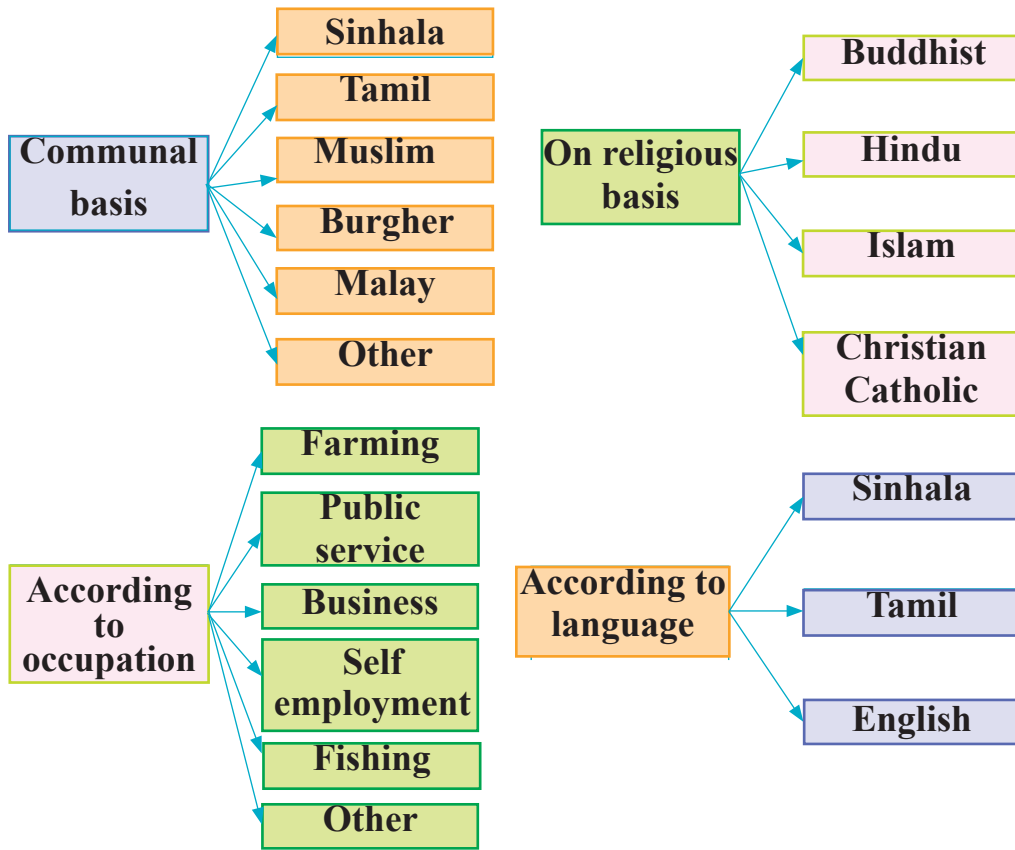
Sri Lanka is the best example for a multi - cultural society. Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities have been living in this country with a strong brotherhood for many centuries. In addition to that Burgher and Malay communities have also been living together as Sri Lankan communities.

In terms of religions, Buddhist, Hindu, Islam, Christian and Catholic communities live together. Religious co-existence has been well maintained. Most of the religious places have become common sacred places for the people of all religions. For example, Kataragama Dewala, Nallur Kovil, Madu Church, Thalawila Saint Anne's Church, Adam's peak are some of those sacred places. Worshipped by all people in common Devotees of all religions visit these places irrespective of their religious differences.

Sinhala, Tamil and English are the main languages in our country. It is commonly seen in our schools that, Sinhalese children speak Tamil and English fluently while Tamil children speak Sinhala and English fluently. It is a commendable and praiseworthy situation. It is also essential to learn to speak, and write the languages used in the country in addition to our mother tongue.

Thus, our society is known as a multi - cultural society because there are different communities, religious groups as well as different language users. It is essential to work peacefully and cooperatively in such a multi - cultural society. You all must have determination to live in such a society peacefully and with harmony.

Multi cultural features in Sri Lanka



Features unique to different religions and ethnic groups

Different cultural features which are unique to different ethnic and religious groups can be identified. Language, religion, patterns of drawing, arts and crafts, and education are some of the common features of a culture. However, those cultural elements can differ from one ethnic group and religion to another. For example, there are several religions followed by different ethnic groups such as Sinhala, Tamil and Muslims in Sri Lankan multicultural society. Cultural festivals which belong to each religion can differ in the way they are celebrated. Some of the festive occasions related to each religious and ethnic groups are as follows.



Figure 3.1 - Sinhala and Tamil new year



Figure 3.2 - Thaipongal Festival

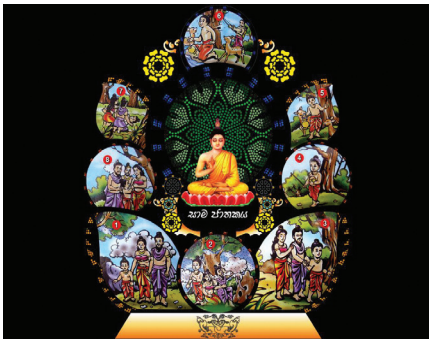


Figure 3.3 - Vesak/ Posen festival



Figure 3.4 - Catholic festival



Figure 3.5 - - Hajj festival



Figure 3.6 - Christmas

In addition to these there are other occasions in which cultural features can be identified. For example, weddings, funerals, weaning ceremony, hair cutting, house warming ceremony etc. Customs & rituals followed in those cultural festivals vary from community to community. It can also vary from religion to religion.

Cultural Heritages

Every culture has cultural elements which are identified as cultural heritages. Customs and rituals; arts and crafts; can be given as examples for cultural heritages. It is a responsibility as well as a duty of all to preserve those cultural heritages and to pass them to future generations.

Protecting the cultural heritages is important for ensuring continuous existence of a culture. It helps developing pride about ancient heritages and protecting uniqueness and identity of a culture. Especially, religious and ethnic groups have their own identity. It can be protected only if the cultural heritages are preserved and handed over to the future generation.

People will be trained to respect other cultures, their customs, practices, arts and craft only if they protect their own cultural heritages. As a good citizen of a multi-cultural society, respecting and protecting other cultures, their heritages is of paramount importance for the co-existence in the society.

Activity 3.2

- Collect information on some cultural heritages available in Sri Lankan society.
- Classify them in terms of ethnicity, religion, and languages. Build up a slogan on the importance of safeguarding those heritages.
- Exhibit it in the classroom.

Steps to safeguard cultural heritages

Each culture has its own cultural heritages. It is the duty and the responsibility of all of us to safeguard those cultural heritages. This will definitely be helpful to preserve the culture for the future generations. It will also create pride about one's cultural identity. As examples shrines, dagoba and the irrigation system in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa areas express the grandeur of Sri Lankan culture.

As a citizen, following steps can be taken to safeguard the cultural heritages.

- Creating awareness among people about the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage.
- Refraining from engaging in harmful activities against culture and Preventing those who harm it.
- Whenever one destroys the cultural heritages, the relevant institutions should be informed. Ex :- Institutions such as Police, Department of Cultural Affairs, Department of Archeology

Activity 3.3

- Write a short essay on the importance of safeguarding cultural heritages and exhibit it in a wall paper.



Figure 3.7 - Gal Viharaya Statue



Figure 3.8 - Moonstone



Figure 3.9 - Lotus pond



Figure 3.10 - Parakrama Samudraya



Figure 3.11 - Samadhi Statue

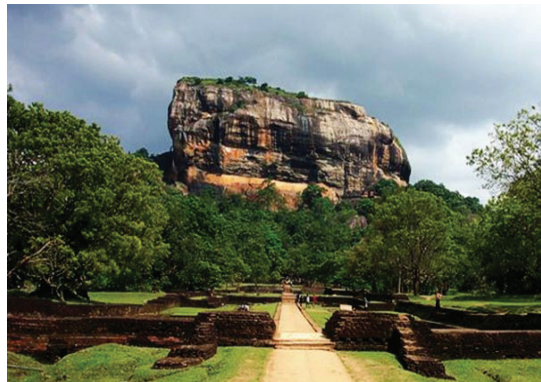


Figure 3.12 - Sigiriya



Figure 3.13 - Katharagama Temple



Figure 3.14 - Madu Church



Figure 3.15 - Dawatagaha Masjid



Figure 3.16 - Jaffna Nallur Kovil

It is the responsibility of every citizen to protect cultural elements of each culture. By doing that we can easily pass down the existing culture to the future generations. It will also create pride and esteem in them. For example, temples, stupas, tanks, irrigation and other cultural elements expose the pride of Sri Lankan culture to the world.

We all have a legal as well as a moral bond to safeguard cultural heritages. This desire should evolve in our mind naturally and with out a deliberate effort. We must determine to protect cultural heritages archaeological as well as for their physical value, without destroying them for our personal benefits. Different rules and regulations have been enacted to protect them mainly due to their archaeological importance. You may have seen in newspapers, televisions and in other media, the

instances where people have destroyed these valuable cultural heritages for their temporary benefits. It is our duty and responsibility to raise a voice against such people. Through those actions, we can legally interfere for safeguarding cultural heritages.

Many cultural heritages have been accepted as world heritages. Unless they are protected the future generation will lose them.

We all are morally bound to safeguard cultural heritages. Legal bond as well as moral bond are essentially important. You have the right to raise voice against the destruction of cultural heritages which reveal our identity to the world. It is a morality based responsibility.

Transmitting culture through the family

Family is the basic unit which transmit culture from one generation to the other. It passes elements of a culture to another generation. Mother, Father, elder brothers and sisters, grand Mother, Grand Father and the other relatives undertake the task of passing or entrusting the culture.

For example, Sinhala and Tamil New Year rituals such as boiling milk, consuming foods, engaging in dealings, anointing with oil are done by the elders in the presence of children. It will train the children to follow the same rituals in the future too. Thus, the family contributes directly to transmit the culture to the future generations. In addition to that, the school, religious places, elderly people and neighbours also contribute to pass down the culture.



Figure 3.17 - Boiling milk



Figure 3.18 - Dealing with the well



Figure 3.19 - Enjoying food



Figure 3.20 - Anointing oil

Activity 3.4

- The main function of the family is to pass the culture to the next generation. Think of a few cultural heritages you got from your family.
- Discuss them with your friends.
- Note down a few of them in your exercise book.

Activity 3.5

- Name a few cultural heritages which belong to your culture.
- Collect details of two cultural heritages which you like most out of the above.

Importance of safeguarding culture

All the ethnic as well as religious groups make attempts to preserve (protect) and maintain culture. The reason is that it will support to safeguard the cultural heritage. For example Sri Lankans had been able to bring about several evidences of the fact that the culture of this country has shown to the world the identity of Sri Lankan culture or nationality. Hydraulic civilization, stupas, temples, folk life based on agriculture, religious rituals are some of the finest examples of Sri Lankan identity.



Figure 3.21 - Irrigation



Figure 3.22 - Ruwanwelisaya



Figure 3.23 - Hindu Kovil



Figure 3.24 - Catholic Church

It is important to safeguard culture in order to build up national harmony. For example, it is important to respect other cultures while safeguarding one's own culture. Consequently suspicion, hatred, jealousy and any other hostile feelings will be eliminated. It will help to build up national harmony. Especially it will contribute to create "Sri Lankan" consciousness.

In a multi cultural society, living in coexistence while safeguarding cultural heritages of all the communities leads to the growth of national pride.

Symbols that reflect National identity

Most of the countries in this modern world are multi - cultural societies. Many ethnic, religious and language groups live within the same country. This is known as a multi - cultural social system. Each group has its own unique identity which should essentially be protected by all. If not, there is the possibility of erupting hostilities and conflicts, among their groups.

In a multi-cultural society, if all citizens could work as united, collective, groups with social integrity it will help to build up national identity.

For example, if all the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Catholics and Christians and those who speak Sinhala, Tamil and English work with a “Sri Lankan” consciousness, it is called national identity.

Sri Lanka has several symbols which symbolize national identity. They are National flag, National anthem, National emblem, National tree, National Flower, National bird and National Sport.

National Flag

National flag is conspicuous among all the other symbols which symbolize national identity. It has been designed on the basis of old royal flag used by King Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe. The national flag we use today in our country is also called the 'Lion Flag'.

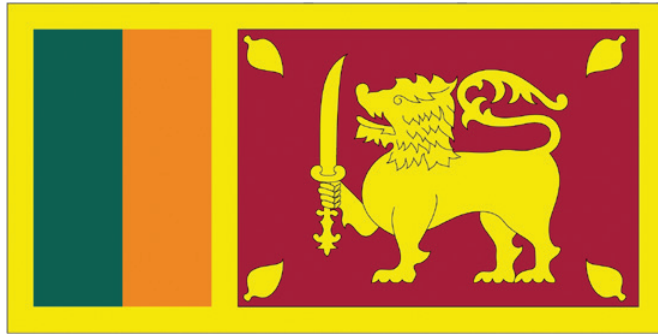


Figure 3.25 - National flag

The national flag we use today in Sri Lanka is a flag made under recommendations of the flag committee appointed on 6th March 1948 by Hon D.S. Senanayake who was the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Members of the national flag committee were

- Hon. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (chairman of the committee)
- Hon. Sir John Kothalawala
- Hon. J.R. Jayawardhane
- Hon. T.B. Jayah
- Dr. L.A Rajapaksha
- Hon. G.G Ponnambalam
- Senator Hon. Nadesan
- Dr. Senarath Paranawithana (secretary of the committee)

Parliament passed the National flag prepared according to the proposals of the flag committee on the 2nd of March 1951. It was hoisted in the flag mast in front of the old Parliament on the 31st of March 1951. In 1972, traditional bo leaves which were in the flag were removed and the four bo leaves of the present day were added.

The symbols of the National Flag represents

Yellow colour lion – Sinhala nation, discipline of the Sinhala community, bravery, dignity and leadership, fairness of the nation

Yellow colour sword held in the right hand – piousness, law abidance while safeguarding the motherland by governing the country in fairness.

Four bo leaves in the four corners on a red background – respect for all the sublime qualities of all religions including the four sublime states of the mind, namely, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity

Dark red background (maroon) – life blood of all the people of Sri Lanka and representation of the ancient Sinhala Royal flag

Green and yellow columns on the left side of the flag – Tamil community represented by the yellow column, Muslim community by the green column

Yellow band of equal width around the flag – unity among all the communities, peace, wisdom, and mutual understanding

Mane of the lion head and bend in the upper part of the tail – equality between the ruler and the subjects.

Article 6 of the present Constitution of Sri Lanka refers to the National Flag and it is depicted in the Second Schedule.

"The National Flag of the Republic of Sri Lanka shall be the Lion Flag depicted in the Second Schedule."

The standard of the present national flag of Sri Lanka has been prepared by the Sri Lanka Standards Institute. The last amendment of our National Flag which was introduced on 22nd May 1972 was standardised by Sri Lanka standards institute on 7th May 1985.

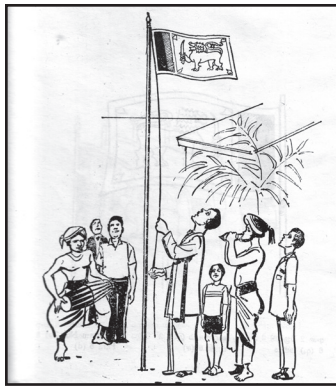
Reference is also made to the correct proper design, dimensions and colours of the Sri Lanka National Flag as laid down in Sri Lanka. Standard specification SLS 693; 1985, was published by the Sri Lanka Standards Institute.

The occasions in which the national flag is hoisted

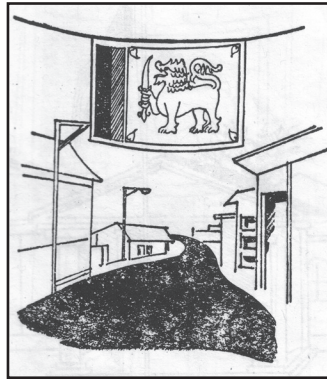
- In state festivals
- In national festivals
- In state leaders' summits
- In an important function of a school or in an institution
- Other special functions.

Factors that should be considered in displaying the national flag

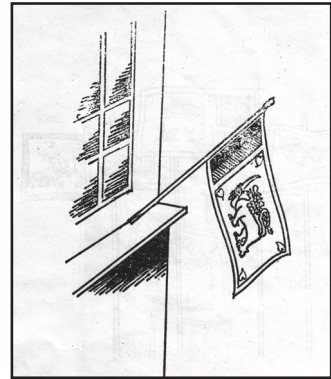
- Hoisting it in a visible place
- Hoisting the flag by keeping the two vertical colour columns close to the flag pole
- Giving priority in all the functions and ceremonies
- When hoisting it with flags of other countries it should be placed in equal height / other flags should be placed on the left side of the Sri Lanka National flag /all the flags should be of equal size
- When hoisting it at night the respective place should have enough light
- When hoisting with regional flags, flags of societies, schools and committees the National Flag should be placed in the middle of them rising high above all of them
- When hoisting flags on several posts closely it should be raised up first and put down finally
- Flag should be hoisted in a way that lion stands parallel to the ground when it is displayed in the middle of a street
- When the flag is used in processions (Perahera) it should be carried on the right
- When taken with other flags, it should be carried in the middle part of the front area



**Hoisting the
National Flag**



Hoisting in the street



**Hoisting 45°
slanted**

Figure 3.26 - Extract : The code of rules for the use of National Flag (1987) P 9,34,35

Rules to be followed when hoisting national flag in a ceremonial function

- Before hoisting it, the flag should be fixed to the cord and the folded flag should be kept at a higher place
- The person hoisting the national flag should stand in attention and the others should also stand in attention facing the the flag
- Hoisting and lowering the national flag should be done slowly with honour
- Playing Magul Bera (ceremonial drums) and blowing the conch shell whenever it is possible while hoisting
- After hoisting the flag everybody stands in attention and sings the national anthem

Rules to be followed when placing the national flag at half mast

- It should be kept at half-mast only on special occasions as day of mourning mentioned by the government
- Initially the flag should be raised to the top of the flag post and lowered to the place where the flag is kept at half mast

- The flag should be lowered 1/3 of the height from the top' Before the flag is lowered at the end of the day it should be raised to the top again and then lowered

Rules to be followed when hoisting the national flag educational institutions

- Hoisting at the begining of each school term and at the begining of months in each term
- Hoisting on special days declared by the government
- On special occations such as prize giving, and sports meet

Things to be avoided when using the national flag

- Displaying damaged and deformed flags
- Using for any form of decoration
- Displaying the lion upside down
- Flag in contact with the ground or dragging on water
- Using it as a garment or a cover
- Keeping any symbol, picture, or drawing on the flag
- Using as a sportswear (A badge of the national flag can be stitched to the upper part of the dress of military, fire brigade, and police personnel)

Activities 3.6

- Hoist the national flag using correct postures, under the guidance of your teacher.
- Test the method of hoisting the National Flag half mast, guided by your teacher.

National Anthem

National flag as well as national anthem symbolizes the identity of a nation. The national anthem in Sri Lanka is "Sri Lanka Matha Apa Sri Lanka Namō Namō Mathaa". It was composed by Mr. Ananda Samarakoon. Our national anthem was sung for the first time on the 4th of February in 1948 in the first Independence Day ceremony.

National anthem is important in creating an esteem, love, and faith respect in the minds of the citizens of the motherland. It creates a sense of equality since it represents all ethnic, religious and language groups in a country.

Occasions in which the National Anthem is sung

- In national festivals
- In state festivals
- In ceremonies of state leaders held in Sri Lanka
- In school and other important festivals
- In international sport events which Sri Lanka is represented

Background of making National Anthem in our country

At the time It was about to gain independence a national anthem was not in use. Therefore the responsibility of selecting a national anthem by a competition was assigned to Lanka Gandharwa sabha. A Sinhala and Tamil panel of judges was appointed to consider the language and concepts of the songs recieved for the competition. The members in the panel were

Mr. S. L. B. Kapukotuwa

Mr. L. L. K. Gunathunga

Mr. Lionel Edirisinghe

Mr. P. B. Ilangasinghe

Dr. O. H.D.A. Wijesekara

Mudliyar. E.A. Abeysekara

This competition was held on the 31st of January 1948. Though the song "Namo Namo Matha" written by the musician Ananda Samarakon was also presented, the song "Sri Lanka Matha Pala Yasa Mahima Jaya Jaya" written by Mr. P. B. Ilangasinghe and Music edited by Mr. Layanal Edirisinghe won the competition. Accordingly, this song was sung at the first independence day celebrations held on the 4th of February 1948. As this song was compiled by two of the judges in the panel people protested and the song was deleted from usage. Thereafter the song composed by Ananda Samarakon "Namo Namo Matha" was sung as the National Anthem in the second independence day celebrations. On the 22nd of November 1951 the cabinet decided this song should become the National Anthem. Later the first sentence was changed as Sri Lanka Matha instead of Namo Namo Matha.

1978 constitution declares that the National Anthem of our country is "Sri Lanka Matha". Lyrics and the music composition has been included in the constitution as a schedule.

National Anthem of the republic of Sri Lanka is "Sri Lanka Matha" The music and the lyrics of the national anthem is included in the third schedule.

The amendments in the national anthem should be done after passing is the proposal in the parliament and the public approval is obtained through a referendum.

Lyrics of the national anthem is included in the front pages in all the textbooks provided to you free. It is your duty and a responsibility to pronounce the words accurately with the proper chords and sing it aloud. When it is sung, it should be honoured by standing at attention.



Figure 3.27 - Standing at attention when singing the National Anthem

State emblem

State's emblem is the symbol of the state. It symbolizes the rule of the state. State emblem which is being used at present was introduced in 1972. The state emblem was designed in order to celebrate Sri Lanka becoming a Republic on the 22nd of May 1972. You have noticed that the emblem is being used to confirm the state ownership. Currency notes, letterheads of ministries and departments, passports, national identity cards are a few in which state emblem is placed. The ownership of the state emblem and the authority to use it belong to the Executive President. It is our responsibility and duty to honour and protect it.

During the British Colonial Era, British Emblem with the Lion and the Unicorn had been in use. After the Independence, an emblem with the lion inside a circle of petal design, a crown on top and the word Lanka at the bottom was used.

The state emblem in use today was created by the artist named S.M. Senevirathne. The symbols used in the Emblem represent the following.



Figure 3.28 - State Emblem

Dharmachakra - (The wheel of doctrine) - Piousness

The stalks of rice - Prosperity

A lion bearing a Sri Lankan sword in its right forepaw - Country and the disciplined nation

Petal design around the lion - Purity

A traditional grain vase - Perfectness

The sun and the moon - Eternal existence

National Tree

National Tree of Sri Lanka is Ceylon ironwood (Na tree). The botanical name of it is 'Mesua nagassarium'. Ceylon ironwood tree has been recognized as the National Tree of Sri Lanka from the 26th of

February 1986. There are several reasons to select Ceylon ironwood tree as the National Tree. They are;

Being Endemic to Sri Lanka

Usefulness

Historical and cultural Importance

Beauty and the pleasantness

Availability around the island

Not being used as a state emblem in any other country



Figure 3.29 - Ceylon Ironwood Tree



Figure 3.30 - Ceylon Ironwood Flower

From time immemorial, Ceylon ironwood tree has been worshipped with reverence. According to Buddhist literature Buddhas named Mangala, Sumana, Revatha and Sobitha have attained enlightenment under the shelter of Ceylon Ironwood trees. There is a belief that Maithree Bodhisattva would attain enlightenment under a Ceylon Ironwood tree. It is believed that Gauthama Buddha on his first visit to Sri Lanka visited Mahiyanganaya and planted a Ceylon Ironwood tree. Therefore Ceylon ironwood tree and the Buddhist culture has a close relationship.

Names for Ceylon ironwood in tree different languages

Sinhala - Na

Hindi - Nagakeshara

Tamil - Naaha Maram

English - Ceylon ironwood

Pali and Sanskrit - Naga

Ceylon ironwood tree grows in the low wetlands and can be seen in abundance close to temples and shrines. It can also be seen planted along the roadsides for shelter.

The tender leaves of Ceylon ironwood is pink in colour. Matured leaves turn to green colour. Though timber of the Ceylon ironwood tree is very hard it is not used for construction purpose other than constructing temples and shrines. It is mentioned that timber of Ceylon ironwood tree was used for constructing bridges and making ships in the past.

Ceylon ironwood tree is of high medicinal value. Roots, bark, flowers, pollen, fruits, tender leaves, are used as drugs. Pollen of the Ceylon ironwood tree are used for making perfumes.

National Flower

National Flower of Sri Lanka is Blue water lily. The botanical name of it is *Nymphaea stellata*. It grows in marshy lands and in reservoirs. It is purple in colour. It blooms when the sun rises and withers when the sun sets.



Figure 3.31 - Blue Water Lily

The background and importance of selecting the National Flower

There are several factors to select Blue water lily as the National Flower. Among them the usefulness, cultural, historical, scientific and aesthetic value are important. In addition, being endemic, growing in all parts of the island easily, and not being declared as a National Flower in any other country have also been considered.

Many had the opinion of selecting the Lotus as the National flower. This opinion did not come into light as the National Flower of India and Bangladesh was also Lotus. Accordingly Blue water lily was declared as the National Flower on the 26th of February 1986.

Blue water lily is significant in Buddhist literature, arts, poetry and the in indigenous medicine. It has been called by different names such as *Indeewara*, *Nilupul*, *Niluppala*. Buddhist lore in Sri Lanka claims that this flower was one of the 108 auspicious signs found on Prince Siddhartha's footprint. Therefore it is considered as an auspicious sign. Sigiri graffiti (Poems written on the sigiriya mirror wall) mentions that Sigiri maids (maidens in the frescoes) held Blue water lily and Lotus. In addition to that Sandesha Kavya (message poem) mention that ladies in the ancient times used Blue water lilies as their earrings. King Kashyapa the first had also named one of his daughters as Uppalawanna comparing her to a Blue water lily.

Blue water lily is of great medicinal value. Bulb, stem, stamen, seeds of the plant are herbs.

Names used in different languages for Blue water lily

Sinhala - Manel/ Nilupul/Niluppala

Hindi - Neelkamal

Tamil - Neelothpalam

English - Blue water lily

Blue water lily grows in streams, tanks and ponds all over Sri Lanka's low country and flowers almost all year round. It is a common feature when two or several plants of *Nymphaea* family be in the same water, they hybrid. Flowers bloom with variety of new features due to this and this makes the plant popular in landscaping.

National Bird

National bird of our country is Ceylon Jungle Fowl. It is found in the jungles throughout the island.

It is an inherent feature of the Jungle Fowl to live in flocks. Fleeing into a higher place in the forest for protection at the slightest sign of danger is a nature of this bird. It makes sounds to communicate about the danger to other members. It may forage for grain, seeds, berries, buds, leaves and insects. It crows at dawn as a daily routine. The poets in the past have written many verses celebrating the sweet sound of the Jungle Fowl. Ceylon Jungle Fowl wander close to human habitats for food. It has significant behavioural patterns such as briskness, facing challenges without retreating, and working in co operation.



3.32 figure - Sri Lankan Jungle Fowl

Close relationship between the Jungle fowl and the Sri Lankan rural life is one of the reasons for selecting it as the National Bird. Briskness, outer appearance and being endemic to Sri Lanka are few other reasons. It falls in to the category of threatened species. Catching, keeping them in possession, and killing them are punishable offenses. Therefore it is our duty as citizens to protect the bird as a national treasure.

National Sport

The National Sport of our country is Volley ball. Earlier, an opinion was forwarded that Elle should be our national sport. However, due to problems in using Elle for international events, this opinion was changed. This game is important for improving qualities such as unity, participation, peace, tolerance in victory and defeat. This is often played in Sinhala and Tamil New Year Festival, School sport meets and sports clubs.

This was originated in 1885, in Holyoke USA. The credit goes to William G. Morgan as the founder of Volley ball. It was introduced to our country in 1916 by an American sports director named Robert Walter.

Playing as a team leads to the victory. It is very important that every player of the team to take the responsibility exclusively to bring victory. Furthermore, Volleyball has been selected as the national sport

of Sri Lanka as it has features such as the possibility for many to play together with less facilities and the popularity in the island.



Figure 3.33 - National sport

Identifying one's own cultural identity

Cultural elements a which group of people, by an ethnic or a religious group traditionally possess can simply be introduced as their own cultural identity. For example, Buddhists do not sit in equal heights when they sit with elders' and interrupt harming conversations of the elders as well. It is important to safeguard one's own culture with out making harm to others' cultures. We should not left down, criticize, blame or ignore the others' cultures. As one protects and honours the features of own culture, those of the others should also be protected and respected. It is the duty and responsibility of all good citizens. It creates mutual faith, dignity and coexistence among all cultural groups. Then a conflict free social environment evolves.

What are Morals?

Society is made of a totality of a human group. Whole society should be developed by improving moral values in each person. Morals are the set of good things accepted and followed by a society for a long period of time. Though they are not legally enforceable, they function as a device that controls and operates the whole society.

Morals are human qualities that enrich the person, society and life. They are essential to improve living conditions of people. These morals account for the formation of social relationships as well as a good society. Therefore, morals are human qualities which contribute to the existence of a good society and bring meaning to life.

Morals to be cultivated in a person

- Being disciplined
- Being honest
- Being patient
- Politeness
- Generosity
- Friendliness
- Kindness
- Abstaining from hatred
- Being affectionate

Need of morals for the wellbeing of society

It is essential for all the people to follow morals in order to ensure wellbeing of a society. The wellbeing of the society is decided by morals followed by the people in that society.

It is important for us to follow morals and safeguard them in our day to day life. Morals should be respected and followed in our houses, religious places, and working places appropriately.

A person becomes successful in accordance with his qualities. Morals are essential for the personal development of a person. They should be made parts of a person's character. Thus the morals are essential for the development of a person whereas it should be connected to life in executing day to day activities. Then building a wholesome society will be possible.

Importance of following morals has been emphasised from the past. Sirith Maldama, Sublaashithany, Lowada Sangaraawa, Lokopakraya confirm it. The following verses are a few such examples

ඇනුම් පද	නො කියම්
බැනුම් කැන බස් නො	කියම්
නිකම් බස් නො	කියම්
තරම් පමණට වදන්	තෙපලම්

I will not taunt, scold or use abusive or meaningless words. I will speak conscious of my status

Sirith Maldama

ඉසුරෙන් පිරිහුණත්
 සුදන තම ගුණය අඩු නො කරත්
 බිඳුණත් රන් බඳුන
 ඇති බර අගය අඩු නොවන මෙනි

Though good people are lack of luxury and wealth their good qualities will not decline. Though golden jar is broken its value and weight will not decrease

Lokopakaraya

තිරසර ගුණෙන් යුතු මහතෙකු හට	පවර
සමුදුරු සියල් කිඳලෙක තුඹසෙක	සුනෙර
පුවතර මෙ දඹදිව මළුවෙක සිය	ගෙදෙර
ඔහු කර නොවන සැපතක් එ බැවින්	කවර

The ocean turns into a brook in front of a great gentleman with firm and good qualities. Huge mountains turns into termite hills in front of him. The world is at his door step. Therefore, what luxury will he lose?

Subahshithaya

Activities 3.7

- Learn by heart and recite in front of the class a few verses from *Sidath sangaraawa*, *Loweda sangaraawa*, *Lokopakaaraya* and *Hithopadeshaya* which emphasize morals.
- Present to the class the social and individual mission fulfilled by following these.