

Chapter 08

CULTURE OF PAKISTAN



The literal meaning of culture is to cultivate something. It is also called a way of life. The culture of a nation is combination of a number of factors. It includes the way of living, the language, literature, religion, customs and traditions, ideology of life, food habits, architecture and fine arts. These aspects of culture grow simultaneously. Each and every factor of culture reflects nation's past and present. Geographical conditions, which include land, climate, vegetation, natural mineral resources and animals, have great impact on the culture of a nation. Some of the characteristics of culture are:

- i. Each culture has its specific characteristics, which differentiate the people of that culture from others. This culture reflects the past history and ideology of that nation or country.
- ii. Culture is a force which affects others. A culture which has positive force or attraction soon influences other cultures.
- iii. Culture is subject to change under the influence of contact with other cultures. There was a time when Muslim Culture had influenced other nations of the world. The cultural force remains effective when people's character manifests its faith in that culture. New culture emerges due to the process of change and contact with other cultures.
- iv. The individual identity of a culture makes it popular among others. Muslim culture flourished because each and every Muslim in the past had strong individual values.
- v. Each culture has certain forceful values. The cultures with strong and permanent values absorb the weak cultures, as did the Muslim culture when Muslims brought many countries under their influence. This happened because of the permanent and strong values of Islam.





1. Languages of Pakistan

Language is the most important part of culture because it is the effective way of the expression of ideas and feelings. Language is the identity of a nation. That is why every nation loves its language and takes all possible steps for its development.

There are many countries of the world where more than one language is spoken. All languages spoken in a country are part of its culture. One of these languages, however, is used as a link language and is known as the national language.

The national language helps in bringing the people of different areas closer to each other and is a source of unity and national cohesion. The national language enjoys a preference over all other languages in a country without relegating them to the background. But, the regional languages should by no means be neglected. All the provincial languages are cultural assets of the nation, which continue to prosper in their respective areas.

More than 30 languages are spoken in Pakistan. The major provincial languages of our country include Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, Balochi and Brahvi. These languages represent their respective provinces and are known as provincial languages. The national language of Pakistan is Urdu, which is understood and spoken with minor difference of accent in all parts of Pakistan. At the time of creation of Pakistan, the Quaid-i-Azam declared in unequivocal terms that Urdu would be the national language of Pakistan. The 1973 constitution of Pakistan also declared Urdu as the official language.

1) Urdu

Urdu is a part of our cultural heritage. About 3000 years ago the Aryan people came through Central Asia and settled down in the northern part of South Asia. As their number increased, they drove the original inhabitants out of this region towards the south. The Aryans spoke Sanskrit language. The local influence brought about some changes in this language. This low Standard Sanskrit language came to be known as Prakrit (the language of the common people). Thus, for about fifteen hundred years the common people spoke Prakrit. Once again, Raja Vikrama Ditta declared Sanskrit as the official, intellectual and literary language. However, the common people continued speaking Prakrit.

The Prakrit language took four distinctive forms with the passage of time and one of those local forms was the Brij Bhasha which was the

language spoken in the land between and around the Ganges and Jumna rivers.

Different Muslim dynasties ruled South Asia. First the Pathans and then the Mughals established their rule here. They spoke Persian which had several words borrowed from Arabic and Turkish languages.

During the Mughal rule, many European nations came to South Asia with one or the other purpose. This way certain French and Portuguese words were added to the Brij language, so much so that during the rule of Shah Jahan (1627-1658), the Brij language had undergone such an internal change that it looked like a new language. This new language was understood and spoken both by the Hindus and Muslims. Since the Mughal rulers recruited their army from different castes and religions, this new language became popular with the armed forces. The army camp in the Turkish language is called "ordoo" (horde), which is derived from the word "orda" (camp) from Mongolian language. Under the Persian influence the word "ordoo" became softer as "urdu". Its splendour is Turkish and its charm is Persian in its base. The Arabic words borrowed by the Turkish and Persian languages were also adopted by this new Urdu Language.

During the last 200 years of the Mughal rule (1658-1857) the religious scholars, intellectuals and poets adopted Urdu as the language of expression, the other one being the Persian language. In this way this language got a new vista for its promotion and propagation. In its nature Urdu is capable of borrowing from all other languages and as soon as the borrowed words got currency, they became an integral part of the language.

Urdu played a vital role in promoting Pakistan Movement. It is spoken and understood in all the provinces of Pakistan. It is a sign of national unity. A number of words from local languages are taking their place in Urdu language. Urdu has also influenced the local languages and Urdu words are used in the spoken Sindhi language as well as in Punjabi language.

Urdu has made great progress in Pakistan. It has a valuable treasure of poetry and prose. Our writers and poets have enriched this language and played an important role to make it popular among the masses of Pakistan. Urdu dramas, Urdu feature films and sweet songs in Urdu made it easier to understand its meaning and content. Urdu is also a medium of instruction and a medium of examination. Modern knowledge and subjects are being translated into Urdu. For the development of Urdu

two Federal level Colleges namely Urdu Science College and Urdu Arts College were set up at Karachi and now have been declared as Urdu University. Government has established a National Language Authority at Islamabad to promote Urdu language.

II) Sindhi

Sindhi is one of the oldest South Asian languages. With the arrival of the Muslims, the Sindhi language started taking strides and several Arabic, Persian and Turkish words entered this language. Sindhi is written in a modified Arabic script. Sindhi language has the distinction of being the first local language in which the Holy Qur'an was translated during the Muslim rule.

The Sindhi poetry of the mystic saints is equally popular not only in Sindh province but also in other parts of Pakistan. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and Sachal Sarmast are the most prominent poets of mysticism in Sindhi poetry. The people get solace in their poetry and are proud of them.

The Sindhi language began to wear its modern look towards the later part of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, this language has made considerable progress in the realms of prose and poetry; constant contributions are being made in short stories, novels, dramas, travelogue, essays and all other facets of modern prose. Similarly, commendable progress has been made in poetry. Besides traditional verse forms such as ghazal, nazm, mathnavi, rubaee, etc. many western, Chinese and Japanese forms have also been introduced. Thus the Sindhi language of today has a very rich treasure of knowledge and literature. There are about a dozen important daily newspapers and more than a hundred weekly and as many fortnightly, monthly, quarterly magazines and journals being published in Sindhi.

The University of Sindh and the Karachi University have the departments of Sindhi language where Master's and the Doctorate degrees are being awarded. Sindhi is being taught in schools and colleges and is also a medium of answer, right from primary classes to graduate level in the examinations and also at post-graduate level. Sindhi is the official language of the Sindh province. Sindhi Language Authority has been established in 1990 for the promotion of Sindhi language. Sindhi Adabi Board promotes Sindhi language and literature by publishing standard classical and modern works.

III) Punjabi

The language of the Punjab province is "Punjabi". The Punjabi vocabulary includes words from Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages. Although there are minor differences of dialect in the Punjabi spoken in different parts of Punjab, yet the basic language is the same. Some ancient Buddhist monks wrote religious or devotional lyrics in Punjabi, which are considered as the earliest pieces of Punjabi literature. Proper work in Punjabi literature really started after the arrival of Muslims in South Asia. Most of the religious scholars of Islam and mystics of this area used Punjabi language for expressing their ideas and for propagation of the religion. Some of the great mystic poets and preachers, who composed their works in Punjabi, include Baba Fareed Ganj Shakar, Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, Bulhe Shah, Waris Shah, Hashim Shah, Ali Haider Multani, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh and Khawaja Ghulam Fareed.

With the advent of the 20th century, novels, plays, short stories and other forms of prose began to be written in the Punjabi language along with the beginning of Punjabi journalism. This was followed by addition of new dimensions to the Punjabi literature, for instance, books on art, philosophy, history, linguistics, economics, geography, traditional medicines (Tibb) and law were written. As a result, this language today has a vast treasure of published and unpublished masterpieces. Punjabi is taught as an optional subject in Punjab. There is a Department of Punjabi language in the University of Punjab where education is imparted at Master's and Doctorate level. Punjabi language is well-set on the road to development and its literature is continuously, growing richer. A large number of young Punjabi writers, dramatists and poets have emerged during the last 35 years. Punjabi dramas and films have brought great effect on the minds of the people and made the language richer and popular among the masses.

IV) Pashto

The language of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province is Pashto. It is also spoken in North-West of Balochistan. In the ancient times, the tribes of eastern Iran settled in the area between the Indus River and Hindukush range. Sanjani and Pamir languages are the existing remnants of some of the languages spoken by them. The Pashto language sprang from the base of these languages. In addition to the ancient Pashto literature. The famous Pashto poets of the 17th and 18th century such as Kazim Khan

Shaida, Rehman Baba and Khushhal Khan Khattak wrote a large number of lyrical poems in Pashto. About the same period, Pashto grammar was also compiled. Towards the end of the 19th Century, the foundation of modern Pashto literature was laid. About the same period, Pashto journalism made a beginning. Folk songs and folk tales were also preserved in Pashto. Today Pashto language has a vast treasure of literary works. Many journals are published in Pashto language. Peshawar University is taking necessary steps to promote this language. Pashto Academy at Peshawar University is making every effort to develop and modernize Pashto. There is also a Pashto Academy at Quetta.

v) **Balochi**

The language of the Baloch tribe's of Balochistan is Balochi. Besides, Balochi, Pashto, Brahvi and Sindhi languages are also spoken in this province. Balochi is linked with the ancient languages that were spoken in the Southern and Eastern Iran. The Baloch tribes came from north eastern Iran and settled in that region of South Asia which is now called Balochistan. They brought with them the ancient Balochi language. But Balochi could not make any noteworthy progress in the beginning. The first Balochi monthly magazine was published in 1952 from Karachi, but it could not survive. During this period, a number of organizations came up to develop Balochi language and literature. At present Balochi literature is on the road to progress. Besides epical romantic poetry, folk stories are features of Balochi literature. Jam Vark, Mast Tawakkali, Gul Khan Naseer, Azad Jamaluddin, N. M. Danish and Banul Dashtyari (Naz Bibi) are well-known amongst the writers who have contributed to the development of this language. The Balochistan University and the Balochi Academy are rendering great service to the Balochi language.

In addition to the above mentioned provincial languages, some other significant regional languages of Pakistan are Sheena, Balti, Brahvi, Chitrali, Kashmiri, Kohistani, Hindko and Siraiki. These languages are spoken in the respective parts of the country.



2.

Importance of National language vis-a-vis National Unity

Although all provincial languages are equally important, yet the need and importance of a national language cannot be denied. Every nation needs some marks of identity. Language is the prime mark of

identification for any nation. Pakistan is a strong federation of four provinces and its national language is Urdu, which enjoys the protection of the constitution. The father of the nation, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had also declared Urdu as the national language of Pakistan. Urdu serves, as the means of coordination between different provinces of Pakistan need to converse with each other, they need a link language. The national language creates a feeling of unity and national cohesion. People living in different provinces realize that in spite of speaking different languages, they are joined together by one national language, which is the heritage of all. This is why the Urdu poetry and prose is getting its contributors from every province of Pakistan. We find poets and writers from Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, whose works in Urdu are a valuable contribution to Urdu literature it is evident from the above facts that Urdu truly deserves to be recognized as our national language which has acquired great importance for creating national unity.

a) Source of contact

It is an important source of co-ordination and developing contact among the people of Pakistan. It is spoken and understood in all the provinces of Pakistan. Hence, it is a source of national integration and solidarity.

b) Role in Pakistan Movement

In the early stages of Pakistan Movement, Urdu was the most favoured language. This language was developed during the Muslim rule over South Asia. Urdu became distinct and prominent because it absorbed Arabic, Persian, Turkish and English vocabulary. Islamic culture gave it a distinct identity and made it popular among the Muslims. Many Muslim leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Abdul Majeed Sindhi, Allama Iqbal, Hasrat Mohani, Allama Shibli Nomani, Quaid-i-Azam and several others favoured Urdu against Hindi and proved that Urdu was the only language of the sub-continent in which literature of Islam existed in abundance. Urdu created unity among the people.

c) Common ology

Urdu as National Language of Pakistan and the provincial languages have an intimate relationship. All these languages have been influenced by Arabic Persian and English and, hence, contain a large number of common words. Literature on identical topics is available in all the languages.

d) Media Communication

Radio, television and press which are the main media of communication are playing an important role in the promotion of national unity through national and provincial languages. Common heritage of these languages have been exposed to the people who has strengthened the national language. This has created harmony among the people of different regions of Pakistan.

e) Source of benefit

The writings in provincial languages like folk tales, essays, plays, poetry and songs are being translated into Urdu language for the purpose of maximum benefit of people to understand it and also develop goodwill among the people.

f) Co-ordination

Pakistan is a federation of four provinces. Urdu serves as the medium of co-ordination between different provinces of Pakistan. Urdu is, therefore, playing an important role in national unity.

g) International Language

Urdu literature is spread all over the country as well as out of the country. Urdu ranks with International languages.

h) Common Medium

Every nation has a language, which serves as a means of co-ordination and unity among its people. Islam is the binding force for Muslims. Urdu which became a common medium of preaching message of Islam occupied a unique status. It is because of this reason that it is national language of Pakistan.



3. Common cultural manifestation in the national life

All the four provinces of Pakistan have their own provincial languages. Also there is slight difference between the customs and the ways of living of the people belonging to different provinces. But the distinction of the cultural heritage of Pakistan is the Islamic civilization, which presented principles of equality, fraternity, brotherhood, justice and truth. This system further influenced the knowledge and literature, architecture, music, art and linguistics. The accomplishments of the Muslims in these fields form our cultural legacy. We are known with reference to Islamic heritage. Islam has knit the people of Pakistan into brotherhood. Therefore, common cultural manifestation in the national life is as under:-

i. Mixed culture

Pakistan has a mixed culture; which is very important from its basic structure. People of each region are influenced by its environment. The effects of the surroundings become evident from their dress, food and patterns of living. In Pakistan people from different origins settled, which included Arabs, Iranian, and Turkish etc. They were the followers of their own regional customs and traditions. Their dress, language and culture were different. All these cultures mixed with each other and produced a common Pakistani culture.

ii. Status of Men and Women

Male member has occupied a unique status in Pakistani culture. He is the head of the family. He is the dominant member. But a woman is also considered an important part of the family who governs and manages all family affairs within the four walls. Household keeping and upbringing of children is entrusted to her in a family. She has the right to education, right to property and right to business in accordance with the principles of Islam. The rights and duties of men and women are determined in the light of the teachings of Islam. These principles are equally followed in all the four provinces of Pakistan and, hence, form common cultural heritage of Pakistan.

iii. Social life

Social life in Pakistan is simple. People believe in old traditions. Their customs and traditions are simple and interesting generally, joint family system is followed. People are taught to respect elders and love children. People are knit in the relation of love and respect for each other. Women are shown great respect. Majority of the people live in the villages and are engaged in agriculture and flock keeping. Marriages are performed in the traditional manner and are very colourful. Huge money is spent on the marriages. People are also employed in different sectors of national economy. Social life is, therefore, common in all parts of Pakistan with a little variation in the observance of different events under climatic or environmental conditions.



iv. Food

Most of the people in Pakistan eat simple food. They eat wheat, bread, rice, meat, pulses and vegetables. They drink tea, simple water and beverages. They also eat local fruits and the fruits of different regions of the country. Therefore, eating habits are common to each province.

v. Entertainments

Our entertainments and pursuits of leisure are similar. Hockey, cricket, squash, kabaddi and wrestling are equally popular throughout the country. People take interest in these games and, therefore, these have become our national games. These games reflect our common national culture.

vi. Religious events

Common cultural heritage is witnessed in our religious events and ceremonies. Marriage is a sacred religious task in our culture and it reflects Islamic tradition and colour. People wear colourful dresses at the occasion of marriages, sing cheerful songs, exchange gifts and invite people on delicious meals. A house where marriage takes place is identified by the colourful lights, music bands and singing of music. Marriage becomes a source of hustle and bustle. This shows our common cultural heritage.

Similarly there are certain traditions of birth and death. Birth of a child, especially male child is celebrated. Gifts are presented to each other. At the time of death of a person people share sorrows with the grieved family. The neighbours, relatives and friends arrange for the food on that occasion. In this way people promote brotherhood with each other.

Other festivals like Eid Milad-un-Nabi, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha are celebrated in a grand manner. People wear dresses, cook varieties of food and exchange gifts. A great sense of brotherhood is expressed on all these occasions.

vii. Single message of love and brotherhood

Our cultural heritage is reflected through our regional literature and literary values. A single message of love and brotherhood has been conveyed by our saints in different languages. The literature produced by

different writers in different languages conveys the message of peace, humanity, mysticism, justice, love and co-operation. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and Sachal Sarmast in Sindh, Sultan Bahu, Bulhe Shah, Waris Shah in Punjab, Rehman Baba, and Khushhal Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gul Khan Naseer in Balochistan have taught us love and brotherhood. They are the symbol of our common cultural heritage.

viii. Media of communication

Radio, television, newspapers, magazines and means of transport are the source of developing national coordination and common national culture.

ix. System of Education

National culture develops through the system of education followed at the national level. The uniformity in our system of education through uniform courses of studies, system of supervision and the system of examination and evaluation help in inculcating national spirit and making the children conscious of our common cultural values. This creates national harmony, promotes common culture and helps the new generation to maintain a link with their cultural heritage.



4. Dress, festivals, arts and crafts

Pakistan is a vast country. Due to variation in geographical and climatic conditions there is great variety in the dress, customs, festivals and arts and crafts of the people living in different areas. This has made our culture rich and colourful. The colourful versatility may be witnessed in the following aspects of our culture:-

i. Dress

Pakistan's national dress is very simple but impressive. Men wear shirt and shalwar combined with waistcoat and turban. Women wear shirt, shalwar and dupatta. But there is difference in the design of the dress of men and women. However, climatic conditions affect the choice and selection of dress. In cold areas the dress is made with thick woollen clothes. In Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan light dress is used in summer and thick woollen or cotton dress is used in winter. The dress of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the same except that the people living in

extreme cold areas where thick woollen clothes are used in winter. Coat and trousers used in all parts of the country but mostly in urban areas. On the whole, the national dress consists of shalwar and shirt.

ii. Literature and Fine Arts

Printing, calligraphy, architecture and music are considered as fine arts. During the Muslim period these arts flourished in South Asia. Their accomplishment is our cultural heritage. In Pakistan our artists created the noble works of paintings. Our calligraphers created unique models of Islamic or Quranic calligraphy. Traditional architecture is reflected in the construction of beautiful buildings. In music new experiments have been made through mixing of our traditional music and the modern tunes. Through television and stage dramas, fine art has been promoted. Stone carving and preparation of ornaments with metal and iron are the master piece works and models of fine art.

iii. Handicrafts

High quality handicrafts have been produced in all the areas of Pakistan through ages. These handicrafts are produced by women working in their homes. Some of these handicrafts are produced jointly by men and women, In Sindh, glass cut work on clothes is very fine and exclusive. Sindhi Ajrak, colourful sheets (chadors) are very prominent and appreciated. In Karachi, ornaments and decoration pieces are made of shells and stones. Embroidery and glass cut work done in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is of high quality. Punjab has a name in its handicrafts. Multani camel skin lamps and painted vessels of Bahawalpur show artistic and designed work of the people of the area. Engraved furniture is made in Chiniot. The glass work and embroidery of Balochistan is of high standard, especially the Balochi embroidery is an excellent artistic work. The handicrafts industry exists in most of the towns, cities and villages of Pakistan, which is a source of providing employment to the people on the one hand and a source of enrichment of our culture. Handicrafts of Pakistan are also a source of earning foreign exchange.

iv. Festivals and Fairs

Many festivals and fairs are held in Pakistan every year. These occasions provide entertainment and joy to the people of Pakistan.

These are:

- a) **Eid-ul-Fitr:** It is celebrated after the month of Ramazan ends and on the first of Shawwal. This is a reward in the form of blessings of Allah to those Muslims who fasted for the whole month of Ramazan. People wear good dresses, eat vermicelli's and exchange gifts. Poor people are helped in cash and kind by the rich.
- b) **Eid-ul-Azha:** It is celebrated on the 10th, of the month of Zil-Hajj in the memory of the great sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim, when he offered to sacrifice the life of his dearest son Hazrat Ismail to fulfill the decree of Almighty Allah. On Eid-ul-Azha people sacrifice animals and distribute meat among their relatives, friends, neighbours and the poor. The sacrifice is offered for three days i.e. 10th, 11th and 12th of Zil-Hajj.
- c) **Eid Milad-un-Nabi:** It is celebrated on 12th of the Islamic month of Rabi-ul-Awwal with great love and devotion. It is celebrated to express happiness on the birth of our Holy Last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (**حَضْرَتُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ خَاتَمُ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَسَلَّمَ**). Homes, streets and bazaars are decorated and illuminated. Religious meetings are held. It is celebrated with great devotion and zeal.



- d) **Celebration of Non-Muslim Festivals:** The non-Muslim citizens also participate in the celebrations of Muslim festivals but they have their own festivals. Christians celebrate the birth of Hazrat Isa (Jesus Christ) on 25th December and Easter festival in April. Muslims share their happiness. Similarly, Hindu and Sikhs also celebrate their festivals of Diwali, Ram Leela, Holi, Rakhi Bandhan and Besakhi etc. Pakistanis share their feelings of happiness and festivity.
- e) **Fairs:** Fairs are the big features of Pakistani culture. Normally these fairs are held at the eve of Urs (birth or death anniversary) of great saints and Sufis. A large number of people travel from distant places and participate in these fairs. In rural areas some fairs are held after the harvesting season. These fairs are great events of meeting friends and others, doing shopping and promoting economic activities.

The most famous fairs of Pakistan are:-

- i. Urs of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh, Lahore, Punjab.
- ii. Urs of Hazrat Mian Mir, Lahore, Punjab.
- iii. Urs of Hazrat Bahauddin Zakaria, Multan, Punjab.
- iv. Urs of Shah Rukn Alam, Multan, Punjab.
- v. Urs of Hazrat Shahdullah Deryai, Gujrat, Punjab.
- vi. Urs of Hazrat Abdul Latif Imam Bari, Islamabad.
- vii. Urs of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Bhit Shah, Sindh.
- viii. Urs of Hazrat Sachal Sarmast, Daraza,
- ix. Urs of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Sehwan, Sindh.
- x. Urs of Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Clifton, Karachi Sindh.

All these fairs (Melas) and festivals are valuable assets of our culture. These events help in enhancing our social and economic progress, strengthening our cultural relations and prove useful in creating national cohesion and unity.

EXERCISE

A. Answer the following questions:

1. Describe the characteristics of culture.
2. Why language is an important element of culture?
3. Write a note on the languages of Pakistan.
4. Describe the importance of Urdu as a national language.
5. What are the common cultural manifestations in the national life?
6. Write down a note on the arts and crafts of Pakistan.
7. Describe the importance of festivals as a part of our culture.

B. Fill in the blanks.

- i. Pakistan's national language is _____.
- ii. Pakistan's culture is a _____ culture.
- iii. The national dress of Pakistan is _____ and _____.
- iv. In Pakistan _____ languages are spoken.
- v. In Balochistan two languages _____ and _____ are spoken.
- vi. The two great poets of Balochi are _____ and _____.
- vii. Shah Hussain is a great _____ poet.
- viii. After independence Sindhi language has made lot of progress in _____ and _____.
- ix. Most of the people in Pakistan eat _____ food.
- x. A single message of _____ and _____ has been conveyed by our saints in different languages.
- xi. Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated in the month of _____.
- xii. Christians celebrate on _____ on _____.