

Q2
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What is meant by culture and civilization?

Describe the characteristics of Islamic culture

INTRODUCTION

Culture and civilization are two interconnected terms that are often used interchangeably. Both accompany each other and no one can exist without the other. By culture, it is meant the range of phenomena that are transmitted through social learning in human societies. While civilization is an advanced state of living that encompasses laws, cultures, social norms and habitats. Islam, being a complete code of life, presents a culture that is based on the principles of the Islamic teachings. The settlements that have been formed which followed Islamic culture may differ in their languages and festivals; however, they may all share a common Islamic culture.

CULTURE-A BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

Culture is defined by UNESCO as the following

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"Set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature but lifestyles, ways of living together, values system, traditions and beliefs."
(UNESCO)

Culture is an important aspect of community of a people living somewhere. It provides a sense of unity, patriotism, stability and some grounds for social progress.

Characteristics of Culture

Some of the prominent characteristics of culture are

a) Culture is always learned

b) Culture is shared among all members of the community

c) It is based on symbols (language, etiquettes etc)

d) Culture is integrated with all societal elements.

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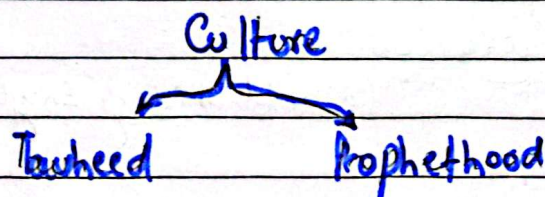
Salient Features of a Civilization

- a) Presence of Geographical Boundaries
- b) Strong Political, Economic System
- c) Developed system of religions
- d) Social Classes
- e) Technology
- f) Art & Architecture

CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC CULTURE

Culture based on Faith

Islamic culture finds its basis in teachings of Islam. It grounds itself in Shariah and allows everything that are within the confines of Shariah. However, it prohibits those activities which are repugnant to the values and teachings of Shariah. Islamic culture is based on the unity of Oneness of Allah and the finality of prophethood.



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Emphasis is placed on Modesty (Life Style) and Moderation

Islamic culture places an emphasis on moderation and modesty. It guides people not to be too proud of their abilities as this will lead to pride. It emphasizes a modest lifestyle. Similarly, it emphasizes moderation in life. It tells its citizens to not pick an extreme path and always lead life using a balanced and moderate approach. As Allah says in the Quran

'And thus we have made you moderate nation.' (Al-Quran)

Promotes Good and Forbids Evil

Islamic culture inculcates the values of promoting virtues and forbidding vices. The concept of 'Amr Bil Maroof wa-Nahi Un nil Munkar' is the epitome of an Islamic society. As Allah (swt) says in the Quran

'And from among you there should be a group who invite good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and only they shall be successful.' (Al-Quran)

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Inculcates Patience within its Followers

Patience is inculcated within those who are members and follow the Islamic culture. Islam lays great emphasis on the virtues of patience and has also highlighted it as one of the many traits the pious have. As Allah says in the Quran

"And those who do good in this world will have a good reward..... Only those who endure patiently will be given their reward without limit." (Al-Quran)

Inculcates a sense of Self-Accountability

Islamic culture inculcates a sense of self-accountability, as every Muslim knows that they are going to answerable to Allah for their actions on the Day of Judgement, it is better to keep ^{for} them or to keep their actions in check in this world to avoid being asked in the next. On that day, every action of a Muslim shall be judged however minuscule it may be. As Allah says in the Quran

And "whoever commits an atom's worth of good shall see it, and whoever does an _{commits}

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atoms & worth of vice will see
it." (Al-Quran)

Promotes Social and Financial Equity/Brotherhood

Islamic culture promotes the care and compassion ^{one has} towards its other members. Similarly, it tries to equity of resources among the society through instruments like zakat, donations and so on. In the mosque, it dispels of all class or social hierarchy (through) by making everyone stand shoulder-to-shoulder. Moreover, the Holy Prophet has said in the

"All mankind is from Adam ... Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one Brotherhood." - (Al-Quran)

Inculcates Social and Moral Etiquettes

The Prophet Muhammad (saw) taught the early Muslim of various etiquettes such as shaking your right hand when meeting with someone or using the right hand to receive or give money. All of these are social etiquettes. The Holy Prophet also taught the ways of eating food, sitting in a gathering

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and even walking. Islamic culture went to the most minute details of life that most take as given or granted.

CONCLUSION

The linkages between culture and civilization are unbreakable both carry each other forward. Similarly, Islam has presented a culture that was brought forth in the Prophet's (PBUH) time and was spread across the globe when the civilization expanded. It grounds itself in faith and values itself on it. It transforms a person