

Contrasting cultures: spain and pakistan

Countries



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Contrasting Cultures: Spain and Pakistan This paper goes through the cultural differences of two countries, Spain and Pakistan based on four “culture-driving” factors: food, Religion, Clothing and Language. Culture may differ from country to country, family to family or even individual to individual. Mostly a country has its culture, according to which the citizens of that country behave respectively. “A nation’s culture resides in the heart and in the soul of its people” (Mahatma Gandhi) Pakistan, which is officially known as Islamic Republic of Pakistan, follows the Islamic law or Shari’aa.

It’s obvious that the main religion of Pakistan is Islam. About 96% of the population are Muslims, out of which 80% are Sunnis and 20% Shia’s, 2% are Hindus, less than 1% are Christians and the others are Jews, Sikhs, Ismailis etc (Worldtrade press, 2010). As the majority of Pakistanis are Muslims, and is a huge factor in driving the culture of Pakistan, all the citizens engage in the Islamic holidays and festivals for example Eid-ul-Adha, Eid-ul-Fitr and respect the Muslims who are fasting in the Holy Month of Ramadan by not drinking or eating in public.

Where Pakistan has a dominant religion as Islam, Spain’s dominant religion is Roman Catholicism which comprises of 94% of the population and the remaining 6% are Muslims, Hindus and Jews (kiwiessential. co. uk, n. d.) The Catholic Church in Toledo implements instructions on the society, but as the rest of the Europe, Spain has now become a secular country so it literally does not have an official religion. Islam and Arab roots of Spain have been present for about 400 years, however in the modern Spain there are only Muslims which are either converts or immigrants from Morocco.

Religion does not have great influence on culture in Spain when compared to Pakistan, even though there are dominant religions and minor religions in both countries. The factor which makes a person known is the language they speak. Both countries have different languages, Urdu being the national language of Pakistan and Castilian Spanish being the dominant language of Spain. However the similarity of languages in both countries is that the other languages spoken in the country are based on the region.

For example, In Pakistan, Punjabi is spoken in Punjab province, Sindhi in the Sindh province and the other languages like Balochi, Siraiki, Pashtu and others adding upto 12 different languages (Saarctourism. org, n. d) Same is in the case of Spain where Castilian (national language) is spoken in Castile, Galician in Galicia, Basque in Euskardi, Calan and Valencia in Catalonia and Valencian region respectively (kiwiessential. co. uk, n. d). All the languages spoken in Spain are not known to Pakistanis and vice versa. Hence language differentiates the two cultures, and basically defines them.

Apart from language, dressing of a person makes the other judge from which country he or she belongs to. Spanish people wear semi-conservative but fashionable clothes and the way they dress mostly depends on the weather (Hagerty, J 2012) Women mostly wear modest clothes which do not reveal a lot of skin, They prefer not to wear revealing clothes or sleeveless in public and mostly wear skirts, long pants or loose fitting shirts (Worldtradepress, 2010). However in Pakistan, the clothing is mostly conservative, except for the upper class.

Shalwar Kameez is the the national dress of Pakistan which is basically a long shirt and loose pants. As the times now in Pakistan have changed,
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people over there wear both western and traditional clothes, but wearing sleeveless or short dresses are looked down upon. The trend of Jeans-Kameez is very common in the women now (Korener S. & Rusell, I. , 2010) However, not wearing Shalwar Kameez by women is still not accepted in many parts of Pakistan and moreover women or girls are expected to wear the most modest clothes and stay “ covered” as it is a very conservative society as well as a Muslim country.

Pakistani clothes are mostly rich in embroidery and full of colours (mapsofworld. com) whereas the people in Spain wear clothes which are mainly made of wool, cotton or leather because of the geographical situation of the country (Hagerty J. , 2012) The clothes worn in the two countries differentiate each other a lot and mostly the Pakistani clothing especially to women is driven by the religion factor. The next culture-driving-factor is food. Food is always different “ regionally” throughout the globe.

Pakistani food uses a lot of spices and herbs making it an exquisite cuisine. Lentils are eaten a lot as well as wheat and flour products such as Chapatti, which are like the Mexican Tortillas, are eaten almost daily. The use of clarified butter known as Ghee is widely used in the middle-class and low-class of Pakistanis, however now the people are more health conscious which has reduced its use in the upper class. Pakistanis are big lovers of pickles and sour pastes called as chutneys which make their food even tastier. Saarc tourism. org, n. d) On the other hand, Spain’s food is nothing like that of Pakistan’s. They ate very mild food and mostly have Continental breakfast, a Heavy lunch and a light dinner (Harkins A, 2011). Wine is a must for them during lunch and so are the desserts mainly Black Pudding The

lunch is mostly a four course meal with a soup, a fish or egg dish, a meat dish served with vegetables and a dessert mainly a pastry or custard (Porter D, & Prince D, 2004). However the famous dishes vary from city to city in Spain.

Due to the Islamic law any kind of alcoholic beverage is not included in Pakistani meals unlike Spain. Rabbit, Chicken and Pork are the main meats eaten in Spain (expatfocus. com, n. d.) whereas in Pakistan , due to Islamic law Pork is not allowed, hence chicken, lamb and beef are mostly eaten (saarctourism. org). In conclusion, after reading this paper the clear conclusion which comes is that both the cultures are extremely different. They rarely have any similarity. The main point is that Pakistan's culture is driven by Religion whereas Spain's culture is driven by Region!

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