

1. Is it necessary to have the stamp of societal approval for a value to be termed as 'good' or 'bad'? Critically examine.

Introduction

Values are Important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. Values have major influence on a person's behaviour and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations.

Body

Is it necessary to have the stamp of societal approval for a value to be termed as 'good' or 'bad'?

Values are essential to ethics. Ethics is concerned with human actions, and the choice of those actions. Ethics evaluates those actions, and the values that underlie them. It determines which values should be pursued, and which shouldn't.

- What makes an act of killing morally good or bad is not that the act causes loss of life or consciousness but rather that the act causes loss of all remaining abilities. This account implies that it is not even pro tanto morally wrong to kill patients who are universally and irreversibly disabled, because they have no abilities to lose. But in matters of Capital Punishment, Abortion, Euthanasia the act becomes morally correct when the respected societies approves it.
- Values help shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, sought or avoided. Consider the value that the United States places upon youth. Children represent innocence and purity, while a youthful adult appearance signifies sexuality. Shaped by this value, individuals spend millions of dollars each year on cosmetic products and surgeries to look young and beautiful. The United States also has an individualistic culture, meaning people place a high value on individuality and independence. In contrast, many other cultures are collectivist, meaning the welfare of the group and group relationships are a primary value.
- When people go against a society's values, they are punished. A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label—lazy, or to legal sanctions, such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment.
- Values are not static; they vary across time and between groups as people evaluate, debate, and change collective societal beliefs. Values also vary from culture to culture. For example, cultures differ in their values about what kinds of physical closeness are appropriate in public. It's rare to see two male friends or coworkers holding hands in the United States where that behavior often symbolizes romantic feelings. But in many nations, masculine physical intimacy is considered natural in public. This difference in cultural values

came to light when people reacted to photos of former president George W. Bush holding hands with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in 2005. A simple gesture, such as hand-holding, carries great symbolic differences across cultures.

- Some values stand up well over the test of time and they don't need societal approval to be good or bad; they are always good or rightful behavior. Honesty and kindness, compassion are two such examples. It is difficult to imagine having a satisfying relationship without them because they build trust in relationships.

Conclusion

Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the sort of person we want to be; the manner in which we treat ourselves and others, and our interaction with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct.

2. Which one of the former American Presidents is your favourite and why? Which of his ideas or actions have inspired you the most? Discuss.

Introduction

"The change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones who have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek". there will never be the perfect time, the people that make things happen and make real changes in the world are the people who do not wait for others or the time, they take action right there and then. One man who did believe it could happen and did not wait for anybody or for when the time was right, was Barack Obama.

Body

Barack Obama is one of my favorite former presidents of America

The best thing I like about Obama is his leadership qualities, a good leader represents the characteristics of honesty, proactive, earnestness, and so much more. A leader that is educated and embodies the ability to assess the other group's skills and talents in order to utilize them to accomplish a goal. Barack Obama was the first black senator for the state of Illinois. he was also the first black United States President. He made a healthcare program that has been modified to include more people it was called Obamacare. As a leader he did many things which include visiting foreign countries, instilling hope and freedom, and providing opportunity, modernizing infrastructure, building new energy sources etc.

Some of the ideas of Barack Obama inspired me the most

- **Conviction:** The campaign slogan of Obama for the 2008 presidential campaign when he was elected the president for the first time was "Change we can believe in." let's discuss his conviction and belief and what he was conveying to the general public. Obama always has a firm belief that if

something is right and if you think you are on the right track then you can influence others too and get your message across. This will take some time but eventually you'll succeed. When he took a stand on many issues, like UN resolution on Israel-Palestinian conflict, everyone believed that he has a valid point and he is not taking the American people and the world community for granted. He talked with logic and knew his job well in influencing people and other leaders so that his point of view was understandable.

- **Change:** Everyone started to talk about change after the Obama's campaign became successful. It became the buzz word and was used across the board by virtually every person talking about some transformation, revolution, etc. This quality and the way Obama portrayed it almost becomes synonymous with him and whenever someone talked about change, the name of Obama also resonates. Obama just didn't use the word change for his campaign. Across his 8 years tenure as the president, he tried to achieve so much by applying a change in every aspect of running the country and what he was doing for the people in general.
- **About ambitions:** once in an interview he was asked how he would describe his own peculiar ambition and its development, President Obama explained his belief that ambitions are common when we are young — we want to prove ourselves and gain notoriety. But once a leader begins to achieve some of that notoriety or face adversity, the sense of ambition for ambition's sake begins to dissipate, allowing true passions take hold. "And if you don't go through that, then you start getting into trouble, because then you're just clinging to prerogatives and the power and the attention.
- **Taking Risks:** It is a common practice that many people play it safe when it comes to anything related to their work or professional life. Taking risks, even a minor one, is not everyone's cup of tea. That's the reason why most successful people are the ones who take risks in their life and come out triumphant. Obama always urged people around him and the general public about taking risks, although calculated ones in the start. The more we will know about Obama, the more we will be inclined to take risks in the life and benefit from this act rather than fail.
- **Turning Endings into a New Beginning:** A leader is a person who is never satisfied with even his own work and always look to achieve more. Take the example of Barack Obama, with a host of things to do on his list, how he turned an ending into a beginning for the next project dozens of times? That's where his leadership skills come into effect and made all the difference. In most of his speeches we often find the phrase "Let's get back to work". That's his way of celebrating a victory in a battle or just after inaugurating a new project. He did that time and again and made sure everyone listened to it. He uses the positive public reaction and sentiment to begin a fresh project so that the buoyant mode keeps the momentum going and help in completing the new task with ease.

Conclusion

The public, despite the tough conditions in which he inherited the economy and country, has seen Obama favorably. He has steered his party to two victories, on the back of a strong economic and domestic policy.

3. Lal Bahadur Shastri is a shining example of value driven public life. Do you agree? What are some of the instances from his life that stand as the epitome of selfless and ethical public conduct? Discuss.

Introduction

Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Indian freedom fighter who later on went on to become the second Prime Minister of Independent India after Jawaharlal Nehru and is remembered as a man of integrity and high ideals.

Body

- Lal Bahadur Shastri was born on October 2, 1904 in Uttar Pradesh and had a humble beginning with drive towards contributing for the nation.
- He is surely a shining example of value driven public life which is evident from his childhood where he gave up studies to participate in the Non-cooperation movement led by Gandhiji at the age of 16. It clearly showcased his dedication towards the nation over personal interests at such a young age.
- Further, he was captivated by Mahatma Gandhi, who himself was an epitome of good conduct and values in public life. He was greatly impressed by Mahatma Gandhi's denunciation of Indian Princes for their support of British rule in India. Lal Bahadur Shastri was only eleven at the time, but the process that started that day ended up to catapult him to the national stage had already begun in his mind.
- Lal Bahadur Shastri threw himself into the struggle for freedom with feverish energy. He led many defiant campaigns and spent a total of seven years in British jails. It was in the fire of this struggle that his steel was tempered and he grew into maturity.
- Post independence, he was called upon to play a constructive role in the governance of the country. It is here that India came to know about highly value driven public life, especially in executive functioning. He resigned his post as Minister for Railways because he felt responsible for a railway accident in which many lives were lost. The unprecedented gesture was greatly appreciated by Parliament and the country. The then Prime Minister, Pt. Nehru, speaking in Parliament on the incident, extolled Lal Bahadur Shastri's integrity and high ideals.
- He said he was accepting the resignation because it would set an example in constitutional propriety and not because Lal Bahadur Shastri was in any way responsible for what had happened.

This was the most shining example of selflessness and ethical public conduct that independent India had seen.

Furthermore, life of Lal Bahadur Shastri provides multiple examples of selflessness and ethical public conduct as can be seen below:

- In 1927, when he got married to his wife, Lalita Devi, who came from Mirzapur, near his home town, he took just a spinning wheel and a few yards of handspun cloth as dowry. This was revolutionary in those days and showcased Shastri's ethical conduct.
- Lal Bahadur Shastri joined the Kashi Vidya Peeth in Varanasi, one of the many national institutions set up in defiance of the British rule. This step showcased his dedication to the cause of Indian independence.
- Shastri's prime ministership saw India ensuring respect for the farmer and the soldier through his iconic slogan, 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan.'
- Shastri had said at the time of signing the Tashkent Agreement that it would be a negation of the values that the Mahatma stood for if he did not work for an environment to foster peace and non-violence.
- India was facing the challenge of food crisis. To tackle it, he went on to urge the people to give up one meal so that there would be more to distribute. The response was an overwhelming one and it must be noted that he implemented this at his home first.
- During his stint as Minister, he followed professional integrity where official resources like cars was not used by him or his family for personal matters.

Conclusion

Over a period of more than 30 years of service, Lal Bahadur Shastri came to be known as a man of great integrity and competence. Humble, tolerant, with great inner strength and resoluteness, he was a man of the people who understood their language. With his value orientation and ethical conduct, in the direct tradition of Mahatma Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri represented the best in Indian culture.

4. On one hand one can't disagree to the fact that compassion is an important human value. On the other hand, compassion as a human attribute is missing from most societies. Can you tell what happens to a society that lacks compassion? Does in the long run, lack of compassion leads to decay of social institutions? Examine.

Introduction

"Compassion is to look beyond your own pain and feel the pain of others" – Dalai Lama

Compassion is a feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering of others and a wish to help them to overcome it.

Body

Compassion as important human value:

As Dalai Lama says - the ultimate source of a happy life is warm-heartedness and compassion is a constructive emotion related to intelligence. It brings positive change in the society. E.g. Bharat vatwani showing compassion for mentally challenged persons was able to build a rehabilitation home.

Compassion is a part of our everyday experience of being human. E.g. Helping a person who is deprived of food and clothing (Compassionate Kozhikode, operation suleimani).

Compassion missing from the society:

However, compassion has been missing in many spheres of life. E.g. often it is reported, public gather around an accident and take photos rather than helping the victim out of compassion.

The same can be seen in many other situations like the attack on African students in Karnataka, mob lynching that happened in UP, Gujarat etc., - all due to absence of compassion.

There are many other instances like Hemant Kumar, an MNC manager was ostracized by his entire village as he refused to wash the feet of priest because he was a dalit. None of the communities/ families felt compassion, placing themselves in his shoes and evaluate if what they did was right.

Societies lacking compassion:

Absence of compassion in the society will lead to lack of fraternity and harmony. There will be inequality, ostracization and alienation of certain sections in the society. As a result, there would be increased crime, hatred and unlawful activities in the society. E.g. Lack of compassion towards the genuine problems of landless/tribals led to the development of Naxalism.

Further, it results in lack of social capital as there will be the alienation of groups due to lack of compassion. This leads to distrust and an environment of suspicion. Thus, there will be a lack of social capital and limited public participation in the society. This will lead to the collapse of social institutions.

E.g.

- lack of compassion in family perpetuate patriarchy and mistreatment of women in the family. Further, old age person sufferings might be overlooked resulting into decay of family.
- Government overlooking the problems of vulnerable sections. E.g. in spite of 66% of persons in jails are undertrials, little is done to address the issue. This is due to lack of compassion by shown the govt.

- Religious institutions discriminate in absence of compassion E.g. the practice of triple talaq, ban of entry to women in sabarimala until recently etc.,
- In economy, there will be exclusive growth and increases the inequality and also unsustainable growth due to lack of compassion towards the environment.

Conclusion

The Dalai Lama in his teachings said, “If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” Rightly so, compassion almost always leads to an affirmative result and is of paramount importance to each and every one.

Additional information (Note down examples related to compassion):

- Sonam Wangchuk helping the people of Ladakh in improving their life by taking projects like Ice stupa (solving the problem of drinking water).
- Krishna Teja the Sub-Collector of Kuttanad in Alappuzha district of Kerala, organized ‘operation kuttanad’ that saved the lives of nearly 2.5 lakh people (and 12000 cattle) during the catastrophic floods.
- Basant rath- A senior IPS officer distributing free books to students, hailing from remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir, in order to help them crack competitive examinations.
- ‘Compassionate Kozhikode’ and ‘Compassionate Keralam’, winning the trust and volunteer help from the locals to successfully clean ponds, feed the hungry, help and improving lives after the recent floods and involving youth in the betterment of the society.
- Poma Tudo – an IAS officer treks more than 2 km every week to meet hilly villages in Nuapada district of Odisha.

5. Respecting women is an important human value. In fact, women have been given a prominent place in the literary creations of many medieval poets. The poets have given high regard to women and acknowledged their contribution in making the home, the society and the country a better place. Elaborate.

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda says, “Countries and Nations which do not respect women have never become great nor will ever be in future” In recent times in the societies equality of status has been assigned to women, but it is often legal than existential. Respecting women cannot be a rule, but surely it can be a responsibility.

Body

- Human values are the virtues that guide us to take into account the human element when we interact with other human beings. Human values are, for example, respect, acceptance, consideration, appreciation,

listening, openness, affection, empathy and love towards other human beings. Women are human being and thus they deserve respect just like any other human being.

- During medieval time, Indian subcontinent was under the rule of Rajputs, Palas, Rashtrakuts, Cholas, Chalukyas, and others and later Delhi Sultanate, Vijayanagar empire, Mughals etc.
- From the available evidence from Amir Khusrau's Matla-ul- Anwar, Hasht Bihisht, Nuh Siphir and Ijaz-i- Khusravi, Ibn Battuta's Rehla and Tarikh-i- Firozshahi of Barani etc. Women had an important role in the social and cultural life of a country.

Unfortunately, a little about the role of women during the Sultanate period is known and that too in fragments.

- Islam raised the status of women in the society, at least legally as high as that of men.
- Several verses of the Quran emphasize alike the dignity of man and woman in the society, and both are equal in the eyes of God and equally rewarded for their good deeds. Consequently, Muslim women were able to exercise their skills and talents in different fields- social, economic, educational and cultural, during the time of the Prophet and early Caliphs.
- Ibn Battuta has left us an interesting account of how the Queens of the Great Khan of the golden horde held court and received visitors.
- Polygamy was widely practiced, especially by the members of noble and aristocratic families, but very often the co wives lived amicably together like sisters, sharing in the joys and sorrows of one another.
- A Hindu women was expected to be an obedient daughter, faithful wife and devoted mother. Marriage was the single important event in her life and it took place soon after puberty. Child marriage was the norm.
- Though she acted as house wife and confined into her inner circles of the house, yet she was consulted on some important family matters.
- During Bhakti movement Lal Ded (1320-1384), the Muslim poetess from Kashmir Lal Ded & Habba Khatun, represented the Sant tradition of Bhakti and wrote Vakhhs (maxims), which are peerless gems of spiritual experience. Meera Bai, in Gujarati, Rajasthani and Hindi (she wrote in three languages), Avvaiyyar, in Tamil, and Akkamahadevi in Kannada, are well known for their sheer lyrical intensity and concentrated emotional appeal. Their writings speak about the social conditions prevailing at that time, and the position of woman at home and in society.

Conclusion

It is often said that the inherent strength of a society, a culture and a system is judged by the way its women are treated and the role assigned to them by the society. The great socio-religious revolutionary saint, Swami Vivekananda stated that, the country which had no respect for woman-hood could never become great.