**HUMAN VALUES AND ETHICS**

Values are the guiding principles of our lives. They are essential for positive human behaviour and actions in our daily lives. They are formed on the basis of interests, choices, needs, desires and preferences. They have played important role in not only sociology, but also psychology, anthropology and related disciplines.

**Why Values are needed?**

We encounter several circumstances every day which test our patience, our character and peace of mind. We have to make tough decisions each day. What guide us in these circumstances are our values. Our values serve as markers to tell if life is heading in the right direction.

When our actions and words are aligned with our values, life feels good and we feel content, confident and satisfied. But when our behaviours don’t match-up with our values, we sense an uneasiness that grows inside us. This uncomfortable feeling tells us that not all is good right now. We feel out-of-sorts. These feelings can be a source of anxiety and unhappiness. We need value in our lives to:

* Guide us in the right path.
* Learn the importance of certainty, goodness and beauty.
* Give direction to life and bring joy.
* Learn satisfaction towards life.
* Attain peace in life.
* Develop character.
* Preserve our culture and heritage
* Bring changes in behaviour towards positive thoughts;
* Promote the peace and harmony in the society

**What are Intrinsic and Extrinsic Values?**

The term intrinsic means “in itself” or “for its own sake”. Intrinsic values are those values which have an eternal property without any reference to any end. For example, *happiness or peace or joy or truth is* an intrinsic value. Extrinsic values are those whose property or value depends on how much it generates the intrinsic values. *Having a family is an extrinsic value* because its value depends on how much happiness or joy it creates.

**What are Basic Human Values?**

Basic human values refer to those values which are *at the core of being human*. The *values which are considered basic inherent values in humans include truth, honesty, loyalty, love, peace, etc*. because they b*ring out the fundamental goodness of human beings* and society at large. Further, since these values are unifying in nature and cut across individual’s social, cultural, religious and sectarian interests; they are also considered universal, timeless and eternal applying to all human beings.

**How values are different from norms?**

Values and norms are different. Norm refers to a relatively specific behaviour as per social customs and it is obligatory. On the other hand, values are matter of choice. For example, honesty cannot be a norm because it may not be chosen to be followed. Further, once a particular value is internalized by an individual, it becomes a norm for him / her for making decisions, judgements, preferences and choices.

**How values are different from Morals?**

Morals are taught by the society to the individual while values can be cultivated from within. Morals act as motivation for leading a good life, while values act as intuition. Further, while morals are deep rooted, values may keep changing from time to time and as per needs.

**What are key features of values?**

There are six main features of values as per the value theory of Schwartz. These are:

**Values are beliefs linked to affect**

This implies that when values are activated, they become infused with feeling. For example, *People for whom independence is an important value become aroused if their independence is threatened,* despair when they are helpless to protect it, and are happy when they can enjoy it.

**Values refer to desirable goals that motivate action**

People for whom social order, justice, and helpfulness are important values are motivated to pursue these goals.

**Values transcend specific actions and situations**

Obedience and honesty, for example, are values that may be relevant at work or in school, in sports, business, and politics, with family, friends, or strangers. This feature distinguishes values from narrower concepts like norms and attitudes that usually refer to specific actions, objects, or situations.

**Values serve as standards or criteria**

Values guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events. People decide what is good or bad, justified or illegitimate, worth doing or avoiding, based on possible consequences for their cherished values. But the impact of values in everyday decisions is rarely conscious. Values enter awareness when the actions or judgments one is considering have conflicting implications for different values one cherishes.

**Values are ordered by importance relative to one another**

People’s values form an ordered system of value priorities that characterize them as individuals. Do they attribute more importance to achievement or justice, to novelty or tradition? This hierarchical feature also distinguishes values from norms and attitudes.

**Relative importance of multiple values guides action**

Any attitude or behaviour typically has implications for more than one value. For example, *attending prayer* might express and promote tradition, conformity, and security values at the expense of *hedonism and stimulation values*. The trade-off among relevant, competing values is what guides attitudes and behaviours. Values contribute to action to the extent that they are relevant in the context (hence likely to be activated) and important to the actor.

**How values are different from Ethics?**

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that used to study ideal human behaviour and ideal ways of being. What is ethical and unethical is judged by social standards and vary from person to person. Values are the *embodiment of what an individual stands for*, and they are basis for the behaviour which forms the basis for ethics. Both ethics and values are situational and changeable in relevant circumstances.

**How values are different from beliefs?**

A belief is an internal *feeling that something is true,* even though that belief may be unproven or irrational. For example, I believe that if I see a black cat crossing the road, it indicates a bad luck. On the other hand, a value is a measure of the worth or importance a person attaches to something. Our values are often reflected in the way we live our lives, for instance, we value freedom of speech, or we value our families etc.

All of us have a *constant internal battle between our beliefs and values*. Sometimes, we mistake our beliefs as values or vice versa. Beliefs are internal, while the values are external. This implies that we can pick up a value from an external source or experience, person or thing and start living with that value inculcated in us. But belief is an internal energy that is created on what we absorb and then it builds itself within us further creating our thoughts, words and actions.

Our beliefs create thoughts; thoughts create emotions; emotions create actions – actions of positive values or negative values which depend on the quality of the Belief itself. These then become internal Values.

**How Values, morals and ethics are inextricably tied together?**

The moral values in our lives hold great importance from the point of personal, social and spiritual development. Values, morals and ethics are inextricably tied together. The preservation of human life is the ultimate value, a pillar of ethics and the foundation of all morality.

Values are what we learn from childhood; the ‘stuff’ we acquired from our parents and immediate surroundings. Values are the motive power behind purposeful action. Moral values are meant for making the quest to find the higher self an easier. Many amongst us may find it difficult to follow values such as truthfulness, honesty, forgiveness in our lives because we have not perceived the subtle gains that come to us by following these values.  Or, maybe, we are careless to realize the importance of values in life.

Ethics, on the other hand, are how we actually do behave in the face of difficult situations that test our moral fiber.  Ethics are *the code or principles on which one’s character depend*. Ethics and character are closely related. **Values are essential to ethics to develop** at an early age and can be instrumental to building character.

Whereas, morals are the *intrinsic beliefs developed from the value systems of how we ‘should’ behave in any given situation.* Moral values are the standards of good and evil, which govern an individual’s behaviour and choices.