A BIRD'S VIEW ON SOCIAL VALUES

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Introduction

Values have been taken to mean moral ideas, general conceptions towards the world or at times simply interest, attitudes, preferences, needs, sentiments and dispositions. They form an important part of culture of society. We can say that they are the social sources of 'patterned interaction, they provide guidelines for conduct, by doing this, they facilitate social control. Thus values are collective conceptions of what is considered good, desirable and proper or bad, undesirable and improper in culture.

Definitions of Values

According to H.M. Johnson – "Values are general standards and may be regarded as higher order norms".

According to Haralambos "a value is a belief that something is good and desirable".

According to young and Mack "Values are assumptions, largely unconscious, of what is right and important".

According to R.K. Mukerjee writes "Values are socially approved desires and goals that are internalized through the process of conditioning, learning or socialization and that become subjective preferences, standards and aspirations".

According to Leslie and H.L. Gorman opines "Values are group conceptions of the relative desirability of things".

Characteristics of Values

1. Values may be Specific: Such as 'Love they neighbour as thyself' or it could be 'Truth prevails'. These values are specific. Individual achievement, individual happiness and materialism are major values of modern individual society.

2. Value Systems differ from Culture to Culture: Value systems are not same in all the cultures, they differ in many ways. For example, one may value aggressiveness and deplore passivity, another the reverse, and the third may value something else. It is natural that one society may value individual achievement another may emphasize family unity and kin support. The values of hard work and individual achievement are often associated with industrial capitalist societies.

3. Values of a Culture may Change: The fundamental part of our life is the socially shared, intensely felt values are a fundamental part of our lives. Values are often emotionally charged. These characteristics of Values are capable of bringing conflict between different communities or societies or at times between various persons.

4. Basic Values are learnt: In the early life most of our basic values are learnt from family, friends, neighbourhood, school, mass print and visual media. Therefore these values become part of our personalities. They are generally shared and reinforced by those with whom one interacts.

Types of Values

1. Individual Values: Individual values and those values which are related to the development of human personality, they could be norms of recognition and protection of the human personality, Values such as loyalty, honesty, etc.

2. Collective Values: These collective values are concerned with solidarity of the community or collective norms of equality, justice, solidarity and sociality etc. These values denote collectively.

To conclude, both the terms norms and values are used interchangeably in our day to day life. It should not be forgotten that social scientists use them in specific sense. Though there is a difference between norms and values, still there is often a direct relationship between values, norms and sanctions of our society.

Importance and Functions of Values

Our day-to-day behaviour is regulated by values. Values give direction to our behaviour. Values deal not so much with what is, but with what ought to be, they express moral imperatives. Values are expressions of the ultimate ends, goals, or purposes of social action. One's values are the basis of one's judgment about what is desirable, beautiful, proper, correct, important, worthwhile and good as well as what is desirable, ugly, incorrect, improper and bad. Durkheim emphasized the importance of values in controlling disruptive individual passions. R.K. Mukherjee is of the opinion that "By their nature, all human relations and behaviour are imbedded in values".

The main functions of values are as follows:

1. Important role is played by values in the integration and fulfilment of man's basic impulses and desires in a stable and consistent manner appropriate for his living.

2. They provide for stability and uniformity in group interaction.

3. They build up societies and integrate social relations.

4. The ideal dimensions of personality are moulded by Values.

5. People's behaviour is influenced by values which serve as criteria for evaluating the actions of others.

6. They help to bring about some kind of adjustment between different sets of rules.

7. They have a great role to play in the conduct of social life.

8. Finally, values help in creating norms to guide day to day behaviour.

Importance of Values in Personality and Socio-Cultural systems

1.Human Being As a Value-creating and Value-fulfilling Animal: As Radhakamal Mukerjee (1960: 10), whose contribution to the study of values is widely recognised, points out that human beings create values and also fulfil them. This particular ability affects both the formation of personality and the formation of groups and institutions in society. In this sense human beings are not only the source of values but also those who judge the behaviour involved in day to day functioning of society. A difference is sometimes drawn between personal and social values. However, even those values which are regarded as personal, are largely acquired by the individual from the society, or a segment of it, to which he/she belongs. A human infant is hardly a social being or person at the time of its birth, though it does possess the potentiality to become one. It is through the process of socialisation that it

becomes a social being or a person. Internalisation of the values of the group is an integral and important part of this process of socialisation.

2. Hierarchy of Values: A person does not attach equal importance to all his or her values. There is a hierarchy of values. In a situation of competing claims, the lower values must yield to

the higher one. Thus, when the examinations are close, a student would rather study than go to see a movie. Undoubtedly, in many situations the individual is faced with a conflict of values. But these conflicts are resolved or kept to a minimum through the hierarchical ordering of values. In the absence of such hierarchy of values, the integration of an individual's personality is likely to be seriously threatened, and his actions may become chaotic.

A socio-cultural system too is integrated through a degree of coherence among its diverse values and the general consensus about their hierarchical ordering. According to Radhakamal Mukerjee (1960: 13) the values pertaining to various aspects of life, such as economic, political, moral or religious, form a network. The values of all social groups and institutions like political, economic, religious, etc., also affect each other in the process of interaction and they overlap with each other.

3. Values as Core of Culture – Personality: Sets of values form the core and ethos of every culture. People belonging to a culture, however, are often not conscious of many of the values, for, values are internalised and become a part of their personality. Radhakamal Mukerjee (1960 :

13) says that a normal person is one who successfully obtains a balance between the various conflicting values and goals faced in life. When a person is unable to resolve the value conflicts it leads to severe mental strain and imbalance in his or her personality. Therefore, he considers that in all normal human beings the person should be a "whole" person just as a normal society is that which is an integrated whole.

Change in values in Indian society:

Though values are quite stable and tenacious, they do undergo basic changes in course of time. Values are strongly bound to other aspects of the social system to which they belong; and change in the value system goes hand in hand with changes in the social system as a whole. Whether it is the change in the value system that causes social change, that is, the change of the social system; or it is some other factors which bring about basic social change,

including a change in the value systems - is a question on which opinion is sharply divided. Let us have a glimpse of the change in the system of values of the civilisation to which we ourselves belong. It is customary to talk of "Indian Values" in a way as if all sections of Indian people share the very same values in all historical eras. This is obviously not so. Besides variations in the value systems of the people of different strata and other segments of Indian society, the values of the dominant elites themselves have undergone tremendous changes over various socio-cultural eras, about which we have ample evidence from textual and other sources.

Since socio-cultural systems are wholes, attempts to study particular values in isolation from the dynamics of the system as a whole tend to remain superficial. Sometimes they are even misleading. This is all the more true in the case of traditional socio-cultural systems, such as that of India, which have grown over long periods of time; when their structural and cultural elements have developed a high degree of consistency. We shall therefore view the changes in the Indian value system in the perspective of the dynamics of the traditional socio-cultural system as a whole from the Rigvedic times onwards. This would illustrate how the systematic values of a civilisation which has maintained remarkable continuity have undergone numerous

changes in the course of time.

I.Values in the Vedic Period: Rigveda, the earliest literary source, provides us a good deal of information about the people who migrated and settled in India around 1500 B.C. It tells us that the militant Aryans destroyed ninety nine cities and overpowered their inhabitants, who are referred as "dasa". After the victory, the following pattern appears to emerge.

i. Conflict of Values between the Conquerors and the Vanquished: The vanquished people are referred to as dasa (slave) and pani, the pani are portrayed as wealthy traders. The cattle wealth of the pani was a great attraction for the Aryan. Being traders the pani did not want to part with their cows and other wealth without compensation. The tendency of pani to expect something in exchange for everything that they gave, appeared absurd to the semi-nomadic Aryan. Such a clash of race and culture between the Aryan and the non-Aryan contributed, in a myriad subtle ways, to the shaping of the Indian traditions of culture and patterns of values. The varna stratification, the distinctiveness of the elite and the folk streams of culture, and the double standards that prevail in the sacred and the secular law, all these owe a good deal to this clash, and the consequent patterns of adjustment that came into being.

ii. Duality of Norms and Values: The hatred towards the racially distinct subjugated people found expression in social values and norms. In Rigveda, we find two sets of norms, one for the Aryan and the other for the non-Aryan. The poet, Samvanana, exhorts Aryans to live together in a spirit of harmony and unity. He says, "May you go together, speak together, may your minds know together just as the gods of earlier times take their portions together". But none of the poets of Rigveda ever expressed the desirability of the Aryan living peacefully with the dasa.

It would appear thus that the foundations of the valuational patterns that have persisted till the present day were laid long ago, perhaps in the Vedic era itself. The facts briefly mentioned above indicate how the Aryan priests and warriors had begun to look upon the non-Aryan traders (Pani) as a perennial source of wealth for extortion and the dasa as the people whose only duty was to serve the Aryan master. The elaborate legal system found in the Smriti, which prescribes different codes of conduct, privilege and penalties for persons of different Varna. This also has its roots in the double standards of morality and law for the Aryan and the non-Aryan laid down in the Veda.

However, after the Aryan settled down in the Indo-Gangetic plains and established a working relationship with the pre-Aryan people, their militant spirit declined. They took over many non-Aryan values and beliefs. Conflicts within the Aryan elites also began to take shape. Through the Brahmana Grantha, the priestly Brahmana asserted their superiority over the Kshatriya who were kings and warriors. Many elaborate and expensive *yajna* were prescribed for which the Kshatriya had to pay. The Kshatriya revolted against this dispensation. Their protest found expression in the Upanishad.

II. Values in the Post-Vedic Period: In the Upanishad, the knowledge of the Self is considered the ultimate aim of life. Persons from all walks of life participated and made contribution to it. The language of Upanishad was easy to understand and therefore attracted people. People belonging even to the younger generation of the priestly elite had lost their interest in the intricate sacrifice and rituals. This wave gave a strong blow to the supreme position of the priestly elites as well as to the Varna hierarchy.

It appears that by the time of the Upanishadic era, the notion of racial purity was compromised to such an extent that it became a part of the ritual purity. Thus for getting formal entry into the community, it was made obligatory for each child to undergo certain sacraments or Sanskara. From conception to death, these sacraments are to be performed to mark the turning points in a person's life. It seems that in all traditional societies, whenever

the elites want to get rid of the immediate past, they try to revive the ancient past. Due to the long interval of time,

a complete revival of the bygone age is never possible. Usually what is revived is only some outer form of the ancient past. During the Upanishadic era the values of Varna-hierarchy lost their hold. The lower castes, women and the younger generation of elites revolted against the traditional social order. During this era many popular non-Aryan values got entry into the elite stream. The stronghold of the priestly elites loosened to such an extent that even the priests had to get acquainted with the newly emerging metaphysical ideas.

III. Values in the Buddhist Period: The social values sought to be re-established in the Post-Vedic period were challenged again by Buddhism. The impact of Buddhism was very great. Unlike Brahmanical elites, Buddha preached in the common man's language. He preached equality of all human beings. The Brahmanical lore was in Sanskrit. It was the preserve of the

elite only. Buddha's teachings were open to all castes. Buddha attacked the great Vedic sacrifices and declared them wasteful and futile. Buddhism became popular among rulers, well-to-do merchants, artisans and peasants. The value of equality among castes and the stress on hard work and frugality propagated by Buddhism, promoted industrial and business activity. People made remarkable progress in trade and industry during this era. Many industries and

crafts are mentioned in Buddhist literature. The Jataka mentions eighteen types of guilds of artisans and workers. They are mentioned as sheni or puga (seni and puga in Sanskrit). The royal court recognised these guilds. There used to be a head craftsman in each guild. He is called Jethaka or pamukha (jyeshtha or pramukha in Sanskrit). He was an important member of the royal court. Gradually there developed a prosperous commercial class. Buddhism disturbed the caste hierarchy and the division of society entirely on the basis of birth. The racial factor which was the basis of colour doctrine got another jolt from foreign hordes who continually came to India. They fulfilled very well the criteria of white complexion and blond hair propounded by Patanjali as the physical qualities of a Brahmana.

IV. Manusmriti: Veda of the Brahmanical Revival: Therefore in order to maintain the uniqueness of the Brahman the criteria of racial purity had to be replaced by ritual purity. The Brahman too had lost their racial purity to some extent, despite theoretically emphasising the colour/doctrine. Still another threat was from the pre-Aryan darker people who were at the

lower rungs of the social hierarchy. They constituted the majority in the society. Their norms and culture were basically different from the Aryan.

In order to survive, the priestly elites had to meet all these challenges, and at the same time revive the flickering Brahmanical tradition. In this period of crisis Manusmriti, the Veda of the Brahmanical revival, appeared on the horizon. Unlike the Sutra of the Post-Vedic period which were recognised to be creations of human being, Smriti were presented as the dictates of mythical seers. It is indeed appropriate to attribute the Manusmriti, the grand treatise of revivalist era, to Manu, the primeval value father, since work really laid the foundations of the social and moral order supposed to be based on Vedic tradition.

V. Values in the Islamic Period: Impact of Islam in India can be traced back to the Arab conquest of the Sind in the beginning of the eighth century. Historically and sociologically speaking Islamic values play a very important role in the cultural tradition of India. When we talk about the values in the Vedic period, in the Upanishadic period, and so on, we are basically talking about the Hindu Great tradition. In contrast, the Islamic Great tradition is founded on a world-view which more or less "is non-hierarchical, is purely monotheistic, and messianic-historical in ethos" (Singh 1973 : 68). It is non-hierarchical in the sense that according to Islam all men are equal in the eyes of God, unlike the Hindu tradition. In the Hindu tradition, as Manu has accorded, the Brahmin are at the top; the Kshatriya are next to them, followed by the Vaishya and at the lowest rung are the Sudra.

Islam is monotheistic in the sense that its people believe in the existence of one supreme God, unlike Hinduism where multitude of Gods and Goddesses are worshiped. It is messianic-historical in ethos because its origin is traced to the time of Abrahim, or Ibrahim. From the sons of Abrahim the three religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism are traced. It believes in the notion of messiah who will redeem the world and that there will be the day of judgement when the world ends.Islamic values, like Hindu values, or for that matter any other values, have not remained constant. There has been a lot of intermixture between Hinduism and Islam. Sufism, a sect of Muslim religious mystics, has the elements of 'bhakti' of Hinduism. Similarly, Sikh religion has values of both great traditions, Hindu, as well as Islam. Because of a long period of socio-cultural interaction the Muslim population of India had elements which are not present amongst the Muslims of other countries. They have caste-like structures in their society. Certain customs are also borrowed from the Hindu population. Similarly, the Hindu communities have borrowed the custom of 'purdah' or veil in North India from the Muslims.

VI. The Modern Value System: The traditional value system of India, which formed the basis of its social structure and institutions for more than fifteen hundred years, began to show signs of rapid change and decline as a result of the impact of modern social forces. These forces were brought about, for the most part, by the British rule. The change did not come merely because the rulers were foreigners. It came about primarily because the British represented a radically different type of society - the modern, industrial-capitalist society in all its economic-technical, political-legal, and cultural-ideological dimensions. Moreover, the industrial-capitalist civilisation is an expanding one. It cannot leave the traditional societies to continue as they have been. Because of its own dynamics, it tends to bring about structural and valuational changes in the traditional societies.

i) The British Rule and Indian Value System: The impact of the British rule on the Indian society gave birth to an urban middle class which had values that were not only different but even opposed to the traditional values. It became imbued with the values of modern capitalist society such as individualism, rationality, competitiveness, acquisitiveness, and activeness. This was a far cry from the unified life of the traditional society where the values of co-operation and contentment prevail. In India the concept of individualism never existed, except in the case of the 'sanyasi' otherwise family group was the basic unit of society to which every person belonged. Impact of the British rule also opened the channels of communication between the Indian elites and the Western society. The English language became the window through which, the Indians could view the changes in Western society. They imbibed the values of freedom. The notions of equality, liberty and fraternity came to be understood and internalised by them. Notion of democracy and self-rule or swaraj became a popular ambition for our leaders during the national movement for freedom in India. In fact, we can see the impact of western values on our national leaders such as, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore.

ii) Impact of Modern Values on Indian Villages: Modern values did not remain confined to the cities. Modern forces brought about a basic transformation in the relationship between urban centres and the villages; and thus the life and values in the countryside also began to change. It was not that because of the new means of transport and communication, peasant villages were

connected with transport and communication, for the first time. In peasant civilisations villages are always related with towns. Unless a stable relationship existed between the villages and the towns the latter could not have survived as they did not produce such

essential things as food and cotton. The fact is that a certain kind of relationship always existed between the villages and the towns belonging to the peasant civilisation; but the modern economic, technological, political and cultural factors have brought about a qualitative change in the nature of this relationship, thereby beginning a process of transformation of the village life itself.

In the traditional peasant civilisations, towns thrive on the revenue collected from the villages. Apart from getting such surpluses from the villages, the towns people are not interested in transforming the countryside or in manipulating its life in any way. This picture changes dramatically when towns become centres of commerce and industry. Now the towns people make an all out effort to sell the mass-produced goods in the country side, and to acquire cheap labour and raw material from there. This has important consequences for the traditional way of life in the villages. The village industries decline, and together with mass-produced commodities which are pumped into the villages, modern attitudes and values also invade the rural areas. The production in the villages also is motivated more and more by the desire for earning the maximum profit, rather than primarily fulfilling one's requirements. Together, with this, the values of individualism, competition, and unlimited acquisitiveness also has gathered strength.

Modern forces dealt a blow to folk values, as well as to the folkway of life. In traditional, peasant civilisations, the basic values underlying the elite and the folk traditions of culture were the same. The difference between the two traditions was primarily that of the degree of refinement, systematisation, and self-consciousness. It was because of the sharing of the basic values and worldview that the traditional elite culture did not damage or weaken the folk cultures, even though they were in constant interaction with each other. The modern elite culture on the other hand is imbued with values which are not only different from folk values but are opposed to them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the influence of modern elite culture poses
a threat to the very existence of folk culture and folk values. We find thus that although the values of a social system tends to form a coherent and relatively stable pattern, they do not remain static.

Present Scenario of Values: In the modern times, degeneration of values have become very rampant. Today, 'value' is a word which is just limited to the moral books of some primary classes. It is no longer a valid word for an Indian mind too, just as it has lost its meaning in

the western world, several years ago. Values have become a word sleeping in the dictionary. Reverences, obedience, kindness, love, affection, were some of the values but in the present scenario these have been substituted by lust, greed, hypocrisy, hatred etc. Responsible behaviour is expected from children but now a days it has been noticed that immoral and antisocial behaviour is increasing among them. As being an integral part of society I consider it as a matter of great concern because decrease in moral values among children and youth, greatly hamper the social fabrication and society as well. A number of factors are responsible for fall in values among youths.

Following are some of the factors which are responsible for declining values among youth:

1. **Peer-group influence:** It is the influence of their peers, which plays a vital role in developing their concept of morality. They pass more time with them, discuss with them frankly and seek their advice. They scrutinize and evaluate matters relating to morality practiced in their homes and found conflicting views. They readily accept views of peer group.

2. **Childhood control:** During adolescence child started to become self-ruled. These rules and regulations may be sometimes very flexible and vice-versa based on reactions towards his childhood environment.

3. **Changes in moral principles and increase in social contacts:** Outside home the environment is changed. In this changed environment, a child learns a lot while making adjustments with these different situations. During this process of adjustment, there is change in the moral principles of child.

4. **Gender based morality specifications by society:** Double and sub standards of morality set by society based on gender is also the cause of degradation of moral values among youth. Some activities supports the social system for such degradation i.e. Going to market alone, laughing in public places task specification for boys etc.

5. **Willingness of self-exposition or identification:** During adolescence youth develop the capability to analyzing the issues and situations, developing their own view points, rationalizing the things, questioning the status quo, revolting and struggling for their personality development. Willingness of self-exposition or identification usually takes a youth or child towards crime and anti-social and immoral behaviour like eve teasing, commenting on girls, elopement, delivering abusing words, smoking, drinking, quarrelling, sex abuse, substance abuse etc.

6. Nuclear family and materialistic attitude towards life: In the family of working husband and wife children does not have sufficient time to stay with their parents and hence felt alone. Their feelings and emotions rested passive and remained as neglected child. In spite of sharing time with parents children start wasting their time in watching TV, staying with peer group, reading and watching porn or bad literature etc. to share feeling and emotions and start revolting in the form of immoral behaviour.

7. Parental behaviour: Parental behaviour definitely affects the child's personality and character in both ways i.e. positive, negative and also responsible for developing moral values. Now a day, the control of parents over their children has been decreasing. As a result, external forces are diverting the youths and they engage themselves in night club, rocking, unwanted discussions and so many objectionable relationships. This sort of isolation, lack of love and affection from family has been endangering and spoiling their lives resulting unrest and agitation. On the other hand, if parents have very strict control and stern punishments during childhood prove harmful to the child may develop feeling of revolt as a result of reactions.

8. Other stimulating factors: A number of stimulating factors such as unhappy life, influence of entertainment means, undesirable films, porn sites on internet, sexual urge, obscene novels, heroism, desire to get rich quickly, drug abuse etc. hasten moral degeneration among youth.

Methods to reduce the moral degradation in youth

1. Government Control over Media: All the governments of states and centre should have control over media agencies and operators who publish indecent acts in their concerned publications. It must be ensure that only useful and appropriate type of news and actions will be broadcast and publish, which eventually reduces the moral decay.

2. Reform in Educational Policy and Governance: Every educational system should have the provision of compulsory moral and ethnic classes for all the students. Education should not merely be exam oriented but also practical with continuous education and evaluation with the help of appropriate teaching methods. The ideologies like Nationalism, International Brotherhood, Freedom, Equality, Justice, Patriotism, Value Based Education should be incorporated in the existing curriculum as compulsory matter at all stage of education.

3. Staying with Values of Past: Children should practice and learn rituals, tradition, religion and activities as well as modernization should be simultaneously maintained.

4. Improvement in social Structure: According to the change in time and social situation, there should be definite change in social structure so that the children from their childhood feel belongingness with everything within the society.

5. Ideological Change: In every society, all Social and political organizations must concentrate on the development of value based moral character of the society and accordingly common people must be accountable for such development. These organizations should concentrate on their positive activities to direct youth in positive direction.

Conclusion

Values have been taken to mean moral ideas, general conceptions towards the world or at times simply interest, attitudes, preferences, needs, sentiments and dispositions. They form an important part of culture of society. We can say that they are the social sources of 'patterned interaction, they provide guidelines for conduct, by doing this, they facilitate social control. Thus values are collective conceptions of what is considered good, desirable and proper or bad, undesirable and improper in culture. The traditional value system of India, which formed the basis of its social structure and institutions for more than fifteen hundred years, began to show signs of rapid change and decline as a result of the impact of modern social forces.

Isolation, lack of love and affection from family has been endangering and spoiling their lives resulting unrest and agitation. On the other hand, if parents have very strict control and stern punishments during childhood prove harmful to the child may develop feeling of revolt as a result of reactions. Education should not merely be exam oriented but also practical with continuous education and evaluation with the help of appropriate teaching methods. The ideologies like Nationalism, International Brotherhood, Freedom, Equality, Justice, Patriotism, Value Based Education should be incorporated in the existing curriculum as compulsory matter at all stage of education. In every society, all Social and political organizations must concentrate on the development of value based moral character of the society and accordingly common people must be accountable for such development. These organizations should concentrate on their positive activities to direct youth in positive direction.

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