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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Some people feel that values keep changing with time and situation, while others strongly believe that there are certain universal and eternal human values. Discuss with examples. (250 words)

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Approach

- Define human values with examples.
- Explain the type of values, whether they keep changing with time or are permanent.

Introduction

Values are elements of life that we hold as important or desirable. They are standards of conduct and guide of human behavior. Values give meaning and strength to a person's character by occupying a central place in his life. Values reflect one's personal attitude and judgments, decisions and choices, behaviour and relationships.

Body

Values can be relative as well as absolute.

Relative values:

- These are based on individual and societal standards, their likes, dislikes, social norms, tradition, for instance Indian traditional values of 'Vasudev Kutumbakam', universal brotherhood, tolerance may contradict with western values of liberalism, individualism and utilitarianism.
- Values evolve to bring order in the society and are culture specific. They evolve along with the cultures.
 - For ex: The present generation of Indian society is more ambition sensitive showing more assertiveness, instead of Indian traditional values of sacrifice and selflessness.
 - The norms of nuclear family and even live-in relationships are more socially accepted today.

Absolute values:

- Universal values like truth, gratitude, peace, non-violence, sympathy, are considered beyond time and space. They are core values and are fundamental. They do not change and remain stable.
- The standards of conduct differ from person to person, society to society but there can be some values which can be considered universal.
 - For ex: murder is a crime in every society and hence a universal norm.
 - Immanuel Kant considered human dignity as a universal value and one of his categorical imperatives. Similarly, justice for Rawls is an architectonic principle.

Conclusion

Thus, values can be either universal, relative or dynamic which keeps changing with time. As Einstein once rightly remarked, "*Try not to become a man of success but try to become a man of values*". Values influence our thoughts, feelings and actions. They guide us to do the right things. Values give direction and firmness to life.