



Mains Practice Question

Q. Does learning from cultural and civilisational values makes one moral and ethical or rather turns him/her towards orthodox and regressive thinking? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)

16 Jan, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- In Introduction briefly highlight what cultural and civilisational values consist of with example.
- Discuss how such values make one moral or orthodox with e.g. (if possible use the same example to illustrate both points of view).
- In conclusion, highlight the concept of moral/ethical relativism for such dilemma in learning. (If space and time give steps to enhance moral learning and minimize regressive ones).

*In ethics paper case studies and examples come handy in briefly making a point rather than long explanations.

Introduction: Cultural and civilisational values are core ideals upon which a community exists. They could be part of rituals, belief systems, traditions, customs etc. They could have an all-pervasive effect on an individual's attitude and also become the norm in society.

Main Body

Making one Moral and Ethical

- Restraining one's action by helping control selfish values like greed, overconsumption e.g. Jainism restrains killing of living beings, Hindus revere cows. This enables one to develop a compassionate and caring attitude towards others.
- Values become part of the family, society, educational institutions and passed on through times e.g. Pacifism stance of Gandhiji was due to his background of merchant community and influence of Jainism. Such an attitude got reflected in his leadership and influenced his actions in the form of Satyagraha.
- Such values become a source of ethical guidance in cases of moral dilemmas taking the form of conscientious decision making, places accountability in the form of social acceptability, and take the form of code of ethics and conduct.

Making one Orthodox and Regressive in thinking

- Since such values persist as norms and take the form of unsaid laws, these could become static and rigid, unamenable to change e.g. patriarchy leading to an oppressive state of women in modern times.
- Due to social stratification, and attempt to maintain such hierarchy by the groups in upper strung, leads one to believe in such structure as taken for granted e.g. caste system in India, communal attitude in politics.
- Over-zealous attitude to protect values and glorify them in order to take pride in them could lead to rigidity and less-open-minded to newer and progressive values e.g. mob vigilantism on Valentine's Day or racial superiority thinking in Nazi Germany

Way Forward

Learning from such values thus needs to be seen from moral/ethical relativism prism. They should have a utilitarian purpose and applied to changing times and needs.

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