



Mains Practice Question

Q. “Social influence and persuasion can contribute in eliminating social evils in the society”. Discuss. (150 words)

09 Jul, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Write an introduction briefly explaining social influence and persuasion.
- Discuss how social influence and persuasion can bring about behavioural change.
- Illustrate the interlinkage between social influence and persuasion
- Discuss the utility of social influence and persuasion in civil services
- Conclude by summarising your answer.

Introduction

Social influence is an attribute that can bring change in a person’s behaviour, thoughts, feelings and attitudes that results from interaction with another individual in society.

Persuasion is defined as communicative activities that are mediated. It is the process of changing or reinforcing attitudes, beliefs or behaviour of a person.

It can be intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of the way the changed person perceives themselves in relationship to the influencer. It is different from conformity, power and authority. These are **fundamental functions of communication.**

Body

Behavioural Changes Brought About Social Influence and Persuasion

- **Change in outlook of individuals:** Social influence is the process by which individuals make real changes to their outlooks and behaviours as a result of communication with others who are perceived to be similar, desirable, or expert.
- **Adjustment in views:** People adjust their views with respect to others to whom they feel similar in accordance with psychological principles such as balance.

Interlink Between Social Influence and Persuasion

- Social influence and persuasion are the keys to bring behavioural changes to solve social evils like caste system, patriarchy, climate change, solid waste management.
- Using social influence of celebrities and campaigns have been quite effective in persuading people to adopt any desired behaviour. For example:

- United Nations taking help of popular Hollywood actors to promote campaigns for climate change and gender equality.

Utility Of Persuasion and Social influence in Civil Services

- **Executing Government schemes:** Sometimes persuasion and social influence works better than coercion. Making celebrities ambassadors for various social schemes like Beti Padhao Beti Bachao is a manifestation of the same. Success of the initiatives like Swacch Bharat Abhiyaan- cleanliness drives and UjjwalaYojana's give it up campaign can be attributed to persuasion.
- **Moral conditioning:** Persuasion can bring change in the social attitude of people. For example, regular announcements to keep the station clean persuade people to change their behaviour. The Selfie campaign was a major success in promoting the Beti Padhao Beti Bachao scheme.
- **Incentivising good behaviour:** For instance in income declaration schemes a window was open to declare black money with some fine and no legal action that incentivized people instead of penalizing them.
- **Following rules:** It helps in making people follow rules which bring inconvenience to them, like District collectors visiting houses in the morning to persuade people for waste segregation before disposal

Conclusion

Thus social behaviour and persuasion are effective attributes to deal with issues like girl child education, inter-caste marriage, temple entry for women. These methods are democratic and in sync with the Gandhian ideals of preferring insistence over coercion. In civil services, they can be viable in bringing about behavioural change keeping intact the dignity and respect of all stakeholders.

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