



Perspective: India's Soft Power

For Prelims: International Day of Yoga, Ayurveda, AYUSH, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

For Mains: India's Soft Power: Importance, Challenges, Recommendations.

Why in News?

The Committee on External Affairs has recently presented its **16th Report on the prospects and limitations of [India's Soft Power](#) and Cultural Diplomacy.**

What is Soft Power?

- **Soft Power:**
 - In contrast to the coercive nature of Hard power, **Joseph Nye** suggested the concept of soft power in post-cold war world
 - Soft power is the **ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction.**
 - The **three pillars of soft power are:**
 - Political values, culture, and foreign policy.
- **Hard Power:**
 - Power in international relations has traditionally **been understood in the context of military and economic might.**
 - It is **known as Hard power** (which is quantifiable).
 - Hard power is **deployed in the form of coercion:**
 - Using force, the threat of force, economic sanctions etc.
- **Requirement:**
 - Nye argues that successful states need both hard and soft power, the ability to coerce others as well as the ability to shape their long-term attitudes and preferences.

Soft Power: Why it's Important for India?

In addition to economic and military power, the idea of Soft Power has **gained traction during the past few decades.** Indian arts, culture, yoga and spiritualism, culinary varieties, festivals, music and dance forms etc, have **attracted people from all around the world for centuries.**

- **For creating Goodwill:** Indian ethos and practices has helped it build a benevolent image and tremendous goodwill globally, but it has to be backed with quality project delivery.
- **As a Strategic Investment:** To become a leading strategic investor in commercially viable and financially attractive [public-private partnership](#) infrastructure projects, India needs to deliver on its promises.
- **Post-Pandemic Changes:** With increased scope of cooperation and the realisation that global problems require global efforts, India's role has gained prominence as the [pharmacy of the World.](#)

- **Trade and Investment Flow:** To build an image of a trusted and reliable partner, India needs to make other countries believe in its commitment to deliver. This will lead to rising [trade and investment flows](#) to growing Indian markets.
- **Agreements and Communication:** The projection of Soft power can help India establish agreement and communication between states through peaceful methods. It also **helps build a brand for itself by promoting its Non-aligned commitments, Democratic values, morals, ethos, etc.**
- **In order to Reach Globally:** There is no denying the fact that India can use these instruments of soft power to reach out to the global audience—in turn, **making an all-embracing impact on the worldwide market.**
 - India's ancient wisdom and spirituality **needed to be utilised to capitalise on India's leadership role in the world.**

What are the Challenges?

- **Lack of Funds:**
 - With limited capacity to fund infrastructure projects, India **needs to rationally allot its funds**, keeping in mind its strategic objectives.
 - Moreover, improving the Indian economy and **opening up the market can help India to accumulate funds for international projects.**
- **Lack of Institutional Framework:**
 - India needs an independent development partnership agency **that develops long-term and short-term strategies**, identifies priorities, builds knowledge and facilitates learning.
 - It needs to remove [Internal institutional hurdles](#), such as policy and bureaucratic delays, to meet its infrastructure targets.

What are the Recommendations of the Committee?

- **Overseas Centres:** Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) should facilitate the opening of more [AYUSH](#) (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homeopathy) centres overseas in a **“strategic and planned manner”**.
- **Yoga Certification Board:** In the context of the government's push to popularise yoga through initiatives such as the [International Day of Yoga](#) and setting up of other related facilities, the panel recommended that the **ministries of AYUSH and external affairs should set up a ‘Yoga Certification Board for certifying Indian yogic practices and therapies’**.
- **Diaspora Collaboration:** The [Indian diaspora](#), too, is a major asset of India's soft power diplomacy. Collaboration with the Indian diaspora should also be encouraged to **disseminate India's soft power in regions where it is not yet widely known.**
- **In the Field of Medicine:** Concerted efforts to get recognition of [Ayurveda](#) as a system of medicine and adopt the [pharmacopeia](#) of India **so that the products can be exported as medicine.**
 - Ayurveda **does not have a recognised pharmacopeia**, which is why such products are being **exported as dietary supplements and nutraceuticals**. The products are still **not recognised in most of the foreign countries.**
- **Pricing System:** On the issue of the differential pricing of tickets to monuments for foreigners and Indians, the **panel suggested that the pricing system “may be revisited”** since such a policy is unnecessary in a globalised world.
 - **Such differential pricing leads to a loss of a large segment of foreign travellers.**
- **Budgetary Allocation:** The panel sought an enhanced annual budgetary allocation of ₹500 crore for the [Indian Council For Cultural Relations \(ICCR\)](#) for **“conducting India's soft power and cultural diplomacy in a robust and extensive manner”**.
- **Coordination Committee:** Establishment of a coordination committee consisting of representatives from the MEA and other ministries **to overcome the lack of coordination among multiple institutions** in projecting India's soft power and cultural diplomacy.
- **A Policy Document:** The MEA should also prepare a policy document on “India's soft power projections, delineating India's soft power toolbox and manner **in which it is being projected abroad along a vision statement for the future”**.

What can be the Way Forward?

- In its capacity as the biggest democracy in the world, India's soft power should extend beyond simply sharing election best practices, to also **countering executive overreach through a sophisticated framework of democratic institutions.**
- The other way to overcome a shortage of money and minds on the job is **to examine how the private sector can be included** to fill some of the gaps left by official agencies.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Years Question (PYQ)

Q. Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India-Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchange could help generate goodwill between the two countries. Discuss with suitable examples. **(2015)**

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