



PERSUASION AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE - GS IV MAINS

Q. 'Social Influence and Persuasion can contribute to the elimination of social evils in the country'. Justify the statement with suitable examples. (10 marks, 150 words)

Social Influence and Persuasion:

- **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.

Role of Social Influence and Persuasion in eliminating social evils

Social influence and persuasion are the keys to bring behavioural changes to **solve social evils like caste system, patriarchy, climate change, solid waste management.**

1. **Persistent social influence and Persuasion against caste system** throughout our history changed our attitude towards caste to some extent.
 - For example, the temple entry movements carried out by our forefathers like Dr. Ambedkar, Periyar and movements like vaikom satyagraha ends in access to temples to the people belonging to lower strata of society.
2. The historical **social evil of gender inequality** is bridged, to some extent, because of the social influence we underwent during our freedom struggle.
 - For example, efforts and constant persuasion of Rajaram Mohan Roy against sati ends in eradication of inhuman practice against women. Social influence and Persuasion efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar results in widow remarriage and women education in India.
3. Persuasion can be achieved not only through words and campaigns but also through action. This may be called the **role model effect.**
 - Example, Savitribhai phule got education from her husband and social reformer, Mahatma Jyotirao phule. Then she herself educated girls even after so many social boycotts to her efforts. The end result is women empowerment and girls' education.



4. **Social influence can also be achieved by constant debate with the society.**
 - For example, Thanthai Periyar with his constant efforts attained many progressive results like Elimination of caste surname in Tamilnadu, Propagation of self respect marriages and inter caste marriages in India.
5. In recent decades, government persistent social influence and Persuasion efforts with the help of **celebrities through the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign** greatly improved the child sex ratio at birth.
6. In the future too, we have to take the social influence path and persistent persuasion to integrate sexual minorities like LGBTQIA+ into mainstream society.

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.

