

**1. In India's public policy discourse, examine the rationale behind putting more emphasis on behavioural nudging.****Introduction**

The Economic Survey has advocated the use of the behavioural economics concept of 'nudge' to encourage desirable social and economic change in the country. The Survey recommends that the proposal to set up a behavioural economics unit in the NITI Aayog must be immediately activated.

**Body**

Nudges are an outgrowth of the important field of behavioural economics, for which Richard Thaler won the 2017 Nobel Prize. Behavioural economists emphasise that humans beings are not computers, and most humans can use a little help. Sometimes people lack information. Sometimes people's emotions get the better of them. Good nudges can give people the help they need.

The present world is seeing new ways to address serious social problems, ranging from public health to sex equality to tax compliance. Here nudges, which are relatively modest interventions that preserve freedom of choice but that steer people in particular directions, are seen to be increasing in importance. When the government provides people with health-related information, it nudges. A warning is a nudge. A reminder is a nudge. So is an emphasis on longstanding or emerging social norms.

Behavioural Insights Teams, sometimes called Nudge Units, can now be found in many nations. Every day, their work is saving lives, reducing poverty, improving public health, reducing sex discrimination, and helping to clean up the environment.

The appeal of nudge units lies in the fact that these interventions are cost-effective and do not require additional resources, but instead draw their power from a fundamental paradigm shift in the way policymakers view human behaviour. In India, where state intervention is vital, and the resource-starved state machinery faces numerous challenges in addressing the needs of the population, nudge units could help optimize the impact of public policies if used effectively.

The economic survey rightly emphasises that nudging and uses of behavioural economics are already playing a prominent and constructive role in India. For example, the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has emphasised behaviour change in addition to the construction of toilets. It has succeeded in part because it has provided information, made the use of toilets more attractive, appealed to people's emotions, emphasised new social norms, publicly celebrated Swachhata champions, and prominently connected the reform project to some of Gandhi's teachings about cleanliness.

Another example is the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative, designed to address the decline in the child sex ratio and promote the empowerment of girls and women. A central goal has been to promote a social norm in favour of celebrating girls, rather than viewing them as a burden.

For India, one of the most important areas for the use of behavioural economics involves public health, which could greatly benefit from a sustained focus on potential nudges. A great deal could be done to promote flu shot appointments and other vaccinations.

Furthermore, the economic survey stressed the importance of understanding the social and cultural norms governing India. In a diverse country like India, an agile and adaptable network of nudge units across ministries and levels of government would be better placed to suggest nudges than a centralized body.

An underlying assumption in nudge theory is that the citizen does not understand what is best for them and hence the government has the power to restrict individual freedoms to serve the greater common good. Public support can be mobilized for proposed changes through public consultation. This can prevent the implementation of nudge theory seeming like coercive state action.

Nudge units place great importance in the power of out-thinking the irrationality presented by everyday human behaviours. However, it would be dangerous to assume that all negative actions can be accounted for and reduced by the power of a nudge; nudge theory can never be a panacea for everything that is wrong with society. Moreover, it cannot be a replacement for shoddily-designed public policies and can only be used to augment the impact of well thought out policies.

Good nudges if they come from a doctor or a government can counter our biases. One thing the government can do is to give everyone clarity on what they should be eating if they want to avoid certain health risks. And if people want to eat differently from the nudge, they are free to do that. But the clear information overcomes the biases that lead them unwittingly to eat in an unhealthy way.

### **Conclusion**

Behavioural economics is, however, not a panacea to policy making; its potential needs to be understood and put in perspective. Nudge policies cannot and should not supplant every incentive-based and mandate-based policy. However, the majority of public policy issues are amenable to incorporating nudges. Through a combination of an understanding of the Indian people and human behaviour, nudge units could be a potent enabler of change.

## **2. Examine the ways in which social influence transforms the attitude of an individual/ group.**

### **Introduction**

Attitude is what an individual or a group think or feel about something which decides one's behavior towards a situation/an individual. Social influence refers to the way in which individuals change their behavior to meet the demands of a social environment. The social interaction influences the attitude of an individual/group and thus a major determinant of the behavior.

## Body

### **Social Influence transforming the attitude of an individual:**

- Family: The social interaction within a family shapes the attitude of an individual. E.g.
  - Abdul Kalam says, his father was holding discussions with all the religion's people in his home. This shaped Kalam's attitude towards secularism.
  - In some cases where the family is patriarchal, the child may develop an attitude of stereotyping the role of men and women.
- Society: The social approval/disapproval transforms an individual attitude. E.g.
  - The social disapproval of open defecation changing the attitude of individuals towards it.
  - Unfortunately, in some cases, it can be negative. Social approval on Bribery develops an attitude as if it is okay in a government official.

As French and Raven argues, the norms and roles expected via social interactions acts as agents of change on one's attitude. It changes one's way of thinking, feeling and behaving that are shared among others in a social group. When a social group has well recognized norms, there is a huge pressure for people to maintain such norm.

### **Social Influence transforming the attitude of a group:**

Similarly, on a group, social influence shapes/transforms its attitude. E.g. the apathy or the approval shown by the society on Mob lynching is a main reason for them to have an attitude of 'Chalta hai' and hence perpetuating it.

The more aware citizens with increasing literacy and general knowledge is changing the attitude of government departments including police who are changing their ways of working to be more accommodative. E.g. citizen vigilance apps, proactive participation and discipline of Ralegan siddhi village has influencing the attitude of district administration seeing them as partners in development etc.,

In the same way, social disapproval of Khap panchayats in several villages of Haryana has led to the Khap panchayats changing their attitude towards dealing with problems be it be on love marriage or property conflicts or untouchability etc.,

Herbert Kelman has identified 3 ways of social influencing transforming attitude:

- Compliance: Influence being temporary only to comply with the norms or rule with or without actually believing in it. E.g. following traffic rules etc.,
- Identification: when an individual/group is influenced by an event or a personality and try to conform oneself/itself to that ideology. E.g. A political party with communist ideology etc.,
- Internalization: It occurs when an individual or a group not only align their attitude as per the social influence but also believe in it as it matched their value system. E.g. Anna Hazare following Mahatma Gandhi and his ideas, Ashrams following ideas of certain Gurus (E.g. Basaveshwara) etc.,

### Conclusion

Social influence can build a character or be a reason to destroy a society depending on the way and values it pursues. Thus, attitude of an individual or a group is built, shaped or transformed by various social interaction it goes through intentionally or unintentionally.

### 3. Why should a civil servant have persuasive abilities? Substantiate with the help of suitable examples.

#### Introduction

Generally, persuasion is defined as communicative activities that are mediated. According to the communication scholar Gerald R. Miller, any message that is aimed to shape, reinforce or change the perceptions, emotions, beliefs, behavioural intentions and behaviours is to be considered as persuasive communication.

#### Body

Persuasion has been perceived as a potent weapon in the hands of civil servants through which they can encourage their teammates to work with more efficiency.

#### Why persuasive abilities:

People respond to persuasive messages in two ways: thoughtfully and mindlessly. When people are in thoughtful mode, the persuasiveness of the message is determined by merits of the message. When people respond to messages mindlessly, their brains are locked on automatic. Persuasion is mainly dependent upon the attractiveness of the speakers and reaction of the listeners. Persuasion is exclusively related with communication, learning, awareness and thought.

Miller (1980) suggested that communications exert three different persuasive effects: shaping, reinforcing, and changing responses.

- Shaping: Attitudes are "shaped" by associating pleasurable environments with a product, person, or idea.
- Reinforcing: Contrary to popular opinion, many persuasive communications are not designed to convert people, but to reinforce a position they already hold.
- Changing: This is perhaps the most important persuasive impact and the one that comes most frequently to mind when we think of persuasion. Communications can and do change in attitude.

### Significance

- Every day we are bombarded by advertisements of every sort. The goal of these ads is to sell us cars, computers, video games, clothes, and even political candidates. The ads appear on billboards, website popup ads, buses, TV infomercials, etc. It's been estimated that over \$500 billion is spent annually on advertising worldwide
- These advertisements do change our choices and preference which are part of our behavior.
- Bringing social change – To deal with issues like girl child education, inter caste marriage, temple entry for women, persuasion may be the only solution because change has to be brought keep intact the dignity and respect of all stake holders.
- Implementing public policy– Sometimes persuasion works better than coercion; success of the initiatives like Swacch Bharat Abhiyaan- cleanliness drives and UjjwalaYojana's give it up campaign can be attributing to persuasion.
- Following rules – It helps in making people follow rules which bring inconvenience to them, like District collector visiting houses in the morning to persuade people for waste segregation before disposal.
- Moral conditioning – Persuasion can bring change in attitude of people. In Delhi Metro various signboards on certain seats asks passengers to offer that seat to needy people. Similarly, regular announcements to keep the station clean persuade people to change their behaviour.
- Incentivising good behaviour– For instance in income declaration scheme a window was open to declare black money with some fine and no legal action that incentivized people instead of penalizing them.

### Conclusion

Persuasion can bring a lasting change in people's behaviour and is highly effective in implementation of public policies provided the tools are used in a right way.

#### 4. How does persuasion work in international relations? Illustrate with the help of suitable examples.

##### Introduction

Persuasion refers to the technique of changing attitude of people, organisations and nations. At international level there is no one authority. Sovereignty and right to self-determination of nations have to be respected. To avoid conflict, maintain just and honorable relations among nations and to solve global problems, persuasion becomes very important in International relations.

##### Body

##### Working of persuasion in international relations

- Development of credibility – to use ethos (ethical appeal); pathos (emotional appeal) and logos (logical appeal), by individual nations. For instance India has historical record of non-aggression and mutual co-existence. India accepted U.N. tribunal award in favor of Bangladesh on India-Bangladesh dispute on moral ground. On the other hand China rejected the International Court of Justice ruling on South China Sea. Steps like this have increased persuasive power to India at international fora. Due to this India is actively involved in Afghan peace process among others.
- Grouping of like-minded nations – to develop a bargaining power and to express a collective morality. For instance formation of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the then bi-polar world.
- International institutions and treaties – act as strong persuasive tool to bring consensus among nations. Recent consensus on climate change and nations self-declaration on reduction in carbon emission comes from persuasion by U.N and climate change treaties.
- Leadership – by individual nations. For instance Germany has taken lead in accommodating migrants by skilling them and making them productive. Cuba, a small nation, has shown extraordinary leadership in providing medical support all over the world, especially in epidemic situation.
- Coercive persuasion – is adopted by stronger nations against weaker ones with the support of other nations. For instance sanctions against Iran, against its nuclear program, by the U.S.

However, persuasion seems to have failed in many instances in International relations -

- Cases of alleged atrocities against minorities in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan etc continues.
- Persuasion and talks have failed stop terrorism emanating from Pakistan.
- Despite huge efforts by India, western nations are not willing to adopt “Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism”, which treats all form of terrorism equally.
- Consensus on nuclear non-proliferation cannot be reached due to self-interest of nations taking precedence over regional peace and stability.
- Persuasion has also failed to stop U.S and other countries from pulling out of Paris agreement.

### Conclusion

Persuasion will work in an ecosystem where international ethics prevails. National interest must not be seen bereft of global interest. International relations must be guided by mutual trust and respect. The vision in International relations should be that of “Vasudev Kutumbakam” (whole world is one family). Then persuasion can become effective tool of international governance.

### 5. Social influence can stifle individual enterprise and ingenuity. Do you agree? Critically examine.

#### Introduction

Social influence occurs when one's emotions, opinions, or behaviours are affected by others in the society. It is a broad term that relates to many different phenomena like conformity, obedience and persuasion. ‘Individual enterprise’ depends on one’s freedom to make choices and decision making ability. For instance freedom to choose one’s life partner.

Ingenuity is power of creative imagination. For instance Ferdinand Magellan advanced our scientific knowledge by navigating around the world and proving that earth is sphere. This was against the prevailing belief in Europe at that time that earth was flat.

#### Body

Social influence tends to create conformity and acceptance of group behavior in individual’s action. It leads to synchronization of thoughts and orientation towards same thinking. But conformist behavior can stifle individual enterprise and ingenuity.

Bureaucratic work culture and too much of conformity may lead to bureaucrats being silent spectator in case of fraud and crime. After U.S failed intervention in the

“Bay of Pigs”, American bureaucrats accepted that they had reservation about the idea but did not raise the flag on time leading to embarrassment to the country.

Values and ethics need evaluation and recalibration due to changing circumstances. Conformity will bring stagnation of ideas. The practices of “Sati” could be abolished only due to eccentrics like Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Conformity leads to “ethical blindness”. Child labour is pervasive and readily accepted in our society. Noble Laureate Kailash Satyarthi and his team and other NGO’s have to work very hard to stop child labour and bring a social change.

Indian society has biasness towards rights of LGBT community. They face discrimination in every walk of life. Conformist behavior has made them most vulnerable community. NGO’s like Naz foundation have difficulty in breaking the status quo.

However, in certain cases social influence and bring desirable behavior among citizens –

- Swatch Bharat campaign and Beti Bacho and Beti Padhao has been successful due to persuasion and social influence.
- Conservation and recycling can be enforced as a value in our society by using emotional intelligence and social influence.
- Social influence to develop environmental values can develop individual enterprise and ingenuity. For instance women’s role in Chipkoo Movement.
- If the government of the day bring unpopular laws or policy like labour law or demonetization then acceptance by all party representatives, workers and also by bureaucrats and citizens will help in smooth execution of the policy and laws.
- Social influence avoids personal and societal value conflict, dissent, intolerance, leading to stronger social cohesion and stronger integration. All these increases efficiency and effectiveness of governance.

### **Conclusion**

Social influence is important for social cohesion and stability. However value of tolerance must prevail in society to be open to new ideas and thoughts. This is the only way for society to grow and prosper.