



## Mains Practice Questions

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### Approach:

- Explain the significance of media in a democracy.
- Give examples and explain the need for journalistic ethics.

### Introduction

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- Media acts as a watchdog of public interest in a democracy. It plays an important role in a democracy and serves as an agency of the people to inform them of the events of national and international significance.
- It is the means by which people receive a free flow of information and ideas, which is essential to intelligent self-governance, that is, democracy.
- Freedom of the media is part of the freedom of speech guaranteed by the Constitution under Article 19 (1) (a).
- One of the basic tasks of the media is to provide truthful and objective information to the people for their social, political and international awareness to reach an informed opinion. This makes media an important stakeholder in a democracy to shoulder the responsibility of presenting unbiased honest news without any vested interest.

- Media is considered as “Fourth Pillar” in democratic countries along with Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. Its importance in influencing readers can be gauged by the role it played during the freedom struggle, politically educating millions of Indians who joined the leaders in their fight against the British imperialism. The role of media in Indian democracy has undergone massive changes, from the days of press censorship during Emergency in 1975 to being influential in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

## **Body**

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### **The Need for Media Ethics**

- The issues of paid news, media trial, non-issues being presented as real news while the real issues are sidelined, the news is being doctored and fact distortion for profits and political favour, fake news, yellow journalism are important concerns which are influencing public and impacting national security. For instance, fear mongering through media has led to mob lynchings, attacks on the migrant population.
- The absence of objective journalism leads to the false presentation of truth in a society which affects the perception and opinions of people. As observed in the case of Cambridge Analytica case, the biased news coverage on social media platform affected the Presidential elections in the U.S.
- The chase for sensationalism and higher TRP rates as observed in the coverage of 26/11 terrorist attacks in India risked the internal security of the nation. The sensationalism-driven reporting compromised the identities of rape victims and survivors despite SC guidelines.
- Trial by media does not follow the due process of law and can reduce the public trust in institutions of governance like the judiciary.
- Paid news and fake news can manipulate public perception and can instigate hatred, violence, and disharmony among the various community within society.
- With the advent of social media, technological changes, the reach of media has grown profoundly. Its reach and role in impacting public opinion have made it even more important to ensure its objectivity, non-partisanship calls for the enforcement of journalistic ethics.

### **Conclusion**

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- In developing countries like India, the media have a great responsibility to fight backward ideas such as casteism and communalism and help the people in their struggle against poverty and other social evils. Hence, having journalistic ethics in place becomes very important.
- It is important that the media stick to the core principles like truth and accuracy, transparency, independence, fairness and impartiality, responsibility and fair play.