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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Free media (including social media) has an important role in the fight against corruption. Comment. (150 Words)

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Approach

- Give in brief the significance of free media for democracy.
- Analyze (with merits and demerits) its crucial role in the prevention, monitoring and control of corruption.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

- A free media acts as a disseminator of information and a channel of communication between people and the government. Its role in the policy process is worth appreciating. Media educates people by providing a wealth of information related to socio-cultural and politico-economic aspects of the society.
- In a democracy it has been entrusted with the task of educating the people about rights and creating awareness on various serious issues and problems concerning the society. It helps in bringing the marginalized sections of the society to the mainstream.

Body

Crucial role of media in the prevention, monitoring and control of corruption:

- **Exposes corruption:** Media can inform and educate the public on corruption, expose corruption in government, private sector and civil society organizations and help monitor codes of conduct while policing itself against corruption. Media fights corruption by conducting debates, investigative journalism, RTI, sting operation, Opinion Polls.
- **Transparency and accountability:** With the help of free media information dissemination is possible and transparency in public sector can be achieved
- **Investigative reporting by media** or reporting of instances of corruption as they occur can be a significant source of information on corruption. Timely action should be taken by the authorities to immediately respond to such reports, to appraise the correct facts, to take steps to bring the culprits to book and to keep the press and the public informed from time to time of the progress of such action.
- A large section of the population is ignorant and backward, it is the free media which **disseminates information about corruption** to them and their backwardness is removed so that they become part of the enlightened India.
- Media also **tracks and updates on important policies and programmes** of the government and critically analyses their impact which is possible only through an independent and neutral media.

- Media is sometimes also called the **fourth pillar of democracy** as it ensures participation in governance at all levels by acting as a crucial link between the governing and the governed.

Media while presenting information to the masses are expected to maintain ethical standards as their way of reporting directly or indirectly affects the lives of the masses. However, there remain **some issues with the media ethics** which are as follow–

- Sensationalism and trivialization has overtaken media ethics.
- Sometimes under pressure of competition does not verify allegations and information before putting them in the public domain.
- Lack of training given to journalists is another cause of concern, because along with a degree, skill also contributes to the personality development of media practitioners.
- Change in media structure and ownership, commercialization of media is among the several factors which has led to decline in ethical standards because unethical practice like paid news is not questioned
- Media's focusing on trivial issues rather than on issues of concern
- Dividing communities and creating misunderstanding among them and engaging itself in obscurantist fetishes like astrology and supernatural rather than propagating rational and scientific thinking.
- There have also been instances of questionable media ethics such as paid news, revealing sensitive information on national security, disclosing personal details of rape victims etc.

Conclusion

- There is a need for media houses to follow Media ethics.
- Thus in the words of Mahatma Gandhi: “The sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power; but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges the whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within”.