



Mains Practice Question

Q. Media is dubbed as the fourth pillar of democracy. In the context, discuss the significance of media ethics in contemporary times. (150 words)

19 Mar, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach:

- Highlight the growing importance of media in a democracy.
- Highlight some ethical issues currently faced by the media towards jeopardising democracy.
- Conclude by highlighting the need of media ethics and suggest some measures for its implementation.

Introduction

- Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and Media are pillars of a democracy. Corruption in any one of these pillars can lead to unstable, flawed or dummy democracy. Media has gained importance in the 21st century due to technological revolution (Information Technology), Human Development (literacy), and increasing interconnectedness of the world (globalisation).

Body

Such processes naturally place media's role in democracy under scrutiny of ethical principles and standards in its functioning due to following reasons:

- **Manipulation of Information:** This has led to news propaganda, censorship and subversion of democratic ideals like freedom, will of the public, for example, media's portrayal of dictatorship among North Korean citizens towards its leader in only favorable terms.
- **Furthering vested interest, conflict with law:** Private ownership leading to favorable marketing of harmful activities or products like tobacco use; Influencing opinions before rule of law takes its course in courts.
- **Issues of transparency, accountability and independence:** use of social media in spreading hate and fake news etc.

Conclusion

- With rising penetration of digital technologies, pillars of the media will be critical in upholding democratic ideals. Thus, it is important to infuse ethics in its functioning through measures like UNESCO INFOethics Congresses, International Symposium on Information Ethics etc.