GSSCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

MAINS TEST SERIES 2023

GS MAINS Q&A

TOPICAL TEST - 28

(5 QUESTION)

ESSAY

Contemporary Topics 1

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GS Q&A (Answer Writing) 2023

Hints: Essay Test - 3

1. Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy.

"Our liberty depends on the freedom of press, and that cannot be limited without being lost."

The current state of media freedom is a far cry from the rights enshrined in Russia's Constitution, adopted in 1993, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Constitution guaranteed press freedom and prohibited censorship. But the freedoms did not last long. Since Putin came to power in 2000, Russia has moved to limit news media and critics. Steps have included passage of a law threatening bloggers and a law to control the internet, plus measures on extremism, foreign interference and false news that can be used to punish journalists. Impunity has increased the sense of threat. Since January 2000, at least 25 journalists have been killed for their work.

In Hong Kong, where independent journalism previously thrived, the local press has been restricted since the introduction of the National Security Law in June 2020, which prohibits acts deemed to be treason, secession, sedition, and subversion against the Chinese government.

The above case studies show that "**Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy.**"

Freedom of the press is the fundamental principle that communication and expression through various media should be considered a right to be exercised freely. Such freedom implies the absence of interference from an overreaching state. On the other hand, democracy entitles its citizens with liberty and freedom of thought, expression. In a democracy, people are supreme and have the freedom to deliberate, discuss, debate and hold the government accountable.

Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. It plays an important role in keeping democracy alive and thriving. A free exchange of ideas, free exchange of information and knowledge, debating and expression of different viewpoints is important for the smooth functioning of democracy. A free press conveys the people's needs and desires to government bodies, making informed decisions and strengthening society as a result. It promotes open discussion of ideas that allows individuals to fully participate in political life. It makes people question the decisions of the government and make it accountable.

The media reminds society of their democratic rights and helps in maintaining checks and balances. Media reports on public affairs and investigates wrongdoing in the administration of public affairs. The free media by virtue of being the voice of the masses empowers them with the right to express opinions and plays a vital role in ensuring justice and the benefits of the government policies reach the weaker sections of the society. For instance, in spreading awareness of Swachh Bharat and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao etc., the media played an important role. Thus, free media is critical in a democracy.

Media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade, with new forms of repression taking hold in open societies and authoritarian states alike. In some of the most influential democracies in the world, large segments of the population are no longer receiving unbiased news and information. Reports such as 'Freedom in the World 2021 (Freedom House, US)', '2020 Human Rights Report (US State Department)' have all highlighted intimidation of

journalists in India. As per the Press Freedom Index, 2022, India has slipped from 142nd to 150th position due to increased violence against journalists and rise in politically partisan media.

Paid News seems to have taken firm roots in India, a nexus between media individuals and politicians. For instance, fake opinion polls during elections. Between 2009 and 2013, the Election Commission is stated to have detected more than 1,400 instances of paid news. The credibility of news channels and newspapers has been dented by biased reporters, editors, etc. Most media houses are owned or sponsored by corporate corporations who may have their own political inclinations, which reduces the press' impartial coverage. The government's pressure in the name of regulations, the bombardment of fake news and the influence of social media is dangerous for the occupation and threatens freedom of press. The security of journalists is the biggest issue, killings and assaults on Journalists covering sensitive issues are very common. Hate speech shared and amplified on social networks are targeted against journalists using social media.

It is important that the media stick to the core principles like truth and accuracy, transparency, independence, fairness and impartiality, responsibility and fair play. Media self-regulation along with strong institutions such as media ombudsman as well as complaints and appeals committees, make it possible for ethics to be adhered to.An independent judiciary that upholds the constitutional guarantee of media freedom is an important safeguard for this fundamental right. In order to give the media a fair play and to check its arbitrariness at the same time, a regulatory body should be formed comprising both media individuals and government bodies.

Countering content manipulation and fake news to restore faith in the media without undermining its freedom will require public education, strengthening of regulations, and effort of tech companies to make suitable algorithms for news curation. Reform should come from senior editors and journalists in the media particularly. They should begin to reveal instances of fake news, conflicts of interest, and make press operations more open.

A free press is a hallmark for a robust and vibrant democracy that empowers people, holds the government accountable, and creates an atmosphere where peace and harmony can be cultivated by the country's people. The erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles. The media informs society on matters of public interest and creates an important platform for public debate, scrutiny and reflection. Therefore, independent media and quality journalism are considered to be the "watchdog" of a democratic society. Voltaire aptly summarized the importance of free press when he once said, "I do not agree with a word you say but I defend to death your right to say it." Jawahar Lal Nehru also echoed similar views when he said "I would rather have a completely free press, with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom, than a suppressed or regulated press."

2. Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master.

Norwegian diplomat Christian Louis Lange made the statement that "Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master." in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in 1921 about the advancements of technology in the 20th century. This quote was meant to describe how the advancement of technology has led to it being a useful tool to aid humans in their work, but he warned of the possibility that it could evolve and become an uncontrollable entity. Technology has revolutionized throughout the 1900s, from the creation of electricity to manufacturing industries of steel and automobiles. It is the source of the world's modernization. Now, in the 21st century, technology is becoming an essential, changing the lives of adults and adolescents, proving Lange's suspicions correct.

Technology is the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes. For thousands of years, dating back to paleolithic age men used simple technological tools like axes and shovels for their personal needs like hunting, and farming. Since then technology has evolved and served humanity gratefully.Technology has overhauled the education system and its importance was

proved when school shut down worldwide due to COVID-19 pandemic. Students can easily access all kinds of information from the internet. It is especially beneficial for students living in remote regions and from poor socio-economic backgrounds who cannot afford proper education. It helps to improve the learning experience and keep students engaged via interactive lessons. Various platforms such as Byjus, Vedantu etc. are there especially for providing knowledge to the students.

A few decades ago, there was no platform available for communicating with a person who is far away. Sending a message via mail took days. Now in the 21th century, we use cars, planes, boats, trains to travel far distances, we use cell phones and computers to be connected virtually and to be omnipresent. Online platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp keep us close to our near and dear ones. Essentiality of technology was highlighted when everyone had to keep a safe distance during the pandemic. In industrial revolution 4.0, technology is playing an important role. All industries are becoming smarter by using the latest technology in the computer and networks. It is used to make business more efficient and well organized. It helps in business security and transparent communication in business processes. Companies can make quick money exchanges, purchases and sales in just a few seconds.

The most important use case of technology today is in combating climate change and its adverse effects. Climate technologies that help us reduce GHGs include renewable energies such as wind energy, solar power and hydropower. To adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, we use climate technologies such as drought-resistant crops, early warning systems and sea walls. There is an equal hand of technology in entertainment too. It brings the entertainment industry to the next level. From Old TVs to the latest LED TV to Smart TV, from small video games to the latest AI PlayStation, There is improvisation in tech that brings the entertainment industry more advanced. On the OTT platform, anyone can watch any web content anytime, and anywhere. OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, HotStar Disney, and MX player are surveying quality content to the world.

There is no doubt that technology is rapidly growing in the medical field also. The evolution of tech is from the invention of x-ray to advanced Robots that can operate complicated surgeries. For the past 200 years, tech has helped to save the lives of patients. It gives more healthy life to human beings all over the world. What technology does is it gives us the ultimate convenience in our daily lives. However, there are disadvantages to these advancements.Most technology has reduced humans to being obsolete, as more work is done by machines than humans, thus causing a rise in unemployment in the labour force. In addition, humans have a dependency on technology, like when they use the calculator to solve problems. This goes to show that humans are not willing to use their mental power to solve calculations on their own. Even when we use social media to connect with one another, we are not willing to see each other in person.

Everywhere in society, there is a phone, computer, or smartwatch in sight with people unable to disconnect. Everyone exploits the new and improved technology for its elegant look and convenience. Along with technology, there is social media, where people from all over the world come together to share personal experiences and communicate ideas. However, humans excessively use electronic devices to the point where it becomes harmful. Technology negatively impacts society because it causes physical, social, mental health issues, and although technology contributes to an increase in exercise due to fitness gadgets, people have become extremely dependent on these imprecise electronic accessories. The evolution of technology has proven to have detrimental consequences on all physical parts of the human body. In a scientific study guided by Paula Hakala, the more hours contributed to technology use, the more physical health of an individual is affected.

As more and more electronics emerge into everyday life, it promotes a decreased amount of social interaction among all generations. Teenagers in this era, including adults, are using technology greatly for a combination of social media, work, education, and relaxation. People prefer

convenience instead of stepping out of the house to experience all of life's special moments. For example, at the Amazon Go store, "you can walk into the store, put your selections directly into your own bag, and walk out". However, since the Amazon Go store is powered by cameras and credit card scanners, employees are no longer essential causing unemployment for millions. People do not need to interact with others while grocery shopping as much as before, instead, families can simply grab merchandise and leave, limiting person to person confrontation. The fact that people can now simply get what they want and need with one click of a button just clearly displays how technology is gradually taking over people's lives.

Online communications are currently being used to a greater extent. Individuals FaceTime and interact with others through social media accounts like Twitter or Facebook, which explains the sudden rise in internet contact. Ever since video chatting was introduced, people resort to it recurrently. In person interaction is slowly becoming useless and less entertaining, while social media initiates better enjoyment. People have established a habit of using technology as a source to isolate themselves from the community. As a result, lack of eye contact, a weak voice, and posture indicate insecurity and nervousness among all ages. This makes individuals more susceptible to public humiliation and cyberbullying if social skills are not exercised often.

Improvement in technology also results in psychological issues. Common mental health outcomes that are associated with technology use are sleep loss, depression, and addiction. Social media today is the primary reason for feelings of depression. Social media portrays the idea that life is ecstatic and that people are naturally beautiful. Women often tend to compare themselves with the perfect lives of others, examining everything wrong personally, and changing appearances to fit an ideal. Technology generates self-doubt and severe pressure on oneself leading to depression and self-esteem issues.

It is inevitable that technology will be present in the future. Indeed, technology has advanced greatly in medicine, transportation, business, and for society's overall health, but examining deeper, the physical, social, and mental effects of electronic devices outweigh the benefits. Nonetheless, technology will define life in the near future, creating a simplified world full of advancements. As technology advances, we must question our own abilities if we are worthy enough to sustain our own well-being without the assistance of technology. Ultimately, technology should not be depended on and should be used to a minimum. Minimal use of technology will uphold meaningful relationships, personal growth, and true happiness.

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