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Q1(c)

Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society
Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Discuss
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

The fourth-pillar claim is that media watches the three official organs.

Speech rights and investigative reporting sometimes fulfil it.

Ownership, **paid news**, and communal frames weaken it.

Women, caste, and rural poor are unevenly seen.

The phrase is an ideal to enforce, not a fact already achieved.

Introduction

Calling media the fourth pillar means a free press should watch legislature, executive, and judiciary. In India the phrase is an ideal. Ownership, party capture, and digital rumour make the pillar load-bearing and cracked at once.

Body**Why the metaphor**

- Democracy needs public facts. Newspapers and later television named famine, riot, and scandal that officials preferred to hide.
- The Constitution's speech rights give the pillar a legal plinth.

Indian sociological limits

- Corporate and political ownership turn watchdog into advertisement, a class fact A. R. Desai would read as superstructure.
- Caste and communal frames in news can thicken majoritarian honour rather than civic equality, against Beteille's disharmonic hope that public values civilise rank.
- **Paid news**, sting as entertainment, and social media pile-ons punish women and minorities in the public domain.
- Rural and Adivasi India remain under-reported except as crisis spectacle.

Still a pillar

- Investigative stories and **local language press** still puncture power.
- The metaphor is a demand, not a description of a clean column.

Flow diagram

Media -> Fourth pillar watch
Ownership party -> Capture
Digital rumour -> Capture
Fourth pillar watch -> Democracy
Capture -> Democracy

Conclusion

Media is a fourth pillar when it informs citizens and checks office. Indian media does that unevenly. Discussing the claim means defending press freedom while naming capture, caste frames, and the digital crowd as threats to the same pillar.

Facts & figures

Fourth estate

Liberal image of press as a check on official power.

Paid news

Electoral-era practice that sells the pillar as advertising.

Ownership concentration

Corporate-political control that narrows what counts as news.

Local language press

A remaining site where district power can still be named.

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