Polity & Governance · GS - II

The expansion of social media has strengthened freedom of expression while creating new challenges relating to defamation, misinformation and online threats. Examine the constitutional balance between free speech and reasonable restrictions in India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 19/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~ 250 words

Answer Hint

Article 19(1)(a), Article 19(2), reasonable restrictions, defamation, misinformation, public order, intermediary accountability, proportionality, constitutional safeguards

Model Answer

Introduction

Social media has democratised communication and enabled citizens to express opinions widely. However, defamatory content, fabricated information and online threats have raised concerns about balancing freedom of expression with individual rights and public order.

Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 19(2):** Permits reasonable restrictions on specified grounds, including sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, public order, decency, morality and defamation.
- **Article 21:** Protects life and personal liberty, including the right to reputation as recognised by the Supreme Court.

Emerging Challenges

1. **Online defamation:** False allegations can damage individual reputation on a large scale.
2. **Misinformation:** Fabricated content can influence public discourse and create social tensions.
3. **Online intimidation:** Threatening and abusive communication can undermine individual dignity and safety.
4. **Regulatory concerns:** Excessive content restrictions may lead to censorship and a chilling effect on legitimate criticism.

Way Forward

- Ensure that restrictions are based on clear legal provisions and satisfy constitutional standards.
- Distinguish legitimate criticism, satire and dissent from unlawful content.
- Strengthen transparent and accountable investigation procedures.
- Apply safeguards against arbitrary arrests and misuse of criminal law.
- Promote digital literacy and responsible platform governance.

Conclusion

Digital platforms do not operate outside the Constitution. A democratic framework must protect robust public debate while addressing legally established violations through proportionate, transparent and accountable enforcement.

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