Polity & Governance · GS - II

The regulation of consanguineous marriages raises complex questions involving public health, reproductive autonomy, cultural practices and constitutional rights. Examine how the State can address the associated genetic risks without adopting a discriminatory or excessively restrictive approach.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 22/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Public health, genetic counselling, hereditary disorders, Article 21, reproductive autonomy, cultural rights, Article 25, informed consent, preventive healthcare, proportionality

Model Answer

Introduction

Consanguineous marriages, particularly between close biological relatives, may increase the probability of certain inherited genetic disorders in offspring. Their regulation therefore requires balancing public health objectives with individual liberty and cultural diversity.

Key Constitutional and Public Health Considerations

1. **Public health responsibility:** Article 47 directs the State to improve public health, supporting preventive measures such as awareness and genetic counselling.

2. **Individual autonomy:** Article 21 protects personal liberty and decisional autonomy, including important choices concerning marriage and reproduction.

3. **Cultural diversity:** Article 25 protects freedom of religion, subject to constitutional limitations. However, cultural practices are not automatically exempt from valid public-health regulation.

4. **Existing legal framework:** Marriage laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act and Special Marriage Act already regulate specified prohibited degrees of relationship, with statutory exceptions.

Balanced Policy Approach

- Expand voluntary genetic counselling and carrier screening.
- Improve access to prenatal and diagnostic healthcare.
- Promote scientifically accurate public awareness without stigmatising communities.
- Collect reliable epidemiological data before introducing restrictions.
- Ensure any legislative intervention is evidence-based, proportionate and non-discriminatory.
- Protect informed consent and confidentiality of genetic information.

Conclusion

Public health protection need not rely exclusively on prohibitions. A rights-based approach combining scientific evidence, preventive healthcare and proportionate regulation can address genetic risks while respecting constitutional freedoms.

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