

Part-A

Read the following text and answer the questions that follow:

In the twenty-first century, humanity celebrates what it believes to be an age of unparalleled liberty and empowerment. With smartphones in every pocket and the internet connecting every corner of the planet, information flows faster than ever before. A single tap allows one to speak, learn, trade, and even influence millions. Yet beneath this exhilarating surface of interconnectivity lies a quiet contradiction. The same technology that grants access to knowledge also governs the pathways to it. People proudly proclaim their freedom online, unaware that their choices are subtly orchestrated by unseen algorithms. The digital realm promises liberation from ignorance and isolation, but in reality, it often creates dependence, distraction, and manipulation. The individual, who once sought autonomy, now lives under the illusion of control while being invisibly monitored, categorized, and commodified.

The transformation of attention into an economic asset marks a defining shift in modern civilization. Historically, power was exerted through visible means—kings, armies, and laws. Today, it flows through invisible circuits of data and design. Corporations compete not for land but for human attention, which has become the new currency of control. Every swipe, scroll, and click is recorded, analyzed, and sold to predict or influence behavior. Social media platforms are designed not merely to inform or entertain, but to addict. Infinite scrolling, targeted notifications, and algorithmic recommendations exploit psychological impulses that keep users engaged for hours. The more time people spend online, the more profit companies extract from their engagement. This commodification of attention has turned leisure into labor; users are both workers and products in a vast digital marketplace. While the tools of technology claim neutrality, their architecture reveals intent—an intent to shape thought and behavior.

This silent form of influence has given rise to what thinkers call “surveillance capitalism,” a system that thrives on the extraction of personal data. Every online action—searches, purchases, even idle browsing—feeds into predictive algorithms that learn to anticipate desires before they are consciously formed. Governments, too, have adopted similar tools, justifying surveillance in the name of national security. The philosopher Jeremy Bentham once envisioned a prison where inmates could be observed without ever knowing when they were watched—the Panopticon. In the digital era, this metaphor has become reality on a global scale. Instead of prison guards, algorithms observe; instead of cells, we inhabit social media platforms. This new form of observation is invisible yet omnipresent, transforming freedom into performance. People behave differently when they know they might be watched, and thus, digital life becomes an endless act of self-presentation. In the name of safety and convenience, privacy has been quietly surrendered.

Beyond technology, the consequences of this system reach deeply into the human psyche. The modern individual’s sense of identity is increasingly intertwined with digital validation. Likes, comments, and followers have become the new metrics of worth, and social comparison has replaced genuine connection. Individuals curate polished versions of themselves online, constructing idealized identities that often bear little resemblance to reality. As a result, authenticity fades while anxiety grows. People compare their unfiltered lives with the highlights of others, leading to dissatisfaction, insecurity, and a persistent sense of inadequacy. Ironically, the platforms designed to unite humanity often magnify loneliness and alienation. The craving for digital approval fuels dependency and reinforces the illusion that happiness can be quantified by numbers on a screen. The very tools meant to empower the mind are now shaping the emotions, values, and perceptions of billions.

Yet technology itself is not the villain. It is a mirror reflecting the intentions of its creators and users. The same internet that manipulates can also liberate, educate, and transform. Activists use social networks to challenge oppression; educators democratize knowledge through open learning; and artists reach global audiences without intermediaries. But genuine empowerment demands awareness. To be truly free in the digital era is to understand how freedom is engineered and how easily it can be taken away. It requires

conscious resistance to manipulation, a willingness to question convenience, and a commitment to protect the sanctity of thought. The future of digital freedom will depend not on machines but on the mindfulness of their users. Without awareness, humanity risks becoming a paradoxical species—one that can touch the stars yet fails to control the devices it created.

1. **Answer the following questions in your own words without copying any sentence from the passage. Copying from text above may affect the evaluation.** $3 \times 10 = 30$
 - (a) What central paradox about freedom does the author highlight?
 - (b) How do algorithms manipulate user behavior in the digital world?
 - (c) What is meant by the term “surveillance capitalism”?
 - (d) Why does the author describe attention as a modern form of currency?
 - (e) How has the idea of the Panopticon become relevant in the digital age?
 - (f) In what ways do social media platforms affect human psychology?
 - (g) What does the author mean by “the illusion of control”?
 - (h) How can technology both enslave and liberate humanity?
 - (i) What role does self-awareness play in achieving true digital freedom?
 - (j) Why does the author call technology a mirror of human intention?
2. **Write the contextual meaning of the following words in English (the words are underlined in the text):** $1 \times 5 = 5$
 - (a) Commodified
 - (b) Beneath
 - (c) Metaphor
 - (d) Alienation
 - (e) Mindfulness
3. **Give an antonym for each of the following words and make sentences with the antonyms:** $2 \times 5 = 10$
 - (a) Proclaim
 - (b) Autonomy
 - (c) Surveillance
 - (d) Genuine
 - (e) Oppression
4. **Mark the following sentences as true or false according to the text.** $1 \times 5 = 5$
 - (a) Digital technology has made all people entirely free.
 - (b) Algorithms collect data to influence user behavior.
 - (c) Digital dependency can lead to loss of authenticity.
 - (d) Corporations profit from human attention.
 - (e) The author believes technology is inherently evil.
5. **Change the following words as directed and make sentences with the changed words.** $1 \times 5 = 5$
 - (a) Manipulate (noun)
 - (b) Observation (verb)
 - (c) Dependence (adjective)
 - (d) Visible (noun)
 - (e) Anxiety (Adverb)
6. **Make sentences of your own with each of the following words as directed: Copying, vagueness and ambiguity must be avoided.** $1 \times 5 = 5$
 - (a) Connectivity (Comparative)
 - (b) Isolation (Simple)
 - (c) Engagement (Compound)
 - (d) Civilization (Interrogative)
 - (e) Perception (Complex)
7. **Write briefly the main idea of the above text. Add your comments. Give a suitable title to it. (all within 100 words)** $10 + 7 + 3 = 20$
8. **Write a feature for the editorial page of an English daily highlighting the dangers of digital dependency and surveillance capitalism, and suggest strategies individuals and governments can adopt to maintain true digital freedom. Include a forwarding note to the editor.** 20