

FROM MAHABHARATA AND BEYOND: A MESSAGE ON THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEADERS

Context

- The profound declaration **Satyameva Jayate or Truth alone triumphs, originating from the Mundaka Upanishad** was inscribed (26th Jan 1950) on the base of the national emblem, the Ashokan pillar, signifies the importance of truth in the nation's ethos.
- Coincidentally, **the day before, the Election Commission of India (ECI) was established with the primary objective of ensuring free and fair elections**, upholding the democratic principle of allowing citizens to choose their government.
- The ECI's role includes **enforcing a level playing field** where candidates and political parties do not manipulate voters through excessive money, muscle power, or deceit **but the challenge lies in defining and upholding "truth" amidst political machinations.**

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

- The MCC was introduced with the hope that it would instil a sense of **self-restraint** among political stakeholders.
- The ECI considers the MCC a **crucial contribution by political parties to democracy**, expecting them to exhibit model behaviour in their actions and rhetoric.
- However, **the reality often deviates**, with political discourse sometimes degenerating into coarse and ignoble exchanges.
- This has led to debates on **whether the MCC should be termed a moral rather than a model code.**

The Intersection of Morality and Law in Electoral Process

- **Philosophical Foundations of MCC**
 - **At the heart of the MCC lies a fundamental tension between legal requirements and moral expectations.**

- **Morality pertains to the principles governing individual behaviour** based on notions of right and wrong, often derived from cultural, religious, or personal beliefs. **Law, on the other hand, comprises rules established by a governing body to regulate behaviour**, ensuring order and justice within society.
- **Legal Framework and Enforcement**
 - **The legal framework** underpinning the MCC **includes specific provisions in the Indian Penal Code** and the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
 - **These laws delineate actions that constitute corrupt practices and electoral offenses**, providing a legal basis for enforcing the MCC.

The Imperative for Ethical Reflection in the Electoral Process: Lesson from Mahabharata

- **The story of Yudhishtira in the Mahabharata, who lost his moral high ground despite technically telling the truth, underscores the importance of ethics over mere adherence to rules.**
- **Ethics in elections is about more than just following the law;** it involves adhering to higher standards of honesty, integrity, and fairness.
- **Ethical reflection ensures that political actions and decisions are not just legally compliant** but also morally sound.
- **When ethical standards are compromised, democratic norms** such as transparency, accountability, and fairness are **weakened**.
- **This erosion can lead to a governance crisis** where the authority of elected officials is questioned.

Conclusion

- **Satyameva Jayate is more than a motto;** it is a **guiding principle** that should permeate the conduct of individuals and institutions alike.
- **The ECI's efforts to enforce the MCC reflect an ongoing struggle** to balance legal enforcement with moral persuasion.
- **For a truly democratic society, this balance must be continually sought, ensuring that the pursuit of political power does not erode the foundational value of truth.**

WHAT IS ARAB LEAGUE?



The Arab League recently called for UN peacekeeping forces in the Palestinian territories during a summit in Bahrain's Manama.

- The Arab League, also called the League of Arab States (LAS), is a regional organization of Arab states in the Middle East and parts of Africa.
- **Formation:**
 - It was formed in **Cairo** on **March 22, 1945**.
 - It was chartered in **response to** concerns about **postwar colonial divisions of territory** as well as strong **opposition to the emergence of a Jewish state** on Palestinian territory.
- **Goals:**
 - The overall aim of the league is to **promote Arab interests**.
 - Its main goals are to strengthen and **coordinate** the political, cultural, economic, and social **programs of its members** and to try to **settle disputes among them** or between them and third parties.
 - In 1950, the members also agreed to **provide military support to help defend each other**.
- **Headquarters: Cairo, Egypt.**
- **Official language: Arabic**

Members:

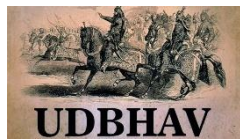
- Currently, it has 22 members. The founding member states of the league are Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.
- Members who joined later are Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, Algeria, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Mauritania, Somalia, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Djibouti, and Comoros.
- The League regards Palestine as an independent state.

- There are **four nations** that were conferred **observer status** by the League: **Brazil, Eritrea, India, and Venezuela.**

Council:

- The **highest body** of the league is the Council, **composed of representatives of member states**, usually foreign ministers, their representatives, or permanent delegates.
- The League makes decisions on a majority basis, but there is no mechanism to compel members to comply with resolutions.
- Each member has one vote on the Council, with decisions binding only on those states that have voted for them.

PROJECT UDBHAV



The Indian Army, under its initiative Project Udbhav, is delving into the epic battles of the Mahabharata and the strategic brilliance of past Indian dynasties, shaping India's rich military heritage.

Project Udbhav is collaboration between the **Indian Army and the United Service Institution of India(USI)**, a defence services think tank.

- The project, named 'Udbhav', translates to '**origin**' or '**genesis**', recognizing the profound knowledge embedded in our nation's historical texts spanning centuries.
- At its core, the project seeks to amalgamate **ancient insights** with **modern military practices**, creating a comprehensive approach to tackle present-day security challenges.
- **Aim:** This initiative aims to **bridge the gap between age-old wisdom and contemporary military education.**
- India's ancient knowledge system, rooted in a 5000-year-old civilizational legacy, boasts a repository of intellectual texts and manuscripts.
- Project Udbhav, as per MoD, aims to facilitate a profound understanding of these systems and their enduring relevance in the modern era.

This project takes inspiration from

- Literature like **Chanakya's Arthashastra** underscores the importance of strategic partnerships, alliances and diplomacy, aligning with modern military practices such as international cooperation and soft power projection.
- Chanakya's teachings on statecraft and warfare are studied by various institutions the world over.
- Similarly, the **wisdom of Thirukkural**, the classical Tamil text authored by Thiruvalluvar, the Tamil philosopher, advocates ethical conduct in all endeavours, including warfare.
- This aligns with modern military codes of ethics of just war and principles of Geneva Convention.

ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL OF INDIA



Recently, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has processed complaints against 101 advertisements (ads) featuring celebrities.

Advertising Standards Council of India is a voluntary self-regulatory organisation of the **advertising industry in India**. It was established in 1985 and is registered as a **non-profit company** under Section 25 of the **Company Act**.

- It comprises members from marketing, creative, media, and allied companies in India. It is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising, ensuring the protection of the interests of consumers.
- **Purpose of the ASCI code:** To control the content of advertisements, not to hamper the sale of products which may be found offensive, for whatever reason, by some people.

Functions:

- It seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation, which requires advertisements to be legal, decent, honest, truthful, and not hazardous or harmful while observing fairness in competition.
 - It looks into complaints across all media, such as **Print, TV, Radio, hoardings, SMS, Emailers, Internet/website, product packaging**, brochures, promotional material, and point-of-sale material, etc.
 - It is a part of the Executive Committee of the International Council on Ad Self-Regulation (ICAS).
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PERSONALITY RIGHTS AND THEIR PROTECTION

Why in news?

Recently, Hollywood Actress Scarlett Johansson claimed that the GPT-4o's voice, sounds very similar to her own. She has accused OpenAI of using her voice without permission despite previously declining licensing requests from CEO Sam Altman.

- **Johansson and Sky**
 - Johansson said one of these voices, named 'Sky', was allegedly copying her voice.
- **Response of OpenAI**
 - OpenAI later said it was pausing the availability of Sky.
 - It added in a statement that Sky was not Johansson's voice but another voice actor's, and was never intended to resemble hers.

The personality rights:

- **About**
 - The name, voice, signature, images or any other feature easily identified by the public are markers of a celebrity's personality and are **referred loosely as personality rights**.

- These could include a pose, a mannerism or any aspect of their personality.
- Many celebrities even register some aspects as a trademark to use them commercially.
 - For example, Usain Bolt’s “bolting” or lightning pose is a registered trademark.
- The idea is that only the owner or creator of these distinct features has the right to derive any commercial benefit from it.

Types of personality rights

- Personality rights are divided into two categories:
 - **The right of publicity**, or the right to keep one’s image and likeness from being commercially exploited without permission. It is similar (but not identical) to the use of a trademark.
 - **The right to privacy** or the right to not have one’s personality represented publicly without permission.

Personality rights in India

- **Legal/Constitutional basis**
 - Personality rights or their protection are not expressly mentioned in a statute in India.
 - However, these rights are traced to fall under the **right to privacy and the right to property**.
 - Even as the Delhi High Court and the Madras High Court have passed interim orders, the law is at a nascent stage in India.
- **Existing provisions**
 - In India, the publicity rights are governed by statutes like the Trademarks Act 1999 and the Copyright Act 1957.
 - With the 2017 judgment (Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India), the personality rights were elevated to the position of constitutional rights.

- The ruling recognised the right to privacy as a fundamental right derived from the right to life & personal liberty (Article 21 of Indian Constitution).
- The court ruled that an individual may be permitted to prevent others from using his/her image, name and other aspects of his/her personal life and identity for commercial purposes without his/her consent.

Personal rights vs consumer rights

- Celebrities are protected from commercial misuse of their name and personality.
- However, there have also been instances where the consumers are misled owing to false advertisements or endorsements by such personalities.
- Due to such cases, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs has made a notification

Recent examples from India

- In September 2023, the Delhi High Court had passed an interim order protecting the personality rights of Anil Kapoor.
 - Anil Kapoor had sought to restrain the use of his name, the acronym AK, his voice, image, as well as his characters like Lakhan, Mr. India, Majnu Bhai, Nayak and the phrase jhakaas with his photo without his consent.
- In May 2024, the Delhi High Court protected the personality and publicity rights of Jackie Shroff.
 - It restrained various e-commerce stores, AI chatbots, etc. from misusing the actor's name, image, voice, and likeness without his consent.

SWEET SORGHUM



Sweet sorghum is a hardy, nutritious, biofuel crop that offers solutions in drought-hit southern Africa because of El-Nino phenomenon.

Sweet sorghum is the most important millet crop occupying largest area among the cereals next to rice.

- One of the key characteristics of sweet sorghum varieties is **their drought resistance**. It allows them to enter a dormant state during extended periods of dryness and resume growth afterwards.
- **Required climatic conditions and**
 - The crop does **not prefer high rainfall** as high soil moisture or continuous heavy rain after flowering may hamper sugar increase.
 - All soils that have medium depth with **good drainage are suited**.
 - Depending on the soil (red, black, laterite and loamy) and its depth water requirement may vary which in turn decide the suitability of the crop.

Unique features of Sorghum

- It has ability to **withstand low water and nitrogen inputs**, as well as its **tolerance for salinity** and drought stress, makes it an ideal crop for farmers in arid regions.
- Research has shown that, under **intense water scarcity conditions**, sweet sorghum makes **use of its stalk juice** to supplement its plant needs.
- It is used in food industry and its stalk is used for the **production of value-added products like ethanol**, syrup and jaggery and bioenriched bagasse as a fodder and as a base material for cogeneration.
- It can produce grains, animal feed and sugary juice, making it unique among crops.
- The grains from sweet sorghum are prepared as steamed bread or porridge malt for traditional beer, as well as in commercial beer production across the continent.