Mains Practice Question

Q. Model Code of conduct has been a remarkable step in ensuring free and fair elections in India. However, the present digital era has posed challenges to it. Comment.

04 Mar, 2021   GS Paper 2 Polity & Governance

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing about the Model Code of Conduct.
- Discuss the limitations faced by the model code of conduct in the digital age.
- Conclude Suitably.

Introduction

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a document from the Election Commission of India that lays down the minimum standards of behavior for political parties and their candidates contesting elections, by defining their dos and don'ts in the electoral battle.

It ensures that the party in power doesn't gain an unfair advantage and free and fair elections can be conducted. However, the emergence of social media and other online platforms has posed challenges for the effective implementation of the Model Code of Conduct.

Body

Limitations Faced By Model Code Of Conduct In The Digital Age

- **Jurisdiction issues:** Digital companies like Facebook are run by companies located overseas. Holding them accountable has been difficult for Indian agencies. EC will face a similar challenge in preventing MCC violations.
- **Fake News:** Digital media is a potent source of unverified and deliberate fake news. EC lacks resources as well as surveillance capacity to implement and punish the violation of MCC.
- **Difficult to Identify Perpetrator:** Most of the information during elections is targeted through the algorithm of [online] platforms to push in much more subtle marketing messaging blended with political canvassing,
- **Unregulated Nature of Digital Media:** All the current measures in place to regulate elections online are being implemented based on voluntary commitments made by online platforms.

    - So, there are no legally binding obligations on, for instance, Facebook or Twitter to take certain actions and there are no penalties prescribed for failing to do so.

Conclusion

The election commission recently has taken steps to regulate electioneering in the digital world. However, the effective implementation of MCC needs an entirely new approach with stringent focus on accountability of digital mediums.