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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**
+ CS(OS) 414/2026 & I.A. Nos. 12907/2026, 12908/2026, 12909/2026,
12910/2026, 12911/2026 & 12912/2026
SHASHI THAROORPlaintiff

Through: Mr. Amit Sibal, Senior Advocate with
Ms. Tine Abraham, Mr. Pundrikaksh
Mitruka, Mr. Vivek Krishnani,
Ms. Ramayni Sood, Mr. Ankit Handa,
Mr. Darpan Sachdeva, Mr. Nikhil
Narenoran, Mr. Kuruvila Jacob,
Advocates.
(M): 7869239297
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versus

ASHOK KUMAR & ORS.Defendants
Through: Ms. Ameer Rana with Ms. Nitya Nath
and Ms. Komal Pathak, Advocates for
defendant no. 3.
(M): 9007138794
Ms. Rukhmini Bobde, CGSC with
Mr. Manish Rawat, GP, Mr. Vinayak
Aren, Ms. Aishwarya Nigam,
Ms. Shrishti Singh and Mr. Abhishek
Mohanpuria, Advocates for defendant
nos. 4 and 5.
(M): 9910048436
9871738029
Email: bobde.rukhmini@gmail.com

CORAM:
HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE MINI PUSHKARNA

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ORDER
08.05.2026

**I.A. No. 12912/2026 (For exemption)**

1. Exemption allowed, subject to all just exceptions.
2. Application is accordingly disposed of.

I.A. No. 12909/2026 (For exemption)

3. The present application has been filed under Section 80, read with Section 151 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (“CPC”), on behalf of the plaintiff, seeking exemption from giving a written notice to the government authorities.
4. This Court notes that the government authorities, i.e., defendant nos. 4 and 5, are represented before this Court.
5. Noting the aforesaid, the present application is disposed of.

I.A. No. 12910/2026 (Application seeking extension of time for filing Court Fees)

6. Learned Senior Counsel appearing for the plaintiff submits that the requisite Court Fees shall be paid, within a period of 10 days from today.
7. Accordingly, let the needful be done, within a period of 10 days from today.
8. Noting the aforesaid, the application is disposed of.

I.A. No. 12911/2026 (Application seeking leave to place on record Videographic Evidence through CD)

9. The present application has been filed on behalf of the plaintiff under Section 151 of the CPC read with Chapter XI of the Delhi High Court (Original Side) Rules, 2018, seeking leave to place on record videographic evidence through a Compact Disk (“CD”).
10. In terms of Rule 24 of Chapter-XI of the Delhi High Court (Original Side) Rules, 2018, it is made clear that electronic records can be received in



CD/DVD/Medium, encrypted with a hash value. The said Rule is extracted as below:

*“24. **Reception of electronic evidence** - A party seeking to tender any electronic record shall do so in a CD/ DVD/ Medium, encrypted with a hash value, the details of which shall be disclosed in a separate memorandum, signed by the party in the form of an affidavit. This will be tendered along with the encrypted CD/ DVD/ Medium in the Registry. The electronic record in the encrypted CD/ DVD/ Medium will be uploaded on the server of the Court by the Computer Section and kept in an electronic folder which shall be labeled with the cause title, case number and the date of document uploaded on the server. Thereafter, the encrypted CD/ DVD/ Medium will be returned to the party on the condition that it shall be produced at the time of admission/denial of the documents and as and when directed by the Court/ Registrar. The memorandum disclosing the hash value shall be separately kept by the Registry on the file. The compliance with this rule will not be construed as dispensing with the compliance with any other law for the time being in force including Section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.”*

11. Accordingly, Registry may receive electronic record in a CD/DVD, so long as it is encrypted with a hash value or in any other non-editable format. The CD/DVD containing the documents, be placed in the electronic record of the present suit.

12. Accordingly, the present application is allowed and the plaintiff is allowed to place the documents/videographic evidence in a CD/DVD.

13. With the aforesaid directions, the present application is disposed of.

I.A. No. 12908/2026 (Application under Order II Rule 2 read with Section 151 CPC)

14. The present application has been filed under Order II Rule 2 read with Section 151 of the CPC.

15. Issue notice to the defendants.

16. Notice is accepted by learned counsels appearing for defendant nos. 3, 4 and 5.



17. Issue notice to defendant no. 2 by all modes.
18. Let reply be filed, within a period of four weeks, from today.
19. Rejoinder thereto, if any, be filed within a period of two weeks thereafter.

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20. Let the plaint be registered as suit.
21. Issue summons to the defendants.
22. Summons is accepted by learned counsels appearing for defendant nos. 3, 4 and 5.
23. Issue summons to defendant no. 2, through all permissible modes.
24. Let the written statement(s) be filed by the defendants, within thirty (30) days from the date of receipt of summons. Along with the written statement(s), the defendants shall also file affidavit(s) of admission/denial of the documents of the plaintiff, without which, the written statement(s) shall not be taken on record.
25. Liberty is given to the plaintiff to file replication(s), if any, within thirty (30) days from the receipt of the written statement(s). Along with the replication(s), filed by the plaintiff, the affidavit(s) of admission/denial of the documents of defendants be filed by the plaintiff, without which, the replication(s) shall not be taken on record.
26. It is made clear that any unjustified denial of documents may lead to an order of costs against the concerned party.
27. If any of the parties wish to seek inspection of the documents, the same shall be sought and given within the timelines.
28. List before the Joint Registrar (Judicial) on 13th July, 2026.
29. List before the Court on 13th October, 2026.



I.A. No. 12907/2026 (for stay)

30. The present suit has been filed by the plaintiff, seeking a permanent injunction to restrain the misappropriation of his personality and publicity rights, impersonation, passing off, and the unauthorized publication of synthetically generated information, including deepfakes.

31. Learned Senior Counsel for the plaintiff submits that the plaintiff is a globally respected author, public figure, former international diplomat, and a fourth-term Member of Parliament. Further, he has served as the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and has held key ministerial positions in the Government of India. Over the course of a long and distinguished career in public life, he has earned immense goodwill, credibility, and public trust. The plaintiff's distinctive persona, including, his visual likeness, recognizable voice, characteristic oratorical style, and highly refined vocabulary is uniquely identifiable with him.

32. It is submitted that the plaintiff had a stellar diplomatic career spanning nearly 30 years at the United Nations, which began in 1978 as a staff member of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ("UNHCR") in Geneva. He was subsequently appointed as the Head of the UNHCR office in Singapore from 1981 to 1984. It is submitted that his long years of dedication to international public service forms the bedrock of plaintiff's unimpeachable global credibility and intellectual authority.

33. It is submitted that subsequent to his tenure at the United Nations, the plaintiff entered public life and has continuously served as a Member of Parliament for Thiruvananthapuram since 2009, and has held key ministerial portfolios in the Government of India, including, Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Human Resource Development.



34. It is submitted that the extensive public reach, goodwill, and reputation that the plaintiff has built for himself is further evidenced by the multitude of prestigious accolades bestowed upon him. The plaintiff has received numerous awards, honours, and recognitions over the course of his distinguished career spanning public service, literature, diplomacy, and public discourse. These accolades have been conferred by reputed national and international institutions in recognition of the plaintiff's contributions to literature, public life, international relations, and intellectual thought leadership.

35. It is submitted that in or around March, 2026, the plaintiff discovered a sophisticated, malicious campaign orchestrated by unknown infringers, i.e., defendant no. 1 across various digital platforms. Further, the infringers have weaponized artificial intelligence and machine learning to generate hyper-realistic audio-visual deepfakes by cloning the plaintiff's face, voice, vocabulary, and mannerisms. These fabricated videos maliciously depict the plaintiff making politically sensitive statements that he never made, including *"Pakistan is faring much better diplomatically than India"* and praise for Pakistan's diplomatic strategies as *"absolute brilliance"*. Such content is calculated to mislead the public and has caused serious harm to the plaintiff's credibility, reputation, and public standing, resulting in significant mental anguish and harassment.

36. It is further submitted that accordingly, upon becoming aware of the unknown infringers' unlawful activities, the plaintiff promptly took steps to seek redressal through available channels, and on 02nd April 2026, the plaintiff issued Letters to the Secretary of defendant no. 4 and the Commissioner of Police, Delhi Police, bringing the infringing content and



the available relevant details to their notice and seeking immediate takedown and action.

37. It is submitted that contrary to the depiction in the impugned deepfakes, the plaintiff has never made any such statements, nor has he authorized any person or entity to issue such communications on his behalf. As such, the audio track accompanying the video is entirely synthetic, generated through voice-cloning tools designed to mimic the plaintiff's precise oratorical cadence and phonetic identity, with the deliberate intent of deceiving the public into believing the plaintiff actually uttered fabricated words.

38. It is submitted that the dissemination of these deepfakes has caused continuous and severe harm to the plaintiff's reputation, and although several media organisations such as India Today and Press Trust of India, as also D-Intent Data, i.e., an independent fact checking agency have debunked the videos, however, the algorithmic amplification and re-sharing on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Meta (Instagram and WhatsApp) has led to exponential circulation. The forgery is so realistic that it has deceived unsuspecting members of the public, the political establishment, as well as various foreign journalists, escalating the matter into an international embarrassment.

39. It is submitted that supporters of the plaintiff have also reached out to him expressing anguish over the false statements attributed to him in these deepfake videos, resulting in significant harm to his political goodwill. Further, it is submitted that, as the plaintiff was actively campaigning for the Kerala Legislative Assembly elections, 2026 in March and early April, the disinformation campaign was especially damaging, and was a deliberate



attempt to tarnish his patriotic credentials, manipulate public perception, and unlawfully interfere with the democratic electoral process.

40. Learned Senior Counsel for the plaintiff submits that the unauthorized cloning and exploitation of the plaintiff's likeness, voice and mannerisms infringe his personality and publicity rights and also constitute a serious violation of his Right to Privacy. Furthermore, the actions of the defendants constitute the common law torts of passing off, misappropriation, and dilution by tarnishment. The creation and dissemination of these manipulated videos also amount to identity theft and forgery under Section 66C of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and Sections 335 and 340 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

41. It is submitted that in light of the plaintiff's highly distinguished background as a former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, a former Minister of State for External Affairs, and the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, any statement attributed to him regarding foreign diplomacy carries immense geopolitical weight. There is immense public goodwill associated with his identity. Therefore, by falsely portraying the plaintiff as endorsing the diplomatic positions of a foreign nation, the unknown infringers have not only committed a gross misappropriation of the plaintiff's personality rights, but also jeopardized his institutional integrity and diplomatic standing. As such, the impugned deepfakes have caused an irreparable harm to the plaintiff.

42. The matter requires consideration. Accordingly, issue notice to the defendants.

43. Notice is accepted by learned counsels appearing for defendant nos. 3, 4 and 5.



44. Issue notice to defendant no. 2, by all modes.
45. Let reply be filed, within a period of four weeks, from today.
46. Rejoinder thereto, if any, be filed within a period of two weeks, thereafter.
47. Learned counsel appearing for defendant no. 3, i.e., Meta submits that the URLs as available on the Instagram and listed in *Schedule 1* of the plaint, have been made inaccessible this morning.
48. The aforesaid statement is taken note of.
49. Having heard learned Senior Counsel for the plaintiff, this Court notes that the plaintiff is a respected and recognised public figure and accordingly, enjoys personality rights / publicity rights over all facets of his personality. Thus, the plaintiff has exclusive control over the utilization of his personality. No one can utilize and/or misappropriate and/or imitate any facet of the plaintiff's personality, and/or exploit the same deceptively, or in any manner whatsoever, without the express consent/authorization of the plaintiff.
50. Further, it is no more *res intergra* that personality rights/publicity rights are protectable under Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India, 1950. The plaintiff's reputation, goodwill, name, physical appearance/image/likeness, voice, mannerisms, styles, signature oratorical style, and other attributes are uniquely identifiable and associated with the plaintiff. The same form the plaintiff's "*Personality*", over which the plaintiff enjoys sole and exclusive control.
51. Thus, misappropriation of any attribute of the plaintiff's personality without his express permission for any purpose and the harm caused to the reputation and goodwill of the plaintiff, is liable to be restrained.



52. Accordingly, this Court is of the considered view that a *prima facie* case has been made out by the plaintiff. Further, balance of convenience also lies in favour of the plaintiff, and irreparable loss shall be caused to the plaintiff if interim relief is not granted to the plaintiff.

53. Consequently, in view of the aforesaid discussion, till the next date of hearing, the following directions are issued:

- I. Defendant no. 1 (Ashok Kumar /John Doe), their associates, servants, agents, affiliates, holding companies, assignees, substitutes, representatives, group entities, their subscribers, employees, and/or persons claiming through or under them, are restrained from reproducing, misappropriating, or imitating any facet of the plaintiff's persona, including, but not limited to his (i) name, (ii) visual likeness and image, (iii) distinct voice, (iv) signature oratorical cadence and manner of speaking, and (v) highly refined vocabulary, to create, publish, or disseminate any synthetic media, deepfakes, voice-cloned audio, or morphed videos, through the use of AI, Generative AI, Machine Learning, or any other technology, for any commercial, political, or malicious purpose, across any physical or virtual medium;
- II. Defendant no. 2 is directed to forthwith take down and block access to the following link as available on its platform 'X' (formerly Twitter):

(a) Links on the platform 'X' (formerly Twitter), operated by Defendant No. 2

Link	Description
(i) https://x.com/Flagvance/status/2021952707339423852?s=20	Deepfake video of Shri Shashi Tharoor circulating as an X-post.



III. Defendant no. 3 is directed to ensure that the following links/URLs on Instagram, which have already been made inaccessible, shall continue to remain inaccessible.

(b) Links on the platforms 'Instagram' operated by Defendant No. 3

Platform	Link	Description
Instagram	(i) https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUoA8DagpqH/	Reels on Instagram hosting the Deepfake video of Shri Shashi Tharoor.
	(ii) https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWS1sgqMixS/?igsh=NWh4a3k2NDJjNDFo	
	(iii) https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV5h_luEXMR/	
	(iv) https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV5h_I OEsg/	
	(v) https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV5sbr2gEcG/	
	(vi) https://www.instagram.com/p/DV4uy0bDE_T/?img_index=2	
	(vii) https://www.instagram.com/reel/DXCVjw2Abgy/	

IV. In case, during the pendency of the suit, the plaintiff discovers any more false, fake and infringing videos/posts not originating from or associated with the plaintiff, the plaintiff shall be at liberty to approach defendant nos. 2 and 3 through the counsels who have entered appearance, for taking down/blocking any further content which is similar to the subject matter of the present suit. In case, the



said defendants have any reservation, they will communicate the same to the plaintiff, and the plaintiff shall be at liberty to approach this Court, for appropriate orders.

- V. Defendant nos. 2 and 3 are directed to provide the plaintiff with the complete identity, registration particulars, Basic Subscriber Information (“BSI”), IP login details, phone numbers, and email addresses of the uploaders, creators, and registrants of the infringing accounts and URLs, as detailed hereinabove, within a period of three weeks.
54. Compliance of Order XXXIX Rule 3 of CPC, shall be done, within a period of one week, from today.
55. List before the Joint Registrar (Judicial) on 13th July, 2026.
56. List before the Court on 13th October, 2026.

MINI PUSHKARNA, J

MAY 8, 2026

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