

## ADVISORY ON PORTRAYAL OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

01 July 2021

Crimes against women, children and persons from the LGBTQ community reflect a deep social malaise which infiltrates all sections of the society. Its manifestation in various forms like sexual and domestic violence deprives such persons of their dignity and is indicative of deeply entrenched patriarchy and heteronormative biases in our society.

Dissenting narratives which counter such abuse and discrimination and encourage society to treat such persons with respect and dignity have been the central theme of television serials on many general entertainment channels. Towards this end, portrayal of ill/mistreatment, assault and objectification of such persons on the screen is often sought to be justified on the grounds that such programmes, actually, seek to spread awareness and take a stand against the oppression of such persons.

As pointed out by BCCC's earlier Advisory on 'Portrayal of Women in TV Programmes' (24/01/2012), the Council has noticed that some entertainment programmes overindulge in portrayal of extreme forms of gender-based violence, which reinforce negative stereotypes.

Content on television mirrors social realities. On-screen portrayal of such incidents becomes inevitable to truly narrate the journeys of such protagonists and eventually their victories against such evils in an attempt to positively influence and inspire the viewers to speak up against such injustice.

However, there must be a bottom line in keeping to some standards of accepted decency and ostensible 'sensitization' wherein depiction of gender-based violence must not get vulgarised into titillation or propagate further subjugation.

A prolonged depiction of physical and psychological violence leaves an indelible impact on young minds and contributes in many subliminal ways to raise the



### **BROADCASTING CONTENT COMPLAINTS COUNCIL**

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threshold of our acceptance of all kinds of violence. Furthermore, such prolonged depiction, rather than bringing out the essential message of disapproval and condemnation of such violence, runs the risk of its unintended elaboration, contrary to what is designed by the channel.

The sophistication of creativity and the seriousness of message deserve that the essence must get reinforced and not veiled or subdued due to grossness and crudity of its depiction. It is thus imperative to consistently combat such routine normalisation of gender-based violence.

BCCC will like to reemphasise that the channels must exercise necessary prudence and caution while scripting, filming and editing such scenes. Channels should ensure that explicit visualisation of violence against such persons is minimised and the message that such violence is unacceptable and must be abjured is clearly conveyed.

The Council, therefore, advises television channels to exercise self-moderation while framing such plotlines based on social issues engulfing gender-based violence; ensure that their depiction is subtle and nuanced as well as additionally ensure that any such portrayal of violence on television is accompanied with an on-screen disclaimer (in English, Hindi and other regional languages) that states:

**“Gender-based violence is a penal offence. This channel does not support or endorse any form of gender-based violence or abuse of any nature.”**

**“लैंगिक हिंसा एक दंडनीय अपराध है। यह चैनल किसी भी प्रकार की लैंगिक हिंसा या उत्पीड़न का समर्थन नहीं करता है।”**

The BCCC asks for sensitivity while portraying such persons as victims of different forms of violence on television and expects channels to strive to use the impact and reach of television for constructive and reformatory purposes.

*For & on behalf of*  
**Broadcasting Content Complaints Council**



*Gita Mittal*  
**Justice Gita Mittal (Retd.)**  
Chairperson