

ORDER

In the matter of Appeal against TV show 'Maati Se Bandhi Dor' on STAR PLUS

This Council has received multiple Appeals against the programme '*Maati Se Bandhi Dor*' telecast on **Star Plus** for several episodes from general viewers and also forwarded from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

The Appellants have alleged that the programme demeans and insults their community/ religion. It denigrates women of Marathi background who are portrayed as violent and without moral values.

The Appellants have claimed that the Channel was aware of the story as it is a remake. The Channel spreads misperceptions while making what is a family drama. It shows romance between brother-in-law and sister-in-law. "This is unacceptable and harm our society where we have to fight crime. We will not allow the makers to insult our culture and women (who work in villages) by portraying them as characterless. Kindly end the show. The Channel should take responsibility," the Appellants have said.

Upon receipt of the grievance, the Channel (Tier-1) made the following points:

'*Maati se Bandhi Dor*' is a new show that features the challenging life story of three people tied to one another by fate. "Unfortunately, we could not locate any content or theme referenced in your complaint in the show's actual episodic content. The show's storyline is devoid of any religious references, sexualized portrayals of characters or disparaging representations of any community. Having said that, do keep in mind that the show is a work of fiction featuring hyperbolic highs and lows that are not rooted in reality and are not really comparable with real life as such. While it may seem that story tracks take time to reveal themselves in the daily television format, we request you to watch the shows in their entirety and enjoy how the show progresses to get a wholesome idea of the makers intent. At Star Plus, we are committed to upholding high standards of programming," the Channel said.

Not satisfied with the Channel's response, the Appellants made the following points:

The show demeans Hindu culture and exhibits values that harm our society. It shows illicit relationship between brother-in-law and sister-in-law. Had the show been against Muslim community, action would have been taken and the show would have been stopped.

The Council sought a detailed clarification from the Channel.

Clarification/Response from the Channel

- The Channel states that by means of repetitive and disingenuous allegations by certain complainants, there is an attempt to present the programme's narrative in

a light that is simply untrue and not based on facts. A few months before the release of the show, a misinformed speculation took off on social media that compared the show to a 2013 Star Maa programme 'Devatha'.

- The Channel reiterates that '*Maati Se Bandhi Dor*' is not a remake of '*Devatha*' and does not follow its narrative. All allegations made by the complainants are baseless and the subject matter referenced in their complaints does not feature in the show.
- Below are the two primary grievances as they appear in all complaints and a considered riposte to them.

1. **That the show presents women in Maharashtrian villages in a poor light:**

On the contrary, the show's protagonist (Vaiju) is a strong female rural farmer, who supports her family by toiling in the fields every day. She works in the harsh blazing sun, muddy fields, ploughing them herself. In a unique and never before seen portrayal of woman farmers, Vaiju embodies a bold-resilient attitude and a strong value system that puts pride and honour before all things. No character, including Vaiju or her sister, is portrayed as promiscuous or as having questionable morals. Vaiju's character reflects an undying sense of loyalty and responsibility towards her family. Most importantly, a virtuous character like Vaiju presents Maharashtrian culture and Indian as heroic and strong in the face of adversity or reversal women. We confirm that the show makes absolutely no disparaging references to either.

2. **That the show encourages illicit relationships and is against Indian family culture and Hindu religion.**

'*Maati Se Bandhi Dor*' is a classic love triangle where the lives of two sisters are unknowingly enmeshed with the same man. Love triangles are an evergreen theme in entertainment, especially romantic fiction, including opera, romance novels, soap operas, romantic comedies and popular music. They are undeniably a major aspect of Indian television shows with most major television dramas and films find themselves centered on a love triangle.

Just like in a classic Shakespearean romantic drama story structure, '*Maati Se Bandhi Dor*' features **initial tragedy** (circumstances leading to a forced marriage, unrequited love), **internal & external conflict** (discovery that Ranvijay was in love with Vaiju's sister Jaya, Vaiju's guilt at having unknowingly wronged her sister, Ranvijay rejecting Vaiju), **redemptive plots** (Vaiju wanting to fix everything, Ranvijay being unable to dislike Vaiju despite trying) and **ultimate catharsis** (to unfold as the show draws to an end). The show features all the elements of a classic story structure in a balanced and realistic manner.

- '*Maati Se Bandhi Dor*' is a fictional narrative designed to explore the complexities of human relationships and emotions. The characters and their actions are purely fictional and are intended to be a dramatized interpretation of real-life emotions and sentiments, and not individuals or events. We have taken great care to ensure that the content is sensitive and respectful of diverse perspectives. All characters embody gracious and respectful manners and there is no element of sensational or scandalous conduct. They never cross any boundaries or behave in an inappropriate or indecent manner. We strongly deny all allegations made by the complainants that paint the show as salacious, indecent, or lewd. Most importantly the show features absolutely no such content as referenced in the complaints.
- As responsible content creators and a television network with a vast footprint, we are deeply conscious of the impact our content has on the audiences and maintain

that the show does not feature anything that can be considered detrimental to the viewers. We would like the Council to kindly note that some misinformed fan groups on social media are campaigning incessantly to pressurise the makers to change the track to their liking, going to the extent of harassing the show's cast and creators. The spat of complaints directed at the Council appears to be orchestrated online and feature identical writeups being sent by a few email addresses repeatedly in an attempt to create a sense of false emergency.

PRAYER BEFORE THE COUNCIL:

The Appellants urge a review of the storyline and coupled with appropriate actions and a directive to stop the programme.

BCCC's DECISION:

The Council reviewed multiple episodes of the show. The story is based in Maharashtra and has Marathi characters. Female protagonist Vaiju is shown as a fearless woman whose marriage proposals have not fructified on 13 occasions. The reason for this is Vaiju's mother, who is apprehensive of the fact that after marriage Vaiju will be gone and they will not be able to fend for themselves.

Vaiju is somebody who ploughs the field courageously, takes up noble causes and does not blink or demur from taking the right side. Her family receives a marriage proposal from one of the region's richest families (Mohite Patils). After seeing the photograph of the prospective groom Ranvijay, Vaiju falls in love with him. Ranvijay, who studies in the city, was in a romantic relationship with Vaiju's sister, unbeknownst to Vaiju. All three characters are unaware of the complexity of the relationship crisscross and mosaic. Vaiju recognises Ranvijay through a photograph while Ranvijay is unaware of Vaiju's identity. Later, after a brief misunderstanding, when the female matriarch is sent to jail on a complaint filed by Vaiju, the female matriarch decides that Ranvijay should marry Vaiju. Ranvijay remains in a dilemma as he is in love with Vaiju's sister and tries to convey his feelings to Vaiju without being aware that the girl he loves is Vaiju's younger sister, Jaya.

Nowhere in the impugned programme have the characters been shown as promiscuous or of questionable moral characters. So far as the complaint against the suicide scene is concerned, Jaya tries to commit suicide by slashing her wrist which obviously is not shown but implied and that too seems to be a part of the narrative.

BCCC believes that in works of fiction, channels have the freedom to create storylines and because shows are spread over a longer duration, and the narrative unfolds multi-dimensionally, there cannot be piecemeal or instantaneous responses, except for course correction where there may be violation of norms. In this case, BCCC believes there is nothing objectionable as alleged in the programme.

The Appeals are, therefore, DISMISSED.

For & on behalf of

Broadcasting Content Complaints Council


Justice Gita Mittal (R)
Chairperson

New Delhi
3 December 2024