

**ONLY BY EMAIL**

September 29, 2025

<b>Citizens for Justice and Peace</b>	<b>Ms. Anita Sharma</b> <b>Compliance Officer NBDSA</b> Independent News Services Private Ltd. India TV Broadcast Centre, B-30, Sector -85, Noida - 201 305 Email: anitasharma@indiatvnews.com
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Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Order of NBDSA in Complaint (No.154) dated 21.10.2024 filed by Citizens for Justice & Peace against “Coffee Par Kurukshetra” show aired on India TV on 15.10.2024.**

Attached please find Order dated September 25, 2025 passed by News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority.

Regards

Annie Joseph  
For & on behalf of NBDSA

**News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority**

**Order No. 205(2025)**

**Complainant: Citizens for Justice & Peace**

**Channel: India TV**

**Programme: "Coffee Par Kurukshetra: यूपी में पत्थरबाजों की फौज कहां से आई ? UP Bahraich Violence"**

**Date of Broadcast: 15.10.2024**

Since the complainant was not satisfied with the response received from the broadcaster, on 06.11.2024, the complaint was escalated to the second level of redressal.

**Complaint dated 21.10.2024**

The impugned show concerned the ongoing tension that erupted in Bahraich's Maharajganj area in Uttar Pradesh. The host with apparent malafide intent generalised the incidents of violence, attributing blame solely to Muslims and portraying them as extremists and aggressors.

This narrative emerged following a tragic event on October 13, when a violent incident unfolded during a Durga Puj version procession. Tensions escalated when loud music was played near a mosque, leading to gunfire that tragically claimed the life of 22-year-old Ram Gopal Mishra, a resident. This incident ignited widespread violence and communal unrest in the area. In the aftermath, mobs retaliated by vandalising and setting fire to numerous properties, including homes, shops, hospitals, and vehicles.

A video surfaced showing Ram Gopal removing a green flag from a rooftop and replacing it with a saffron flag before he was shot. Authorities arrested five suspects linked to Mishra's death after an encounter with Uttar Pradesh Police, during which two of the suspects sustained gunshot wounds.

The host targeted the Muslim community, propagated anti-Islam theories, and spread a divisive agenda. The impugned show was premised on multiple incidents across the country, specifically chosen to paint the Muslim community as aggressive. The participants present during the show included Professor Sangeet Ragi, Pradeep Singh, and Shantanu Gupta. In the show, the Muslim-majority areas were labelled as "sensitive" solely because of their demographic composition, fuelling a false narrative about the Muslim population, their festivals, and religious practices. By urging Hindus to object to the Azaan and emphasising exaggerated or imagined threats from the Muslims, the narrative further deepened divisions and stoked communal tensions. This framing contributed to an increasingly polarised atmosphere, fostering mistrust and hostility between communities.



During the programme, Professor Sangeet Ragi launched into a divisive and communal narrative. He drew a provocative comparison to the Godhra incident, stating that, similarly, during the train burning and the subsequent Gujarat riots, the blame had also been unfairly placed on Hindu Kar Sevaks. This framing not only distorted the current situation but also deepened communal tensions by invoking past conflicts.

The host failed to intervene as Professor Sangeet Ragi made provocative statements, which were intended to pit the Hindu community against the Muslim community. Instead of challenging, the host reinforced these divisive remarks by citing a Dainik Bhaskar report about a religious flag being hoisted in Amroha. Ragi immediately corrected him, stating that the flag had been raised on a temple, further spreading misinformation.

Ragi then proceeded to present a deeply troubling narrative, portraying extremism within the Islamic community as inherent and framing the growing Muslim population as a direct threat to Hindu interests. He warned that Hindu complacency was reminiscent of the mistakes that led to the Partition of India. He emphasised that Hindu cultural practices were under siege. By linking current tensions to historical events, Ragi's statements fuelled a false narrative that Muslim influence poses a threat, contributing to communal polarisation.

The statements made by Professor Ragi were deeply problematic and Islamophobic as they perpetuated harmful stereotypes and promoted religious intolerance. They suggested that Hindu practices were being unfairly restricted in favour of Muslim traditions, creating a false narrative of Hindu victimhood. By framing Azaan and Muslim festivals as disruptions to Hindu customs, the speaker fostered animosity between the two communities. Furthermore, the assertion that Muslims were "given Pakistan" and that India belongs primarily to Hindus was a dangerous and divisive remark that undermined the secular fabric of the nation. It stoked communal tension by portraying Muslims as outsiders who do not belong, disregarding India's pluralistic identity. The inflammatory language about "impurity" and implied threats of retaliation escalated these sentiments, encouraging hostility and deepening societal divisions, which could incite violence and further marginalised the Muslim community.

Ragi claimed that Mahatma Gandhi called Hindus cowards and Muslims bullies. By selectively invoking Mahatma Gandhi's words, Ragi distorted the historical context to reinforce harmful stereotypes, fuel communal divisions, and perpetuate a narrative that framed Muslims as aggressors and Hindus as perpetual victims. His assertion that police officers in India regard Muslim-majority areas as "communally sensitive" was designed to cast these communities as dangerous and fear-inducing. By framing these areas as exclusive zones in need of protection from so-called



"Islamic aggression," Ragi fostered an atmosphere of mistrust and deepened communal divisions. His claim that these perceptions are rooted in Islamic theology only amplified the stigmatisation and fear surrounding Muslim citizens.

The host, before moving on to the next guest, engaged with Ragi's provocative comments and misleading theories about the Muslim population and Islam. He asked, "ठीक है, इस पर आगे बात करते हैं की इसका **Sanction** कहाँ से मिल रहा है?". In response, Ragi asserted that this sanction originates from "*Theology*" (Islamic theology). The host skilfully navigated Ragi's controversial views on Islam, probing deeper into his assertions.

The host intentionally generalised Muslim citizens as responsible for violence by emphasising a series of incidents linked to communal tensions during the Durga Puja processions. By citing specific events—such as unrest in Bahraich, Garhwa, Kaushambi, Howrah, and Sitamarhi—the host aimed to paint Muslims as instigators of conflict. This narrative reinforced negative stereotypes and fostered a divisive view of the Muslim community, ignoring the complexity of the situation and the broader societal context.

The host then referenced the Nuh violence and Delhi's Jahangir Puri riots, encouraging the guests to generalise these incidents as reflective of the Muslim community's dominance and propensity for violence.

The next participant, Pradeep Singh, introduced his own inflammatory and communal rhetoric in response to the host's questions. He escalated the discussion by stating, "*Where do the stones come from? We have seen the visuals of that during the Delhi riots*"

Singh invoked a communal incident to generalise and perpetuate the narrative that Muslims inherently harbour animosity towards Hindu festivals and rituals due to an extremist mindset. He referenced a riot in Gujarat, where temples and shops were allegedly burned, leading to the death of 660 people. This selective invocation of communal violence across the country appeared to be aimed at portraying Muslims as hostile to Hindus and their celebrations.

Singh recounted an incident in Tamil Nadu, where Muslims refused to allow a Hindu Shobha Yatra to pass through a Muslim-majority area near a mosque. He claimed that the district administration sided with the Muslim community, arguing that since they constituted 90 percent of the local population, they believed they had the authority to impose such restrictions. However, Singh noted that the Madras High Court ultimately rejected this request and allowed the Shobha Yatra to proceed.



Singh and the host neglected to address the history of anti-social elements deliberately playing loud music and throwing colours at mosques during religious processions in such areas, which have often created law and order situations, raising tensions between communities.

The host then brought the Muslim community back into the discussion, stating that *"But they (Muslims) considered it their right to such an extent that they went to court!"*. Singh responded to the host that *"They (Muslim) thought that this is a very natural thing. When you have this kind of mentality, you can guess what you can do. They (Muslims) always have an excuse to commit violence."* He suggested that Muslims "considered it their right" to challenge the Shobha Yatra in court, and Singh's inflammatory response that Muslims *"always have an excuse to commit violence"* was extremely dangerous and divisive.

Then the host added his words, "बहाना और हथियार." Singh once again, with the intent to portray the Muslims as an enemy of the Hindu Community and their festivals, attempted to challenge inter-faith religious co-existence.

The point raised by Professor Ragi regarding the sensitivity of areas due to Muslim dominance and extremist ideologies was further fuelled and supported by Singh, who reinforced Ragi's communal segregation and divisive arguments.

Professor Ragi then escalated the discussion further by citing a statement attributed to Maharshi Arvind, asserting that a time will come when Hindus must take to the streets. Professor Ragi's remarks, invoking Maharshi Arvind suggested that Hindus will eventually need to "take sticks and come out on the streets" to confront the "mind-set of Islam," were profoundly dangerous. Furthermore, the host once again shifted the discussion to a communal theme, actively engaging in a provocative dialogue. He supported the points made by Professor Ragi, clearly affirming his statements without any interruption.

Another guest, Shantanu Gupta, shifted the discussion to the Delhi riots, engaging both himself and the host in the topic. Gupta asserted that during the Delhi riots, petrol bombs were stored in crates. He emphasised that there was systematic planning and machinery behind the riots, suggesting that Muslims are habitual offenders in such instances due to the organised storage of stones and petrol bombs. Then, Shantanu Gupta displayed a photo on his mobile, stating that *"stones were also kept in it (Crates) and the stones were managed very well, just like the builders make them from gravel, the stones were kept of a very big size that if a person hits his head, he will die. So, they were prepared and as Ragi ji said, 'this is a matter of today, not a matter of ten years'."*

Starting at the 18:40 mark, the show took a very divisive tone, openly targeting the Muslim community. Guest Shantanu Gupta discussed Azaan, which was completely unrelated to the main theme. This shift was caused directly by the



communal rhetoric of the other guests. The host showed no interest in performing his duty as a host and restraining the guests from vilifying the religious practices of a minority community.

Shantanu Gupta's claims were indicative of a broader misinformation campaign aimed at inciting communal tensions. His assertion that B.R. Ambedkar identified three specific reasons for conflict between Hindus and Muslims was misleading and taken out of context. Moreover, Gupta's interpretation of Islamic practices, particularly the wording of the Azaan, was deeply flawed. By framing the Azaan as inherently exclusive or provocative, Gupta perpetuated divisive stereotypes that further alienated communities and stoked fear. Such rhetoric is dangerous as it misinforms the public and undermines the values of coexistence and mutual respect that are essential for a pluralistic society. Shantanu Gupta's comments on the Azaan, implying that many do not understand its significance, were intentionally provocative and aimed at stirring existing narratives around religious practices. He stated, "आधो को तो अज्ञान का मतलब भी नहीं पता होगा, अगर मतलब पता होगा तो सच में हमें कोई दिक्कत नहीं होगी." Following this, both host and guest Pradeep Singh echoed communal sentiments regarding the Azaan, with Singh saying, "दिक्कत यही है कि दिक्कत नहीं है," while the host emphasised, "मैं वही कह रहा हूँ कि किसी के दिमाग में नहीं आता कि क्यों हो रही है अज्ञान?"

Although the host later claimed there was no issue with the Azaan, his framing of the conversation suggested an attempt to provoke doubt and question the legitimacy of this long-standing practice, which has coexisted peacefully within India's diverse cultural landscape. This line of questioning not only undermined the significance of the Azaan but also sought to challenge the very essence of interfaith coexistence in the country. By casting suspicion on a religious observance integral to the Muslim community, the host and guests fostered a sense of division and distrust among viewers. Their remarks resonated with a troubling trend that attempts to paint Muslims as outsiders whose traditions are unwelcome in the public sphere.

Moreover, the host's affirmation of Professor Ragi's provocative statement about why Hindus should endure the Azaan five times daily further escalated the tension. The host's remarks underscored a dangerous double standard that suggested that the religious rights of one community can be questioned and undermined, while simultaneously stoking resentment towards another.

The overall tone of the show reflected a deliberate strategy to explore and amplify stereotypes and false narratives about Muslims and Islam, rather than fostering understanding or respect for diversity.



The guest, Pradeep Singh, reacted to the narrative staged by all the participants and said, *"Look! What is happening now started during the time of the CAA; then the pandemic came and the momentum stopped. This is a direct preparation for civil war. They (Muslims) say, 'The time has come for the decision of who will fight.' The time has come for the decision of who will fight."*

Prof. Ragi expressed his affirmation towards the objectionable remark made by guest Pradeep Singh. It is disturbing and disappointing that the host did not stop and interrupt the guest for making such a communal and provocative remark.

The discussion was against brought to Dr. Ambedkar's book, wherein Prof. Ragi mentioned about the Mohammad Bim-Qasim and Mughal in reference with the Ambedkar's book. He said that देखिये न ! यानी लूट्टेरे कौन हे हमारे देश "We and they" हर नेशनल नैरेटिव मैं होता है, हम और वे, वे कौन थे ? ये लूट्टेरे! This kind of language promoted a "we vs. they" mentality, deepening divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The host failed to impose any restrictions on the panellists regarding their communal and provocative views, referencing a tweet from Samajwadi Party Chief and MP Akhilesh Yadav about the recent violence in Bahraich. In his tweet, Yadav had criticised the Uttar Pradesh government's administration for poorly managing the Yatra's route and questioned what song was played during the procession that may have provoked tensions within the community. By quoting Yadav's tweet without critical context, the host effectively allowed the conversation to veer towards blame and speculation rather than focusing on the need for constructive dialogue and understanding among communities.

Following this, Shantanu Gupta reiterated harmful stereotypes by suggesting that Muslims are inherently extremist and incapable of accepting or respecting other religious beliefs. Such assertions perpetuate a damaging narrative that paints Muslims as intolerant, further entrenching societal divides. Gupta's comments reflect a broader pattern of discourse that disregards the complexities of individual beliefs and practices in favour of reductive generalisations.

Pradeep Singh then escalated the rhetoric, as he suggested that the mere presence of Hindus is a problem for other communities, framing existence itself as a point of contention.

Such rhetoric not only stoked communal tensions but also undermined the possibility of peaceful coexistence in a diverse society. By fostering an environment of hostility and distrust, these statements could potentially incite further violence and discrimination against the Muslim community, which is already facing significant challenges in maintaining its identity and rights within a polarised socio-political



landscape. Further, the hosts' failure to challenge or moderate these extreme views reflected a troubling disregard for the responsibility of media figures to promote dialogue rather than division.

At the 27:00 mark of the show, the hateful conversation culminated in irresponsible statements and unfounded claims that targeted the Muslim community. These discussions relied on unresolved theories and propaganda, which can foster fear and anger among the general public. This was exacerbated by the continuous and unrestricted airing of provocative, hate-filled theories and stereotypes by all panellists, under the watchful eye of host Sourav Sharma.

Participant Ragi gradually presented his divisive views after receiving affirmation from the host without interruption or stoppage, which contributed to potentially creating fear and a sense of threat among Hindus regarding Muslim citizens. His comments appeared intended to disturb the harmonious diversity of our country and attempted to persuade the Hindus to think about why Muslims are living here. Throughout the discussion, he openly propagated divisive narratives against Muslims on national television, and at no point did the host intervene to curb these statements or prevent the panellist from spreading communal rhetoric.

Ragi attempted to sow doubt and foster a sense of segregation among the majority population of this country against the Muslim community. In conclusion, host posed a question to the panellists: *"What is the solution to this? Is strictness from the police the remedy? Or should we avoid going into those so-called sensitive zones? What is the solution?"*

Pradeep Singh responded with a troubling assertion, stating, *"The solution is to assert your power and your rights. Those who are personally supporting these individuals (Muslims), the rioters, should be asked what they would do if their own homes were attacked."* This comment was deeply problematic, as it not only incited fear but also created a dichotomy that positions Muslims as the perpetual aggressors, further entrenching the narrative of victimhood among Hindus. By suggesting that support for Muslim communities equates to siding with violence, Singh aimed to vilify those advocating for coexistence and mutual respect.

At the end of the show, panellist Ragi escalated the inflammatory rhetoric by framing the situation in terms of a cosmic battle, stating, *"In the battle between gods and demons, who are the gods and who are the demons? Who is the divine society, and who is the demonic society? It is necessary to understand the population of this country and to be prepared for it"*.

This statement was particularly concerning, as it not only dehumanised the Muslim community but also incited a sense of righteous indignation among Hindus, implying that they are engaged in a moral fight against an evil adversary. The show, characterised by its provocative and hate-filled discourse, ultimately contributed to



an environment where communal tensions could escalate, posing a significant threat to societal cohesion and peace.

### **What does the show entail?**

Rather than fostering constructive dialogue aimed at promoting harmony, the participants resorted to inflammatory rhetoric that deepened societal divisions based on religion. Throughout the half-hour segment, discussions surrounding the Bahraich violence served as a pretext for unjustly implicating the entire Muslim community in a narrative steeped in suspicion and fear.

The statements made by guest Pradeep Singh, alongside Professor Ragi, reflected a deeply troubling incitement to civil unrest, posing a significant threat to national unity and integrity. Singh's assertion that current tensions represented a "direct preparation for civil war" explicitly incited fear and division, portraying Muslims as adversaries in an escalating conflict. This rhetoric dangerously implied that Muslims are the instigators of violence, perpetuating a narrative of victimisation among Hindus. Ragi's comments further entrench this perilous ideology, suggesting that the time has come for Hindus to unite against Muslims, thus creating a false dichotomy that alienates an entire community.

Equally alarming was the host's failure to challenge these incendiary remarks. Instead of guiding the discussion towards peace and understanding, he allowed it to devolve into a rhetoric that promotes hostility and division. By not intervening, the host effectively endorsed a narrative that could incite violence and exacerbate communal tensions.

The participants' comments cultivated an atmosphere rife with stereotypes, casting Muslims as inherently linked to violence and unrest while neglecting the complex nature of the issues at hand.

The intentional focus on these themes reveals a concerning agenda aimed at fostering discord rather than encouraging understanding or resolution. The discussions lacked a sincere commitment to addressing the underlying causes of conflict and instead seemed designed to scapegoat a marginalised community. By dragging the Muslim population into the conversation surrounding the Bahraich violence, the show trivialised the complexities of societal issues, igniting further animosity and fear.

The host exacerbated the situation by citing multiple incidents to construct a sensational narrative, thereby endangering the livelihood and security of the Muslim community. His reference to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's writings distorted their original intent, suggesting that Muslims exploit Hindu vulnerabilities. The host painted an

entire community in a negative light, overlooking the nuanced realities of communal relations in India.

According to the guidelines of the NBDSA, hosts are expected to maintain neutrality and avoid favouring one community over another. However, this expectation was clearly not met. As evidenced by the videos and highlighted statements, both the host and participants seemed focused on questioning whether Hindus in India should “*open their eyes*” to the so-called “*agenda of Muslims*.” As an anchor of a news channel, that is supposed to uphold a neutral and unbiased theme, the host failed to introduce any non-communal topics into the debate.

By airing the impugned broadcast, the broadcaster not only violated Fundamental Principles – 1, 4, 5, 6 and Principles of Self-Regulation concerning Neutrality apart from the Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage concerning Racial and Religious Harmony and Specific Guidelines for Anchors conducting Programmes including Debates.

**Reply dated 5.11.2024 from the Broadcaster**

1. The show “Coffee Par Kurukshetra” is recorded live, is unscripted, and involves a discussion between the guests on an important contemporary topic. The purpose behind the show is to offer viewers an alternative viewpoint on a particular issue, allowing them to make an informed choice on a topic. The statements made and views expressed during the show are those of the guests and the broadcaster does not in any way endorse them.
2. The complaint pertains to the telecast of the show on 15.10.2024, when the topic of discussion for the day was the unfortunate incidents and communal tension in Bahraich.
3. The show began with a factual recounting of the incident and the aftermath without any hyperbole or embellishment. The floor was then opened for the guests to make their respective remarks and express their views. Not a single statement has been pointed out in the complaint made by the host that is incendiary, communally charged, or likely to incite violence and disharmony. Furthermore, every statement made by the host was backed up, either by facts verified by reliable sources or the views expressed by individuals of great learning.
4. The recounting of the show in the complaint presents a highly distorted view of what actually transpired and the context and tone of the show. Several statements quoted have been cleverly put forth without providing the true context, in a manner designed to sensationalize the statements completely.



5. The allegation that the host failed to challenge the allegedly incendiary remarks made by the guests amounts to endorsing them is entirely misconceived. The show was designed to present to the viewers various viewpoints on a controversial issue and to openly discuss them. The guests voiced their opinions based on their knowledge and personal experiences. At no point during the show did the host endorse or express agreement with any views expressed by a guest. In fact, on multiple occasions, he asked who was responsible for these repeated incidents. Not once did the host lay blame for the incidents on any particular person or community. The host did not pronounce any verdict or proclaim any person or community as guilty.
6. Unfortunately, the complaint proceeds on a narrow, biased, and single-dimensional approach to the topic and an erroneous belief that the complainant's view is the only possible one on the topic. At multiple occasions the complainant has characterized the remarks of the guests as "distorting historical context" or "false" or "indicative of a broader misinformation campaign" or "deeply flawed" or "misinterpretation" or "misguided" or "creating a false dichotomy" – and yet, not once facts, figures or evidence have been offered to contradict these assertions. The citing of historical facts and past incidents to buttress a point being made by a guest cannot in any manner be said to create disharmony and fearmongering.
7. It is absolutely derogatory, disrespectful and defaming to assume and conclude that the broadcast is anti-Muslim and made an attempt to stir the societal harmony by attacking Muslims or any particular religion or community in India.
8. The impugned show is consistent with the broadcaster's right to expression and freedom of press. It has been held by the Hon'ble Apex Court that the freedom of the press forms an essential part of the right to freedom of speech and expression as granted in Article 19 of the Constitution of India. It has also been held that the freedom of speech and expression also covers the right to publication and circulation, through all means.
9. Not a single provision of the NBDA Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards ("NBDA code") or the Specific Guidelines for Anchors conducting Programmes including Debates ("anchor guidelines") or the Cable Television Network Rules ("CTN Rules") or the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023 is attracted in the present case.
10. There was no violation of fundamental principle 1 inasmuch as no false statement was made by the host. There was no violation of fundamental principle 4 as the topic was not selected for either promoting or hindering either side of the issue. The topic was selected because it was a recent controversy of social significance.



11. There was no violation of fundamental principle 5 as the purpose of the show was to share with the viewers different viewpoints on the incident. The show did not call upon the viewers to accept or reject any viewpoint. The freedom to choose any view is left with the viewer. There was no violation of fundamental principle 6 given that views were expressed by multiple guests from different backgrounds. The mere fact that the guests were in agreement regarding some of the issues discussed does not imply that the controversial topic was not fairly presented.
12. There was no violation of Regulation 2 of the Principles of Self-Regulation given that multiple guests were invited to express their own views on the topic. Furthermore, allegations were not portrayed as facts and charges were not conveyed as guilt. There was no violation of Regulation 9 of the Principles of Self-Regulation as the host did not make any statement which may denigrate or is likely to offend the sensitivities of any group.
13. The show did not violate the anchor guidelines. No derogatory statement was made by the host / anchor about any community. No communally inflammable statement was made during the news reporting. As there was no debate, no panelists were present. Even otherwise, no extremist or separatist was invited to make a comment. Guidelines d and e would in any case be inapplicable as it applies to guidance to be given to panelists. Guideline f would also not be applicable given that the news was not a panel discussion or debate. No religion linked adjectives were uttered by the anchor. No character assassination or attacks were made in the news reporting at all. Furthermore, no communal agenda was pushed during the programme. The anchor did not take any side in the issue, and no personal view or opinion was given. Further, no allegations were portrayed as facts.

**Decision of NBDSA at its meeting held on 13.12.2024**

NBDSA considered the complaint, response from the broadcaster, and after viewing the footage of the broadcasts, decided to call the parties for a hearing.

On being served with the Notice, the following persons were present at the hearing on 29.05.2025:

**Complainant**

1. Ms. Tanya Arora
2. Mr. Aman Khan

**Broadcaster**

1. Mr. Tejveer Singh Bhatia, Advocate
2. Ms. Ritika Talwar, Legal Head & Vice President, HR



### **Submissions of the Complainant**

The complainant recounted the events that occurred in Bahraich leading up to the impugned broadcast, which was aired on October 15, two days after the incident of communal violence had transpired in Bahraich. Their grievance was with the use of aggressive visuals, high-pitched music, and loaded language like '*civil war by Muslims*,' '*extremist Muslims*,' '*threats*,' '*conspiracy*,' and '*stone pelter army*,' which term was used by the anchor at the beginning of the impugned broadcast itself. It is important to note that at the time the impugned broadcast was aired, no investigation or police statement had been released regarding the incidents of violence in Bahraich. However, in the broadcast, the panellists referred to this event to draw historical parallels with partition, to suggest that partition was imposed on Hindus because of Muslims. Additionally, other communal riots were also mentioned. Further, in the broadcast distorted references were made to the Azaan, and a question was raised about why Hindus should tolerate the Azaan when Muslims complain about loudspeakers during Hindu festivals. There was also discussion about how the religious practice of the Azaan conflicts with Hindu deities and Hindus. It is reiterated that, although no investigation had taken place, Mr. Ram Gopal Mishra, who was killed in the communal violence in Bahraich, was portrayed as a martyr. Additionally, this incident was depicted as an attack on Hindus and Hindu festivals, suggesting a conspiracy.

Throughout the broadcast, the Muslim community was demonized. A parallel was also drawn with the murder of Kanhaiyalal. These incidents were used to endorse the rhetoric about how Hindus should also come out in the streets with sticks.

At the 6-minute mark in the broadcast, reference was made to the rise in the Muslim population, which was alluded to as a threat to the Hindus. Statements made by Mahatma Gandhi, BR Ambedkar, and Acharya were distorted during the broadcast to suggest that these individuals were also aware that Muslims were a threat to India and Indian civilization. There were also references to Muslim areas in the broadcast and it was implied that one could not enter such areas.

There was no Muslim voice or counter voice which was present and the discussion in the broadcast was on one narrative only. The host did not try to counter this narrative. The events that transpired in the Bahraich were presented in a manner that Hindus were attacked and unverified rumours were presented as facts and not as allegations.

A divisive "us versus them" narrative was constructed and past incidents were cited to justify calls for Hindus to awaken and take to the streets.

The host himself claimed that the alleged rioters had guns and stones ready, and no neutrality was maintained in the broadcast. By constructing a one-sided, communal



narrative around the Bahraich violence, the anchor prioritised sensationalism over truth, thereby abdicating his responsibility to uphold ethical journalism and fuelling further division and mistrust.

### **Submissions of the Broadcaster**

The broadcaster submitted that, admittedly, during the impugned broadcast, reference was made to quotes in the books of Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, and other books; however, in the complaint, the complainant has failed to identify what was misquoted. The statements made by the panellists were from the books.

In any event, the statements made and views expressed on the show were those of the guests and the channel did not in any way endorse them. The show's format is a discussion. It submitted that presenting diverse viewpoints, even if controversial, is essential for informing the public and upholding freedom of speech. The complainant has presented certain parts of the program out of context, creating a false impression. Statements have been selectively quoted and decontextualized to paint a negative picture. The impugned show ought to be considered in its entirety to understand the true intent and context of the guests' remarks.

The impugned broadcast was a discussion about an incident that took place in Bahraich, where a Durga Puja procession was attacked in front of a mosque. As a result, some Hindus became aggravated and retaliated. During this event, one person, Mr. Gopal Verma, was shot five times. This incident was being discussed in the broadcast, where diverse panellists were invited to express their views. In such programmes, only the topic of the discussion is given to the panellists; how they choose to develop it is left to their discretion. The anchor intervenes wherever necessary to check the panellists. For instance, in the impugned broadcast, the anchor questioned Ram Gopal Verma's actions, wherein he climbed a house, removed the green flag, and replaced it with a saffron flag. However, he also asked whether Mr. Verma's actions condoned killing him.

It shouldn't be the case that when individuals from a particular community do something wrong, no one is allowed to speak out. As far as the murder of Kanhaiya Lal was concerned, the only question raised was whether all the Hindus should come out on the roads, simply because of the incident. It was only in this context that reference was made to Kanhaiya Lal. It was clearly stated that there must be some law and some equivalence.

One of the panellists had raised the question of where the stones came from and who supplied them. Since there was an incident of stone pelting, a parallel was drawn to the incidents in Kashmir and in Shaheen Bagh. It had been reported by both the police and by media reports that during the incident in Shaheen Bagh, bottles of



stones and acid were kept on the terrace. It had merely shown visuals of the event that had transpired.

That, admittedly, the event had taken place, therefore, there could be no injunction against the media discussing such an event. It clarified that terms such as stone pelter were used only by the panellists.

In rejoinder, the complainant submitted that the broadcaster had not merely reported the Bahraich incident. Had the panellists advocated against communal violence, no objection could have been raised. However, in the impugned broadcast, inflammatory statements were made.

### **Decision**

NBDSA considered the complaint, gave due consideration to the arguments of the complainant and the broadcaster and reviewed the footage of the broadcast.

The Authority found that a particular theme was chosen and thereafter only those persons who have strong views in support of that theme were invited to express their views. The broadcaster did not include the speakers who could express other side of the picture, and thus the discussion was not balanced and was one-sided. This is clear violation of principle of neutrality under the Code of Conduct. The broadcaster is advised to have such discussions in the programmes keeping in mind the principles of neutrality.

NBDSA further also directed the broadcaster to remove the videos of the impugned broadcasts, if still available from the website of the channel, or YouTube, and remove all hyperlinks, including access, which should be confirmed to NBDSA in writing within 7 days of the Order.

NBDSA decided to close the complaint with the above observations and inform the complainant and the broadcaster accordingly.

NBDSA directs NBDA to send:

- (a) A copy of this Order to the complainant and the broadcaster;
- (b) Circulate this Order to all Members, Editors & Legal Heads of NBDA;
- (c) Host this Order on its website and include it in its next Annual Report and
- (d) Release the Order to media.

It is clarified that any statement made by the parties in the proceedings before NBDSA while responding to the complaint and putting forth their view points, and any finding or observation by NBDSA in regard to the broadcasts, in its proceedings or in this Order, are only in the context of an examination as to whether there are

any violations of any broadcasting standards and guidelines. They are not intended to be 'admissions' by the broadcaster, nor intended to be 'findings' by NBDSA in regard to any civil/criminal liability.

**Justice A.K Sikri (Retd.)**  
Chairperson

**Place: New Delhi**

**Date : 25.09.2025**