



July 3, 2021

To,

Mr. Mayank Aggarwal,  
Compliance Officer NBSA  
Zee Media Corporation Ltd. No 19,  
Film City, Sector 16A, NOIDA – 201301  
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**Subject:** Complaint against communal and insensitive portrayal of the minority community on your debate programme Taal ThokKe

Dear Sir,

This is in reference to Zee News' show called कुदरत बहाना है, मुस्लिम आबादी बढ़ाना है? (Nature is just an excuse, the motive is to increase Muslim Population?) aired on your 5 P.M debate programme *Taal ThokKe* on June 27, 2021.

The video link of the show can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOnyRlpeKsc>

**The clip of the show downloaded by Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), Mumbai, on June 29, 2021 is marked and annexed hereto as Annexure A.**

Your show focused on how the Uttar Pradesh government is mulling over a potential population control law, although there has been no official confirmation about the same. It aired a debate programme on this topic, emphasising on the statement made by Samajwadi Party MP Shafiqur Rahman who said that Children are “*Nizaaam-e-Kudrat*” (part of the system of nature) and that nobody has a right to interfere with that.

The entire show which is barely a debate and more a shrill exercise in heightening hyperbole and volume, insinuates that there is only one particular minority community behind India's backwardness and illiteracy. Mohsin Raza, an Uttar Pradesh minister, part of the panel, said that BJP is a party for the 'Bhartiya Janta' (Indian population) and that they are *samarpit* (dedicated) to the country, working for their nation, taking a dig at the spokesperson from the Samajwadi Party, Anurag Bhadauriya, who was against giving a communal angle to the story and instead brought up issues like Covid-19 deaths, inflation and rising unemployment. When he tried to bring up these issues, the anchor of the show, Aditi Tyagi, kept cutting him off and continued to play the statement made by Shafiqur Rahman about how nobody has the right to interfere with population. The debate was about how Shafiqur could make such a statement and nothing about the expected population control bill and the provisions it would entail. Moreover, it needs to be stated that every segment of society, in India or the world, surely has persons with different views: cherry picking from these and using the media to generate a stereotype is certainly not a responsible act from a media house.

Mohsin Raza went on to say that Samajwadi Party and its supporters don't have a problem with forceful conversions and instead glorify terrorism. “*Yeh hinduon ko musalman banwanewa loke saath kbade rebte hai?*” (These people (Samajwadi party) stand by Muslims who forcefully convert Hindus to their religion), he alleged against the Samajwadi Party. The channel allowed such statements to be spoken unabated without any verification.

Throughout the show, which was close to 40 minutes, misinformed and offensive taglines were run. At some point in the show, the host Ms. Aditi Tyagi did ask questions about why a religious angle has been given to the potential population control law, but on the other hand taglines concerning only Muslim population was flashed on the TV screens of all viewers. Some examples are:

-*Hum do humare do par mazhabiru kawat kyun?* (Why a religious angle/barrier to the two-child policy?)

-*Nizam-e-kudratya Hindustan par aafat?* (system of nature or a disaster upon India?)

-*Kudrat bahana hai, muslim abaadi badhana hai?* (is nature just an excuse, motive is to increase the Muslim population?)

The show also, on several occasions, showed visuals of crowded areas only inhabited by Muslims. Such images of areas crowded by only Muslim people clearly displays the intention of the channel that just wanted to regurgitate the 'Hindu-Muslim narrative' and divert from the real issues of Covid-19 and the slowing economy. Such themes also tend to perpetuate the myths pertaining to the Muslim population and falsely glorifies the Muslim population explosion narrative that compels people to believe that Muslims intend to do anything to increase the population of their community to dominate India.

Further, another panelist, BJP Spokesperson Sanju Verma asked at the outset as to why this population control law is being looked at from a religious perspective but makes arguments in support of the very same religious angle. She mentions states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal where the Muslim population is very high and that there are 86 districts in these states which have the most unemployment, malnutrition and crime. In all these districts, Muslim population is more than 50 percent.

The show, even though raised questions about why involve religion in this topic, ends up doing the exact same thing. The name of the show (Nature is just an excuse, the motive is to increase Muslim Population?) is sufficient to believe that this show was aired to target only this particular community and push the majoritarian agenda of Hindutva.

The most astonishing thing about this show on your channel is that the debate drifts to the narrative that the abovementioned law is not pinning the blame on Muslims or giving it a religious angle and that it does not intend to promote disharmony. But at the same time, in the beginning of the show, it ropes in a Hindu Mahant Narayan Giri of the Antarashtriyia Juna Akhada who comments against Shafiqur Rahman's Nizaam-e-kudrat statement and says that such foolish people reach the Parliament and disrespect the Constitution of India. He also said that the population is exploding and before he could complete his sentence, the channel cuts to images of crowded Muslim places.

On one hand, the host kept questioning through the show why population is a religious issue and on the other hand, asked obnoxious questions like *Kudrat bahana hai, muslim abaadi badhana hai?* (is nature just an excuse, motive is to increase the Muslim population?). It seemed like the show tried to create rhetoric that did not exist, as not even the Uttar Pradesh government has made any religious reference for its proposed population control law, nor has any prominent leader conformed to such views. It is ironical how your channel created a communal narrative on the show and then questioned why such a narrative exists. Unclear why this was done, in any case, it does not conform to the code of ethics and principles of self-regulation laid down by the NBSA.

Zee News on YouTube has around 18.9 million subscribers, and about 5.2 million followers on Twitter, which proves that it has an impactful reach amongst Indians and can influence a considerable amount of the population. The host of the show, Aditi Tyagi also has a huge following on Twitter with 2,08,000 followers (approximately). The Supreme Court in the *Amish Devgan vs Union of India* (W.P CrI. No 160 of 2020), has held that,

*"Persons of influence, keeping in view their reach, impact and authority they yield on the general public or the specific class to which they belong, owe a duty and have to be more responsible."*

Recently, the Tamil Nadu High Court in *Mohan C Lazarus vs State of Tamil Nadu* (CRL. OP No. 250 of 2021) held that:

“The whole object of religion is to enable humans to evolve themselves into better beings... Unfortunately, in many instances, people get blindly attached to their religious beliefs and tend to make demeaning statements against other religions. They do not realise that spirituality is not a medium through which each religion competes with each other to show its superiority over the other...Spewing venom against another religious faith and developing hatred among the followers of a particular religion against another, defies the very purpose of religion, which is meant to help a human being evolve towards higher truths.”

The show/reportage stands in violation of code of ethics and principles of self-regulation as laid out by the NBSA as also Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage. It further amounts to certain offences related to hate speech, misinformation and promoting enmity under the Indian Penal Code. As such, in view of the elaborate and detailed complaint made herein above, we expect your channel to take responsibility of the grievances raised herein and act upon the same responsibly.

In view of this, it is in best interest, that you remove the above-mentioned content from all social media accounts of your channel and your own website and issue a public apology for the misinformed reportage of communal nature. In an event we do not receive a satisfactory response from you, we will be compelled to submit a complaint to the News Broadcasting Standards Authority.

As a matter of public education, we would also urge that you get your esteemed team members and journalists to look at national and international research on the subject of Population, Religious Belief and Population Control. There are numerous.

One that immediately comes to mind is a recent book published by none other than Former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), SY Quraishi, *The population Myth-Islam, Family Planning and Politics in India* (Author: S. Y.Quraishi, Publication: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2021

Between Pages 100-102 the Book states,

**“Availability of health infrastructure and services**

As we have seen in the previous chapter, family planning acceptance is also dependent on delivery of health services to the communities and individuals in question. Here, again we find Muslims lagging. According to NFHS-4 data, only 77 per cent of Muslims women in the age group of 15-49 has received antenatal care from a skilled provider, which is the lowest among all religious groups (Table 4.6).

They also lag behind in accessing delivery services at healthcare facilities and receiving advice on family planning from community health workers, as is evident from Table 4.7 and Table 4.8. This results in lower acceptance of family practices by the community.

Table 4.6: Percentage of women in the age group 15 – 49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider lowest for Muslims

Religion	Percentage receiving antenatal care from skilled provider
Hindu	79.3
Muslim	77
Christian	84.2
Sikh	93.6
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	93.2
Jain	93.7

Source: NFHS – 4; Mumbai: IIPS



Table 4.7: Percentage distribution of live births among women aged 15 – 49 delivered in health facility lowest for Muslims

Religion	Percentage Delivered in a Healthcare Facility
Hindu	80.8
Muslim	69.2
Christian	78.5
Sikh	92.5
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	92.2
Jain	98.1

Source: NFHS – 4; Mumbai: IIPS

Table 4.8: Percentage of women in the age group 15 – 49 who received advice on family planning lowest for Muslims

Religion	Percentage Who Received Advice on Family Planning
Hindu	69.7
Muslim	65.2
Christian	72.6
Sikh	77.1
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	81.6
Jain	70.4

Source: NFHS – 4; Mumbai: IIPS

This is only one excerpt from a 298 page book. Exploring social issues and matters of national concern from a responsible and explorative perspective could and should have led your channel to focus on the aspect of discrepancies in health care services and access. Needless to say that esoteric and outdated notions from within segments need also to be explored and exposed as part of a holistic approach. Selectivity and targeting however does more damage to the cause than anything else.

You are also put on notice that failure on your part to satisfy the complainants with an apology on your news channel may result in legal consequences for your channel at the appropriate fora, at your risk to costs.

Yours sincerely,

Nandan Maluste, President

Teesta Setalvad, Secretary