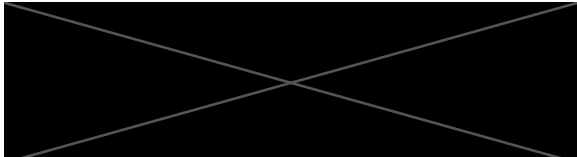


ONLY BY EMAIL

January 28, 2025

Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade 	Ms. Kshipra Jatana Compliance Officer NBDSA Network18 Media & Investments Limited, 
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Complaint (No. 135) dated 21.09.2024 filed by Mr. Indrajeet Ghorpade against a broadcast aired on News18 Rajasthan on 21.09.2024

NBDSA considered the above complaint at its meeting held on 13.12.2024. The gist of the complaint, response of the broadcaster and the decision taken are mentioned herein below:

Since the complainant was not satisfied with the response received from the broadcaster, the complaint on 04.10.2024 was escalated to the second level of grievance redressal, i.e., NBDSA.

Complaint dated 21.09.2024

The complainant questioned the broadcaster as to why it was spreading fake news that animal fat in Tirupati Balaji temple Prasadam Laddu is a Congress Party conspiracy. This goes against accuracy, objectivity, neutrality and fairness. He requested that the broadcaster to remove the broadcast immediately and publish a clarification.

Reply dated 3.10.2024 by the broadcaster

The broadcaster in its reply submitted that in the discussion on the channel 'News18 Rajasthan' with Swami Dipankar ("Swamiji"), the anchor had posed several questions. During the interview, Swamiji responded to these inquiries and shared his insights. Amongst various other responses, he also expressed the view that the Indian National Congress Party bore some responsibility for the controversy surrounding the Prasadam Laddu, which had garnered significant public attention. His responses and statements were his own, made independently without the channel's or anchor's endorsement or influence. In fact, during the interview, the anchor frequently questioned Swamiji why the current administration and trust members should not be held accountable for the situation. Given that allegations of ghee adulteration have been raised on multiple occasions in the past, they should have exercised greater caution.

Therefore, the anchor was completely neutral and non-partisan in conducting the interview and, in the interest of balanced and fair reporting, actively challenged statements regarding the Congress party's responsibility for the issue at hand. Any claims to the contrary were firmly denied. The broadcast strictly adhered to all relevant rules, regulations, guidelines, and applicable laws.

Also, it had revised/updated the title of the interview and its thumbnail. However, this action was taken completely without prejudice to the broadcaster's rights and contentions and without admitting any of the allegations made in the complaint, all of which are firmly denied. As a responsible member of the media, it is committed to fulfilling its duties with utmost accountability within the legal framework. Its primary goal is to provide accurate information to its viewers. It consistently upholds the highest standards of responsible journalism and will continue to ensure that its broadcasts meet these standards while fully complying with the laws of the land.

It was reiterated that the channel did not support or endorse the views expressed by Swamiji and had, therefore, without prejudice to its rights and contentions, taken down the Interview from its portal/channel. This had been done in the hope that the complainant would kindly treat the matter as closed.

Decision

NBDSA considered the complaint and response of the broadcaster and reviewed the footage of the broadcast.

Upon review of the footage of the impugned broadcast, NBDSA observed a discrepancy. While the title of the impugned broadcast "Tirupati Laddu Animal Fat Row : Tirupati के प्रसाद में बीफ, Congress का बड़ा षड्यंत्र" had been revised to "Tirupati Laddu Animal Fat Row : Tirupati के प्रसाद में बीफ, क्या बोले स्वामी दीपांकर? | N18V" as stated by the broadcaster in its response, the broadcast itself had not been revised, as the anchor could be seen questioning the interviewee as to whether the adulteration in the Prasadam Laddu was a conspiracy against the Hindus.

While the anchor had raised questions concerning the responsibility of the current administration and trust members, the overall tone of the broadcast seemed to be less about seeking accountability for the ghee adulteration; instead, the broadcast provided the interviewee with a platform to expound his views on the Sanatan Dharma, which was a deviation from the intended subject for the interview.

In view of the above, NBDSA decided to advise the broadcaster to bear in mind the Specific Guidelines for Anchor conducting Programmes, including Debates, while inviting any person as an interviewee in its broadcast. It also observed that the broadcaster should adhere to the Specific Guidelines covering Reportage, under which *"Facts should be clearly distinguishable from, and not be mixed-up with opinion, analysis and comment."*, while reporting/discussing any subject.

Further, contrary to the broadcaster's submission that it had removed the interview from its portal/channel, it appears that the broadcast was still available on the broadcaster's YouTube channel, in view of the same NBDSA directs the broadcaster to remove the video from all platforms, including from YouTube within 7 days from the receipt of the decision and inform NBDSA accordingly.

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

This is for your information please.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,



Annie Joseph
For & on behalf of NBDSA