

ORDER

In the matter of complaints against multiple episodes of the programme 'Pehredaar Piya Ki' aired on Sony channel

This Council has received several complaints from viewers and also a complaint forwarded by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting against various episodes of the programme 'Pehredaar Piya Ki' telecast on Sony channel in July and August 2017.

The complainants allege that the series is based on the broader theme of a nine-year-old boy getting married to an adult woman. The complaints also allege that the boy is shown fantasizing about the woman, stalking her and clicking her photographs without her permission. The show's promo has the same boy putting vermilion on the forehead of the woman. The complainants have averred that the channel, through the programme or its storyline, not only promotes the regressive theme of "child marriage" but cogitates the feeling of love displayed by a nine-year-old boy, who, in normal course, would not be in a position to understand or comprehend the concept of love.

In the other complaints received by BCCC, it has been stated that the programme shows age-inappropriate content as the child is shown to be discussing the idea of his "honeymoon" and that such shows should not be telecast when a large number of children watch television. Further, the complaints allege that the show's characterization in which a nine-year-old boy falls in love and romances a 19-year-old girl leaves little room for the impressionable minds to differentiate between fiction and reality and it can have a negative impact on them.

The Council has also received complaints alleging the show to be paedophilic in nature and asking as to how such content can be allowed to be shown across the country at primetime. Some complainants have stated that the channel, through this programme, has perpetrated a regressive perspective and, therefore, the corrective measure of discontinuing it should be taken.

On the directive of the Hon'ble Chairperson, BCCC took *suo motu* cognisance of the a large number of complaints emanating from the viewers as well as of media reports which said that an online petition had been started at through the website www.change.org, and decided to call the channel for a HEARING in its 67th meeting on 16 August 2017. The channel was also requested to send its detailed clarification about the programme 'Pehredaar Piya Ki'.

BROADCASTING CONTENT COMPLAINTS COUNCIL

Indian Broadcasting Foundation, B-304, Ansal Plaza, Khelgaon Marg, New Delhi 110 049
Email: bccc@bccc.co.in Website: www.ibfindia.com Tel: 91 11 4379 4400 Fax: 91 11 4379 4455

BROADCASTING CONTENT COMPLAINTS COUNCIL

In its reply, the channel provided the following clarification to the NOTICE issued by BCCC:

Theme of Child Marriage: Circumstances force Divya, the protagonist, to protect the royal clan's nine-year-old prince against threats he may have from his family members. The child, Ratan Maan Singh, is the only heir of Maan Singh's royal dynasty. This becomes the bone of contention for the whole family. The family members repeatedly plot to murder Ratan, although his parents fight tooth and nail to protect him. They get killed in an unfortunate accident. On his deathbed, Maan Singh pleads with Diya to marry Ratan, as marriage is the only association in which the wife vows to stand by her husband in all tough and turbulent times. Diya, who owes her life to Maan, agrees to become Ratan's "*pehredaar*"; hence the title '*Pehredaar Piya Ki*'. Our protagonist Diya is Ratan's guardian. In its reply, the channel said that it has clearly in the episodes that the marriage will legalize only when Ratan turns 21. The channel said the visuals or the language are neither explicit nor coarse and it has taken utmost care to ensure that there is nothing indecent in the episode. The channel further said a prominently displayed disclaimer at the beginning of the show clearly and unambiguously states that the show, characters and incidents therein are entirely fictitious and that it does not propagate/promote child marriage in any manner.

Theme of stalking: The channel said that Ratan grew up listening to fairytales, he is charmed by the fairies in those tales. When he sees Diya for the first time, he gets mesmerized by her, being an innocent child he visualizes Diya as the fairy of his fairy tales and follows her. Diya reprimands Ratan for the act but he innocently clarifies that he was following her because she is like his fairy! "At SPNI we have always been considerate to the child's age, maturity, emotional or psychological development and sensitivity, we ensure that the way children are projected should not harm or risk their welfare."

Theme of 'Suhag Raat': Ratan's family members hate Diya as all the wealth, properties and Ratan's responsibility has been entrusted to her and not to them. In this animosity they try to look for means to demean Diya, the "*suhag raat*" is part of their conspiracy to insult and have Diya displaced from their lives and from the house. However, Diya rebukes them for the act. Also, while editing the visuals utmost care has been taken that these scenes are delicately handled and are seen in the context of the overall storyline.

Theme of Honeymoon: Being an inquisitive child, Ratan curiously asks one of the family members about a couple on a honeymoon in their resort. As explained earlier, Ratan's family members do everything in their power to demean Diya. Mohak, the cousin, instigates Ratan that a

BROADCASTING CONTENT COMPLAINTS COUNCIL

honeymoon will make Diya happy and that he too should plan one. Ratan in his enthusiasm of making his fairy happy, announces that he will take Diya for the honeymoon to places like Barcelona or Disney Land. However nothing in the said scenes panders to any prurient interests, the scene only attempts to engage the audience.

The channel stated that the programme's focus is to show the road to protecting the child protagonist and overcoming the hurdles that come in the way and not to pander to prurient interests. Such depiction is only an attempt to engage the audiences and take the story forward. The channel also stated that it runs periodic disclaimers/scrolls during the programme specifying that the show does not promote child marriage.

The channel's representatives appeared before the Council on 16 August 2017 and made their arguments, extended on the basis of the written submission. They informed the Council that the channel wishes to portray a very different concept. The intent is not to show anything demeaning, derogatory, age-inappropriate or to glorify 'child marriage'. The channel also contended that more than 8.8 crore viewers have seen the show and a handful of complaints or negative opinion should not weigh on the Council's decision.

The Council viewed some episodes of the show and found depictions like the child's marriage with an adult woman objectionable. The Council concurred with some complaints who had said that the child has been deliberately put in 'adult situations'. The Council also observed that the programme's theme is against the law as child marriage is not only illegal but also goes against various initiatives taken to generate awareness against this social malaise.

The Council considered the channel's contention that the serial is not intended to show the inappropriate love angle between a nine-year-old boy and an adult woman. The channel had stated that the main protagonist is the woman and not the child and it is the story of her trials and tribulations while protecting the child and discharging her functions.

After hearing the channel's submissions, this Council makes the following observations:

- a) That the programme '*Pehredaar Piya Ki*' is based on the theme of "child marriage".
- b) That the channel should have been more sensitive in dealing with age-appropriateness of certain scenes that involved a nine-year-old child.
- c) That scenes like putting '*sindoor*' (vermillion) on the woman's forehead and going through wedding rituals like '*jai mala*' (marriage garlanding) is wrong.
- d) That the programme can potentially impact impressionable minds and it is not fit to be telecast during normal viewing hours.

BROADCASTING CONTENT COMPLAINTS COUNCIL

- e) That the programme violates BCCC's earlier Advisory which says that children should not be portrayed in adult or age-inappropriate situations.
- f) That the programme has been found in violation of Theme 6 of IBF's Self-Regulating Guidelines dealing with 'Harm & Offence'. Point 1 says, "Create public panic or unnecessary alarm, which is likely to encourage or incite the public to crime or lead to disorder or be offensive to public feeling." Point 9 of the same theme says, "Promote, glorify or justify social evils such as child marriage, dowry, bigamy, son preference etc."
- g) That the programme is also found wanting on the audiovisual depiction of the above stated theme which stipulates, "Show scenes involving children in violence as victims or as perpetrators or as forced witnesses to violence or being subjected to any form of child abuse."

This Council, therefore, orders:

1. That the channel shall henceforth air the programme 'Pehredaar Piya Ki' at 10 PM or later with no repeats during normal/daytime hours.
2. That while the channel airs this programme, it shall also run a scroll at appropriate intervals, in readable bold fonts, stating: "This programme does not advocate or support child marriage."
3. That the channel shall comply with these directives as soon as possible but not later than a week's time, that is 22 August 2017.

For & on behalf of
Broadcasting Content Complaints Council



Justice Vikramajit Sen (Retd.)
Chairperson

18 August 2017
New Delhi