

Advisory on depiction of Horror, Occult, Superstitions, Black Magic, Exorcism & Witchcraft in TV Programmes

29 May 2017

The Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC) had issued an Advisory on the above subject on 10 December 2015. In the light of further complaints received on the same subject, the Council feels the need to revise its earlier Advisory as under:

Programmes or shows that feature content based on Horror, Occult, Superstitions, Black Magic, Exorcism, and Witchcraft deal with sensitive themes and hence the depiction and presentation has to be cautious and restrained.

India has a rich tradition of storytelling and literature seeped in fantasy and folklore. This has inspired many creative representations on various platforms and it is an accepted part of our culture. The Council respects the creative freedom of channels, and while understanding the background, feels it necessary to outline guidelines for portrayal and depiction of such content.

The IBF's Self-Regulatory Code in **Theme-3** outlines the norms to be followed for audio-visual depiction of such themes in detail and this should form the cornerstone of the channel's creative approach.

Relevant portion of the Self-Regulatory Code is given below for ready reference:

“Subject Matter Treatment: While subjects or themes dealing with exorcism, the occult, the paranormal, divination, human or animal sacrifice or such other practices depicting horror may be covered only in ‘R’ category [programmes not suitable for children & young viewers] provided the storyline or the characters justify these and the subjects matter treatment does not in any way:

1. Justify, encourage or glamorize such practices
2. Instil fear or revulsion about the consequences of not following such practices
3. Encourage blind belief or superstitions in the efficacy of such practices
4. Enable the viewer to emulate such practices or learn their details or sources
5. Depict women as witches in programs on occult

Audio-Visual Presentation: The audio-visual presentation of any content will be given in a responsible and aesthetic manner, subject to the condition that the following shall not be included in respective categories below:

Category 'G' Programmes for unrestricted viewing and/or under Parental Guidance

- a) Prolonged, frequent or gratuitous depiction of horror related to the occult, exorcism, the paranormal, divination or human or animal sacrifice or other such practices
- b) Depiction of such practices in such morbid details so as to make them look realistic and efficacious.

Category 'R' Programmes which may not be suitable for children & young viewers

- a) Prolonged, frequent or gratuitous depiction of excessive horror related to the occult, exorcism, the paranormal, divination or human or animal sacrifice or other such practices”

The Council reiterates that the depiction should be in keeping with the narrative and if necessary, the channel should run a scroll during telecast disapproving of any such practices stating that it is a work of fiction.

The Council advises that the visual depiction should not glorify or glamorise any practices and therefore, the portrayal should be suggestive and not elaborate. Due care should be exercised to ensure that the viewer understands the fictionalisation of the subject matter.

The BCCC does not wish to curtail creative liberty but expects sensitivity and restraint in dealing with all such themes.

For & Behalf of
Broadcasting Content Complaints Council



Justice Mukul Mudgal (Retd.)
Chairperson