



TV CHANNELS FLOUT EVERY NORM OF DECENCY.

The Supreme Court on Friday sought the Centre's response to a PIL which alleged that mushrooming TV channels were crossing every norm of decent reporting in the absence of official guidelines and given the lax self-regulating mechanism for control of broadcast content.

A bench of Chief Justice P Sathasivam and Justice Ranjan Gogoi issued notice to the I&B and law ministries on the PIL filed by 'Hindu Janjagruti Samiti' (HJS), and TEAM SAFSAC which claims to safeguard against denigration of Hinduism and its religious leaders, after senior advocate Shekhar Naphade argued that the violation of broadcast codes were mainly meant for character assassination of certain persons.

Two weeks ago, a CJI-headed bench had refused to give any relief to a writ petition filed by Sant Asaram Ji Bapu, seeking to rein in TV channels from projecting him as guilty even before commencement of trial against him.

Naphade said it had become a trend with TV channels to indulge in character assassination of important persons just to get popular among the masses. He said they knew that there was no regulatory mechanism to haul them up for crossing the line.

To a question from the bench, he said the Press Council of India (PCI) had no jurisdiction over the content of TV channels as it dealt only with print media.

PIL raised, "The absence of any effective regulation and checks/balances for TV channels has posed a great threat to public morality, public order and public interest wherein the citizens of India are exposed to TV programmes that are in blatant breach of programme code."

It said the February 19, 2008 programme code, issued by the information and broadcasting ministry, applied to cable TV operators who distribute the channels to homes but not to those who broadcast the programmes and proposed setting up of a high-powered committee to regulate the content of TV channels.

Seeking permission for authorities to prosecute individual TV channels, as in the case of websites, the petitioner proposed that the committee should be empowered to deal with complaints against any objectionable programme on a TV channel.
