

IMPAR Guidelines for Media Panelists

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Media is the fourth pillar of democracy and it plays crucial role in providing information, creating awareness and opinions and developing knowledge societies. But, unfortunately, a large section of media has assumed the role of narrative building and generating hate contents through heated and screaming debates. Regrettably, Muslim representation has been serving handy in painting Muslims as illogical and intolerant with their aggressive behaviour in traditional moulti attires on TV screens. This has done irreparable damage to the Muslims image as a community, which is being seen as misfit to live in and appreciate religious beliefs and values of multicultural societies. Whatever be the course of discussions, slightest provocation is enough for them to fall in trap. IMPAR is issuing these guidelines to help promote responsible behaviour and informed and healthy discussions, especially on issues related to politics and religion.

1. Muslim television panellists must respect the religious views of other communities and never challenge or attack them, if they want respect for their own religion and religious beliefs. They must respect and appreciate the social, cultural, and religious values and traditions of other faiths.
2. The religious beliefs can't be subjected to scientific scrutiny. There are huge sensitivities involved in matters of religion, belief, cultural values and social practices. Never question them. Many times, the anchor's agenda could be to provoke you. Can you keep your cool and avoid falling into the trap?
3. It is necessary to dress well and prepare well before joining any debate. But, more important is the display of debating etiquettes, manners and good behaviour. Always focus on conveying the point, rather than scoring a point. If facts are not known, better to smile and pass.
4. Never cross the line of national interests, while debating politics or the Government performance. National interests are above the politics. No matter what the subject or situation, never be seen lauding the comments of the foreign powers. We must show maturity and full trust in our own institutions.
5. Maintaining dignity in debating is the most important, which requires display of patience and respect for the anchor and other panellists. Counter the point and not the person. Never make religious comparisons or go anecdotal. Better to align on the greater objective of society and the nation.
6. Intellectual debates require intellectual responses. If you can't, better keep shut and pass on, rather attempting to be noticed by your loud voice and aggressive behaviour. The panellists must follow the golden rule of giving respect and getting respect.
7. Neither drag the name of the top leader or the cult figure of any debate. Trying to match the aggression of the anchor or other panellists will be counter-productive. You must know that the humiliation on TV channels is not to you alone, but the whole community pays for your non sense.
8. On matters of foreign policy, defence and internal security, extra sensitivity is required. No loose comments be done, figures quoted or anything stated, which may go against the national interests. Clear line should be drawn between the political party, government and the national interests.
9. The panellists must know that certain channels are merely using you to build a narrative and further their agenda and TRP. Can you refuse to be pawn in their hands? If you're knowingly or unknowingly serving the agenda, be prepared to be used and shamefully thrown out after the objective is fulfilled.
10. Clear any misunderstanding by facts or simply propose to come back, if not aware, instead of giving an aggressive reaction. It is better to retract and apologise in order to maintain grace. Keep in check your voice and behaviour. Participate only if you can add facts or ease and peace to the viewers.

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