

Talk shows or Mock shows

Thursday, March 14, 2013 - Due credit must be given to Gen Musharraf for allowing so many TV channels in the country and giving them free hand to air their programme. As a result of this media has assumed the status of 4th pillar of the state.

TV talk shows are very popular and are considered the best means to bring to the viewers facts on current national and international issues. Talk shows are basically television or radio programmes in which a presenter (anchor) introduces a particular topic which is then discussed by the participants and lesson drawn. The anchor of the talk show is supposed to discover hidden facts, un-earth corruption scandals and excesses being committed by government in dealing with people or highlight the agenda behind a project in its true perspective to the viewers. But while doing so a clear cut line has to be drawn. The discussion and disclosures have to be within legal, moral, cultural and ethical limits conforming to the norms of the society.

The quality of views and information must be based on facts that could be proved and under no circumstance should they lead to character assassination of an individual group or organization. Unfortunately in Pakistan freedom of press has been used to defame people for which there is no justification. How on earth can a channel air a programme on a case that is being heard in any court of law?

By doing so anyone discussing a case which is subjudice is liable to contempt of court. However, here in Pakistan no one is bothered about rules and regulations and such acts go un-noticed. Most of the anchors are young girls who pose questions to elderly experts in their fields and out match the anchors knowledge on the subject but the anchor creates a very embarrassing situation by asking such questions as fail to generate healthy debate.

Another normal practice is to call 3 leaders from different political parties, pitch them against each other and enjoy their fight with no interest on the need to elaborate an important issue and draw lessons from it. Sometimes these shows lead to use of abusive language and words unbecoming of any gentleman and tarnish the basic concept of the show.

We have a category of sponsored talk shows which can also be termed as 'Lifafa' shows. It is difficult to deny this fact as many names of renowned anchors have appeared in the press being involved in the game of 'Lifafa', though they were denied later but not before causing extensive damage to the profession. I would just give one example of the property tycoon of this country, who was being targeted by every channel but once he started giving them ads there was an end to hostility against him. Where do we go from here?

Continue with this drama of Talk Shows or show some maturity and make the shows into efforts to bring facts to the people. If we really want the people to benefit from talk shows, we must be realistic, honest and should have no bias or leaning towards any particular party involved in the issue. To achieve this it would be best to invite neutral experts who can voice opinions on the basis of the merits of the case rather than on the basis of affiliation to a political party. The media in Pakistan is important and very powerful. It must use its power to educate and build not damage and destroy.

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