

the new Media Policy announced by the BJP government in their election manifesto for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

It say`s...

Our Policy on Media, Cinema, Arts

Freedom with Responsibility

WHILE the BJP believes in the traditional Indian position of "Ano Bhadraha Kritavayo Yantu Vishwataha" (Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides), it equally believes in the Gandhian dictum that we should keep our windows open for fresh air to come in, but keep the walls intact, so that we are not blown off our feet. This is the guiding principle of the BJP in its approach to the media.

Consistent with this, the BJP would enact rules to ensure that ownership of the media is in the hands of natural-born Indians only. While, a limited extent of 20 per cent foreign equity investment may be allowed in the electronic media in view of its large capital requirements, no investment will be allowed in the other media, including the print media. On the use of editorial matter from outside in electronic media, the BJP would ensure that the safeguards present in Article 19 (2) of the Constitution are fully implemented to balance freedoms and public interest.

Voluntary Normative Standards for Media

THE BJP believes that, a healthy polity and democracy cannot survive without the support of an extra-political moral order which the democratic political order cannot itself impose on its citizens. This belief is also the emerging belief of more advanced democracies that are experiencing a steep slide in morality which is endangering the very idea of orderly society. These decaying societies are beginning to understand that no society, especially a democracy, can long endure without the consensus of the majority of its citizens to some normative moral code. Within the boundaries of this code, cultural diversity can flourish, outside of which it quickly degenerates into a jungle of conflicting special interests enveloped in moral chaos.

While world shrinks, India will have to provide against such danger in our society too. Fortunately, at the family and social levels, the age-old "dharma", which is distinct from religious practice, acts as an extra-political normative moral order. But the normative moral order or dharma needs to be protected and preserved as it is already under pressure. With this end in view, the BJP will strive for a national consensus with the involvement of all sections of the Indian society for a voluntary moral standard for the media, for the media plays a very important role both in fostering and prejudicing such a moral order. The inherent idea behind such a moral code may be summarized as under:

- Promotion of family values and extended family relationships to preserve its character as a basic socio-economic and socio-cultural unit.
- The importance of religious faith in moulding human life, with due understanding that religions should not conflict; nor should there be uniformity.
- Projection of regard and respect for women and motherhood.

- Criticism of political parties and personalities, without eroding the self-confidence of the nation.
- Promotion of interest in Indian traditions, history, literature, arts and values as a source of emotional support and as a link with the nation's past, thus strengthening the civilizational and cultural roots of the country and its people.
- Entertainment as an embodiment of the traditional Indian view of "Navarasa" so that it does not degenerate into a source of amoral living.
- Healthy development of an open and scientific mind, the spirit of adventure and patriotism among the youth.

The BJP will ensure that the rights of free speech of Indian citizens are guaranteed and will promote the availability throughout India of a diverse range of radio and television services offering information, entertainment and education. A BJP Government will ensure the development of a non-partisan Indian expression through programmes which, while reflecting Indian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity would, at the same time, encourage rational thinking, a scientific temper and lead Indian society to modernity in the 21st century.

This is an indicative and not exhaustive idea on the subject. The BJP Government will start a nationwide debate on this concept of a voluntary moral code and strive to evolve a consensus.

To achieve this goal, we will:

- Improve the provisions of the Prasar Bharati Act to let Prasar Bharati organize an effective public broadcasting system, which would be accountable to Parliament but free from Government control, immune from political influence and sensitive to the diverse needs of Indian society.
- While permitting, by license, the entry of private enterprise and investment in radio and television broadcasting, purely on commercially acceptable terms determined by bids, we will ensure that:
 - a) The uplinking of television programmes will be from India.
 - b) Foreign equity investment in audio-visual media is restricted to 20 per cent.
 - c) Management of all types of the media is in Indian hands
- Ensure, by law, that there is appropriate statutory guidelines for the content of the broadcast in line with the terms of Article 19 (2) of the Constitution of India.
- Ensure and encourage the availability of a variety and plurality of views and diversity in programming by discouraging monopolies and maximizing the number of voices, which can use the mass media. We will, therefore, impose appropriate cross-media and cross-platform restrictions and also restriction on investment by media in cable TV companies and vice-versa.
- Facilitate the development of an efficient and competitive Indian broadcasting industry by providing a level playing field to the nascent Indian industry vis-à-vis a highly developed foreign-based broadcasting industry.
- Encourage providers of both public and commercial broadcasting services to be responsive to the need for fair and accurate coverage of matters of public interest including matters of local significance and respect community standards in the provision of programming.

- Ensure the providers of broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to programmes that may be harmful to them.
- Ensure the adaptability of the Indian broadcasting system to scientific and technological change.
- Create an exclusive "Kisan Channel" in Doordarshan.
- Establish an independent autonomous public authority comprising representatives of all sections and interests. This authority will regulate broadcasting and set up a system to address complaints.
- Evolve a strategic plan to strengthen India's national news agencies like PTI and UNI to let them become influential global players in the shortest time.
- Economic security and social welfare of working journalists shall be ensured. The Working Journalists Act, 1955 shall be further strengthened and steps shall be taken for proper implementation in all media establishments.
- Freedom of the Press shall be ensured and protected at all costs.

Cinema

POPULAR cinema has played an important role in promoting social harmony and nationalism, apart from providing inexpensive entertainment to the masses. However, in recent years, popular cinema, increasingly funded by the underworld, has had a negative impact on society, especially on impressionable young minds. Sex and violence on the screen is beginning to gnaw at the moorings of our cultural ethos. The BJP is committed to checking this abuse of popular cinema. A BJP Government will:

- Allow movie-makers through suitable provisions in law to raise resources from financial institutions to curb the influence of underworld financiers and Mafia dons.
- We will provide a "green channel" clearance for the automatic certification of movies that do not have explicit scenes and dialogues of violence and sex. Producers of such movies will not have to wait in the queue for Censor Board clearance. Deterrent punishment will be meted out to any movie-maker who abuse this facility and to theater owners who screen such movies.
- Exempt quality movies, which will be certified "Q", from entertainment tax.
- Encourage viewers to form local Darshak Sanghs-on the lines of consumer organizations-to monitor the quality of movies being screened in their area.
- Set. up theaters at all district headquarters and large population centres for screening art and popular movies.
- Reserve 50 per cent of the places on the Censor Board and Censor Panels for women.
- Create a special fund for promoting regional cinema.
- Introduce legislation to ensure minimum wages and retirement benefits for movie artistes and crew.

In the field of performing and literary arts, our broad approach will be:

- Reservation, propagation and popularization of our diverse cultural heritage.
- Creativity and experimentation.
- National integration through arts.
- Taking arts to the people and bringing people's arts to national limelight.

- Recognition and honour of and support to outstanding persons in creative pursuits.
- Debureaucratization of arts and culture and freeing them of excessive Governmental interference.
- Creation of basic supportive infrastructure for arts and culture in all the States.

The BJP believes that, a healthy polity and democracy cannot survive without the support of an extra-political moral order which the democratic political order cannot itself impose on its citizens. This belief is also the emerging belief of more advanced democracies that are experiencing a steep slide in morality which is endangering the very idea of orderly society.