



HOUSE OF LORDS

Report from the Commissioner for Standards

The conduct of Lord Ranger

Commissioner for Standards

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Address: The Commissioner for Standards, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

Email: lordsstandards@parliament.uk

Telephone: 020 7219 7152

Website: www.parliament.uk/hl-standards

Registrar of Lords' Interests

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Address: Registrar of Lords' Interests, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

Email: lordsregistrar@parliament.uk

Telephone: 020 7219 3112/3120

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Telephone: 0808 168 9281 (freephone)

Email: Support@ICGShelpline.org.uk

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	3
Executive summary	4
Ms Poonam Joshi's complaint	4
Lord Ranger's response	4
Finding	5
Outcome	5
Account of the key facts and evidence	6
Ms Joshi's complaint	6
Impact	8
Preliminary assessment	8
Lord Ranger's written submission	9
Documentary evidence	14
Ms Joshi's oral evidence	16
Background	16
Before the Diwali event	16
During the Diwali event	17
Social media activity after the Diwali event	17
Indian Ladies UK article	18
Indian Journalists Association complaint	18
Guardian article	19
The wider circumstances of the complaint	20
Potential outcomes	20
Impact	20
Lord Ranger's oral evidence	20
Background	20
Before the Diwali event	21
During the Diwali event	21
Social media activity after the Diwali event	22
Indian Journalists Association complaint	22
Guardian article	23
The merits of the complaint	23
Use of facilities	24
Bullying and harassment	24
Potential outcomes	24
Impact	25
Findings and outcome	26
Relevant aspects of the Code of Conduct	26
Use of facilities	26
Bullying and harassment	26
Parliamentary Behaviour Code	27
Confidentiality	27
Fairness	28
General observations	28
Findings: use of facilities	28
Findings: bullying and harassment	29
Application of the Parliamentary Behaviour Code	29
Does Lord Ranger's behaviour amount to bullying?	30

Does Lord Ranger’s behaviour amount to harassment?	32
The wider circumstances of the complaint	33
Response to the draft report and findings	35
Outcome	35
Aggravating factors	35
Mitigating factors	36
Proposal for an agreed resolution	36
Proposed remedial action	37
Conclusion	38
Appendix 1: Indian Ladies UK online article	39
Appendix 2: Sample of Tweets and WhatsApp messages	44
Appendix 3: Guardian article	48
Appendix 4: Email from Lord Ranger to the Standards Clerk	50
Appendix 5: Apologies from Lord Ranger and Ms Poonam Joshi to one another	51

The conduct of Lord Ranger

INTRODUCTION

1. This report deals with a complaint made about Lord Ranger by a member of the public and journalist. The complaint was made under the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords dealing with bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. This states that members are required to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities with respect and courtesy. Behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of the Code of Conduct.
2. The complaint also engaged the rules relating to the use of facilities.
3. In considering this complaint, I¹ have been supported by Louise Elwell, Independent Investigator,² and Michael Torrance, the Standards Clerk who assists me in my work. I wish to place on record my thanks to them for all their valuable help, while also acknowledging that I am solely responsible and accountable for the conclusions reached and the decisions made in this investigation.
4. The complainant, Ms Poonam Joshi, has opted to waive her anonymity.
5. By its nature, any report into allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct will include content that some readers may find upsetting or offensive. My aim is to reflect fairly and fully the evidence I gather in the course of an investigation and not to censor or in any way minimise views expressed or material uncovered. I believe this transparency is essential to helping the House of Lords to be a workplace where everyone is valued and respected, and where it is clear that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated. This means that reports into allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct will often make for difficult reading.
6. **The findings and discussions in this case relate to the use of facilities and bullying and harassment.**

1 This investigation and report were completed by Mr Akbar Khan, Commissioner for Standards for the House of Lords

2 While I value Independent Investigators' expertise, challenge and advice, I maintain final responsibility for all investigative decisions, analysis of evidence, findings and recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ms Poonam Joshi's complaint

7. Ms Poonam Joshi, a member of the public and journalist, submitted on 14 November 2022 a complaint about Lord Ranger's behaviour. She alleged that in response to concerns she had raised about the Hindu Forum for Britain, an organisation which Lord Ranger had co-founded, he had
 - shouted at her at a Diwali event he hosted in the House of Lords on 21 October 2022;
 - threatened her with legal action; and
 - issued a series of derogatory tweets about her, which sometimes tagged her employer, the High Commission of India, and members of her family.

Ms Joshi described Lord Ranger's behaviour as "unethical" and "unhinged" and asked for it to be investigated as she considered it to be a breach of the Code of Conduct. On 22 November, Ms Joshi also alleged that Lord Ranger had contacted a professional body which she was a member of to request that they remove her from their membership.

8. As part of her complaint, Ms Joshi provided a link to an article she had written on the website of Indian Ladies UK (ILUK), an organisation she founded, about her interaction with Lord Ranger, including at the Diwali event. This article criticised both Lord Ranger and the Hindu Forum for Britain, including the attendance of a representative of Nithyananda, an Indian Hindu guru, at the Diwali event. Before and after the event, Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger exchanged a significant number of tweets and WhatsApp messages, which Ms Joshi submitted to me as evidence. Some of Ms Joshi's tweets alleged that Lord Ranger had charged some individuals £20 to access the Diwali event, which represented a possible breach of the House's rules on the use of facilities.
9. On 20 December, shortly after my investigation commenced, the Guardian published an article which stated I was investigating the conduct of Lord Ranger, despite my office having not confirmed this publicly.
10. Ms Joshi said Lord Ranger's behaviour had had a significant impact on her and her family, as well as on her professional life and livelihood.

Lord Ranger's response

11. While Lord Ranger regretted his decision to engage with Ms Joshi on social media, he emphasised that he had responded due to significant provocation by Ms Joshi, who he said had lied about, and defamed, him and his daughter on social media.
12. Lord Ranger told me that Ms Joshi's behaviour had caused him and his family significant stress, threatened his reputation and had also taken a toll on his health.

Finding

13. Regarding the possible breach of the rules on the use of facilities, following consideration of all the evidence, I concluded that Lord Ranger had not breached the Code of Conduct.
14. Regarding the possible breach of the rules relating to bullying and harassment, following my consideration of all the evidence, I concluded that Lord Ranger's behaviour did meet the criteria for bullying and harassment and therefore breached the Code of Conduct.

Outcome

15. I considered all the options available to me to identify an appropriate and proportionate outcome by reference to all the circumstances of the case, including the effect of the breach on Ms Joshi and the wider circumstances of the complaint. I concluded that his case could be resolved via remedial action.
16. **In the light of the findings, I recommended that Lord Ranger apologise to Ms Poonam Joshi about his conduct and undertake bespoke training and behaviour change coaching. Lord Ranger agreed to the remedial action and has issued a written apology to Ms Joshi. Ms Joshi also chose to issue a written apology to Lord Ranger regarding her actions.**

ACCOUNT OF THE KEY FACTS AND EVIDENCE

Ms Joshi's complaint

17. I was contacted by Ms Poonam Joshi on 14 November 2022. Ms Joshi wished to make a complaint relating to the behaviour of Lord Ranger. She said:

“I am a London-based journalist and activist and I’m writing to you to bring to your attention the recent behaviour of Lord Rami Ranger.

It began on the day of Diwali when I raised concerns about an organization that Lord Ranger co-founded—the Hindu Forum of Britain—and his judgment in promoting a self-proclaimed Indian god man who is the subject of an Interpol Blue Notice on charges including rape and child abduction and is currently a fugitive from Indian justice.

Raising these questions has led to my attracting the opprobrium of Lord Ranger, to the extent that he has already threatened me with legal action and engaged lawyers to send me threatening letters about his intention to sue me for defamation.

Having told him that I would be happy to meet him in court, Lord Ranger has gone on the attack against me on social media.

I have attached some screenshots about what Lord Ranger gets up to, particularly in the hours between sunset and sunrise - he promptly unblocks me on Twitter as the sun goes down and begins ranting and raving through the night. It is seriously concerning and utterly unethical behaviour that I believe requires a serious intervention.

Just to reconfirm the fact that he is doing this AFTER using a Coventry-based law firm to send me legal notices demanding that I cease to publicly criticise him.

On his nightly rants, Lord Ranger repeats claims of “Defamation” and “Bringing an End to Poonam Joshi” in the courts while tagging my place of work and my colleagues and editors.

When I blocked him, he began tagging the organisation that I run - Indian Ladies in UK, which helps Indian migrant women who fall victim to domestic violence. He has now start[ed] tagging and tweeting to [my] husband, who is also a journalist. He has tweeted to [my] husband that he feels “sorry” for him and promising to “save him”. He has even targeted and attacked our 14-year-old son on Twitter.

He then tweets demanding why I have blocked him and asking me to unblock [him]!

He’s also repeatedly used the word “Presstitute” against me – a slur used by right-wing extremists in India against journalists who dare to criticise the ruling BJP government.

What is also evident is that a number of fake Twitter accounts have been created in the past 10 days, all of which are followed by Lord Ranger and who follow him in a sort of echo chamber.

He also frequently contradicts himself.

For example, he told his followers the lie that that I had been “banned” from the High Commission of India in London. When I pointed out that I had just this last week attended a journalist’s event at the HCI, he tells his followers that I had “bullied” my way into the event.

He has labelled me “filth” and “garbage” but fails to respond to actual and entirely fair criticism.

He then goes on to smear daily wage earners and taunt me with his position as a member of the House of Lords – making statements like “everyone knows me in Parliament. Who knows you?” He will also send me photographs of him attending various events, asking whether I ever get invited to events! He has frequently used his position and privilege to talk down to me; when I responded to a Tweet of his in which he said “Defamation claim against Poonam Joshi on Monday”, he retorted - “DO YOU HAVE ANY MONEY”? Before claiming to his followers that I live “Day to Day”.

He has also called me a “Devil” and cast aspersions on my parents whom he claims have “not raised me well” and whom I am “dishonouring”. There is a pattern in his behaviour in that when an Employment Tribunal in 2020 found him guilty of gender-based harassment and workplace discrimination it was revealed that he berated and castigated one of his employees who brought allegations of sexual harassment to him as a “dirty girl” and bringing “dishonour” to her parents. He has also engaged in peculiarly South Asian power politics by frequently tagging my workplace as well as the High Commission of India in a bid to compel these organisations to somehow ostracise me.

It would be rather entertaining if it wasn’t so utterly sad. In fact, I have begun to take pity on him and have requested him to not make an utter fool of himself – to no avail.

Just to reiterate that all of this is happening while he has sent me legal threats and also proclaimed loudly to his followers that he will “finish” me in the courts and that my “time is up”.

It is unhinged behaviour and suggests a feeling of impunity reinforced by lawyers and sycophants.

I feel it is deeply concerning and appalling that a Conservative peer should conduct himself publicly like as a reaction to fair criticism and questioning by a journalist.

I would like to call for an immediate investigation of his behaviour.

Furthermore, here is a link to a comment piece that I wrote following my encounter with Lord Ranger at the Palace of Westminster.”

18. Ms Joshi’s article was published on 4 November 2022 on the Indian Ladies UK website with the title “Why doesn’t Lord Rami Ranger practise what he preaches?”. It is attached as Appendix 1. In the article Ms Joshi criticised Lord Ranger on several grounds, including suggesting that he received his peerage in return for donating money to the Conservative party and that he did not respect women—referring to a 2020 employment tribunal hearing which she said had found Lord Ranger guilty of workplace harassment and

gender-based discrimination³—and that he had charged some guests £20 to access the Diwali event. The article also questioned the role and effectiveness of the Hindu Forum for Britain.

19. Ms Joshi contacted my office again on 22 November and 1 December to allege that Lord Ranger had pressured members of the executive committee of the Indian Journalists Association (IJA)—a professional body of which she was a member—to “censure” her in some way, and had pressured her employer, ABP News, to remove her as its UK correspondent.

Impact

20. In the course of her evidence, Ms Joshi explained that she considered she had been bullied and harassed by Lord Ranger in part due to her gender. She considered his behaviour to be “condescending and patriarchal”, as well as misogynistic.
21. In her email of 22 November Ms Joshi told me that Lord Ranger was “attempting to use his position, influence and wealth to deprive me of membership of the IJA” and that she was becoming “increasingly anxious about Lord Ranger’s attacks, especially on [her] livelihood at a time of so much uncertainty.” Ms Joshi was also concerned about the potential impact on her husband’s career.

Preliminary assessment

22. As part of my preliminary assessment of her complaint, I wrote to Ms Joshi on 22 November to request further information about the Diwali event, the chronology of the messages she had exchanged with Lord Ranger and copies of some of those messages, as well as the letters she had received from Lord Ranger’s lawyers.
23. After Ms Joshi replied on 30 November, and provided substantial amounts of evidence, including tweets by both her and Lord Ranger and a private exchange of WhatsApp messages, I then concluded that it would be appropriate to investigate whether Lord Ranger’s conduct constituted a breach of the Code of Conduct.
24. Before reaching this conclusion, I needed to satisfy myself that the complaint
 - (1) fell within the scope of the Code of Conduct and
 - (2) did not engage the House’s sub judice resolution, or that it was unlikely to do so during my investigation.
25. On scope, the Commissioners for Standards receive many complaints about members’ activities on Twitter, but these are usually dismissed following preliminary assessment, for instance because they relate to members’ expression of their views and opinions, or because such tweets do not form part of their parliamentary duties and activities. Although this case in large part concerns social media activity, it falls within the scope of the Code because the behaviour complained of directly affected the complainant, and also because it was directly linked to their interaction between Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger at an event that took place in the House of Lords.

³ During my investigation, in January 2023, an employment judge struck out a claim for compensation from Lord Ranger by the claimant in the earlier employment tribunal case.

26. On the sub judge point, I was aware that Lord Ranger’s lawyers had issued amended particulars of claim to Ms Joshi in relation to defamation on 31 March,⁴ so I needed to be mindful of how my investigation might be affected by any subsequent civil proceedings, and vice versa.
27. Paragraph 144 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct requires an investigation to be suspended if related proceedings (criminal or civil) become sub judge within the meaning of the House’s sub judge resolution.⁵ The sub judge resolution covers active civil proceedings and is subject to waiver. After making further inquiries, I was satisfied that any civil proceedings were not active, within the meaning of the House’s sub judge resolution, when my investigation concluded in May 2023.
28. On 14 December I wrote to Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger to confirm that I intended to launch an investigation. In both letters, I asked them to avoid contact with one another – in person or online – and emphasised the importance of maintaining confidentiality during my investigation.
29. In my letter to Lord Ranger, I told him which parts of the Code might be engaged and enclosed a copy of Ms Joshi’s complaint and her evidence. I invited him to send me a full written response to the complaint. I also invited him to attend an interview.

Lord Ranger’s written submission

30. Lord Ranger replied on 11 January with his written response.⁶ He wrote:

“Please note the Complainant has made egregious false accusations and included misinformation in the letter of complaint against me and the Hindu Forum of Britain (HFB).

The Complainant has made these factitious complaints to attack me as a consequence of my support to the Hindu Forum of Britain. As the Complainant has a history of longstanding acrimony against the Hindu Forum of Britain. Which was recently exacerbated when the Complainant demanded that the Hindu Forum of Britain condemn the Muslim community after the riots in Leicester in 2022. The Hindu Forum of Britain said it would not do so as there was to be a public inquiry and would only comment after that. This upset the Complainant and [she] started attacking the HFB and myself for supporting the HFB.

Please do note the Complainant has been attacking the reputed Hindu Forum of Britain without any due cause and justification well before the Hindu Forum of Britain’s Diwali Reception held at the Cholmondeley Room in the House of Lords, which I booked for the Hindu Forum of Britain. My communication with the Complainant precedes the Diwali Reception at the House of Lords.

I tried to ameliorate the attacks being made by the Complainant against the Hindu Forum of Britain for the benefit of community cohesion through my communication with the Complainant.

4 Lord Ranger’s lawyers issued his original particulars of claim to Ms Joshi on 12 December.

5 See The Companion to the Standing Orders, paragraphs 4.68 to 4.73

6 Lord Ranger’s submission was lengthy and repetitive. In the interests of brevity only the most relevant parts of his response have been reproduced in this report.

To further assist in this matter, I invited the Complainant to the Hindu Forum of Britain's Diwali Reception, so that the Complainant could see first-hand the good work of HFB and of its President Ms Trupti Patel.

The Complainant immediately after the Diwali Reception started a daily, hourly barrage of false, defamatory and harassing tweets against me. This caused me great stress and anxiety because of the false allegations and harassment being made in public which has given a false and demeaning impression of me, which has further led me to fear for my and family's well-being.

The tweets by the Complainant included innuendos that I had committed heinous crimes by comparing me to Peer Lord Nazir Ahmed. The Complainant also put out many tweets and via other social media, articles and videos, deliberately giving false accounts of an employment tribunal matter. This continued notwithstanding the Complainant [being] advised by my solicitors, that the information being put out was incorrect, the Complainant continued to do so without regard to the true facts. I therefore had no choice but to issue legal action against the Complainant.

[...]

I wasn't aware of the ILUK [and] that it was set up by the Complainant. I only [found] out when this organisation's Twitter handle joined in their relentless abuse to me. I am not aware of the work it carries out. The Complainant on her own accord started to maliciously target me through tweets, Facebook of the ILUK and also recorded videos with malicious content against me and my family which was shared via her ILUK social media platform. I was astonished and shocked that not just the Complainant's personal platform was being used to target me but the platform of supposed welfare groups which the ILUK claims to promote.

[...]

It makes no sense that I would invite the Complainant to the Reception and use such derogatory words, which I simply do not use.

Furthermore, and key to the manipulation of the facts by the Complainant where she states I made no attempt to engage both the Complainant and Ms Patel, I did introduce the Complainant to the President of the HFB, Ms Trupti Patel. The allegation that I said "know your place", "don't try to be too big for your shoes" is false. The Complainant did not leave as she alleges. The Complainant was there till the end of the reception [and] present for The Vote of Thanks. During the event the Complainant kept on interrupting me and demanding that I should bring the President of the HFB down from the stage to resolve the differences between them. I reasoned with her several times [to let the event finish] and I will arrange the meeting. When she said she cannot wait only then I said try not to be too big and show some respect to the invited guests and dignitaries.

[...]

The allegations and timelines made by the Complainant are all false.

[...]

I would like to inform [you] that this is not the first event I had sponsored or held on the Parliamentary estate, and it is shocking that the Complainant has made such an allegation that I ill-treated and rudely spoke to the uninvited guests. The Hindu Forum of Britain is a not-for-profit organisation, and it was covering the costs of the afternoon tea and beverages.

Additional uninvited guests can cause an issue to the quality of service, security, space and cost of event to the HfB. There was no disparaging, or untoward or rude conversation. This is false.

The actual facts of what happened are. When I went to greet my guests, it was brought to my attention that there was a group of people looking to attend the reception. As a responsible supporting Peer of the reception, I enquired into this when it was brought to my attention. As I wanted to establish to how this group of people arrived uninvited by the HFB to the reception.

Once I had established the facts and who the people were and that they had received invites via a third party, I mentioned that people should not come uninvited and that its costs money to the organisers. [...]

Once I mentioned that its costs the HFB, I collected from two of the uninvited guests £20 each (a much-subsided rate) to the per head cost for tea and sandwiches and I gave the collected £40 and the additional cost of 6 uninvited guests which I personally paid to cover their cost by paying £120 from my own pocket to the HFB.

[...]

In relation to the allegations made about Nithyananda by the Complainant, I was shocked to see a story in the first Guardian newspaper and other press and media coverage on the 11th December 2022 which was contributed by the Complainant to the Guardian journalist. I then discussed the same with the President of the Hindu Forum of Britain Ms Patel about the Nithyandana character. I was told that Nithyandana was not invited. However, one of the members of an organisation who is duly running a registered charitable organisation and has no criminal record with the police was invited by the HFB being a Hindu. I was further shocked to see that the Complainant was still contacting the press and media and a second story came out on the 20th of December which also included details of an investigation being carried out against me by the House Lord's Standard Commissioner for bullying and harassment. This has caused me a great deal of embarrassment in society and pain that I am a bully and have harassed a guest at the House of Lords which I have not done.

[...]

The daily, hourly barrage of false and defamatory tweets by the Complainant has put me under great stress and anxiety because of the false allegations and harassment being made in public which was giving a false impression of me and my reputation, which led me to fear for my and family's well-being. I therefore commenced ... legal action

and also took advice from the Parliamentary police in relation to the Complainant's conduct against me.

I have not tagged her 14-year-old son, in fact I have no knowledge it is her son and his age. On looking at the twitter handle @AllesAryan, it looks like a dubious account set up very recently in September 22, with no tweets, retweets or following at all.⁷ If I have inadvertently tagged [his] Twitter handle, then it must in response to a Tweet against me from this account. I would like to reiterate that there is no way anyone can tell that this handle belongs to a 14-year boy. It is worth remembering that the Complainant operate 5 separate Twitter handles and creates more dubious handles as the Complainant goes along to abuse, harass and intimidate her opponents.

[...]

I was told by [the] Complainant's very close friend⁸ that the Complainant had reported her husband to the police for domestic violence. I had asked the Complainant if this fact was true.

I am told by reliable source that the Complainant has been barred by the Indian High Commissioner because of her history of wrongly and unduly attacking the previous High Commissioner and the Minister of Coordination. Recently the Complainant gained entrance to an event of the High Commission for the journalists because there was a new member of staff at the gate.

I tagged my tweets to the ABP news as the Complainant tagged her tweets to the Prime Minister, Indian High Commissioner, and many other community groups. My purpose to alert the ABP news as to how one of their journalists was abusing her position by attacking everyone who did not agree or appease her and [the] Complainant was acting in a most unprofessional manner.

I retweeted a message which included the word presstitute - this [is] simply a phrase used in India against unscrupulous journalist. Presstitute is a term that REFERENCES journalists and 'talking heads' in mainstream media who give biased and predetermined views misleadingly tailored to fit a particular partisan, financial or business agenda, thus neglecting the fundamental duty to report news impartially.

[...]

I contacted [the] Indian Journalist's Association (IJA) to inform them that one of its members had started a campaign of defamation and harassment against me; such contact when an IJA member commits such action is not unreasonable. I contacted the IJA as one would if a complaint against an IPSO member needs to be raised.

[...]

7 On 11 May Ms Joshi told me that her son's Twitter account was not dubious, that it had been established before her exchanges with Lord Ranger on Twitter and that it had, in fact, issued some tweets and re-tweets.

8 On 11 May Ms Joshi told me that she had made it clear to Lord Ranger that she was not friends with the individual in question before I received his written submission.

The Complainant is again wrongly inferring and alleging that I was applying undue pressure when contacting the IJA. That is far from the truth. As above, I contacted IJA as the Complainant is their member, so I needed to bring to their attention how their member was acting unprofessionally and in a harassing, defaming way, by making false and disparaging comments against me ... When I received the IJA response that they cannot get involved [I] responded with my discontent that such an organisation does not even start an investigation process but simply replies back that it cannot get involved without a proper review. It is ironic how the Complainant has wrongly reported me to the House of Lords Standard Commissioner and many other organisations ... when I flagged up the Complainant's unprofessional and wrongful conduct to the Complainant's regulatory organisation. This is now another reason for the Complainant to make another spurious allegation and complaint against me.

[...]

The Complainant has only recently reduced putting out the tweets against me, after receiving the particulars of claim which I issued against the Complainant for defamation and harassment and the schedule of such tweets made against me by the Complainant.

[...]

The WhatsApp messages between the Complainant and I show how I was trying to advise how working together for the betterment of society will help the community cause and helps one be recognised for their efforts. I was attempting to help the Complainant understand the benefit of working with the Hindu Forum of Britain rather than against it.

[...]

It is most disappointing that Ms Joshi, the Complainant, who is a journalist and having ulterior motives and a longstanding vendetta against the Hindu Forum of Britain has manipulated the facts and made incorrect and egregious statements against me to penalise me for my support to the reputed Hindu Forum of Britain.

[...]

I would also like conclude by stating it is rather ironic the Complainant has whilst writing to your good offices to complain about me and the Hindu Forum of Britain, has simultaneously been contacting the press and media in the UK and India to spread this false narrative against me, only to personally attack me in public, going to the extent of manipulating the facts as presented to your offices and the press and media.

The conduct of the Complainant notwithstanding the damage already caused to me with her surreptitious lies and innuendoes of the worst kind has blatantly and deliberately ignored the principles of due process and natural justice, by knowing full well that the matter was being reviewed and investigated at by your respected offices and that it should be treated as confidential, yet the Complainant in full knowledge published the details of the false allegations and went to great effort ... contributing

to the coverage by directly targeting me, as well as the Hindu Forum of Britain in the press and media in the UK and internationally.

[...] Furthermore, the Complainant on twitter and on the video made further blatant lies that my daughter who is a long-standing community worker was honoured with an OBE for community work only gained this honour because it was bought with cash. The Complainant has also meted out this false narrative against me to my Peerage that I bought it. The Complainant has no respect for truth and natural justice.

I would also re-confirm that as a member of the House of Lords, I take very seriously the rules of the Code of Conduct and adhere to the same and I always consider my conduct and actions to make sure that I do not compromise the Code of Conduct which I am subject to and fully subscribe too. I adhere to the Nolan Principles in public life and importance of public interest. I also conduct myself to make sure that I treat all with respect and professionalism, and pay regard to understanding others and their perspectives, whilst carrying out my work with courtesy and responsibility.

[...]

I would also like to bring to you[r] attention that the Complainant has falsely put out on social media and other platforms that I attend the House of Lords in effect only to claim the attendance allowance. I put this on record that I have never claimed a penny for attendance or any expense since I joined the House.

I request the Complainant is held to account for such improper conduct to malign and falsify the facts and its impact which I take most seriously as it is built on falsification of the true facts by the Complainant.”

Documentary evidence

31. As part of their evidence, Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger submitted a significant number of tweets and WhatsApp messages by them both, including to one another.
32. At the point I concluded my investigation, I noted that Lord Ranger had over 13,000 followers on Twitter and Ms Joshi had over 12,000 followers.
33. In the exchange of tweets between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi some tweets were deleted and both sides occasionally blocked and unblocked one another. They both accused one another of either setting up, cooperating with, or using “fake” accounts to abuse and “troll” one another. Beyond asking the parties what accounts they were responsible for or had access to, it is beyond the scope of a report to draw firm conclusions about the exact roles of either member in respect of third-party Twitter accounts. I therefore focused on the tweets sent from the accounts Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi told me they had access to, the abundance of which, alongside other evidence, allowed me to reach informed conclusions about this matter.
34. I reviewed all the tweets that have been sent to me, which included more than 200 tweets attributable to Ms Joshi and just under 100 attributable to Lord Ranger. However, what became clear is that many of them were irrelevant to the complaint. I therefore only draw attention to a sample of

the tweets sent by Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi that are most relevant to the complaint. These are provided in Appendix 2.

35. Both Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi submitted a significant amount of documentary evidence, again not all of it was material to the complaint. For the avoidance of doubt, I did not investigate or consider the following matters in any detail:
- (a) The merits of guests invited to attend the Diwali event, including the representative of Nithyananda.
 - (b) Third-party statements facilitated and submitted by Ms Joshi about Nithyananda.
 - (c) Disagreements between Ms Joshi and Ms Trupti Patel and, separately, Ms Rashmi Mishra.
 - (d) The merits of the Hindu Forum for Britain.
 - (e) The merits of Indian Ladies UK.
 - (f) Apart from Ms Joshi, Lord Ranger's behaviour to other guests at the Diwali event. I did not receive any complaints about this, and third-party complaints are not permissible.
 - (g) The detail and merits of the employment tribunal case concerning Lord Ranger and other parties.
 - (h) The merits of Lord Ranger's defamation claim against Ms Joshi, or any other defamation claims involving either party. This is a matter for the courts.⁹
 - (i) Third-party statements facilitated and submitted by Lord Ranger about his good standing and character.
 - (j) Third-party statements facilitated and submitted by Lord Ranger about Ms Joshi's alleged treatment of other individuals.
 - (k) Determinations by Twitter about the compliance of some of Ms Joshi's tweets with their guidelines.
 - (l) Information submitted by Lord Ranger about his life achievements, contributions to UK society, charitable work, honours, and awards.
36. Some of the above matters were raised repeatedly by both Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger during this investigation even though they were advised not to do so on the grounds of irrelevance. While the context to the complaint is important, the sole purpose of this report is to consider whether Lord Ranger breached the House of Lords Code of Conduct, and not to consider or pass judgment on the wider dispute between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi, including the merits of their respective standpoints and other activities, nor the views of third parties without any locus in the complaint.

⁹ Though as per Article IX of the Bill of Rights 1689, 'proceedings in parliament'—which includes my investigation and this report—cannot be relied upon, by any party, in court proceedings.

Ms Joshi's oral evidence

37. I interviewed Ms Joshi on 27 January 2023 together with Louise Elwell. Ms Joshi was accompanied by her husband, Mr Vijitha Alles, at her request. Michael Torrance, Standards Clerk, was also in attendance to support me as Commissioner.
38. At the beginning of our interview, I explained to Ms Joshi that I was not investigating her conduct and did not have the power under the Code of Conduct to sanction her in any way. However, I also explained that I would take into account her behaviour as part of the context in which her interactions with Lord Ranger took place, and that this may be reflected in my conclusions and any recommended outcome.

Background

39. Ms Joshi told us she was a foreign correspondent for one of India's national news networks called ABP News. She had also founded and ran an organisation called Indian Ladies UK, which supports Indian women in need, and has a membership of approximately 40,000.
40. Ms Joshi confirmed that she controlled the @PoonamJoshi_ and @IndianLadiesUK Twitter accounts and had access to the @TheUKAsian account, a news website she ran with her husband.
41. Ms Joshi told us that she had first met Lord Ranger in June 2022 when she interviewed him for ABP News, and that their interaction had been professional and cordial. Ms Joshi said she believed they had exchanged email and mobile details prior to the interview and had started following each other on Twitter after the interview. Ms Joshi also confirmed she knew Lord Ranger's daughter.

Before the Diwali event

42. Ms Joshi told me her next contact with Lord Ranger was in the days prior to the Diwali event when she participated in a Twitter discussion on 17 October about the merits of the Hindu Forum for Britain, including the conduct of Ms Trupti Patel, the Forum's co-founder and president. She told me that Lord Ranger had intervened in the discussion to defend the Forum, and had taken exception to some of her tweets, which he responded to, and had eventually blocked her. Ms Joshi told us she was not initially aware of Lord Ranger's involvement with the Forum, but that this became clear during their subsequent email exchange.
43. Ms Joshi told us the Twitter exchange had made her feel confused and slightly disappointed, rather than offended, because she did not intend to have a feud with Lord Ranger. This prompted her to email Lord Ranger to apologise, say she had no intention of offending him, and tell him she held him in high regard. They had a cordial exchange of emails and Lord Ranger invited her to attend the Diwali event on 18 October, saying: "I'm sorry, Trupti has not projected a good image of Hindu Forum of Britain. I intend to put it right. Are you willing to join?" Ms Joshi accepted the invitation and told us that she had formed the impression that Lord Ranger had offered to mediate between, and help reconcile, her and Ms Patel.
44. Ms Joshi told us she had had a disagreement with Ms Patel at the Nehru Centre in September 2019 and had also been publicly critical of the Forum

in the past regarding other matters. Therefore, she had concerns about the role of the Forum by the time she accepted Lord Ranger's invite to attend the Diwali event.

During the Diwali event

45. Ms Joshi told us when she arrived at the House of Lords, she called Lord Ranger to come and collect her. She waited with other individuals she presumed had been invited. When Lord Ranger arrived, he ascertained that some of these individuals did not have invitations. Ms Joshi said Lord Ranger took them through security but then became irritated with them and asked them to pay £20 each to attend the event. As Ms Joshi had received an invitation, she was not asked to pay any money. Ms Joshi thought five individuals who had invitations paid £20 each, because they were embarrassed, and six individuals without invitations also paid £20 each, totalling £220.
46. After the event's speeches and prayers had concluded, and guests began to leave, Ms Joshi told us she waited around hoping Lord Ranger would introduce her to Ms Patel. She approached Lord Ranger, who told her the hosts had been busy, but then attempted to introduce her to Ms Patel, who "made a really bad face", did not greet her in any way and walked away. When she expressed her dissatisfaction to Lord Ranger she said he became quite loud and shouted at her, saying "know your place" and "don't try to be too big for your shoes". This made her embarrassed and uncomfortable, and brought her close to tears, so she "stormed out". Ms Joshi told me that "even before walking out, I said 'Lord Ranger, I don't think you should shout at me like this. I don't appreciate it but wish you a happy Diwali'". Ms Joshi said at the time there were still people "hanging around" although they were not part of their conversation.
47. After she left the event Ms Joshi told us:

"I was very upset that day, extremely upset about how the whole evening had gone and the efforts I had made with this Lord, you know, trying to fix things, only for it to become worse. The biggest thing that was bothering me was being shouted at, you know, in front of the community people that I—who have seen me, you know, on TV, who have seen me around covering news and respect me for my work, et cetera. So, there were loads of things going in my head."

Social media activity after the Diwali event

48. After leaving the Diwali event on the same evening, Ms Joshi said she, and some of the other guests, tweeted about what they perceived to be their negative treatment at the event. She said this prompted Lord Ranger to begin attacking those who had complained via Twitter, including her, as well as contacting her on WhatsApp.
49. We discussed one of Lord Ranger's tweets that said she had reported her husband for "domestic abuse" despite her having told him in advance, via WhatsApp, that this was not true. Ms Joshi said that this tweet had made her "furious". She said Lord Ranger also began tagging and messaging her husband and 14-year-old son on Twitter, which prompted her to block Lord Ranger's account. She then continued to engage with Lord Ranger via the Twitter account of Indian Ladies UK.

50. We discussed the tweets Ms Joshi had sent to Lord Ranger, which included an allegation that Lord Ranger had “bought” his peerage and an OBE for his daughter. Ms Joshi told me “I’m quite ashamed of some of the tweets that I sent out because I was so emotionally charged.” She admitted to retweeting a tweet which referred to Lord Ahmed but did not think it concerned Lord Ranger, as he was not tagged in it.¹⁰
51. Ms Joshi admitted that, after my investigation was launched on 14 December, she had occasionally tweeted at Lord Ranger, notwithstanding my request not to contact him.
52. On 13 January 2023 Lord Ranger issued two tweets: one about an event he had attended with the former prime minister, Rt Hon Theresa May MP, and another about a meeting with a religious figure. The following day, and in reference to those tweets, Ms Joshi issued two tweets: one questioning Lord Ranger’s ethics and suggesting he had bought his peerage and an honour for his daughter, and another referring to Lord Ranger as a misogynist. Lord Ranger was not tagged in either tweet, but it was clear that he was being referred to. On 17 January, Ms Joshi issued some further tweets speculating about why Lord Ranger’s daughter was awarded an OBE. On 20 January, Ms Joshi issued tweets questioning Lord Ranger’s conduct regarding comments he had made to the BBC.
53. Ms Joshi told me that she had:
- “... still tweeted a couple of times where it was necessary and in the public interest. I am the last person who can be controlled from speaking up against wrongdoing due to the fear of litigation or physical harm.”
54. In an email on 29 January, Ms Joshi told me that:
- “... the reason that I was tweeting to Rami Ranger in December/Jan—despite a lack of exchanges from his Twitter account directly—was because a number of organisations founded or chaired by Lord Ranger, such as British Sikh Association, Park India Friends began clashing with me on Twitter. He has used several fake accounts to abuse me ...”

Indian Ladies UK article

55. We discussed Ms Joshi’s article which was published on 4 November. The link to the article was subsequently tweeted by Ms Joshi and Indian Ladies UK on several occasions. She explained that she felt “mostly disappointment, anger, a bit of frustration” at the time it was published and had hoped Lord Ranger would read it, understand where he had gone wrong and provide him with an opportunity to privately apologise. In response to our suggestion that publishing such an article might not have been the best way to achieve this objective, Ms Joshi said she did not consider contacting Lord Ranger privately because he had threatened her with legal action and “bombarded” her with messages.

Indian Journalists Association complaint

56. Before our interview, Ms Joshi had provided me with copies of the emails that Lord Ranger had sent to the IJA on 15 and 16 November 2022 to

¹⁰ Lord Ahmed was expelled from the House of Lords in 2020, in response to a complaint which was upheld against him. In 2022 he was imprisoned in relation to historic sexual offences.

complain about her “appalling conduct”, saying that she was a “disgrace to her profession” and to request that they “remove her” from their organisation. Ms Joshi told me that Lord Ranger had attended IJA events in the past and had also made financial contributions to the organisation. The IJA president replied to Lord Ranger on 29 November to confirm that they did not intend to intervene in any way. Lord Ranger replied and made clear his disappointment with that decision and asked the IJA to “show the spine and cut out cancer”. Ms Joshi told us that seeing these emails had made her feel “enraged and upset”.

Guardian article

57. On 20 December the Guardian published an article entitled “Lords inquiry launched into Tory peer accused of bullying female journalist”.¹¹ The article is reproduced in Appendix 3. In the article, Ms Joshi was quoted as telling the Guardian:

“I have been targeted by Mr Ranger for weeks ... Lord Ranger has long been seen as an elder statesman within the British Asian community who has never been criticised in any way. So, to be questioned, especially by a journalist who also happens to be an Indian woman, is seen as an ‘affront’ in our community.”

58. Lord Ranger was also quoted as telling the Guardian:

“I have served court papers for defamation against [Joshi] and as a result, I cannot comment now. I will be giving my response to the commissioner for parliamentary standards in due course.”¹²

59. On the same day the article was published, Ms Joshi tweeted a link to the article to her followers without comment and also tagged Lord Ranger in a separate tweet.
60. Ms Joshi assured us that having received my letter of 14 December, she had respected confidentiality by not providing the Guardian with any information when approached to do so for the article in question. However, she said that she had been speaking to the Guardian and other journalists before her complaint was submitted and had suggested to them that she was planning to submit a complaint.¹³ She said the quote attributed to her in the 20 December article had been provided to the Guardian for an earlier article she thought was coming out and she had not known they were intending to use it for that article instead. Ms Joshi told us that it was Lord Ranger’s quote which confirmed an investigation was taking place, rather than anything she had told the Guardian.

11 Kiran Stacey, ‘Lords inquiry launched into Tory peer accused of bullying female journalist’, *The Guardian* (20 December 2022): <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/dec/20/lords-open-inquiry-into-claims-tory-peer-rami-ranger-harassed-woman-journalist-poonam-joshi>

12 My office was also approached by the Guardian for comment, but I did not provide any, in line with the Code’s confidentiality requirements about complaints of this nature. On 21 December, my office contacted Ms Joshi to remind her of the confidentiality requirements set out in my letter to her on 14 December.

13 On 4 November, in an email to Lord Ranger’s lawyers, Ms Joshi said she intended to share Lord Ranger’s tweets, WhatsApp messages and emails with the ‘House of Lords Standards Committee’ as well as her colleagues in the media.

The wider circumstances of the complaint

61. We discussed the wider circumstances of her complaint about Lord Ranger's conduct. She described herself as both a journalist and a women's rights campaigner. In response to our suggestion that many of her tweets to Lord Ranger could be construed as being of a personal nature rather than legitimate comment, Ms Joshi defended her approach as "fair criticism" by a journalist, telling us that it was "imperative" for her to hold Lord Ranger, as a public figure, "to account" for his behaviour in the "public interest".
62. Ms Joshi told us that she was "enraged" by Lord Ranger's tweets and that she was "very, very, very angry" and "just wanted to do everything within [her] power to expose him to the best of [her] ability because that's not how community leaders or elderlies in our communities behave." She said she did not want to "give in" to his bullying behaviour. She told us she was "on a campaign to expose him". However, she also emphasised that she did not have any "malicious intent" and did not intend for anyone to think any less of Lord Ranger.

Potential outcomes

63. We discussed possible outcomes with Ms Joshi. She wanted Lord Ranger to appreciate that his behaviour had been wrong as a public figure. While she was open to receiving an apology from him—preferably in public—she made it clear she had no intention of apologising to Lord Ranger. We also discussed the option of facilitating an agreed resolution but did not reach any conclusions in that respect.

Impact

64. Following our interview, Ms Joshi emailed me to say:

"I am the victim here, it's sad and disappointing to see that a respected peer, instead of apologising for his behaviour, is trying to use his influence to destroy me in every possible way; to have me banned by the High Commission, have my job taken away, wants me expelled from the IJA; calling me a cancer and also labelling my husband a domestic abuser. Lord Ranger has already started a legal action against me after he failed to stop me from questioning him. He is using the power of his money and position to bully and harass a female journalist who has challenged him, and he can't tolerate being challenged by a woman."

Lord Ranger's oral evidence

65. I interviewed Lord Ranger on 6 February with the assistance of Louise Elwell. Lord Ranger was accompanied by Nayaz Qazi, his Chief of Staff, at his request. Michael Torrance, Standards Clerk, was also in attendance.

Background

66. Lord Ranger told us that while he had helped to establish the Hindu Forum for Britain, he had no formal role in the organisation. We noted separately that the Forum was an umbrella organisation representing 300 Hindu organisations.
67. Lord Ranger confirmed he either controlled or had access to the following Twitter accounts: @RamiRanger, @PakIndiaFriendship and @BritSikhAsso.

68. Lord Ranger corroborated the factual circumstances of his first meeting with Ms Joshi in June 2022.

Before the Diwali event

69. Lord Ranger told us he felt that the exchange of tweets between himself, Ms Joshi, and other individuals, on 17 October did not project a good image of the community and that he had offered to mediate to bring it to an end, including by tweeting at Ms Joshi. In his subsequent email exchange with Ms Joshi, he had tried to persuade her to become more positive. He had not appreciated that Ms Joshi had pre-existing issues with some members of the Forum. In this regard, Lord Ranger told us that:

“By these exchanges, I meant to do good. I wanted to reason with the young lady. Without realising her background, because I had no idea that she already had some issues with the members of the Hindu Forum, and she was now taking their anger on me, and I was trying to, as a person of the community, was trying to reason with her that this is not the way forward”.

70. Lord Ranger stated that in inviting Ms Joshi to attend the Diwali event in Parliament, which he paid for, his aim was to bring her and Ms Patel together so they could establish friendly relations and stop fighting. He had also wanted to project a better image of the Forum to Ms Joshi.

During the Diwali event

71. Lord Ranger suggested that Ms Joshi had kept pressuring him to interrupt the event, including when people were being honoured and awarded on the stage, to bring Ms Patel down from the stage to attempt a mediation. In response he had asked her politely to let them finish first. Ms Joshi had then “lost her cool” and he asked her: “Are you that big that you can’t wait?”. Lord Ranger insisted that he had not raised his voice or been aggressive to her.
72. Regarding the incident which occurred with the uninvited guests, Lord Ranger told me he had invited a particular individual to the Diwali event. When he collected that individual from the entrance, he realised they had invited a further eight individuals without his knowledge. This made him “very upset” as the Forum, which was a charitable organisation, had covered the cost of the refreshments for each invited guest. He made it clear to the individual concerned that this was not acceptable and asked for £20 per head to cover the Forum’s costs. However, the individual only had enough money to pay for 2-3 of the uninvited guests, so Lord Ranger paid the rest of the money from his own pocket and gave it to the Forum. He thought the original number of invitees had been agreed with the House, who charged £25 per head, so considered it was best to recoup some of this amount rather than nothing at all. Lord Ranger considered that he had complied with the House’s facilities rules to the best of his knowledge.
73. Lord Ranger submitted a statement by the individual who had invited additional guests as supporting evidence. The individual concerned said he had invited five additional guests; that Lord Ranger had become “visibly annoyed” and asked for £20 per person, telling him: “never to repeat this mistake again”. The individual said he collected £120 from his five guests and himself and gave it to Lord Ranger. As this experience had upset him,

he left the Diwali event after some time. He said that Lord Ranger later apologised to him, and that he bore no grudge against Lord Ranger.¹⁴

Social media activity after the Diwali event

74. After Ms Joshi left the Diwali event Lord Ranger said she had subjected him to a “barrage of attacks” on social media, which he became aware of the next day.

75. We discussed some of the tweets he had sent to Ms Joshi in response. In particular, I questioned the necessity of using certain language towards Ms Joshi such as “People tell me you are toxic” and “Who is asking you? Who has given you the authority to insult others who do not appease you? You are showing your poor upbringing by bullying”. Lord Ranger replied:

“This is the common Asian practice; that, you know, you always say the family has instilled the right values in you, because the values are very important. So, if you start showing no respect to someone for his age, experience, contribution, social status, you just start insulting somebody, then we Asian culture consider that to be a poor upbringing.”

76. We further asked Lord Ranger if he thought that referring to what he considered to be Ms Joshi’s “poor upbringing” was appropriate and respectful behaviour. He replied:

“Now, I think I should not have engaged because I realise that the freedom of speech comes with a huge price for, you know—I have always felt for evil to flourish all it takes for good people to do nothing and in the end inquiries like these will make good people disappear, and we will have a very poor society when you cannot express what I felt ...”

77. We asked Lord Ranger why he had tweeted that Ms Joshi’s husband had been reported for “domestic abuse”, despite having asked Ms Joshi beforehand if that was true in a private WhatsApp message on 25 October, to which she had replied “NEVER”. Lord Ranger replied that he had been told it was true by a third party and that he did not “believe it didn’t happen; it might have happened. But anyway, it’s wrong. Now I realise it’s wrong and I accept it.”

78. When we asked him about Ms Joshi’s allegation that he had knowingly targeted her son on Twitter he said he was not aware from looking at the Twitter handle in question that he had tagged Ms Joshi’s son’s account.

Indian Journalists Association complaint

79. We discussed Lord Ranger’s complaint about Ms Joshi to the IJA, which Lord Ranger defended on the basis that the IJA needed to be aware that Ms Joshi’s work was not “constructive, objective reporting. She does abuse”. Lord Ranger also suggested Ms Joshi was not a proper journalist.

80. We asked Lord Ranger why he asked the IJA to “show the spine and cut out cancer” and if he was comparing Ms Joshi to cancer. He replied:

“Well, you are just picking my words. You know, I think she is a cancer because she has not spread anything good anywhere. You can make her a heroine and bring me down. It’s up to your judgment ...”

14 Ms Joshi submitted the same statement to me as evidence.

Guardian article

81. We discussed the Guardian article which was published on 20 December. Lord Ranger said the Guardian called him to say that they were going to run a story about him being under investigation and that he was firmly of the belief that Ms Joshi had told them that.
82. On the same day the article was published, Lord Ranger brought this article to the attention of my office and asked: “I do not know who is bullying whom?”

The merits of the complaint

83. Lord Ranger felt very strongly about the merits of the complaint and the circumstances surrounding it. He told me:
- “... that woman breached your condition for telling the world that the House of Lords inquiry is under way to, you know—I’m already convicted. I’ve already been embarrassed. I’ve already been humiliated in press society. You know, I’m going underground from today onward. Never you will see me in public life because that girl has taught me a very big lesson; that you have something to lose, you will lose it. She has nothing to lose. She has nothing to lose. She can do anything she likes. She has more right[s] than I have. And I feel very bitter and disappointed that I’ve been brought here when you people had all the knowledge, all the evidence, to gather to see the background of the person. If somebody can just accuse any person of the House of Lords, and you will take that very seriously because that is a public person. But I, all my life, sacrificed nights, evening, days to bring benefit to this country.”
84. Lord Ranger made it clear to us that he was disappointed that Ms Joshi’s complaint was being considered. He said I should have dismissed it without taking any further step in the process because Ms Joshi had breached the investigation’s confidentiality requirements by speaking to the Guardian. He suggested that Ms Joshi’s background should have been established, including “what have they contributed, what have they achieved, what is their job, what is their business” before the complaint was taken seriously.
85. I advised him that the Code of Conduct did not allow me to dismiss a complaint on such grounds, but that the behaviour of Ms Joshi would be considered as a potential mitigation when making my determination. In response, Lord Ranger said I was demonstrating bias to Ms Joshi and encouraging her to treat other individuals in the same way as him.
86. Throughout my investigation, Lord Ranger repeated his points about process – most recently in an email on 14 March, which is provided in Appendix 4. However, despite his accusation against me that I had demonstrated bias towards Ms Joshi by not dismissing her complaint as he had requested, when I asked him during the interview if he was content with how the discussion had proceeded and the advice that I had provided about the possibility of an agreed resolution, he responded “... I am very satisfied that you have been very fair. You have conducted this inquiry in a very professional manner, and you have put me straight”. He later added “I have learnt my lesson. I want to finish this. It’s taken a toll on my health, and I just want to end”.

Use of facilities

87. We asked Lord Ranger about his understanding of the rules governing the use of House facilities when sponsoring an event. He said that he did have knowledge of the rules “to some degree” and that he was “aware that we can’t take advantage, or we can’t sell products”. When we asked about his obligations as a sponsor he said “The obligation is that we get the number from the House of Lords that this is the room, Cholmondeley Room, sitting down, you have 100. Standing up you have 130, ... so we then invite people ... and then you choose and pay for the afternoon tea according to the number ... If we tell them 20 people are coming, we pay for 20, and 30 ...”

Bullying and harassment

88. We drew Lord Ranger’s attention to the provisions in the Code of Conduct and the Parliamentary Behaviour Code. We highlighted the obligation placed on members of the House to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities with respect and courtesy.
89. We asked Lord Ranger about his understanding of his obligations under the Code. He said that he fully adhered to the Code and could not have built up a company, maintained relationships and run an organisation if he was in the habit of insulting people or bullying them. He had to carry people with him and had done his very best to be an upstanding citizen.
90. In respect of the allegation made by Ms Joshi that he had shouted at her at the Diwali event, Lord Ranger said that there were hundreds of people present at the event. As a result, if he had acted aggressively towards Ms Joshi or bullied her, there would have been witnesses. He denied raising his voice at Ms Joshi telling us:

“No, No No. Why? I am a civilised man. Why should I raise my ... I invite my guests and start shouting at them? If I had raised my voice, first of all it would have been a disgrace for me, as a Lord, to speak to somebody, and somebody would have heard what was happening, and I would have been bringing the event into disrepute”.

91. Lord Ranger explained to us that as an older man he treated Ms Joshi like he would treat his own children by asking her to show some patience. Instead, she had told him ‘No’ and that he needed to introduce Ms Patel to her immediately. In response he had asked her in a very polite and muted manner “Are you that big that you can’t wait?” Lord Ranger said he was effectively begging Ms Joshi to show some patience.

Potential outcomes

92. Lord Ranger told me:

“I have accepted I have made some bad judgments here and I have learnt my lesson, and, you know, I’m willing to accept where I went wrong. But it was worked up over many, many days. She was abusing and, you know, she got the worst out of me.”

93. Lord Ranger emphasised that he had been provoked but that it was an isolated incident for which he expressed remorse and intended to avoid getting into a similar situation on social media in future. He said that “for a

minute I forgot that I am a public figure and I have to maintain my dignity and honour at all times”. He told us that he intended to be more “mindful” that he was a member of the House of Lords, including his obligations under the Code of Conduct.

94. We discussed possible outcomes with Lord Ranger. He told us he was prepared to apologise to Ms Joshi about his conduct – preferably in private – and was open to the possibility of reaching an agreed resolution of some nature. However, he was concerned that any apology he made to Ms Joshi would be promoted by her on social media, causing him further public humiliation.

Impact

95. On 17 March Lord Ranger emailed me to say that Ms Joshi’s conduct had caused him and his family “immense stress, hardship and suffering and has impacted my health and mental well-being”.

FINDINGS AND OUTCOME

Relevant aspects of the Code of Conduct

Use of facilities

96. Paragraph 12 (c) of the Code provides that:

“In order to assist in openness and accountability members shall ... act in accordance with any rules agreed by the House in respect of financial support for members or the facilities of the House.”

97. Paragraph 122 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct says that:

“The rules on the use of facilities which have been agreed by the House are set out in two House Committee reports which are in the Handbook on facilities and services for members and their staff.”

98. The Handbook on Facilities and Services for Members says:

“Members should ensure that any bookings are in line with the following rules, which have been agreed by the House. A breach of these rules is deemed to be a breach of the Code of Conduct. It is the responsibility of members to ensure their own compliance with the rules.”

99. Rule G of the Handbook says:

“For events arranged for charitable organisations with the permission of the sponsoring member, a UK-registered charity may seek financial or other kinds of support at a House of Lords function in connection with its charitable purposes, for example by ... charging guests who attend a function an amount which exceeds the actual cost per head ...”.

100. Rule L of the Handbook says:

“Before agreeing to sponsor a function for an organisation, members must make all reasonable enquiries to satisfy themselves that: (i) it is a fit and proper organisation to hold a function at the House; (ii) the function would comply with rules A to K and with the Standard Conditions for Events at the House of Lords in force at the time the function is booked; and (iii) the function would not damage the reputation of the House of Lords.”

Bullying and harassment

101. Paragraph 11 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords provides that:

“Members of the House should observe the principles set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code of respect, professionalism, understanding others’ perspectives, courtesy, and acceptance of responsibility. These principles will be taken into consideration when any allegation of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is under investigation.”

102. Paragraph 18 of the Code provides that:

“Members are required to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities (including parliamentary proceedings) with respect and courtesy. Behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of this Code.”

103. Therefore, while all members ought to adhere to the principles and standards of behaviour set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code, and a failure to do so will be taken into account in investigations, it is only behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct that constitutes a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords.
104. There are no allegations of sexual misconduct in this investigation.

Parliamentary Behaviour Code

105. The Parliamentary Behaviour Code, included as Appendix A to the Code of Conduct, sets out six principles of conduct:
- (a) Respect and value everyone—bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated;
 - (b) Recognise your power, influence or authority and don’t abuse them;
 - (c) Think about how your behaviour affects others and strive to understand their perspective;
 - (d) Act professionally towards others;
 - (e) Ensure Parliament meets the highest ethical standards of integrity, courtesy and mutual respect;
 - (f) Speak up about any unacceptable behaviour you see.

106. Paragraph 125 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct defines bullying as:

“offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving an abuse or misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority and can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation”.

107. Paragraph 126 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct defines harassment as:

“any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of either violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them”.

Confidentiality

108. Paragraph 134 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct provides that:

“In the interests of natural justice, the specific allegation made to the Commissioner or the bullying and harassment and sexual misconduct helpline should be made in private and not publicised until the complaint has been finally determined.”

109. Paragraph 158 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct provides that:

“From the point that the Commissioner decides to undertake an investigation all evidence and correspondence relating directly to the inquiry is covered by parliamentary privilege. It must remain confidential unless and until it is published. If such evidence or correspondence were to be published or disclosed to anyone else without the agreement of the Conduct Committee or the Commissioner, this would be a contempt of the House. An attempt to obstruct an investigation is a contempt of the House.”

Fairness

110. In cases of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, I apply the principles of natural justice, fairness, proportionality, openness, and transparency in reaching decisions as to the appropriate ways to proceed and outcomes or sanctions to agree or recommend. It is also a requirement that the civil standard of proof (balance of probabilities) is adopted by me to find the allegation proven against a member.
111. The requirement of fairness applies to both complainant and respondent. I do not give any advantage to one or the other in the investigatory process; for both I offer the same options and conduct interviews in the same way.

General observations

112. Before turning to my findings on whether Lord Ranger has breached the Code, it is important to observe that the basic facts giving rise to the allegations are agreed between Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger. The basic facts are that Lord Ranger hosted a Diwali event at the House of Lords on 21 October 2022 and that Ms Joshi was his personal guest. The various tweets and other forms of correspondence referred to in this report are also not disputed in terms of their authorship.
113. Finally, by way of general observation it is obvious that my investigation has focused on the social media output of Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger. I wish to make it clear that the principal reason why their social media has been so closely scrutinised is because it has been brought within the scope of the Code by reason of its nexus with Lord Ranger’s parliamentary activities in hosting the Diwali event which was attended by Ms Joshi at his invitation. The social media relied on has provided the background context that led to Ms Joshi’s attendance at the Diwali event and the subsequent exchanges between her and Lord Ranger after the event. The social media output has therefore been of critical relevance to my investigation.

Findings: use of facilities

114. My office contacted the House of Lords Facilities Department in December 2022 to ask for further information about the application of their rules to the Diwali event sponsored by Lord Ranger. The Department confirmed they had not been informed by the Hindu Forum for Britain that it intended to charge guests for attending its event and drew our attention to section 1.1 of the Standard Conditions for Events that they provide to event sponsors. It says:

“Where the Event Organisation is a UK registered charity [it] may, with the permission of HOL, use the Event for fundraising in connection with its charitable purposes, for example by: (a) charging guests who

attend a function an amount which exceeds the actual cost per head; and (b) holding fundraising auctions involving pledges.”

115. Based on Lord Ranger’s evidence it is clear that he charged some uninvited guests £20 per head to cover the cost of the event’s catering provision. In his written response Lord Ranger said:

“Once I mentioned that it costs the HFB, I collected from two of the uninvited guests £20 each (a much-subsided rate) to the per head cost for tea and sandwiches and I gave the collected £40 and the additional cost of six uninvited guests which I personally paid to cover their cost by paying £120 from my own pocket to the HFB.”

116. My office verified the actual cost charged per head for catering with the House of Lords Facilities Department, who confirmed it was £25. Therefore, the amount charged to the uninvited guests by Lord Ranger was in fact below the actual cost per head charged by the House of Lords Facilities Department.
117. **I find on the balance of probabilities that by charging the uninvited guests a reduced amount to only cover the costs per head of catering, Lord Ranger was not in breach of the rules relating to the use of facilities. Although Lord Ranger did not seek the prior permission of the House of Lords Facilities Department to charge the uninvited guests, I find that he was not required to do so as there was no prior intention to use the Diwali event to raise funds. Rather, the decision to charge the uninvited guests appears to have been made on a spontaneous basis when Lord Ranger became aware of the additional, and uninvited, guests who had arrived at Parliament for the Diwali event.**
118. **In the light of my factual findings, I have concluded that Lord Ranger is not in breach of paragraph 12(c) of the Code of Conduct.**
119. Although there were inconsistencies in Lord Ranger’s testimony about his interaction with the uninvited guests at the Diwali events, as I did not receive any complaints, I was not required to reach a finding on this matter.

Findings: bullying and harassment

120. The criteria for bullying and harassment largely overlap, such that a finding of harassment will often provide good evidence of bullying. That being said, there are also material differences. For example, a significant feature of bullying which is not part of the definition of harassment involves an abuse or misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened.
121. Harassment may also come in different forms. For example, harassment may or may not be connected with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. The definitions set out in the Code of Conduct cover all forms of harassment and bullying.

Application of the Parliamentary Behaviour Code

122. Having regard to the Twitter exchanges between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi it is clear to any reasonable observer that they are ill-tempered on all sides.

The pattern of insult and counter-insult between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi is evident.

123. I find on the balance of probabilities that Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi have treated one another in a manner that can mostly be characterised as insulting, disrespectful and discourteous. As many of the tweets exchanged were linked to a parliamentary activity – the Diwali event – I find that both Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi (who was a visitor to the Parliamentary estate) were members of the parliamentary community and obliged to act in accordance with the Parliamentary Behaviour Code which places a general obligation on both visitors and those who work on the Parliamentary estate to respect and value everyone, and states that bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated.
124. As I have no power to investigate and make findings in respect of Ms Joshi's conduct as a visitor under the Parliamentary Behaviour Code, I now turn below to consider whether Lord Ranger's conduct amounts to bullying and/or harassment under the terms of the Code of Conduct, which was the primary focus of my investigation.

Does Lord Ranger's behaviour amount to bullying?

125. As I have noted earlier, for behaviour to amount to bullying it must also involve an abuse or misuse of power. The definition of bullying notes that power does not always mean being in a position of authority and can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation. Whether conduct constitutes bullying will depend on both the perception of the person experiencing the conduct and whether it is reasonable for that person to have perceived the conduct as bullying.
126. I find that there was an imbalance of power between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi by reason of Lord Ranger's authority, his public position as a member of the House of Lords, his wealth and his social standing, and his connections and associations with other senior political figures. He was acutely aware of this imbalance of power and abused it by persistently undermining, humiliating and denigrating Ms Joshi. Examples of this included his frequent disparaging remarks including "Who is asking you? Who has given you the authority to insult others who do not appease you? You are showing your poor upbringing by bullying". In another tweet Lord Ranger stated "Use your real name. Shameless Poonam Joshi pride and joy of the Joshi family, no decent job or business, living day to day". In a further tweet, including a photograph of Lord Ranger with the former home secretary, the Rt Hon. Priti Patel MP, he said "I am in Parliament, and you are not. Please tag the entire Parliament. They know me and no one knows you".
127. Lord Ranger's response to my question asking if such conduct was respectful, in which he referred to Asian culture in his defence, demonstrated precisely the power imbalance that he used to humiliate Ms Joshi (see paragraph 75). This response seems to suggest that Lord Ranger believes that showing respect and valuing everyone is not universal but is reserved for those who have attained age, experience and social status, among other things, such as himself, and if such 'respect' is not accorded then it is entirely appropriate to attack that individual on the basis of their upbringing,
128. A further example of Lord Ranger's misuse of power was writing to the IJA to seek the removal of Ms Joshi from the organisation for her "appalling

conduct” and calling her a “disgrace to her profession”. When questioned about this Lord Ranger confirmed that he considered Ms Joshi to be a form of “cancer”.

129. In all his tweets Lord Ranger has used the Twitter handle ‘Lord Rami Ranger CBE’ and in his email correspondence with the IJA he signed off as ‘Lord Rami Ranger, House of Lords’, making it clear to everyone what he considered to be his elevated public status compared to Ms Joshi’s.
130. I find on the balance of probabilities that there was an exchange of words between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi about meeting Ms Trupti Patel at the Diwali event. That related to Ms Joshi’s request to meet Ms Patel and an expression of her subsequent displeasure at the way in which she perceived she had been treated by Ms Patel, as well as Lord Ranger’s efforts at facilitating a conversation with her. Ms Joshi alleges that Lord Ranger told her “know your place” and “don’t try to be too big for your shoes”. These remarks are denied by Lord Ranger, and he also denied shouting at Ms Joshi. Ms Joshi also told me that Lord Ranger’s suggestion that she kept on interrupting him and demanding that he should bring Ms Patel down from the stage to meet her was factually inaccurate. She told me that Lord Ranger had spent much of the event on stage, while she had spent most of the evening near the entrance to the event hall on the river terrace.¹⁵
131. Although there are no witnesses to the allegation, I find on the balance of probabilities that Lord Ranger is likely to have used such language towards Ms Joshi taking into account his wider pattern of behaviour and use of language. I have reached this conclusion based on the nature and content of his other tweets and emails when he has become upset with Ms Joshi. In those messages, I find there is a clear pattern of behaviour involving the use of language that belittles and undermines Ms Joshi. The remarks such as “know your place” and “don’t try to be too big for your shoes” are in my view entirely consistent with the language and tone used in many of his tweets.
132. However, as to whether Lord Ranger shouted these words, I find on the balance of probabilities that he did not do so. Lord Ranger has stated emphatically that he would not invite someone to Parliament and then shout at them as it would be inappropriate behaviour as a member of the House, and it would also have brought the event into disrepute. I accept Lord Ranger’s explanation on this occasion. He has been candid regarding the shortfalls in his conduct during this investigation and having done so there would have been no reason for him to lie about this specific issue. Lord Ranger’s denial is also supported by the absence of any independent witness accounts of him shouting at Ms Joshi even though she and Lord Ranger accepted that there were several persons standing close by during their interaction. I believe that if Lord Ranger had shouted it would very likely have been witnessed by others around who knew he was the host. Ms Joshi herself said she was concerned about her reputation given that she also knew other guests in attendance. This being the case it is surprising that no one has come forward to support her assertion of being shouted at. I have received evidence from one of the guests in relation to being asked for payment to attend the event, but none have been forthcoming on this matter. Accordingly, the only evidence of shouting by Lord Ranger is from Ms Joshi. When considered in the wider

¹⁵ On 11 May, Ms Joshi submitted a witness statement to me to support this position and offered to provide corroborating video footage.

context I have outlined, I find her evidence to be insufficient in meeting the relevant standard of proof to find that Lord Ranger shouted at her.

133. Ms Joshi's description of the impact of Lord Ranger's conduct on her makes it clear that she perceived his conduct to be offensive, malicious and insulting, amounting to bullying. She told me she was enraged by his tweets and was "very, very angry", and would not give in to his "bullying ways". In the circumstances, I find it was reasonable for Ms Joshi to have perceived Lord Ranger's conduct as bullying.
134. **In the light of the evidence, I conclude on the balance of probabilities that Lord Ranger's conduct did constitute bullying against Ms Joshi within the definition in the Code of Conduct.**

Does Lord Ranger's behaviour amount to harassment?

135. I now turn to look at the same conduct against the criteria for harassment.
136. The Code of Conduct defines harassment as any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. Harassment can be intentional or unintentional and may be persistent or isolated. It may take place in person, by telephone or in writing, including texts, emails, or online communications.
137. I find that immediately before the Diwali meeting, the communications between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi on 17 October, while robust, were nonetheless controlled and relatively cordial. For example, a tweet from Lord Ranger to Ms Joshi on 17 October at 10.14pm stated "You may end up facing a libel [sic] case if you are not careful. Why don't you start your organisation and set high standards for others to follow? Trupti Patel doesn't get paid for the work she does out of her own will. By nit picking who are you serving?" Ms Joshi replied at 10:15pm, saying "It's sad they had to use such a respected figure like you to defend them. If they have done nothing wrong, they should speak for themselves Rami Ji. I have huge regards for you and pls keep leading the way for Indians the way you do. You are our pride". These tweets represented the wider tone and content of their communications at this time and do not in my view reach the threshold for harassment. During Lord Ranger's subsequent email exchange with Ms Joshi, in which he eventually invited Ms Joshi to attend the Diwali event, his tone was also constructive and respectful.
138. During and after the Diwali event, it is clear that relations began to sour between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi. Many of Lord Ranger's tweets about Ms Joshi chose to cast aspersions on her background, status, upbringing, material wealth and her contribution to society, which I have already considered. Lord Ranger also made references to Ms Joshi's husband, including the suggestion that Ms Joshi had reported him for domestic abuse, despite Ms Joshi telling him this was untrue in advance.
139. By making all these remarks and comments against Ms Joshi, I find that Lord Ranger's conduct was unwanted by Ms Joshi and that the purpose or effect of his conduct was to violate Ms Joshi's dignity and humiliate her. Ms Joshi's evidence is that she felt humiliated and her dignity violated which I accept. I further find that Lord Ranger's deliberate and repeated disparaging comments demonstrates that his conduct was intentional.

140. As I have already noted, harassment may be established when related to a protected characteristic such as the ‘sex’ of a complainant or it may be established even without being related to a protected characteristic such as sex. Although Ms Joshi has alleged in her complaint that she has been bullied by Lord Ranger, in part due to her sex, I find the few references by Lord Ranger describing Ms Joshi as a ‘girl’ or ‘woman’ is insufficient to establish on the balance of probabilities that Lord Ranger disparaged Ms Joshi because of her sex.
141. Finally, Ms Joshi alleged that Lord Ranger had also tagged her young son into his Twitter exchanges. Lord Ranger has stated that he had no knowledge of her son, nor was he aware that he had tagged her son into his Twitter exchanges. I accept Lord Ranger’s account on this matter and find that he did not knowingly or otherwise tag Ms Joshi’s son in his Twitter exchanges.
142. **In the light of the evidence, I conclude on the balance of probabilities that Lord Ranger’s conduct did constitute harassment against Ms Joshi within the definition in the Code of Conduct, albeit not harassment related to the protected characteristic of sex.**
143. **Overall, based on the findings I have made in respect of bullying and harassment, I conclude that Lord Ranger’s conduct is in breach of paragraph 18 of the Code of Conduct.**

The wider circumstances of the complaint

144. That there is a fundamental wider disagreement between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi, and that there are other disputes beyond this complaint, are relevant parts of the context to this case.
145. Ms Joshi has also publicly made potentially damaging allegations about Lord Ranger. Because of these factors, and the significant number of tweets issued by Ms Joshi, she must bear some of the responsibility for the continuation of the dispute and the prolonged duration of the exchanges between herself and Lord Ranger.
146. While I consider Ms Joshi’s upset at Lord Ranger’s conduct to be genuine, the relevant circumstances of this case demonstrate that there has been fault on both sides. I therefore do not consider that it is reasonable for Ms Joshi to consider that Lord Ranger is solely responsible for the unpleasant environment arising from their interactions, both in person and online.
147. The initial disagreement at the Diwali event escalated considerably because of the public way in which both parties chose to handle it, which only caused hurt, upset and humiliation to both parties. While I can appreciate why Ms Joshi was upset, much of her social media activity appeared to be focused on harming Lord Ranger’s reputation in a very public manner rather than seeking any sort of private resolution.
148. It is clear that Ms Joshi saw her interactions with Lord Ranger as part of a wider campaign, including her objections to the Hindu Forum for Britain. During her interview she defended her approach as “fair criticism” by a journalist, telling us that it was “imperative” for her to hold Lord Ranger, as a public figure, “to account” for his behaviour in the “public interest”. She told us she was “on a campaign to expose him”.

149. On the balance of probabilities while I accept that Ms Joshi has been subjected to bullying and harassment by Lord Ranger, it also evident to me that Ms Joshi's intention has been to use the complaints process to publicly discredit Lord Ranger for a range of other disputed matters between them. This was demonstrated by Ms Joshi's contact with the media in the run up to making a complaint to my office. In this regard, I fully recognise the impact this has had on Lord Ranger and the difficulties he experienced in exercising self-control when defending himself and his family from being unfairly attacked, while at the same time maintaining the high standards of behaviour expected from members of the House of Lords. On this point, he candidly stated in interview "She was abusing and, you know, she got the worst out of me." Later he said, "for a minute I forgot that I am a public figure and I have to maintain my dignity and honour at all times".
150. While noting the impact on Lord Ranger I also wish to commend Ms Joshi for being open about her own behaviour during her interview and for providing copies of her own tweets as well as Lord Ranger's. This allowed me to consider the relevant matters in the round.
151. **Both Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi sought to undermine one another by issuing inflammatory tweets and sought to involve their family members in their dispute.**
152. **Ms Joshi claimed that her social media activity was intended to hold Lord Ranger "to account" but there were occasions where it appeared that her tweets were intended to insult or ridicule him.**
153. **The complaints process is not intended to provide a means to resolve more general disputes between a complainant and a respondent which do not have a parliamentary dimension.**
154. **With respect to the Guardian article published on 20 December 2022, and Lord Ranger's suggestion that Ms Joshi had breached the confidentiality requirements of the Code of Conduct, I consider allegations of such breaches to be extremely serious, as they have the potential to undermine confidence in the complaints process. The risk of trial by media before an outcome can be reached following an objective investigation is very real and can cause lasting damage to a respondent's reputation without justification.**
155. **On the balance of probabilities, I do not consider that Ms Joshi breached paragraph 158 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct, as the evidence she submitted as part of her complaint had already been shared with her media contacts before the complaint was submitted to me and was therefore not covered by parliamentary privilege. However, I believe that Ms Joshi's decision to share details of her complaint, including the identity of Lord Ranger, with her media contacts before submitting her complaint to me did not respect the spirit of paragraph 134 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct, which is intended to keep the identity of both parties and the specific allegations out of the public domain until after the complaint has been finally determined.**
156. **Lord Ranger repeatedly requested that I reject Ms Joshi's complaint because of her alleged breach of the confidentiality rules. The Code**

of Conduct does not permit me to reject a complaint which has met the prima facie test on such grounds. It is instead a factor that I take into account when reaching my findings as well as any recommended outcome.

Response to the draft report and findings

157. In accordance with paragraph 169 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct, Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi were shown my findings in draft and were offered the opportunity to provide comments. Lord Ranger was also offered the opportunity to provide any material he wanted me to take into account when considering a recommended outcome.
158. Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi both provided feedback on my draft report on 11 May, and some changes were incorporated into my final report as a result.

Outcome

159. Paragraph 191 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct provides that:
- “The appropriate sanction in each case will be assessed by reference to all the circumstances surrounding the offence, including the state of mind and the degree of fault involved in its commission. In cases of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, the assessment will include the effect of the breach on the complainant(s). Account will be taken of any factors aggravating the offence (for example, any racism, homo- or transphobia or other hate-speech element) as well as any factors mitigating it (including whether the offence was out of character and/or took place in exceptional personal circumstances, and insightfulness).”
160. In considering an appropriate outcome for Lord Ranger’s breach of the Code it is important for me to consider his culpability, the harm caused by his proven conduct and the presence of any aggravating and mitigating factors. In respect of his culpability, I find that Lord Ranger was responsible for the nature and tone of his communications – on whatever platform he used – towards Ms Joshi. This also included his conduct at the Diwali event. His proven conduct was bullying and harassing towards her.
161. In terms of the harm caused, harm can be viewed in different ways. Lord Ranger’s proven conduct humiliated and denigrated Ms Joshi and violated her dignity. Cases like these understandably cause great reputational damage and undermine public confidence in Parliament. Everyone is entitled to be respected and valued and not subjected to bullying or harassment.

Aggravating factors

162. Turning to aggravating factors, in his written submission and during our interview, Lord Ranger chose to focus on the behaviour of Ms Joshi, as well as repeatedly questioning the legitimacy of the complaint and misunderstanding the scope of the Code by asking me to investigate the conduct of Ms Joshi. While Lord Ranger expressed regret about engaging with Ms Joshi on Twitter, and said he had learnt lessons, he appeared reluctant to accept responsibility for some aspects of his conduct, including his tweets disparaging Ms Joshi. He demonstrated limited insight into his behaviour, preferring to excuse himself by saying that his conduct was somehow acceptable in an Asian cultural context. His conduct was also repeated and deliberate. I consider all these factors tend to worsen the circumstances of this case.

Mitigating factors

163. For the reasons discussed above I believe the behaviour of Ms Joshi to be a significant factor in my consideration of this complaint and find that the presence of a very significant element of provocation caused by Ms Joshi affected Lord Ranger's judgment and behaviour when engaging with her. I did not reach this conclusion lightly but in the interests of fairness to Lord Ranger, I have treated this as a mitigating factor when determining the proposed outcome.
164. On 11 May Lord Ranger wrote to me and said:
- “As to rehabilitation, the conduct which has led to your findings against me was the result of an exceptional set of circumstances. The whole process has been pressured and stressful and has taken a toll on my health. The investigation itself had a very significant influence on me and ... I have learned from your draft report. Whilst I now understand my obligations under the Code ..., I also understand that I need to develop my understanding of how to fulfil them in the social media sphere. I have decided to attend appropriate training on social media use by public figures (at my own expense) and will build on the ‘Valuing Everyone’ training¹⁶ provided by Parliament which I attended in 2021 by agreeing to re-attend this training. I have already significantly reduced my use of Twitter and continue to increase my awareness of its power.”
165. Accordingly, whereas I would ordinarily have been inclined to consider proposing a short suspension in response to Lord Ranger's conduct, as a result of the significant provocation by Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger's proactive willingness to undertake further training, I decided that a public apology and bespoke training and behaviour change coaching constituted an appropriate outcome in the circumstances.
166. I nevertheless welcome Ms Joshi's decision to come forward and report Lord Ranger's conduct and would like to make it clear that my consideration of her behaviour in the context of her complaint does not in any way diminish my finding that Lord Ranger has breached the provisions of the Code of Conduct concerning bullying and harassment.

Proposal for an agreed resolution

167. Paragraph 165 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct provides for an investigation involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct to be brought to an end, subject to my discretion, if an agreed resolution can be reached between the complainant and the respondent. This outcome differs from remedial action in that no finding is reached and a report does not necessarily have to be published.
168. Because of the circumstances of the wider dispute between Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi, and the possibility that it could continue for some time, and at great cost, I suggested to both Ms Joshi and Lord Ranger at an early stage in my investigation that they may wish to reach an agreed resolution encompassing the different strands of their disagreements.
169. I held follow-up interviews with Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi to consider the potential terms of an agreed resolution in more detail, in February and March,

16 This course is now known as the Behaviour Code seminar.

but as there was no unanimity to proceed, this option was not pursued. The terms of the proposed agreed resolution will remain confidential.

170. On 11 May, and as part of his response to my draft report, Lord Ranger told me his preference was to make another attempt to reach an agreed resolution with Ms Joshi. As part of this he was prepared to apologise to Ms Joshi in private and hoped she would choose to reciprocate in kind. If such an agreed resolution was reached, Lord Ranger asked me to consider exercising my discretion not to publish any report. If Ms Joshi did not agree to an agreed resolution, Lord Ranger suggested it would not be appropriate for me to propose any sanction in this case, in the light of the impact the investigation had had on him and because of the insight he had demonstrated on his behaviour in response. I considered Lord Ranger's proposal to try and facilitate an agreed resolution but, at that stage in the process and in the light of the previous attempt, I did not consider this to be an appropriate option to pursue.

Proposed remedial action

171. In this case I considered remedial action to be an appropriate outcome.
172. Paragraph 160 of the Guide to the Code of Conduct provides that remedial action may be agreed if "the complaint, though justified, is minor and is acknowledged by the member concerned." "Minor", in this context, does not mean trivial, and does not imply that the effect on the complainant has been minor. Rather, it acknowledges that in the full range of behaviours covered by the provisions, the behaviour complained of is at the lower end of the range.
173. Publication of a report is not a sanction, but the effect of publication is, in my view, a matter that I can take into account when considering the proportionality of the proposed outcome. The publicity which publication entails may itself be an effective catalyst for change in the respondent's behaviour, as well as allowing others to assess whether their own behaviour requires modification and readers who may have been affected by similar or equivalent behaviour to recognise that they have a remedy. Both these effects, over time, should improve the working environment of the House of Lords.
174. **I recommended Lord Ranger should make a public apology to Ms Poonam Joshi regarding his conduct on Twitter. It is not within my power to compel Ms Poonam Joshi to issue a reciprocal public apology to Lord Ranger, but I encouraged her to do so, in recognition that they both bear a measure of responsibility for the unfortunate circumstances that have arisen.**
175. **I also recommended Lord Ranger should undertake bespoke training and behaviour change coaching provided by an approved external supplier. While I noted Lord Ranger's intention to undertake social media training and welcome his intention to attend Parliament's Behaviour Code seminar again, it is important for the external training to address the specific nature and impact of his behaviour arising from this complaint - in a timely manner and in accordance with the expectations of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme.**

176. **I would urge Lord Ranger, and all members of the House, to ensure that their activity on social media, and more generally, meets the expectations set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code and the Code of Conduct.**

Conclusion

177. In cases involving bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct any remedial action recommended by the Commissioner needs to be agreed by both the member and the complainant. If remedial action is agreed between the parties, there is no role for the Conduct Committee. Where remedial action cannot be agreed between the parties, both the complainant and the respondent may make written representations to the Conduct Committee which will take the final decision on how the case should be resolved (paragraph 166 of the Guide).
178. **On 1 June 2023 Lord Ranger and Ms Joshi wrote to me to confirm they were content to resolve this complaint by remedial action. Lord Ranger issued a written apology to Ms Joshi, which is included in Appendix 5. Ms Joshi also chose to issue a written apology to Lord Ranger regarding her actions, which is included in the same Appendix.**

APPENDIX 1: INDIAN LADIES UK ONLINE ARTICLE

Comment: Why doesn't Lord Rami Ranger practise what he preaches?

Here's the thing. I'm a girl from Delhi and I don't suffer fools. I have very little time for people who strut around showing off their baubles and, my biggest bugbear of all is those in power looking down their noses at ordinary people.

So it's been a bizarre and revealing few days dealing with just that sort of man – the kind of man whose eye-watering donations to the Tory party lands him a peerage; who makes YouTube videos detailing his “accomplishments”; who sits on numerous community organizations that don't appear to do much for the community and the list goes on. A man going by Lord Ranger – Rami Ranger, founder of Sun Mark, which has, he likes to remind people at every opportunity, received the Queen's Award no less than 5 “consecutive” times.

At the end of it all, it has raised serious questions as to the behaviour, morals, ethics and judgment of “Baron Ranger of Mayfair”, a man who sits in the House of Lords and as such has a direct impact on millions of ordinary people.

It all began about two weeks ago when a number of Hindu community groups started an online campaign calling for more “transparency” from the Hindu Forum of Britain (HfB). Co-founded by Rami Ranger, HfB claims to be some sort of umbrella organization for Hindu groups across the UK.

Now, to digress a little bit and lay all of my cards on the table at the very outset, I have something of a history with HfB. Some years ago, I was invited to the Nehru Centre in London for an event by the organisation. Also invited was Rashmi Mishra, a woman who openly claims to be a right-wing Hindutva lunatic, who corrals old age pensioners to go and demonstrate against news organisations that are critical of India in any way and who takes every disparaging remark about India or the BJP as a personal affront because, well, it suits her grift.

Ms Mishra it appears wasn't happy that I too had been invited to this event and demanded that HfB's other co-founder – Trupti Patel – get me to leave, which I – being a girl from Delhi – impolitely refused to do, leaving Ms Mishra huffing and puffing from the venue.

Back to the present day and I joined the aforementioned debate on social media asking precisely what the HfB does. I am a Hindu and a proud Indian who has lived in the UK for 18 years but neither my life nor that of anyone I know from our community has been improved in any way shape or form as a result of anything the HfB has done. Hell, I've been sheltering victims of domestic violence – women and children, Hindu, Muslim – in my own living room for 8 years but had never known HfB.

I have heard of one living being who has received help from the HfB – Shambo the bull. This was an unfortunate bovine living in a Hindu temple in Wales who came down with Bovine Tuberculosis back in 2006 and was ordered to be slaughtered, for the greater good of the farming community in the area which would have been decimated if an infected animal was allowed free reign.

Enter the HfB, which promised to “form a human chain” around the temple to prevent Shambo being put to sleep because, well, such animals were sacred in Hinduism. Alas, common sense prevailed and Shambo was indeed sent to his abode in the sky.

And of course, there are the pictures of committee members posing with politicians in parliament at Diwali.

Aside from that, what does the HFB do? Curiously, why is an organization, led by a man who claims to work for community cohesion, so exclusive? A case in point is the fact that its various steering committees are populated almost entirely by Gujaratis. Another is a recent video in which Rami Ranger's HfB co-founder Trupti Patel declares that "no Labour-supporter, MP or Labour sympathiser will be invited to MY Diwali event", to applause from a gleeful audience, some of whom are doubtless among those who, for example, brand people who support Mayor Sadiq Khan – like me – as "anti-Indian" or "Pakistan lovers".

These and others are the, entirely legitimate, questions raised by members on social media, especially in light of what had recently happened in Leicester – an issue over which HfB has kept basically schtum.

But it appears that such impertinent questions are a strict no-no in our community. Raising questions of those who have monopolised positions of power is apparently haram! So Lord Ranger – as many in positions of power who are faced with difficult questions are inclined to do – first began by publicly thrashing the people raising the questions, including myself, calling us all "extremists" and blocking us.

Curiously, after blocking me, he still felt the need to send me emails detailing everything he had achieved including of course, sending round that PR puff piece video and mentioning the five consecutive Queen's Awards for Excellence. It was quite remarkable to behold – a sitting member of the House of Lords who had become outraged that I and others had had the audacity to ask for transparency.

He then, as men of a certain vintage tend to do, appeared to calm down and invited me to a Diwali event that he and the HfB were hosting at Westminster, presumably in a bid to clear the air and make the case for what exactly HfB does. He even suggested that he wanted to "smooth things out".

He even sent the below message, basically throwing his HfB co-founder Trupti Patel under the bus.

I am sorry Trupti has not projected a good image of the HFB, Poonam.

I intend to put it right. Are you willing to join?

**Regards,
Lord Rami Ranger CBE
Chairman**



Once there, and to no great surprise, he had anything but that intention. While preening around for the cameras he was least interested in engaging with me in any way, which was absolutely fine with me. What was not however, was his treatment of the numerous representatives from Hindu organisations who had turned up at the event. You can always tell a man of culture and decency in situations like this. He behaved extremely rudely and coarsely towards a number of them, including at one point demanding that they pay 20 pounds each to enter. A multi-millionaire Lord shouting and asking the plebs to cough up twenty quid for a cup of tea and a photo-op.

I soon scarpered as did many of the others who felt deeply insulted. If only Lord Ranger had been as exasperated at the fact that the brochure for the event featured a full-page advertisement for Nithyananda, the so-called Hindu spiritual guru wanted in India on charges of rape and kidnapping and who has been absconding from Indian justice in various Caribbean countries trying to set up his own “Kailaasa”.

After the event, the same groups and individuals who had been treated badly were on social media along with me, questioning the conduct of someone who is held in such high esteem in our community.

But, and once again to no one’s surprise, instead of offering an explanation or an apology, Rami Ranger went on a full-frontal attack against those who complained, and me, on Twitter and WhatsApp.

In a bizarre sequence of events over a week, he would first tag me and ask me questions like “what have you achieved”? He was even moved to ask what my father had achieved!

He then bombarded me with WhatsApp messages with pictures of him posing with the Queen, the then-Prince of Wales, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a photograph of him in the House of Lords wearing those silly ornate robes preferred by that bizarre unelected, upper house of the British parliament. He also sent me the YouTube puff piece and various links ruminating in breathless detail about five Queen’s Awards for Excellence his various companies have received. It was like watching the annoying drunk uncle from the colony shouting and gesticulating wildly at the houses after his third peg at 7 pm.

Here’s a bit more of a flavour of his messages to me:

“What is your quality?? Do you have a high-profile job? Or Business?” I’m sorry I didn’t realize that having a meaningful life entailed having a “high profile job” or “business”. I mean, who will the likes of Lord Ranger pass laws for if all the plebs had high profile jobs and/or businesses?

“I have been honoured by the Queen on 8 occasions. How many times anyone has honoured you?” Precisely ZERO occasions, Lord Ranger. I’m guessing my chances are even bleaker now that she’s dead. Long Live the King!

“You show a very poor upbringing and disgrace your parents with lack of culture and refinement”. Well, my left-leaning economist father will be cheering from his grave that his little girl has the audacity to call out a member of the House of Lords, so I’m happy about that. As for “culture and refinement”, well I’m not the one ogling on Twitter, dear Lord.

“Unless you change your mindset you continue to show aggression. No aggressive person ever succeeds in life, nor do they benefit society with their lives”. This is remarkable from a person who claims to champion women’s rights. Why don’t you Google “suffragettes”, Lord Ranger.

This patronising and patriarchal way of speaking is very telling about the nature and character of the man. I am, in his eyes, devoid of “culture and refinement” – presumably because I do not and will not conform to his “ideal” of what a woman should be; submissive, quiet, diligent in the kitchen and bedroom, never daring to raise their voice at, let alone in the presence, of such pomposity.

Well, there’s previous form with the man. In 2020, an employment tribunal found Lord Ranger guilty of workplace harassment and gender-based discrimination after he lambasted a young woman for having the audacity to complain about sexual harassment at HIS company. He described her as a “scumbag”, a “silly girl”, a “dirty girl”, telling her that making a complaint would besmirch the “honour” of her parents. His lawyers claim that he had been “entrapped” into saying these things.

Because girls are meant to be ornamental, right? In a tweet on 29 October, Ranger shares a video of a parade of gorgeous young sari-clad women wearing heavy gold jewellery and purrs, “the best place for Gold”.

A few weeks earlier he shared the below tweet. If anyone doesn’t think this is creepy from a 75-year-old Baron, they need to have their head examined.



Lord Rami Ranger CBE @RamiRa... · 4h ...

The one on the 🪑



ThePreity™ 🇺🇸 🇮🇳 @PreityU... · 5h

A or B?

Which one is more delicious?



When I shared this among my followers, he became even more incandescent, first blocking me, then unblocking me and blocking me again and then sending me private messages via WhatsApp and then tagging my employer and raising questions about my “integrity” and “honour”. It is utterly bizarre behaviour that is more than a bit disconcerting. At one point I actually became concerned and reached out to his daughter – after all, he is old enough to be my father – but his daughter wanted nothing to do with him or the situation.

And yet he carries on, this week addressing the Punjabi community at the High Commission, posing with various people in high places. People who are unaware of his actions are still lining up, singing his praises, doubtless after being offered the chance to visit his Lordship at the place of the Lords for a photograph which they can put on Facebook and tell the relatives back home about what they’ve achieved and how far they’ve come. “Hey look, ma, I got a picture with a Lord!” (Please don’t mention the £1.5 million he had to, erm, “donate” and the creepy Twitter messages).

But that’s the way the community works. You can be a part of it or be apart from it. I’d choose the latter 7 days a week and twice on Sunday.

The pattern is always the same. If you, in any way, raise questions about someone in our community who has declared themselves a figure of importance then it becomes a major problem.

They believe that they are above any sort of criticism or accountability because they believe that they have reached a “big position” and should not be questioned in any way shape or form. It’s typical South Asian thinking.

It’s time these people be called out, it’s time they be held accountable. This is a man who spoke about female empowerment in his inaugural speech to the Lord’s, only to call a woman who dares question him a “dirty girl”. He’s so drunk on power that at one point while attacking me on social media he compared himself to Lord Rama!

But this fallacy will one day come crashing down because power and money corrupts and that rot is already very well evident. It’s shameful that the likes of Rami Ranger are celebrated.

But here’s the other thing.

This country is weird in that you can buy your titles and buy “prestige”, but this country also gives simple people like me and you to hold power to account and put them in their rightful place!

I for one won’t stop.

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE OF TWEETS AND WHATSAPP MESSAGES

On 17 October @RamiRanger “Who is asking you? Who has given you the authority to insult others who do not appease you? You are showing your poor upbringing by bullying”

On 21 October @PoonamJoshi_ “No point being a millionaire if one doesn’t have basic decency ... today I witnessed a millionaire ill-treating and bullying his own Hindu community members, I felt ashamed th[a]t the man represents us in the Parlia[m]ent”

On 21 October @PoonamJoshi_ “... millionaire Lord Rami Ranger charged money to a FREE event and bullied respectable Hindu community adults”

On 22 October @PoonamJoshi_ “Rami Ranger bought a LORDSHIP for himself & OBE for his daughter Reena Ranger? Hard working, grass root community workers are never even mentioned, and millionaires given medals, because they can through money and buy anything! Disgraceful”

On 23 October @RamiRanger “All your time is wasted dragging people down. What are your accomplishments? Can you share? Do you have a decent job? Any Business or Organisation? Since you have no standing in society you can throw mud on others with impunity. Continue to waste your life or seek help.”

On 23 October @PoonamJoshi_ “Rami Ranger has a history of harassing women ...”

On 23 October @RamiRanger “Self-praise is the easier thing to do. Let some organization or the King honour you. You have a big mouth. Now shut it.”

On 23 October @PoonamJoshi_ “I am NOT going to give a list of my achievements to an abusive, irrelevant, egotistic and arrogant man who clearly seems to have lost his mind.”

On 25 October @PoonamJoshi_ “An Indian origin lord sending msgs past midnight, bombarding me with his pics with the Queen & others & boasting about wht he hs done while throwing similar abuses at me that he did at his employee who sued him & his son in law Harmeet Ahuja in court. 🤔”

On 25 October, the following WhatsApps were exchanged:

Lord Ranger: “Did you report your husband for domestic violence?”

Ms Joshi: “NEVER”

Lord Ranger: “You show a very poor upbringing and disgrace your parents with lack of culture and refinement”

Ms Joshi: “You have a history of harassing women and treating them like shit”

Ms Joshi: “I am going to start a full-fledged campaign against your wrong doings”

Lord Ranger: “Great, please do. People tell me you are toxic”

Ms Joshi: “I heard you go crazy at night after you have a few drinks and start sending people messages”

Lord Ranger: “No one will come near you as you are jealous and vindictive”

Lord Ranger: “I have been honoured by the Queen on 8 occasions. How many time[s] anyone has honoured you”

Lord Ranger: “What is your quality?? Do you have a high-profile job? Or business?”

Ms Joshi: “You are Pathetic Mr. Ranger. I am sending all these messages to Reena. Let her see her own father’s doing”

On 26 October @RamiRanger “I am going to take action against this toxic woman who specialises in defaming people”

On 26 October @PoonamJoshi_ “A Lord of the prestigious British Parliament actually tweeting something like this is appalling. After seeing this I have no doubt why @RamiRanger treats women like objects and uses the language that he has used with many women in the community. Shameful!!! How is he a LORD?”

On 26 October @PoonamJoshi_ “👊👊👊👊 Rami ji, it was YOU who was reported to the Police and the court has found you guilty of harassment and abuse along with your son in law Harmeet Ahuja. Read again sir! You are a dodgy lord like Lord Ahmed who was stripped of his peerage, u r next!»

On 26 October @RamiRanger “@indianladiesuk Poonam Joshi why someone called you a bitch? Are you?”

On 26 October @RamiRanger “If only you could achieve 5% of what I have for my family, community and country. Champion of filth and abuses. Horrible. I feel sorry for her husband who I am told was reported for domestic abuse.”

On 26 October @RamiRanger “You are free to do whatever you like @ABPNews @abplive How can anyone employ such a rude person. I am getting hundreds of messages not to engage with you as you have no shame and nothing to lose. You have already reported your husband to the police. You are a cyberbully.”

On 27 October, Ms Joshi sent a WhatsApp to Lord Ranger: “Mr. Ranger I am giving you an opportunity to remove you[r] libel[l]ous tweet about my husband. It’s a blatant lie and in a way you are condoning Domestic Violence. U wouldn’t want me to drag your daughters and son in laws in this fight. This shows your class and your upbringing that u always remind me of. We are fighting for other people like Trupti and Hindu Forum of Britain. U and I didn’t have any issues. You jumped in.”

On 27 October @PoonamJoshi_ “How many controversies is @RamiRanger’s name connected to? Harassing a woman, participating in a charity gala where women were groped while he talks about women empowerment, Hindu Dharma, Sanatan Dharma! It’s all a farce. He doesn’t follow what he preaches clearly.”

On 29 October @PoonamJoshi_ “When I questioned @RamiRanger about giving platform to Self-styled Godman Nithyananda, an accused Rapist and child abuser, he asked me if I had a job, what a pity? A man I once held in such high esteem is defending a rapist, coz they paid money!! Shame! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bviQh4twgIQ>”

On 2 November @PoonamJoshi_ “This is @RamiRanger. He was given a life peerage by TM. He was caught up in the cash for honours scheme. He was found guilty by an employment tribunal of victimising & harassing a female employee after she raised a sexual harassment complaint against another member of staff.”

On 2 November @PoonamJoshi_ “He is the Co-Founder of Hindu Forum of Britain, what h[a]v[e] they done with regards to Leicester attacks? What exactly hv thy done for Hindus in the UK apart from using them for their politics? They’ve done nothing! He ended up charging £20 from Hindus who came to a Free event at HOL.”

On 4 November @PoonamJoshi_ “Here is a man sitting in the Parliament, Lord Rami Ranger who is old enough to be my Father, talks about women empowerment but displays no regard for women. My last 2 weeks of experience with him taught me a lot about this so-called community leader! <https://indianladiesuk.org/comment-why-doesnt-lord-rami-ranger-practise-what-he-preaches/>”

On 10 November @PoonamJoshi_ “Lord Rami Ranger is a disgrace to the entire Indian community let alone just Hindus, he has exploited us for too long for monetary and political gains. He has sold his company & plans to move to Dubai, clearly people hv seen his true face, he is struggling to survive in the UK.”

On 11 November @RamiRanger “Bad people see bad and good people see good in others. Poonam is mentally disturbed. She needs help sos”

On 12 November @IndianLadiesUK “...Trupti Patel and Rami Ranger must be brought down. Enough is enough. Hope you can join our protest we are planning demanding removal of Rami from the Parliament and Trupti’s from Hindu Forum.”

On 12 November @PoonamJoshi_ “In my honest opinion and belief you have harassed, victimised and gender discriminated against the poor female employee who was sexually harassed by one of your employee Kapil Sharma you continue to employ. U are a disgrace and stop harassing me following me around everywhere.”

On 12 November @RamiRanger “She is vicious and vindictive because I did not appease her.”

On 12 November @RamiRanger “Your achievements are that you have become the epitome of filth and garbage reflecting your upbringing and showing what masterpiece your parents have given to society, a twisted personality.”

On 12 November @RamiRanger “I am in Parliament and you are not. Please tag the entire Parliament. They know me and no one knows you.”

On 12 November @RamiRanger “Do you have any money?”

On 12 November @RamiRanger “Poonam Joshi is, a total nutcase ...”

On 12 November @RamiRanger “Poonam Joshi I feel sorry for the one who is married to you. Poor chap. May God give him the strength to bear with her.”

On 12 November @RamiRanger “Use your real name. Shameless Poonam Joshi pride and joy of Joshi family, no decent job or business. Living day to day.”

On 16 November @PoonamJoshi_ “Great to see so many people come out condemning Rami Ranger, he is a disgrace.”

On 8 December @PoonamJoshi_ “Lord Rami Ranger – who has given more than £1.3 million to the Conservatives through his Sun Mark business – is just the latest in a long line of elite Tory donors who have received peerages, knighthoods and other honours #CashforHonours #RamiRanger”

On 8 December @PoonamJoshi_ “How many people agree with me that Lords like Rami Ranger must be suspended from the Parliament. How can they be found guilty by a court for harassment and gender discrimination, be able to throw filth at women publicly and still carry on being part of a respected establishment?”

On 9 December @PoonamJoshi_ “Invitees who brought a guest or two each were taken inside by Rami Ranger, Once brought in, security checked, he had no reason to shout insult & demand money to a free event. He had the option of not bringing them in but he did. I witnessed it. There is no fee for Parliament.”

On 10 December @PoonamJoshi_ “Somebody is dreaming of doing their dodgy awards at the Parliament. A Lord is already facing inquiry for inviting Nithyananda’s cult to the Parliament, let’s see who supports a commercial award ceremony for a certified community hate spreader.”

APPENDIX 3: GUARDIAN ARTICLE

Lords inquiry launched into Tory peer accused of bullying female journalist

Rami Ranger alleged to have mounted campaign of harassment against reporter who investigated his links to an Indian guru

Authorities at the House of Lords have opened an investigation into another Tory peer, Rami Ranger, the Guardian has learned, after an independent journalist accused him of a campaign of bullying and harassment.

Poonam Joshi, a freelance reporter and women's rights campaigner, has been investigating Lord Ranger over his links to a controversial Indian guru, details of which were revealed by the Observer newspaper earlier this month.

Ranger told the Observer he regretted attending an event at the House of Lords at which a representative of the guru was present. The invitations to the event were issued in Ranger's name. But he responded to Joshi with a volley of abuse over Twitter and WhatsApp, which the Lords commissioner for standards is investigating. Ranger is suing Joshi for defamation.

The investigation comes just weeks after the Lords launched an inquiry into the Conservative peer Michelle Mone, after the Guardian revealed she and her children had benefited from £29m of profits from government contracts during the Covid pandemic.

Joshi told the Guardian: "I have been targeted by Mr Ranger for weeks ... Lord Ranger has long been seen as an elder statesman within the British Asian community who has never been criticised in any way. So to be questioned, especially by a journalist who also happens to be an Indian woman, is seen as an 'affront' in our community."

Ranger said: "I have served court papers for defamation against [Joshi] and as a result, I cannot comment now. I will be giving my response to the commissioner for parliamentary standards in due course."

The Lords commissioner for standards did not comment.

Ranger is a significant Tory donor, having given the party £1.5m through individual donations and through his consumer goods company, Sun Mark. He is an influential figure in the British Indian community, helped found the Hindu Forum of Britain and served as a patron of Conservative Friends of India.

In October, Ranger helped organise a glamorous Diwali event at the House of Lords, which Joshi attended. Also there was Atmadayaki Nithya – Atmadaya, as she is commonly known – the UK representative for Nithyananda, a Hindu guru with millions of followers who is on the run after being charged with raping a follower and abducting children.

Atmadaya has described allegations against Nithyananda as "false and part of a campaign of religious persecution by anti-Hindu extremist elements of the government in India".

Ranger told the Observer: "If I had known, I would never have attended an event where such unsavoury characters were being promoted."

But he took a different tone with Joshi. After she confronted him over her concerns, he subjected her to a barrage of critical tweets and WhatsApp messages.

Among them, he tweeted the unfounded allegation that her husband was a domestic abuser, called her “such an evil woman” and a “total disgrace”, called her “the epitome of filth and garbage”, and threatened to take her to court, warning: “I will teach you a lesson.”

He also engaged with her on WhatsApp and during their conversations, which have been seen by the Guardian, told her she “showed a very poor upbringing”, called her “jealous and vindictive” and likened himself to “your father trying to put some sense into you”.

Ranger has now launched a defamation case in the high court against Joshi in which he accuses her of promoting a “false narrative” against him.

This is not the first time Ranger has been accused of demeaning behaviour towards younger women. At an employment appeal tribunal earlier this year, a judge upheld a ruling that Ranger had harassed and discriminated against a woman who had complained about sexual harassment at his company.

The tribunal heard that during a recorded phone call in Punjabi the peer called his employee Ramandeep Kaur a “silly girl” and a “scumbag”. Ranger contested the translation of the conversation, saying instead that he called her an “insolent girl”.

APPENDIX 4: EMAIL FROM LORD RANGER TO THE STANDARDS CLERK

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your email [redacted].

I have no intention to apologise to someone who launched a barrage of unprovoked insults without provocation. She will only be encouraged to go after others.

She reported me to the Prime Minister, Par[t]y Chairman, the Indian High Commission and every other person of influence to damage my standing in the country.

Had I not served her with the defamation claim, her abuse on social media would have continued unabated. The Commissioner thinks she is the victim in all this and not the architect.

Kindly, ask the Commissioner to decide my punishment bearing in mind the character and conduct of the plaintiff throughout. You have seen enough of her Tweets to demonstrate her character and how she abuses everyone with impunity.

Finally, I am disappointed with the way I have been dealt with and held accountable for everything I said and at the same time, no action is deemed appropriate against the plaintiff for her unprecedented abuse and for reporting me to the press before the outcome of the inquiry. Breaking the rules set out by the inquiry by giving false narratives to the Guardian newspaper.

Furthermore, no action is taken against the plaintiff for her relentless campaign to malign an accomplished Peer and his family.

No consideration is given to my promises never to repeat such behaviour. We make mistakes and learn from them.

No action against someone who made a video against me with inaccurate information to discredit me. No consideration is given to the tremendous provocation I have been subjected to.

Please request the Commissioner to decide my punishment without further delay.

I hope the complaint will be dismissed in view of the plaintiff's conduct and behaviour throughout.

Thank you

Regards

Lord Rami Ranger CBE

APPENDIX 5: APOLOGIES FROM LORD RANGER AND MS POONAM JOSHI TO ONE ANOTHER

Apology from Lord Ranger to Ms Poonam Joshi

I am grateful for the opportunity to issue this apology in this report.

In this report, the Commissioner has found my behaviour fell short of the high standards I expect of myself, and which others expect of me as a sitting member of the House of Lords. I have expressed my remorse and I apologise to Ms Joshi.

The investigation process and reading and reflecting on the report has had a profound and lasting effect on me. I will continue to self-reflect and learn from this experience.

Lord Ranger

Apology from Ms Poonam Joshi to Lord Ranger

I am grateful to Lord Ranger for his apology.

The Commissioner's Report has given me the opportunity to reflect on my own actions, which have not met the standards I have set for myself. I am remorseful and accept that I bear a share of the responsibility for the circumstances which have arisen, and I apologise to Lord Ranger.

Ms Poonam Joshi