

DELHI SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

University of Delhi

Seminar on Media and Power by Dr.Shanta N. Varma

on 10 March 2018

The students of Delhi School of Journalism had the esteemed opportunity to attend a seminar lecture by Prof. Shanta Varma, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. She was introduced by Chitralli Ghatak.

Prof.Varma has 40 years of experience in being academically involved with foreign relations study of India and the world. She has even devoted her knowledge and expertise to foreign universities,especially in Hong Kong.Yet her simplicity in interaction with the students and faculty and the sweet apology of not being fluent in lecturing in Hindi though she was well versed with it, was a sight to behold.

She started with simple terms and establishing the foundation of media as an image constructing and projecting entity. This led on to her derivation of the theory that the link of media interest and image relationship determined overall international relations.

According to her, power shaped the nature of relations and International relations is nothing but international politics. There is a power struggle among nations and with greater power there is greater assertion of influencing actions of other states.

She explained to us the multiple dimensions of these power assertions, ranging from hard and soft power to influence politically, socially, culturally

and economically. There were state and non-state actors in foreign relations, and terrorism is the latter.

In a short, rapid and dynamic session we understood the fundamentals of foreign relations and then she went on to tell us the role media has to play in this scenario, revolutionising the world and its relations. An indisputable example she gave was about the reportage of the Gulf War in the late 70s by CNN which has gone down in the records of history as the CNN effect.

She highlighted core issues like media imperialism, the wire/news agency monopoly in presenting perspectives, especially in the case of the freeing of Goa by the Nehru government from the Portuguese and how the West portrayed India as a tyrant.

She deemed people in Public Relations to be Spin Doctors and how bureaucrats and ministers set agendas for foreign relations.

There was a heated discussion in the question answer session. As an unbiased academician Prof.Varma stood by the decisions of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and PM Modi in shaping today's foreign relations. She advised students to not be pseudo intellectuals who debated with incomplete information.

Report by Gauri Joshi