

Special Lecture on MEDIA AND POLITY by Prof. Bidyut Chakrabarty on Saturday, 24 February 2018



The students of Delhi School of Journalism got an invaluable opportunity to attend a special lecture by Prof. Bidyut Chakrabarty, Professor of Political Science and Former Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delhi. The lecture was also graced by Prof. J.P. Dubey, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delhi and Dr. Manasvini M .Yogi, OSD, Delhi School of Journalism and faculty members.

Prof. Chakrabarty was meant to be formally introduced by Shashank Mundru, but we were captured and awed by the humility and dedication of Prof. Chakrabarty who consented to address the students on such a short notice and refused any flowery praises, introduction and credentials, and even had reservations to be called Professor as he considered himself a teacher. His dedication urged him, in his own words, 'to not give students stale food and prepare for addressing the undergraduates'. In his dilemma of sticking to English or Hindi during the seminar and then sticking to the Hinglish slang of Delhi residents, he said, *Seekh to li aage badhkar angrezi zaban Lagta hai goonga ho raha hai Hindustan.*"

Emphasising on the importance and omnipresence of social media, Prof. Chakraborty said that every media house and individuals are connected via social networking. The social media phenomena witnessed by India now was at its peak in the US in the 1980's, and Indians try to ape the west as if we are void ourselves of legacy and process.

He asked the students why they thought media was referred to as the Fourth Estate and not Second or Fifth. According to him, it was imperative to historically interpret the reference which dates back to the French Revolution and Church, Nobility and Townsfolk the three segments (estates) of the society were connected by a fourth link, the media. Thomas Carlyle in his book "French Revolution" published in 1837 referred to the Media as the Fourth Estate for the first time.

To establish the relationship between media and politics, he explained that as a method politics was Deliberation and Discussion, Contestation and Negotiation and there is politics even in simple day to day human transactions. The relationship of Media with politics was more of an index, a mirror to understand the changing face of politics. He elucidated upon the making of Karl Marx from a rebellious journalist to a social thinker seeking to provoke alternative thinking against the power structures and more support to lower classes.

Coming to the Indian context, he observed that Colonialism was an important chapter in Indian history and our language, education, infrastructure and lifestyle reflects that. Media and politics are also not untouched from this phenomena, where Gandhi derived his ideology from British principles of tolerance, compassion and empathy but went on to oppose, dissent and later challenge the realms of British Rule. He told us how revolutionary thinkers like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gandhi were against Child Marriage Law imposed by the British to restrict age for marriage. He called Gandhi a confident and well informed journalist who

was unapologetic for starting the Indian Opinion in South Africa for resident Indians there. He then went on to discover the contributions of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as a journalist and an inspiring social thinker, who could influence the *dalit* masses in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

He concluded by saying that the relationship between media and politics has been going on from centuries both implicitly and explicit. It is not static and keeps changing, hence examples cannot be captured in a single contextual framework. Calling market and corporate ownership demons who stop journalism from being objective, he advised budding journalists to explain the social realities and not to be judgemental.

With Inputs from **Gauri Joshi** and **Abin George** (I Semester BJ)