

The 2nd International Conference of XCOMM on “The role of media in Democracy” was held on November 25 & 26 at Xavier University Bhubaneswar

The International Conference on “Role of media in democracy” was hosted by Xavier School of Communication (XCOMM). Mr. Siddarth Varadarajan, the founder of “thewire.in” was the chief guest and Mr. Baijayant Panda, Honourable Member of Parliament was the guest of honour, Fr. Dr. Paul Fernandes SJ, Vice Chancellor, Fr. Lourduraj Ignacimuthu SJ, Dean, Xavier School of Communications (XCOMM) and Ms. Jagi Mangat Panda, Managing Director of OTV were present at the inaugural session.



Ms. Jagi Mangat Panda welcomed the gathering and introduced the guests for the day. Father Lourduraj, Dean, XCOMM spoke on the dynamics and importance of the conference titled “Role of media in democracy.” He quoted Denis McQuail to state the functions of media namely, information, correlation, continuity, entertainment and mobilisation and reminded the audience that “Media should be the voice of the voiceless.” He raised question mark about the balanced news in India in the context of corporate ownership. The vice-chancellor of Xavier University Bhubaneswar (XUB), Fr. Dr Paul Fernandes thanked the dignitaries for their presence at the Second international conference organized by Xavier School of communications, in collaboration with Odisha Television Network (OTV). He invited the research scholars, media professionals and the students to question media with regard to the democratic values, political system and system of art and communication. He cautioned that if we don’t question media at this time, the market and government will influence people and we will go back into mass society paradigm forever.



The inaugural panel discussion was chaired by Sandeep Sahu, Senior journalist and the guests were Shri Baijayant Panda, Honourable member of the parliament and Shri Siddarth Varadarajan, the founding editor of “The Wire.” The panel discussion had two propositions. The first one focused on whether media is capable of bringing about **free, fair and independent** reporting and the second, if the media fails to have any impact on the people, what would the consequences be?

Mr. Siddarth Varadarajan talked about the three different aspects of media ecosystem i.e., Free, Fair and Independent. He also questioned the type of media a country has at present and what will happen if such a media doesn't exist. He stated that there are a very few media houses that are really interested in democratic values and independence and only a few really care and believe in "quality journalism". He advised the media students not to let their personal bias affect what they see and hear and report."

Mr. Jay Panda, MP spoke on the freedom of press and the social media. He felt that the social media apparently has overtaken the print and broadcast media because the citizens have become journalists and the opinions are shared today more than ever.



A total of 51 research paper were presented, moderated by Mr. Krishna Prasad, former editor-in-chief of The Outlook, Mr. Anupam Dasgupta, senior journalist, "The Week", Dr Stevenson, HOD, Dept. Journalism and Mass Communication, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Dr Devvrat Singh, Dean, School of Media, Central University of Jharkhand, Mr. Amit Patra, Film Critic, Dr Francis Arackal, Faculty, Amity University, Gurgaon, Dr NC Pattnaik, Principal, Law College, Berhampur and

Fr. Maxim Dias SJ, Principal, St Joseph's Evening College, Bangalore. Interesting papers deliberating on "Media acting as a watchdog: The desired role to be played in enhancing the possibilities of a democratic space in Kashmir" "Haat as a medium of communication for rural, social and economic development" "Media and people's perception and attitudes towards Dalits in modern India" and "Online media as a toll of resistance to the suppressive tendencies of the Indian government."



Talks by eminent personalities. Mr. Brian Donahue of Alaska University, USA (via Skype) on the topic "In the back drop of the US elections, how did media behave and what is missing in today's journalism?" Mr. Krishna Prasad, former editor-in-chief, The Outlook addressed the participants and shared the concerns about the corporate owned-media and his own concerns for those training to be journalists and emphasized on the ethical dimension. Mr. Sharma of Coca-Cola shared his views on the importance of Public Relations.



The best paper award won by Sourabh Das and Ayan Baroliya of MICA Ahmedabad for their paper titled, "Media acting as a watchdog: The desired role to be played in enhancing the possibilities of a democratic space in Kashmir." The students participated in different sessions actively. The conference concluded with the valedictory message from the Dean, Fr. Lourduraj Ignacimuthu SJ, and he distributed the mementoes and certificates to the moderators, participants, and students.