

International Communication Association Preconference

Tryst with Democracy: 70 Years of Media in Independent India - Successes, Challenges, Interventions

Venue: University of California, San Diego

Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017, 9 am - 3.30 pm

Deadline for submissions: February 10, 2017, to roys@sfasu.edu

Organizers:

Sudeshna Roy (Stephen F. Austin State University, USA)

Daya Thussu (University of Westminster, UK)

Vipul Mudgal (Common Cause, India)

Sponsoring ICA Division: Global Communication and Social Change

Additional ICA Division Affiliations: Communication and Technology, Communication Law and Policy, Journalism Studies, Mass Communication

August 15, 2017, marks the 70th anniversary of India's independence from the British, 70 years of functioning as the world's largest democracy, 70 years of working together with 29 distinct ethno-linguistic groups and approximately 1.3 billion people or 17.5 per cent of the world population. Indian media have come a long way in operating in a country of such depth and complexity. There are a multitude of successes and challenges that Indian media have experienced along the way.

The survival and flowering of Indian democracy owes a great deal to the freedom and vigour of its media. One of the biggest drivers of media's success is that almost alone in the world, India's print, magazine and television news businesses are growing rapidly, in circulation as well as in advertising revenues, often in double digits. At the same time, media in the West are experiencing dramatically shrinking readership amongst printed editions of newspapers and magazines. India is already the world's second largest user of the internet and on-line journalism and social media are growing exponentially, especially among young Indians.

Despite these successes, studies of the Indian media frequently show how most newspapers and television channels struggle to meet the professional requirements of reporting news with the analytical depth that a subject deserves, without bias or deliberate distortions. Also troubling is the consistent presence of a single, dominant narrative in the mainstream media on almost any issue of importance. The alarming trend towards media concentration in India and its

implications for democracy and ideological pluralism is also an unsettling aspect that needs consideration.

In the intersections of such accomplishments and challenges of the Indian media, lie spaces for interventions. This preconference focuses on these spaces. How can Indian media continue to function as the fourth estate for the world's largest democracy? How can problems of media accuracy be better quality controlled? What kind of regulatory framework, if any, is required to ensure media freedom/diversity and quality journalism? How can media help in transcending class bias and really embrace their role in reporting and discussing the problems of the country in a balanced way? What are ways in which Indian media can benefit from non-profit ownership? In what ways does the proliferation of the online news sites complement or challenge coverage of mainstream media and hold journalists accountable for their reporting? What role do diasporic Indian communities (estimated to be around 25 million in the world) play in the functioning of news media in India? Are there ways to involve competition, perhaps from foreign news agencies, to the benefit of current Indian media?

Invited keynote speakers feature scholars and practitioners with expertise in Indian media and democracy and professionals from Silicon Valley with interest in Indian media market and their take on media and democracy specifically due to San Diego's location.

Apart from the keynote address, and the topics covered in invited panels, the final session of the day will consist of informal concurrent roundtables around media and democracy in India - interactions, abrasions, collusions, and interventions. Submissions for participation in the pre-conference should include a brief biographical sketch (50 word) and a 200-word abstract that fit the theme and questions posed in this CFP. Organizers will identify areas of shared interest in submissions to organize breakout groups for the concurrent roundtable discussions. Scholars at all stages of their careers are encouraged to apply.

All proposals must be emailed to roys@sfasu.edu. The deadline for submissions is February 10, 2017. Submissions will be judged on relevance, originality, and fit with the preconference theme. Notifications of acceptance will be emailed by end of February 2017.

Cost of registration and attendance:

\$40 per person for ICA full members who are not students

\$25 per person for students

A limited number of fee waivers are available. To request a waiver, please include a statement of your specific need in your proposal.