

# The Fifth Estate

TOWARDS A DIGITAL PARADIGM

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SIMC

## Objective

The aim of the event is to create a space where students can interact with and gain insights into the industry through working industry professionals. In order to make the event one where both parties can engage in intellectual discussion, a theme is ideated by members of the Corporate Interface Team. This year, the theme was 'The Fifth Estate: Towards a Digital Paradigm'. The event was broken into two segments focusing on culture and law as entry points into the discussion of the 'digital paradigm'. While the Law seminar took place in the morning session, the Culture seminar took place in the afternoon.

## Thematic Overview

Journalism traditionally constitutes the fourth pillar of democracy. But, now it has witnessed a paradigm shift, where it has become the fifth estate, the voice of truth amplified by data and technology. SIMC has always been a pioneer in adapting to changes in the field of media and promoting newer and inventive ways of learning journalism and media in general. Hence, it becomes extremely crucial and relevant to engage in conversations surrounding the topic of digital media and its ongoing evolution.

## Session 1

### *Interrogating Truth: Law and Digital Journalism*

As students of journalism we recognize the necessity to equip aspiring journalists with a conceptual base about the relationship between journalism and law. Hence the seminar focused on RTI Amendments, access to information, and challenges in reporting



**Mr. Vakasha Sachdev** was the first speaker. He is the Associate Legal Editor at TheQuint and a political analyst. With an expertise in international tax and UK construction matters, Mr. Sachdev is also a dual-qualified lawyer in India, England and Wales.



Mr Niranjana Takle was the second speaker. While working as an investigative journalist with The Caravan, Mr. Takle captured headlines when he wrote a piece about the mysterious circumstances of Judge Loya's death. This was iconic in the history of journalism in India. He has previously worked for CNN-IBN and The Week. In 2008, he worked as the Bureau chief of Network 18 in Maharashtra.



The third speaker was Mr Anil Galgali, an RTI activist who has done remarkable work in exposing corruption and misuse of power by the government using Right To Information Act. He has also shared many tips on using RTI through videos on YouTube, making it accessible public knowledge for everyone.



The fourth speaker was Ms. Kritika A, a Lawyer who works at the Bombay Sessions Court. She has previously worked at The Leaflet and The Indian Express reporting extensively on legal affairs. She is also an alumnus of the revered Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

After the speaker sessions, the floor was open to the students to engage and interact with the speakers.



## Learning Outcomes

*“Interrogating Truth”*: Does Rule of Law Enable Free Press?

Written by Shraddha Tiwari, MAMC Journalism 2019-21

With the advent of newspapers in Germany, the concept of 'rule of law' has been hitherto the basis of thriving journalistic virtues. Rule of law, in the general parlance, means equality of law and adherence to procedure established by law. Journalism demands accountability, transparency and an accessible and independent judiciary for its sustenance. Speakers at “The Fifth Estate” noted that the rule of law advocates of these elements essentially. Moreover, “it allows you to set

up a printing press, a publishing house, allows you to set up a company to put things out in the digital world and it gives you safety from harm,” said Vakasha Sachdev, Associate Editor, Legal at the Quint. He further added, “Law is supposed to govern everything in our lives and so does journalism by telling what the government is doing and what injustices are happening around. So all of this is intrinsically tied up with the law.”

Sachdev asserted that in the contemporary clout, where journalistic virtue is implicated of personal biases, rule of law comes to the rescue. “It necessitates protecting viewpoints you don't like,” he stated. However, he also highlighted that certain legal provisions such as censorship, civil and criminal defamation, sedition and enactments such as Official Secrets Act primarily aid in restricting ethical journalistic practices.

Although, given the increase in number of law suits against journalists, legislation such as the Right to Information Act has empowered the citizenry. Sachdev noted that “It is a great example where laws are drafted in a way that grants people access to information. The kind of journalism done through RTI is absolutely incredible. It has changed the way government functions, which is a positive aspect of rule of law.”

Niranjan Takle, a seasoned journalist noted that “It is extremely difficult to access data, documents and information when the system doesn't want to give it to you.” The panelists agreed that procedural delays and whims of the Central Information Commissioner can hinder access to information. Anil Galgali, an RTI activist, suggests precaution while using RTI as a tool for information to avoid such obstacles. “What journalists or any activist is required to do for culling out information via RTI, is to be cautious and aware of the phraseology and writing,” he said. Galgali placed prominence upon documentary proof, asserting that it strengthens the veracity of journalistic writing.

## Session 2

### **Confluence: Reimagining Culture Journalism**

With the advent of digital media, and the growing popularity of influencers and bloggers, today, culture journalism is shaping reality, not just mirroring it. Journalism and culture share a symbiotic relationship, where journalism influences culture, but is also influenced by it in more ways than one. Between likes, shares, memes, and listicles, a new wave of culture journalism has arrived. The relationship between media and consumer has become more reciprocal and participatory

Confluence is the convergence of traditional idea of culture journalism embracing the internet and technological advances, and slowly but steadily, carving its own niche. Speaking of reimagining culture journalism, we focus on the ways - narratives of cultural journalism have transformed, evolved, and the challenges faced by the journalists today.



Ms Nikita Chawla is a freelance journalist and has worked as a travel correspondent at Mail Today. Her portfolio also includes names like Asiaville while she also has a youtube channel called 'Nikki's Mantras'. I request Ms Chawla to please take over the stage and address the gathering.



Mr Ajit Duar is celebrated film critic, scriptwriter and coveted faculty of film studies, Mr. Duara has an experience of over 3 decades in the world of cinema. An author with The Open Magazine, Mr. Duara is an alumnus of the Columbia University.



A Culture journalist with over 12 years of experience, Bhanuj Kappal has been writing on independent music, art and protest culture. Having worked Live Mint, Mr Kappal is the man who has numerous insights on the gully rap.



Founders of the travel blog 'Awaara Daiaries', the duo call themselves travelers, story tellers and digital entrepreneurs. Going by the tagline 'Those who wander, Discover', Parampara and Parichay intend to relive the love of travelling.

After the speaker sessions, the audience was given a chance to interact with the speakers.






## Learning Outcomes

### **The Impact of Digital Footprints: Reimagining Cultural Journalism**

Written by Saikeerthi, MAMC Journalism 2019-21

“The Fifth Estate: Towards a Digital Paradigm” sought to understand the shifting priorities and increased reliance on virtual reality and data and the major role it's played in structuring culture as we see it today. The age has seen the emergence of cultural journalism exploring previously unavailable platforms which have both been impacted by culture and in turn, have influenced it as well. It was this conflux that the panelists of the event pursued to address.

Users of the world wide web often place a large amount of power on one's filter bubbles. The danger and results of which limits them and ironically conforms them into a narrow space on a platform that was meant to widen their horizons. It is this reinforcement that has, over years



appealed to people by blurring the lines between virtual reality and reality. In this age of Journalism, with the yellow press on the rise and its ability to influence society, often plunge minds into confusion. This has given rise to a group of people that seek to "sway opinion", a group that calls themselves influencers. According to Nikita Chawla, a social influencer and image consultant, "the fourth and the fifth estate has become one".

To understand social media today, it is important to trace it back to its roots and observe how society has come to be increasingly dependent on it. Mass media revolutions over the years have carried with it ideas of liberation. There rose this need and availability of creative remuneration that first kickstarted the waves of social media through magazine articles, initiated by the printing press. "Another thing that printing press of course did was create a civil society", says Ajit Duara, a film critic. Its elevated impact on law and creation can be understood by tracing the evolution of technology in the printing press. "The typewriter was a great liberating instrument" and it helped the growth of individualistic writing, giving them freedom from the printing press. "If one looks at the future", Ajit Duara says, "how much smaller can it get? And how fast can it get?...that is technology". However, talking about how technical excellence has a limited reflection, he says, "no matter how fast you go or how small you do things...what does happen is that it hampers your thinking process."

Music Journalism, a growing field under culture journalism is still building its roots in India and according to Bhanuj Kappal, an independent culture journalist is still struggling to break free from conventional Bollywood music. "I don't think India has really ever had Musical Journalism, not entirely. What we have is entertainment journalism or celebrity journalism where you are talking about the artist, you are talking about the stars. We are not engaging with the music. The space for a deep critical engagement with the music, its lyrics...does not really exist and that has never really existed". The media industry in the age of likes, shares and follows, unfortunately, uses the space provided for music journalism as a promotional tool.

"We are products of the digital generation", says Parampara, one part of the duo that has set up their travel blog, Awara Diaries. The digital platform has provided them with the ability to independently write and establish their own identity as travelers. This has made the definition of being a "journalist" more inclusive as an increasing amount of people are using social media as a medium of expression. According to Parichay, co-founder of Awara Diaries, "citizen journalism has become cultural journalism". This golden age of media has placed an immense amount of responsibility on the content creators, a responsibility that can be both misused and empowering, keeping in mind the global reach of the digital media. Approaching the topic of availability of data, taking into consideration both the positive and negative aspects of it, does provide information and insights into people, helping content creators to understand their audience and produce tailored content.

Media has become an integral part of the cultural spectrum and to avoid its role would be ignorant. In the wake of this social media dependency, the second panel of "The Fifth Estate" brought forth the importance of acknowledging the direction of one's digital footprints and its impacts on their social and professional lives.

