



HINDU MEDIA FORUM

Truth is Supreme



MISSION STATEMENT

The aim of the Hindu Media Forum is to keep the world informed through honest reporting as well as unbiased analysis of the events taking place around the globe. To accomplish this goal, Hindu Media Forum will mobilize elements in the traditional as well as the emerging forms of media to come together on one platform.

INTRODUCTION

A satirical quote from the James Bond movie 'Tomorrow Never Dies' sets the tone of the new world order. In the movie, the power hungry villain Elliot Carver, who is a media mogul bent upon world domination, says "Caesar had his legions, Napoleon had his armies, I have my divisions: TV, news, magazines. And by midnight tonight, I'll have reached and influenced more people than anybody in the history of this planet, save God himself." Carver goes on to add, "Words are the new weapons, satellites are the new artillery." While meant as a satire, these lines have increasingly proven to be true since the power of the media is rapidly replacing military power as the most potent force on the global stage.

It is imperative that Hindu society understands this changing dynamic, and adapts itself accordingly to this new reality. It is already common wisdom that "He who controls the media, controls the mind of the people". An increasing number of people now believe that "He who controls information controls the world". This is supported by a careful analysis of the most powerful countries which reveals that in addition to their existing strengths, these countries have an almost unchallenged hold of the global media as well as the flow of information around the world.

While the Hindu community has established itself in many parts of the media, media institutions remain out of reach of many Hindus. In particular, important developments and issues concerning the Hindu society get neither proper coverage nor a just representation. This lack of coverage combined with the very small presence of voices advocating the interests of the Hindu community has led to the entrenchment of attitudes and mindsets that are at very least unsympathetic to Hindu interests, if not downright hostile. The active propagation of this adversarial mindset continues to have a detrimental impact on the Hindu society in several ways. The first way is that Hindus themselves act adverse to their own interests based upon the information presented by a compromised media. The second aspect is that forces hostile to Hindu society will gain in strength and credibility even within Hindu society, which will allow for the subversion of the Hindu community, leading to its decay and downfall.

In view of these alarming developments, the Hindu Media Forum will devise strategies to encourage those advocating the interests of Hindu society to establish them in the existing media framework besides penetrating the entrenched media institutions. The Hindu Media Forum will provide an avenue for established media personalities and others experienced in the dissemination of information to share their expertise and experience with aspiring journalists, reporters, filmmakers, and people who desire to work in all aspects of the media.



Shri Sushil Pandit

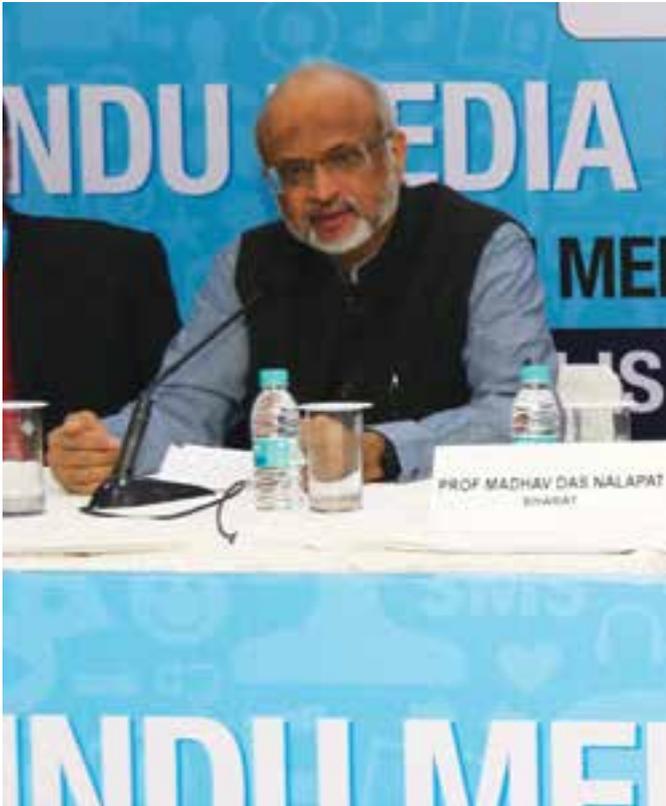
Coordinator, Hindu Media Conference, Bharat

Introductory Remarks

Shri Sushil Pandit set the ball rolling by focusing on three aspects of Hindu Media. First, the negative perception associated with the word 'Hindu' and its impact on media; second, an in-depth analysis on the reasons for this negative perception; and third, how such a perception can be changed so that the Hindu side of the story and media from the Hindu perspective can be brought into the mainstream. He stated how the nomenclature 'Hindu' gives rise to feelings of fear and doubt amongst Hindus themselves. His first anecdote was of a former PM of Bharat declaring that he was a Christian by education, a Muslim by culture and only a Hindu by accident. He also remembered how the low economic growth rates achieved by Bharat during

the Nehruvian Era were coined as the 'Hindu Rate of Growth' by Prof P.C. Mahalanobis. He stated that the problems we faced as a country - poverty, low economic growth rate, unemployment, malnutrition etc were wrongly attributed to 'Hindu'. According to him, we have internalized this misdirected inferiority complex leading to an auto phobia for anything Hindu. He said the challenge that Hindus in media need to resolve is how to cure this faulty perception and self loathing attached to it. He suggested that we need to relook the strongly ingrained prejudices that we have against ourselves. Today, entertainment forms the dominant part of media; therefore, we also need to understand the role of entertainment media on our collective psyche.





Professor Madhav Das Nalapat

UNESCO Peace Chair, Manipal University, Bharat

Introductory Remarks

Professor Madhav Das Nalapat emphasized the universality of Hindu Dharma. He compared the Hindu thought with the O blood group which is a universal donor. He said, "The way O blood group is accepted by people of all blood groups, similarly, Hindu Dharma has elements of universality which enable it to be accepted and move across effortlessly through diverse cultures." He asked the media why it was quick in spreading negative news and slow in spreading positive news. He gave an example of the different speeds by which a drop of ink versus milk dissolves in a glass of water. Milk stands for purity but takes more time to dissolve in water, whereas ink stands for impurity but dissolves very quickly. Prof Nalapat stated that the media needs to find ways of absorbing the positive news (milk) as quickly as negative news (ink).

Paramacharya Sadasivanathaswami

Hinduism Today, Hawaii, USA

Challenges to Hindu Perspective in the Contemporary Media Environment

Paramacharya Sadasivanathaswami said he was surprised to discover that Hindus living in one country were unaware of Hindus living in other countries, and the struggles faced by them. For example, Hindus residing in Fiji were unaware that Hindus were residing in Mauritius and vice versa. He found the same pattern of ignorance throughout South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Bharat, etc. He shared a few initiatives taken by his organisation with respect to Hindu Dharma: They provided a Dharmic perspective on the issue of cloning during



the 'Dolly' cloned sheep controversy; US medical association approached them for creating guidelines for medical treatment of people from Hindu Dharma; they created and published a compilation of Hindu festivals to present an overview of Hindu Dharma to the people of Europe and Americas.



Shri Umesh Upadhyay

President News, CNN IBN Network 18, Bharat

Bharatiya Media and Entrenched Prejudice Against Anything Hindu

Shri Umesh Upadhyay said that he had never heard of the word 'Hindu Media' in his 25 years of journalism and mentioned the reactions of various media professionals to the concept of 'Hindu Media'. He stated that he had expected a religious congregation but was pleased to see the participation of well-known professionals. He emphasized on the 'neutrality of media in Bharat' and stated that media presents things as they are without being coloured by considerations of race, religion, caste, creed etc. Professor Nalapat in response to Shri Upadhyay commented that 'neutrality of media' is a desirable ideal; however, the mainstream media in Bharat does not practice it in reality. According to Professor Nalapat, there seems to be a blind spot with regards to atrocities against certain communities such as the

persecution of Kashmiri Pandits. On the other hand, excessive attention is given to atrocities against some other communities such as the Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar.

Shri Lokesh Maharaj

Jaagriti Radio and TV, Trinidad & Tobago

Caribbean Media and Hindu Narrative

Shri Lokesh Maharaj mentioned how the only outlet for his Hindu forefathers in Trinidad & Tobago were meetings where they all would recite holy texts. According to him, discrimination against Hindus has been prevalent in Trinidad & Tobago since a long time. He quoted examples of absence of Hindu prayers in schools and absence of Hindu themed radio stations, even though Trinidad and Tobago has a sizeable Hindu population. Hindus had to resort to legal activism to make their voice heard. He spoke about the launch of 'Jagriti', a radio station for Hindus and how it had already achieved 8% market share in a short period of



time. He emphasized that media is not just entertainment. According to him, media is about educating, about having a voice, influencing laws, fighting discrimination and promoting unity amongst Hindus.



Shri Kiran Ramsahaye

Editor, *Le Matinal*, Mauritius

The Hindu Response - Strategy and Tactics

Shri Kiran Ramsahaye informed the gathering that 68% of the citizens of Mauritius have ancestors from Bharat, and 50% are Hindus. He stated that despite such big numbers, Hindus face discrimination in everyday life. He quoted the example of the precondition of being a Christian to get a job with Mauritian administration. His main point was that Hindus should not be apologetic about being Hindus. He said, "Hindu Dharma is not a religion, it is about Righteous Living. And, when we talk of Hindu media, we don't talk about saffronisation. However, in trying to be secular we must not undermine being Hindus." He spoke from an outsider's perspective on how media functions in Bharat when it comes to Hindu issues and added with a note of disappointment, "It was very unfortunate to see namesake Hindus in media of Bharat themselves undermining larger Hindu interests".





Chairperson: Shri Amit Khanna

Filmmaker, Ex Chairman Reliance Entertainment, Bharat
Introductory Remarks

Shri Amit Khanna spoke about the sudden evolution of technology in media: from a 'knowledge economy' to an 'attention economy' culminating in the present 'engagement economy'. According to him, the present era of media is an 'engagement economy' and success will come to the one who monetizes 'attention'. He stated that machine to machine communication is the future of communication and that it will change the landscape of how media functions. He observed that Shri Narendra Modi had risen with such force to become the Prime Minister as he had the ability to foresee changes in how the world communicates and prepared well for it. With regard to the 'Main Stream Media' bias against Hindus, he mentioned how 90% youth don't read newspapers and their primary source of news is internet. He also talked about the positive impact of technology on media

and added that "technology has brought about democracy and a level playing field in media".

Shri Sandip Tarkas

MD and President, Consumer Insight Future Media,
 Mumbai, Bharat

Emerging Media Consumer

Shri Sandip Tarkas, in his talk, made three observations about the present media industry: a highly fragmented audience, intermediaries from media disappearing and self-expression being the new form of content. He stated how everyone is a media owner now, and how the user is highly opinionated, impatient and loud. To better define the present situation he quoted the novelist William Gibson "The future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed." He also spoke about the power of propaganda. He quoted an example of how Chinese soldiers were depicted as Indian soldiers and how it created a big controversy about Indian soldiers being used as human bridges. He also mentioned how Ebola virus which has minimal impact in India is getting so much coverage, whereas 'Azad Maidan Riots' were relegated to the background.





Shri Anant Roongta

Promoter, Famous Studios, Mumbai, Bharat

Evolution of Technology and the Birth of New Media

Shri Anant Roongta observed how the cinema industry had evolved over the years and how the industry's evolution was largely driven by changes in technology. He stated that 40% of the world's population was now on the internet. He outlined the importance and impact of the internet and related technology on Cinema. Talking about the positive impact of technology on media, he stated that the cost of equipment used in cinema is quite low in the present scenario. According to him, this low cost provides greater opportunities to a wider group of people including Hindus to produce cinema with meaningful content. He also mentioned the potential of Bharat with its exotic locations to be promoted as a film shooting destination. However, he saw two major roadblocks in utilizing this potential: the first being red tape defining bureaucracy in Bharat, and the second being shortage of skilled manpower.

Shri Shrikant Shastri

Co-Founder and CEO, Crayon Data, Bharat

Making Sense of Data

Shri Srikant Sastri focused on the challenges that technology is posing for the media, and what can be done to meet these challenges. He stated that in the near future there is going to be a deluge of data leading to an overwhelming data overload. He emphasized that if technology is used correctly, it can be positively utilized to connect the world Hindu community. He outlined the problem of multiplicity of choices as one of the primary examples of data overload. He explained how a simple search for the word 'Hindu' on Google gives us 65 lakh results. These many results lead to confusion in the minds of people and an inability to get direct or relevant information. Thus, according to him, the solutions for the challenges propped up by technology, also lie in the domain of technology.





Chairperson: Kaveree Bamzai

Editor-at-Large, India Today Group, Bharat

Introductory Remarks

Kaveree Bamzai explained the reach of social media and its ability to influence opinions in Bharat. She mentioned that Bharat has 100 million FB users, 18 million twitter users and 900 million telephone/mobile users. She stated how BJP understood this and used its “army of influencers” really well, while the “Congress steered clear of social media and the voters steered clear of Congress”.

Neena Rai

Formerly Khaleej Times & BJP media cell, Bharat

Twitter - How Do You Get Your Followers

Neena Rai said that a ‘critical mass’ of followers is needed to have a voice and an impact. She explained that: No Followers = No Presence; No Presence = No Voice; No Voice = No Story. She said social media became so popular because the youth and the Hindus were flustered with mainstream media (MSM) and felt that MSM had failed them. Twitter was a great medium for them to vent their angst against certain news traders and the Congress Government. Most of these people were doing well in their careers but were concerned about their country. She emphasized the need for Hindus to be on twitter so that they could have ‘their own’ voice. If the Hindus were not going to do the job themselves, channels like Al Jazeera and countless



other Western channels are at liberty to project them as they pleased, which is not favorable majority of the times. She said it was we who are failing our brothers and sisters in Pakistan and Bangladesh.



Vikas Pandey

BJP Social Media cell, Bharat

Facebook-Battling for your point of view

Vikas Pandey explained his journey of 10 years in the world of social media and how he was among the first ones to create pro BJP and Hindu platforms on social media. His focus was about the need to create social media platforms for Hindus and a support system that funds these platforms and provides training and mentoring to volunteers. He also spoke on the challenges while doing the same. He quoted the low visibility and presence of Hindus on social media in spite of their large population and availability of rich content. He quoted the example of Facebook, where a keyword search for 'Hinduism' brought him 7 lakh results compared to a keyword search for 'Islam' which brought him a massive 5 crore results. He mentioned how he was running various Facebook pages with a combined

reach of over a crore people and yet had shortage of relevant and adequate 'Hindu' content. He spoke about various limitations related to sharing content and finding content. He also rued the sorry state of affairs that arose due to a scarcity of social media volunteers. He explained that many volunteers who he trained and who had worked with him for last few years, slowly faded away once they had a job or got married.

Sandeep Balakrishna

Columnist and Author, Bharat

Blog – The New Equalizer

Sandeep Balakrishna's talk revolved around the use of Blogs in spreading issues important to Hindus. He stated that blogging was truly revolutionary when it started as it had elements of passion, independence, and was an outlet for opinions of people who had no say in the mainstream media. He mentioned how the media hypocrisy during Ram Janambhoomi verdict and distortions of 2002 Gujarat Riots and 2012 Assam Riots were brought forth by popular blogs. In the final part of his talk, Sandeep enumerated the lessons that he learnt over many years of blogging: Adhere to facts and do detailed research before blogging; always write from a position of strength; don't be hesitant to call out a bluff made in public; and try to respond to every comment.





Rahul Chandra Sharma

Program Director, World Hindu News, USA

World Hindu News – Building a new paradigm in Hindu news media

Rahul Chandra focused on the need to develop alternate media development platforms. He stated that one of the biggest challenges for Hindu society is to fight the faulty perception that is continuously built around Hindus, Hindu symbols and Hindu organisations. In his analysis, Rahul Chandra gave two primary reasons for this faulty perception. First, media houses are run by editorial boards who serve their own ideological purposes, whether they are Christian, Jew or Muslim. Second, even where the editorial boards are run by Hindus, most of them are sold to Abrahamic religions. He also mentioned the propaganda against Hindu concepts such as 'Karva Chauth' being depicted as anti-women, 'Shivratri' being depicted as wastage of milk and the likes of Wendy Doniger questioning the authority of Hindu scriptures. He saw the solution in developing alternate Hindu media that is run by "Veteran and enlightened Hindus". He emphasized the need to train Hindu media persons from a Hindu perspective. He explained how 'World Hindu News' was an effort in the same direction.





Shri Sushil Pandit

Coordinator, Hindu Media Conference, Bharat

Shri Sushil Pandit said that the media landscape has been dramatically impacted by the advent of the internet. The rise of digital media has forced even traditional media like print & TV to look at new revenue models and opportunities for collaboration.

Shreekant Khandekar

Editor and CEO, Agency FAQs

The Future of Media Business

Shri Shreekant Khandekar spoke how the ability to distribute content was becoming equally important to creation of content, and herein lay the importance of technology. To support this theory he cited the example of Google. Most of Google's revenue is from advertisements and its competency lies in pointing you to the right content instead of creating its own content. He defined the difference between internet business and all other media business. Since all content is available on the internet, it has become the sum total of all media. The challenge, according to him, is about the choice between monetizing the content or monetizing the audience. This choice needed to be factored because ad rates have been falling every year and a sole ad support model does not work. For the future of media business he said that sub cultures should be allowed to thrive, and media companies should create communities/platforms and monetise them.





Shri R.R. Gopaljee

Associate Editor, Dinamalar, Tamil Nadu, Bharat
Changing Phase of Newspaper Economy

Shri Gopaljee spoke about the challenges faced by print media industry sector in today's media environment, dominated by technology. He spoke about how sources of news have dramatically changed over the years, having a direct and proportional impact on staffing decisions and revenue models of print industry, which were further impacted by the presence of the wage board and the decisions taken by them. He said that due to the proliferation of e-commerce sites, and a large chunk of business now being executed online, the budget spent on ads by commercial retailers in the print industry has significantly gone down. The inability of youth to be able to write and read in their native tongue while being fluent in speaking, was another big reason for the failure of vernacular

language newspapers. Also, the target segment for a vernacular newspaper is often fragmented and scattered, which leads to distribution challenges. When it came to opportunities in collaboration, Shri Gopaljee gave examples of how the price wars in North Bharat caused damage to the print media industry.

Shri Jwalant Swaroop

Ex-COO, Lokmat Group of Newspapers, Bharat
Traditional Media and Global Consumer

Shri Swaroop said that as a market, the metros were no longer exciting for traditional media because of over saturation and the shift towards new media. However, even with the threat of new media, he opined that traditional media still has many years to flourish. Rural, semi urban and small towns, over the last few years have seen a real estate boom. The new crop of housing colonies in these areas has naturally created growth for traditional media. He observed that the new age consumer is not only a silent receiver of information but also an active participant and co-creator of experience. According to him, the new age consumer in rural areas was also outsmarting the urban consumer in mobile growth. He suggested that the over

dependence of traditional media on advertising needed to end and that they needed to source new revenue streams. There was an obvious benefit in collaborating, but sadly the intent was missing.





Major Ravi

Film Director, Bharat

Right Balance Between Entertainment and Values

Major Ravi described the power of cinema as a medium to ignite patriotism in the youth. He explained how the primary theme of all his films is patriotism, and how he uses films to create a 'Hindu Spirit' and *Sanskriti* that inculcates values of inclusiveness and tolerance as well as those of courage and sacrifice. He gave the example of one of his movies where he depicted these values from the point of view of the soldier. Major Ravi said that critical aspects affecting the country are usually overlooked by the media. Using his own personal history as an example, he described how there was a massive coverage in media of the commando operation against the LTTE assassins. However, the questions raised by him, as leader of the commando operation assigned to catch the

assassins of the late Prime Minister of Bharat, late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, regarding the unexplained delay caused by the political masters in giving the go ahead to ambush the killers were never highlighted.

Ms. Sukanya Ramesh

Film Actress, Bharat

Depiction of Women in Entertainment Media and its Societal Impact

Ms. Sukanya Ramesh pointed out the dichotomy that while Bharat makes the highest number of films in the world, yet only a few films are sensitive to the sentiments of the pre-dominant Hindu society. She spoke about the changing roles of women in cinema of Bharat over the years. Initially women entered into films for artistic expression and social issues guided by values of courage, self respect and dignity. In the 60s, 70s and 80s there was a strong Western influence in the style of dance, and lyrics started to project women as seductive creatures. All these factors tend to have a negative impact on young minds and the collective psyche of society. Patriarchy, under-representation and vulnerability of women are the reasons for women



being projected in a negative manner in the media. To bring about changes in this mindset, it is first important for men to change and allow women to make their own minds.



Shri Priyadarshan

Film Maker, Bharat

Repositioning Cinema to Build Our Future Society

Shri Priyadarshan's talk revolved around the need to stop blatant Westernization of our cinema. He compared the high growth rate of Bollywood as being synonymous with 'cancerous tumour' because it was influenced by Western concepts and driven by cheap entertainment. He opined that if we can rename 'Bombay' to 'Mumbai', 'Calcutta' to 'Kolkata' and 'Madras' to 'Chennai', then what stops us from changing 'Bollywood' to a more native name. He stated that Hindu literature such as The Ramayana and The Mahabharata have deeper plots and scripts compared to scripts like those of the Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter. He expressed his desire to see films influenced by the themes of these great Hindu classics. He said, "Hindu Dharma is our strength and cinema

should go forward through such themes." Shri Priyadarshan emphasized the importance of unity in our country and that cinema should work towards the goal of unity in diversity. In this regard he stated that youngsters' exposure to media was primarily in the form of cinema, and thus cinema needs to project the right kind of Hindu values. Many film makers over emphasized the negative aspects of Hindu society like poverty being excessively highlighted by our filmmakers in the Western world. He mentioned that this fad needed to change and that educational films based on Hindu Dharma needed to be introduced. In the last part of his talk he spoke about the problems being faced by the cinema of Bharat. He put special emphasis on the problem of taxation. According to him taxation is anti-innovation and works as an entry barrier. He also spoke about problems faced from the censor board, and opined that most rules of censor board were against creativity.





Moderator: Shri Sushil Pandit

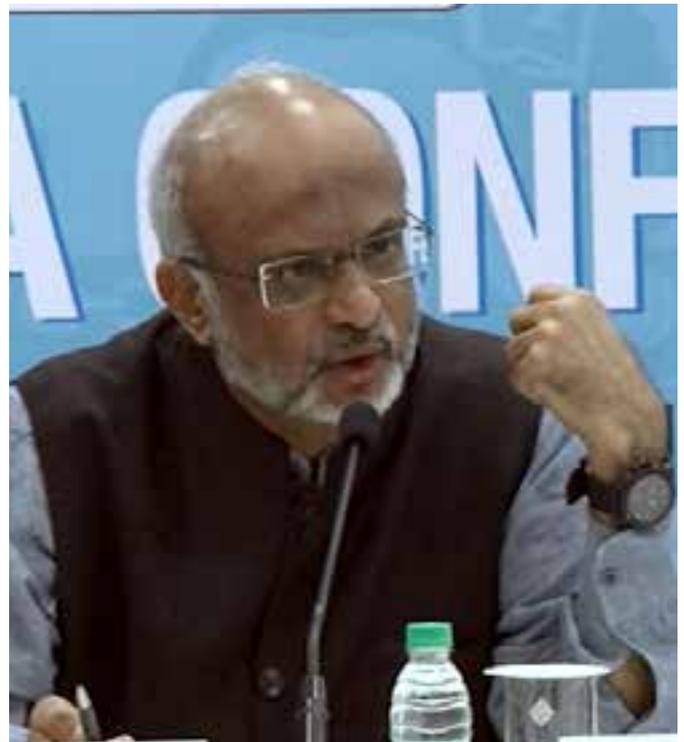
Coordinator, Hindu Media Conference, Bharat

In the final session, Shri Pandit invited the chairpersons from all the earlier sessions to provide their summary view.

Professor Madhav Das Nalapat

UNESCO Peace Chair, Manipal University, Bharat

Prof. Nalapat said that the media in Bharat and globally has for some reason decided to suppress coverage of oppression faced by one set of people – such as Kashmiri Pandits, or minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh. This should change and the media should be concerned equally with issues faced by all sections of the global community. He said that Hindus need to develop confidence and look at things from a fresh perspective. Despite centuries of foreign rule, we never lost our core values, and this perseverance was highlighted by speakers in the first session. He re-iterated that Hindu values are universal, and it is the responsibility of media and the Hindu community to defend and celebrate this 'Hinduness' because Hindus can fit into any society without harming the host society.





Shri Amit Khanna

Filmmaker, Ex-Chairman Reliance Entertainment, Bharat

Shri Khanna provided a summary of the two aspects discussed in the second session – technology and digital media consumer. He said that people still regard themselves as technology-agnostic, without realizing how connected we all are and how pervasive media and technology have become. The huge amount of digital data being generated today has given rise to the concept of ‘big data’, and is driving us towards Web 3.0 i.e. Internet of Things, which will have a profound impact on our lives. He said that we will soon have a generation of digital natives (people who have grown up in the internet age), and we should adapt to this new paradigm to be effective interlocutors in society, politics, and religion, rather than dwell too much on the past. Prof. Nalapat added that

poor broadband infrastructure and colonial era laws were two major impediments to growth of digital platform in Bharat.

Kaveree Bamzai

Editor-at-Large, India Today Group, Bharat

Kaveree Bamzai said that social media has enabled people to create an alternative discourse, bypassing the monopoly of ‘mainstream media’. It is clear that people with domain expertise will garner followers, irrespective of the platform, and she urged the social media pioneers to mentor other youngsters to maintain their high standards of research and fact-checking. Creating networks is very important as well to propagate your message. She expressed her hope that the energy which has been created through social media would continue to be harnessed for a good cause.





Shri Sushil Pandit

Coordinator, Hindu Media Conference, Bharat

Shri Sushil Pandit said that one of the take-aways from the fourth session was the way print media is being squeezed by both electronic and digital media. He traced the problems of print to the price wars and predatory circulation techniques, which led to over-dependence on advertising. This has created entry barriers as no new newspaper can enter the market unless it has money to burn. He stated that media is no longer a passive mirror reflecting society, but an active player which runs with a business agenda. Along with content, evolving better delivery mechanisms leveraging technology is crucial.

He summarized the fifth session on entertainment media by recapping Major Ravi's inspirational talk on creating films rooted in his personal values of

patriotism and life as a soldier, Ms. Sukanya Ramesh's presentation on how women need to resist the pressure to conform in order to create content which is wholesome and value-driven, and Shri Priyadarshan's clarion call for mass media producers to reflect Hindu ethos.

