

Proceedings of the 'Workshop on Parliament and Media'

held on Friday, the 6th November, 2009 in the Main

Committee Room, Parliament House Annexe.

श्री उर्मिलेश : मि० दामोदरन शुरू करें, इससे पहले मैं एक दुखद् सूचना देना चाहूंगा। देश के जाने-माने पत्रकार इंडियन एक्सप्रेस ग्रुप के मशहूर हिन्दी अखबार "जनसत्ता" के सम्पादक, भूतपूर्व सम्पादक, कोलमिनिस्ट प्रभाष जोशी का आज रात देहांत हो गया। हम सब के लिए, मीडिया बिरादरी के लिए और पूरे देश के लिए समाज के जितने तबके हैं, उन सबके लिए यह एक सदमे की बात है, दुख की बात है। तो इस गोष्ठी की शुरुआत से पहले मैं चाहूंगा कि हम उनके सम्मान में एक मिनट खड़े होकर श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित करें। (तत्पश्चात उपस्थित महानुभावों ने एक मिनट का मौन रखा) अब मैं चाहूंगा कि राज्य सभा सचिवालय की तरफ से हमारे वक्ता मि० दामोदरन को फूलों का गुलदस्ता देकर स्वागत किया जाए। (Bouquet was then presented to Shri M. Damodaran) इससे पहले कि मि० दामोदरन आपसे पार्लियामेंट, मीडिया और मार्केट जैसे विचारोत्तेजक विषयों पर अपनी बात कहें, मैं चाहूंगा कि मि० गोपालकृष्णन, हमारे ऑनरेबल स्पीकर को इंटरोड्यूज करेंगे।

SHRI P. GOPALAKRISHNAN: Before I introduce Mr. Damodaran, I would request my colleague to hand over a bouquet to our distinguished guest, Dr. M. S. Swaminathan.

(Bouquet was then presented to Dr. M.S. Swaminathan)

SHRI P. GOPALAKRISHNAN: Friends, Mr. Damodaran does not need any introduction to any of you because he has become quite famous as the Chairman of the SEBI. He is one of the distinguished civil servants we had in our fraternity. He was earlier Chief Secretary in Tripura. He was also the Chairman of the UTI, IDBI before he took over as Chairman, SEBI. During his period in SEBI, he had brought out a number of reforms and modifications in our market system. We are privileged to have him with us to talk on the subject of 'Parliament, Media and Markets'. I would now request Mr. Damodaran to kindly give his words. Thank you.

SHRI M. DAMODARAN: Mr. Urmilesh, Mr. Gopalakrishnan, Dr. Swaminathan, friends, it is an extraordinary privilege being here to speak to you on a subject that I could not make much out of myself when I was asked to speak because attempting to speak about Parliament, Media and Markets in the course of one lecture is to attempt to establish relationships among three different subjects that might not seem related and yet have some kind of relationship that needs to be explained in a short while. But, I think, it is a single privilege to be here because those of you that cover Parliament, those of you that are in the area of politics without being in the arena of politics are the persons through whose eyes the people of the largest democracy of the world gets to see that democracy in action. Therefore, I think, there is a huge privilege that you enjoy commensurate, of course, with the huge sense of responsibility. So, to come here and share some thoughts with an audience like this is clearly a privilege for someone like me who has been in this room as a member of the audience on several occasions, who has come to this building to give evidence before Parliamentary Committees and emerged reasonably unscathed, I would like to imagine, who has had some idea of what happens within Parliament after long years in the Government service but who is not as well equipped to understand what happens here as those of you do who day in

and day out watch our elected representatives do what they do to represent us by coming here, asking questions, responding to questions, making statements, participating in debates, enacting legislations and all that. Two-three things that I thought I needed to state upfront. One is that some of what I will share with you is from the perspective of someone who reads, and this I say with the great pride, ten newspapers every morning before stepping out of his house. I can't claim to read them that from cover to cover. I cannot say that from the mast head right up to the sign off on the last page, I read every word; I don't do that. But I read it reasonably seriously to take in various shades of opinion, various facts that are presented. What I am left with everyday after I go through this exercise is something that I thought I need to share with you, taking advantage of this unique opportunity that I have. Let me start with something that was told to me many years ago when I was a college student. A distinguished editor of a newspaper came to our college to address us. After his address he was having a cup of tea with us. I made bold to mention to him and said, 'Sir, your paper is a little dull compared to the other papers that we get in the city.' I will not be specific about the name of city and paper, because I have no intention of embarrassing or praising anyone at this point in time. And he asked me, 'Why?' I told him that there were no opinions expressed in his paper. I said, 'You give your facts in a very objective way. And it is true because facts have an objectivity around them. But there are no opinions expressed in your newspaper.' He said, 'That is deliberate and it is our policy. We have enlightened readers of our newspapers and we don't wish to insult them.' This was my first understanding of what the media is like. He said, 'We don't wish to insult them by passing off our opinions as facts as some other newspapers might be doing.' It was much later that I learned and I regret to say this to this audience but this needs to be said. It was much later that I learned that over time the evolution in the media has been such that large sections of the media -- and I might lose

friends as I say this, but it bears saying -- seem to believe that fact is free and opinion is sacred. I think somewhere along the way the power that resides in this profession seems to have found expression in a manner not consistent with the interests of those that pay a reasonable amount of money to read those newspapers. From the time Edmund Burke looked up at the reporters' gallery and said 'there sits the Fourth Estate,' I think the Press has had occasions to recognise the power, and more often than not, let it also be said, recognise the responsibility that goes with the power. But it is the occasional stepping out of line. It is a situation when business interests drive content that one tends to worry as a reader of a newspaper. Let me get straightaway to the present. I do not want to trouble you too much with the past because that had gone, except to say what a distinguished journalist from another generation once said in his time, and it has got much worse since then. He said, 'What we are getting to read these days are not editorials but proprietorials.' In some sense, he was maybe a little ahead of his time because that I think is what we are seeing more often today rather than what we saw in the past.

All of you, I am sure, know this. Many years ago, a distinguished editor of a paper in the country said that he had the second most difficult job in the country, first, of course, being the Prime Minister's job. And shortly after that, for the pain of making that statement, he was sacked. That paper ran for quite some time without an editor as if to say that an editor was a dispensable commodity in a paper having a large circulation.

I think these are some of the occasions when we find the conscious shift taking place from 'news as news' to 'news as commodity.' We recognise that news has got commoditised over time. There is recognition and it was expressed recently in a seminar in which I took part. One gentleman from the audience said, 'Most of what I get to see in the newspaper is advertisement and not news.' I have no

quarrel with that and I must say that because at the end of the day it is the business proposition. Papers have to be brought out day after day. I have no quarrel with the fact as an individual that some of the news items tend to be driven largely by flights of fancy rather than by fact. This is one occupation where every day rain or shine or hell or high water you have to bring out the paper. If you don't get news, I suppose you have to get at something that looks like news and put it out there because newspapers like nature abhor vacuum. You cannot have blank spaces. The exception was when you protested against emergency. You cannot do that day after day saying that there is not enough news so you left the space blank. You cannot do that.

There is a responsibility to bring out news. But it is not in that context that I thought I would share some thoughts with you. All of you recognise that this has been one of the fastest growing industries. There are far more newspapers today than we thought we would see. Certainly, as I was growing up I did not expect to see, whether in the English language or in any other language, as many newspapers as there are today.

There are papers being published for all manner of reasons. To start with, you get papers and get published for disseminating news which is what we thought was the original reason why newspapers got published. And now there are newspapers that get published because people that own them want to see themselves written about. I posed this question to a gentleman who runs a language newspaper. Once I said, 'I believe your paper is making losses on a continuing basis. Why are you throwing good money after that? Why don't you give this up?' Good friend of mine, sometime Member of Parliament, he said, 'You are innocent. Don't you realise that if I don't own a newspaper my photo will never get published on a daily basis. This is the only paper where I can get published on

a daily basis.' So newspapers as command performances have also happened in this place.

But the immediate worry that I have is something else. That is with the business of commoditisation of news having gained ground. What we are today seeing is newspapers in which I don't know whether I am reading is news, or, I am reading an advertisement that masquerades as news, or, I am reading something that is agenda driven passed off to an unsuspecting audience as the gospel truth. That is really my worry. There is something called truth in labelling. If it is labelled correctly, if I know that what I am reading is an advertisement, I am comfortable reading advertisements. If I know what I am reading is news I am comfortable reading that. But my discomfort stems from the fact that if I am reading something that seems to look like news but it is a paid advertisement masquerading as news, I have a problem with that. And that gets worse when there are business interests that arise out of positions taken in the market by people that significantly own newspapers and when they drive that.

Let me give you an example of that which I have personally experienced. Some years ago I was Chairman of the Unit Trust of India. Some of you who follow markets might know that the UTI along with the LIC and the General Insurance Corporation, these three taken together, had the largest shareholding in a company called the ITC. The shareholding of these three taken together was two or three per cent, if my memory serves me right, more than the next largest shareholder which was a foreign tobacco company. Therefore, for long years, not just in the market but even in Parliament, there have been debates who should control this business. This matter figured in Parliament questions off and on maybe 30 years or so. The questions were like what is the FDI provision on this; if the FDI allows it, should there be other hurdles erected towards increased acquisition of shareholding in this company by foreign investors; and things of that kind. I saw in

a newspaper one morning when I was Chairman of the UTI that I had authorised the shareholding of the UTI in that company to be sold to that foreign tobacco company. It was a very detailed article on page one. It said that I had gone to London and I had discussions with the senior management of that company that was intending to acquire all those shares and that a deal was about to be done. And all that while, I had not been to London, I had not known as to who runs that company, I had not met any of them nor was there any intention then or even now, at this point of time, long years later, to sell that stock. But, immediately, after that came out on that day, in the market, the share of ITC moved significantly. Some people must have bought. Some people must have sold. But, clearly that news item had driven prices in a certain manner. We denied that. The denial was carried, as all of you know. You know better than we do. The breaking news was on page 1. The denial was tucked away where only research scholars and people who have lot of time and can research papers, can find it. We found out where the denial was tucked away. We found the denial all right because we were looking for it. I am sure, most of the readers didn't find it. We were looking for it, having sent out a denial. Therefore, we found it. But, curiosity prompted me to find out who had been buying shares in the market on the day the story came out. Three months later, a similar story came out which said that we had appointed merchant bankers who had come and discussed with me. The gentleman from an agency that does investment banking had come to give me an invitation to the marriage of his daughter and we discussed an ongoing cricket match at that point of time and then, he left. But as he left my office, he ran into somebody from the press who thought it appropriate to write a story next day saying that we had handed over the mandate to the investment banker to find a market for our shareholding. That day too, the shares moved significantly. And my research showed that significant acquisition of shares on those two occasions were made by a broking firm acting on its own behalf and

acting on behalf of some clients. And that broking firm had a commonality of ownership with the newspaper that published that report. I then went to my distinguished predecessor, the Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India and told him that there ought to be something that he should do to see that people did not use significant shareholding power in newspapers to move stock prices which then, they would acquire on the basis of what might come in the newspapers. He told me correctly that it was not his job to regulate newspapers. He said that he was the regulator of the securities market and not of the newspapers. He and his predecessor had both said that there should be some kind of a code of conduct for the media dealing with markets and in ensuring that people who wrote about markets, who spoke about markets and who commented on markets, had some internal discipline within their organisations to see that they did not use their positions to push up their own bank balances via the stock markets, to put it very bluntly. The first attempt to get the media to have a code of conduct failed because people in the media who were present at that meeting mentioned that they would themselves come up with a code of conduct. Later, another attempt was made by my predecessor and he said if you gentlemen and ladies are busy in writing out the code of conduct, we will give you a draft and please work on that draft and see whether that meets your requirement. So, SEBI prepared a draft code of conduct for people in the media who deal with markets and that code of conduct remains a draft because there was no feedback from those who were intended to work on it and finalise the draft. In all my private conversations with owners of both the newspapers as well as television networks, I am told that there are internal guidelines which regulate the conduct of these people. Some of you might recall that some time ago, in all seriousness and not in a jest, I had mentioned in a newspaper interview, and that keeps coming back to me again and again, that the word 'anchor investor' was beginning to acquire a new meaning as anchors

becoming active investors in the market. I had not named anyone. But, I had, at least, 200 people writing to me thereafter. I am happy to say that 190 of them, if I remember right, said that it was long overdue and you needed to say this some time or the other and the other ten asked me whether I had a particular individual in my mind when I said that. Of course, I did not respond to those mails obviously. But, interestingly, there were two television anchors who wrote to me saying, "I don't think you have any business to blame us because we don't do this." But, I hadn't, for God's sake, named anybody. Whether there was a sense of guilt that was shaping the subsequent conduct of those individuals, when they wrote to me saying, "You don't have any business to blame us." The point I am trying to make is simply this that there are people who invest in markets within India and outside on the basis of information that is in the public domain. The two major problems that market economies as well as our own lives face and need to get addressed are conflict of interest and asymmetry of information. If we can reasonably address conflict of interest and asymmetry of information both in our life and our work, we would have made significant progress. Asymmetry of information will never get addressed if there are people who can manipulate information in a manner that they take advantage of because they tend to mislead others who are in the same market competing for the same goods on the basis of what they believe to be correct information. And, I think this is where the importance of media, especially in market related matters, comes. The market is sensitive to what appears in the media. To use the expression of lawyers, what is expressly stated or what follows by necessary implication, if that sensitivity is not recognised by those who comment on markets, then, clearly, you have a problem where the average relatively uninformed common investor that you seek to bring to your markets to give the markets the depth and variety that it needs, that kind of a person is going to get relatively disadvantaged on a continuing basis and then, shy away from your markets and

there will be no market as we go forward because only those who are privy to information or those who create information in order to get benefit by the information will exist in the market. I think that is a problem which people like you in responsible positions need to address when you talk to your younger colleagues who cover markets. Today, another thing has happened in the media if you look at what happened several years ago and what is happening now. I remember when I was a student and I was growing up, if you took a newspaper and went through it, the beelines in the newspaper were, at best, two or three. Today, anyone who enters your profession, gets a beeline almost immediately after he or she is in the profession when they are way behind the years and when that over-powering sense of having arrived in a profession that is extremely powerful tends to dominate them and before the maturity that this profession needs catches up with them. And, this is particularly important when it comes to market. Let me give you one more example. I was some years ago Deputy Director General in Doordarshan. We recruited a bunch of news correspondents. For the first time in the history of the organisation, there was a recruitment of news correspondents. After they were recruited and trained, they were sent out to various Ministries which they covered like many of you have done in your career. Two months after that, somebody who was covering the Ministry of Urban Development came to me and asked me what kind of accommodation do I live in. I mentioned that I was living in a modest Government accommodation. That person had the temerity to say to me, "I get to see the Minister every day. Do you want me to put in a word for a better house for you?"

SHRI M. DAMODRAN (CONTD.): That is how power goes to the heads of young people, and I think, you people who have been around in the profession for some years collectively owe it to your profession; you owe it to people like us who read newspapers day-in-and-day-out the truth. One last thought and then I am done.

When we talk in terms of Parliament and Media with some kind of relation to the market, let me tell you my own experience of having come here four days continuously to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on what happened in the Unit Trust of India. Luckily before I joined there, I only went there to pick up the pieces in a sense as many of us know there was a Joint Parliamentary Committee that was set up to look at what went wrong with the markets and, specifically, it was asked to look at what went wrong in the UTI. I came here and for four days, from morning till evening, I was giving evidence before the Committee. To the credit of the Members of the Committee, and the Chairman, they asked tough, probing questions, but they were always civil. They were never asking questions in a manner that was intended to intimidate, but they clearly wanted to get to the truth of the matter. And the reason why I am saying this is that outside there might be a perception that Committees of Parliament don't do what they are asked to do, but my experience was quite positive even though I had to answer questions that I was, at that time, not equipped to handle. The reason why I am mentioning this is that the next day, I read in the newspapers that I had been grilled by the Parliamentary Committee! I mean, if you had read that, you could have got the impression that I had either lost my job or was about to lose my job. It was said by somebody who was not present in the room obviously when all of that happened. I know what "grilled" means. "Grilled fish" is my favourite dish on any menu! So, I know what "grilled" means. I don't know what happened, but I know I wasn't grilled in that Committee!

Let me share one other thought with you and then I am done. It might not have anything to do with the markets, but, I think, this is an opportunity that I am not going to get every other day. So, I might, as well, mention this to you. Long years ago, I used to be the Chief Secretary of Tripura, and one of the things we had during that time was a police strike by the Non-Gazetted Police Association.

The strike started on a particular day. It so happened that the previous day, in some remote corner of the State, two dead bodies were discovered. These deaths had taken place three days prior to the bodies being discovered. It was a private fight between two people in some remote area, and the bodies had been discovered. And I read in the newspapers the next day a screaming headline which said "Two die as policemen go on strike in the State!" Many people do not have time to read the newspapers. I know that these are two completely unrelated bits of information. I got calls from the Home Ministry asking me whether the agitation had turned wild. I said, "No, it hadn't." I was told, 'but there were two deaths apparently' -- somebody said -- which is when I saw the news-item which said, "Two die as policemen go on strike." I would urge you to see that that kind of, what I call, sub-editor's revenge is neutralised.

I went to the root of this and, then, I discovered something which you might not agree or which you might agree, privately, with, that reporters have the opportunity and the privilege to speak to the real people. You are out there in the real world; you speak to the real people. You interact with them. You get a feel of what they say. But those who sit in the office and put together what file is the final version that comes out, the ones that write the headlines are the ones who do this. I call it the sub-editor's revenge because a sub-editor's missing out on interacting with people, as reporters do, that has to be neutralised. So, I call these headlines as sub-editor's revenge for missing out on the real action. My plea to you is, please do recognise that there is a role for Parliament, that there is a role for Media, and that there is a role for markets. We need to construct these roles in a manner that is harmonious. We need to see that there is nothing that happens where one part suffers because somebody else gets hyperactive for the wrong reasons somewhere else.

And as a tax-paying Indian citizen, I have one last request and that is, I believe that some of what happens in Parliament needs a far more follow-up than what we find in the newspapers. There are important things that all of you bring to our notice, but, as a reader, I find the follow-up is something that is not as much in evidence as one would like it to be, and, then, please also recognise--I say this because it is more a confessional statement but it is the truth--that when questions are asked in Parliament and when the replies to the questions get drafted, the average civil servant's attempt with skill sets honed over time is how to convey the minimum information that is possible in response to that question. I believe, as media covering Parliament, the inadequacy of information that comes into the public domain *via* Parliament questions is something that needs a better focus than what it has at this point of time.

Thank you very much, once again, for the privilege of having me with you.

(Ends)

श्री उर्मिलेश : दोस्तो, मिस्टर दामोदरन जी ने मीडिया, पार्लियामेंट एण्ड मार्केट के संदर्भ में जो बातें कही हैं, वे बेहद महत्वपूर्ण हैं। मैं समझता हूँ कि आज जिस जद्दोजहद से भारतीय मीडिया गुजर रहा है, उसमें ये कुछ बड़े मुद्दे हैं, बड़े सवाल हैं। मुझे लगता है कि ये हमें अपने

आत्मनिरीक्षण का मौका देते हैं, अपने को समझने का, अपने को तोलने का मौका देते हैं। यह बहस मीडिया में नहीं हो रही है, यह बहुत आश्चर्यजनक बात है। जो बहस हमें बहुत सारे सेमिनार्स, सिम्पोजियम में मिलती है, बाहर मिलती है, वह मीडिया के अंदर नहीं है। मुझे लगता है कि राज्य सभा सचिवालय ने यह जो आयोजन किया है, यह हम सब के लिए इसलिए भी महत्वपूर्ण है, खासकर के मीडिया के लोगों के लिए कि जो बहस मीडिया के अंदर कम हो गई है वह कम से कम एक नई पहल के रूप में राज्य सभा की तरफ से हमारे सामने आई है। मैं दामोदरन साहब को बहुत धन्यवाद देना चाहूंगा और मैं चाहूंगा कि हमारे जो साथी हैं, डेलिगेट, यहां जो पत्रकार आए हैं, जो गैर पत्रकार भी हैं, वे सब इस बारे में मिस्टर दामोदरन से विचारोत्तेजक बहस करें, सवाल करें और वे जवाब दें। मैं सोच रहा हूँ

कि इसके पहले डा. स्वामीनाथन अपनी बात कहें और फिर दोनों वक्ताओं से बारी-बारी आपका प्रश्नोत्तर हो, मुझे लगता है कि वह ज्यादा बेहतर होगा कि इससे पहले मि.गोपालाकृष्णन, हालांकि डा. स्वामीनाथन किसी परिचय के मोहताज नहीं हैं और न ही दामोदरन साहब, लेकिन यह महज औपचारिकता है, मि. गोपालाकृष्णन देश के जाने-माने एक बड़े कृषि वैज्ञानिक हैं, एक ऐसे समाजशास्त्री भी हैं, जिन्होंने कृषि विज्ञान को भारत के दर्शन से जोड़ा है, ऐसे डा. स्वामीनाथन को आकर परिचय दें।

SHRI P. GOPALAKRISHNAN: It is my privilege to introduce Prof. M.S. Swaminathan to the audience, but I feel that if I explain anything about his achievements, I would be doing an injustice because I am nobody to introduce him because all of you know him so well. He is internationally well known. He is one of our most distinguished agricultural scientists. So, I would not do the mischief of introducing him to the audience.

Only one or two small things I would like to mention here is that he is one of our hon. Members of Parliament now, and apart from all that you know about his achievements in the field of agricultural science, he is an avowed supporter or interested person in Karnataka music which, I hope, many of you may not be knowing.

With these few words, I would now request Prof. Swaminathan to kindly give his words.

PROF. M. S. SWAMINATHAN: Thank you very much and there is a lot of pleasure in meeting the Media personnel.

The farm sector's, what we call economically, contribution to GDP growth and so on, today, has gone down below 20 per cent. Everybody realises that it is the key sector in terms of rural well-being, national sovereignty and livelihood security of nearly two-thirds of our population. Therefore, the Media is concerned. Every day you see reports. By and large, the Media is interested in somewhat mega events like suicide of farmers or very large drought and floods and so on. They are all

interested in mega events. But the problem in our country is what we call the chronic under-nutrition or endemic hunger affecting a large number of population. According to the Economic Survey, 45 per cent of our children under the age of three are underweight; that means they are under-nourished. Some of these chronic and endemic problems obviously do not attract the Media attention, but the mega events.

In the last two years, when I have been in Parliament as a nominated Member of the Rajya Sabha, one of the issues which has come up now and then is the Report of the National Commission on Farmers because neither in independent India nor in colonial India have we had commissions specially to deal with the problems of farmers. There had been National Commission on Agriculture; there had been Royal Commission on Agriculture. But it is for the first time that a commission to look into the problems of the farmers has been set up. One of the results was the National Policy on Farmers. It is a Policy for farmers. It was placed in the Parliament by Sharad Pawarji on 21st November, 2007. Why I am mentioning this is that you people should follow it up, the Policy and its implementation. The major emphasis of this Policy is on giving an income-orientation to farming. In other words, we know about 80 per cent of the 115 lakh farming families are what we call small and marginal farmers and there is pervasive poverty in our country because in the rural countryside agriculture today is not paying. Sixty per cent of our agriculture is rain-fed. There is no assured irrigation. So, the National Policy on Farmers tries to give an orientation towards how to increase the income, value addition to primary products and generating more non-farm employment, apart from non-farm productivity. It is a twin approach, enhancement of non-farm productivity and generation of new opportunities for non-farm employment through value addition to primary products, improved post-harvest technology, and so on.

Another aim of the National Policy is to attract and retain the youth in farming. In our country 70 per cent of the population, today, is below the age of 35 and 70 per cent of the rural population are young people. The National Sample Survey Organisation conducted a survey and found that 45 per cent of the farmers who were interviewed wanted to quit farming if they had got an alternative occupation. The problem is that there is no alternative and farming promotes more job-led economic growth whereas modern industries, by and large, promote jobless growth. Therefore, with such a population of 1.1 billion, farming is the mainstay for livelihood security in our country. But its contribution to the GDP has come down. That means there is greater impoverishment of the people in the rural sector.

There is also a frequent reference, including by the Prime Minister, both inside the Parliament and outside, to the question of a Second Green Revolution and so on. It is yet to come. People ask: Why can't there be Second Green Revolution? But, then, you must understand, I must say, that the Media played a very important role in the sixties in keeping up our morale. You know that we had PL-480 wheat; ten million tonnes of wheat came. The Foreign Media said, "India is leading a ship-to-mouth existence". There were a large number of books which said, "Indians can never feed themselves". Under those conditions, I must pay a tribute to the Indian Media. They kept up our confidence because they used to visit our scientific laboratories and see the new kinds of wheat and rice which were coming up. So, the Media played an important role in terms of the last item on this four components, what I call the Green Revolution Symphony, the technology which was the primer of change, the services which could take the technology to the small and marginal farmers and the public policies, particularly, on input and output pricing because farm ecology and farm economics are the two determinants of sustainable progress. If economics or ecology goes wrong, farming would not go right. So, the public policies, I must say, are not very good from the ecological point of view.

There has been over-exploitation of groundwater and so on. But in terms of input and output pricing, even today you have seen that an amount of Rs.1,100 has been announced for a quintal of wheat and so on. I will come to it in a moment because that is a major factor in terms of sustaining the interests of farmers. Farmers' enthusiasm was seemed to be believed. You look at this. He is a farmer from Ludhiana side. He is put up for what is called national demonstration. He produces about seven tonnes of wheat per hectare, while all his neighbours, the larger farmers, hardly produce two tonnes of wheat per hectare and so on. So, it became a large movement. What happened was, a small Government programme called high-yielding varieties programme became a mass movement. That is what you call a revolution. Otherwise, it is an evolutionary progress of two per cent, three per cent and so on.

Another important area which attracts attention is the question of livestock. We have nearly a billion farm animals. We have about 500 million cattle, sheep, goats, buffaloes and so on, and another 500 million poultry. There are both commercial poultry farming and natural poultry farming. This has been one of our success stories. We are number one in the world today in milk production. The difference between other countries and our country is that in our country it is production by masses, as Mahatma Gandhi has said. Over 75 million women are involved in the dairy enterprise and it is a very important component for strengthening the livelihood or the income of the people because livelihood and livestock are very closely related. If you have got drought, one of the first symptoms of acute distress is that farmers will start selling the livestock. Then, they will start selling the land and so on. Whenever we think of food security in our country, we have also an obligation to these one billion farm animals. They also require feed; they also require fodder; they also require water.

You all know what is now happening in agriculture. Mr. Pawar has recently stated that this year the growth rate may be about two per cent which is still the same as the population growth rate. You have been highlighting the problems of agriculture, the environmental problem, land ownership and land distribution. Keeping prime farmland for agriculture has become a major struggle. In this context, there has been a discussion on SEZ (Special Economic Zone) and so on, what you call land grabbing or the problems of diversion of prime farmland. Water is the key constraint. Next year is the International Year of Biodiversity. The Government of India enacted two pieces of legislation, one is the Biodiversity Act based upon the Global Biodiversity Convention and the other is the Plant Variety Protection and Farmers' Rights Act. Both of them deal with the problems of farmers. Now the latest one next month is the Copenhagen, Climate Change and its impact. At the recent L'Aquila meeting, G-8 and G-20 members agreed to sort out the limit of increase in temperature to two degrees centigrade. But two degrees centigrade above normal has very serious implications for agriculture. Our wheat production will go down; our rice production will go down; water will become scarcer. So, the Media will have to take more and more interest in climate change and food security.

Economics, cost, risk, return and equity issues, are being discussed all the time. Now there are a large number of *mahila kisans*. For example, in Vidarbha, there have been a large number of suicides by farmers. They are farmers. Therefore, they have land. So, the number of *mahila kisans*, the number of women farmers, has increased. They require some kind of a support system. They require some kind of a support system because of the multiple burdens on their time. They require many more support services. Those issues come up in the Parliament now and then. Finally comes energy and bio-diesel. Diversion of farmland for energy purposes has also become a major issue.

Now there have been a number of steps which have been taken; land, water, biodiversity, climate change. There is the National Action Plan on climate change. One of them deals with sustainable agriculture. One of the eight Missions in the Prime Minister's Advisory Council is sustainable agriculture. The sea level rise has not been discussed very much. But we have a very long coastland of 17,500 kilometres; Andaman and Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep, then Maldives and Bangladesh is very much concerned because one-third of Bangladesh would go under sea water. We also have a large number of problems. Tsunami of December 2004, was a sort of wake up call in terms of what might happen in future. There is a considerable emphasis on building a National Water Security System, like the food security system. The Government has a National Water Policy which deals with how we can meet our water needs. The four important sectors, household sector, domestic requirement, industrial requirement, agriculture requirement and eco system, that is, forest and eco system also require water; otherwise we will have forest fires. Even in California, for example, you can see forest fires. When there is very serious dry condition, fire catch up very early. Our problem is nearly 75 to 80 per cent of water goes to agriculture. How do you improve efficiency? The Minister of Water Resources, Shri Soz, mentioned it in Parliament. Unfortunately, the media has not taken much interest in that, although they talk about water shortage and so on. The Government started a national programme called 'More Crop and Income Per Drop of Water'. Stockholm Water Prize gets attention in our country, but not the National Water Prize which first went to the Panchayat in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra. Water is going to be a very serious problem. This particular national programme 'More Crop and Income Per Drop of Water' has certainly shown there is enormous scope for improving the productivity of water. Now, as a result, the Supreme Court interventions, so far as food security is concerned, have been in three major directions in the last few

years. One direction is in relation to how do you ensure food security. In other words, there are Commissioners who are going round and seeing whether the noon meal programme is being effectively implemented. More recently, they asked the Government of India to start a programme on water security. This is called 'War for Water' by the Ministry of Science and Technology, which is dealing with it. Here war does not mean fight. War means Winning, Augmentation, Renovation. A win, win situation for all of them. The third area in which the Supreme Court has given direction is in the area of genetic modifications, for example Bt. brinjal/*baingan*, is very much in the news today in all the media. The Supreme Court has been giving instructions how to ensure bio safety and other environmental safety. I would not like to go into details. Those of you who want to take hard copy, can have it.

You all have heard about Chirrapunji. Chirrapunji is an example of world's heaviest rainfall up to 14 millimetres. At the same time, you have water shortage in November, December and January. Many of you might have gone to that region now called Sorah region. Fortunately, as a result of NREGA, which is giving the highest priority to water harvesting, watershed management, what is now called Jal Kund, small pond, there is a lot of difference. When you go to Meghalaya, you should go to Chirrapunji area. As a student I used to read about Chirrapunji. But when I actually went there in the month of December-January, it was very difficult to get water. That is why NREGA is called world's largest ecological programme.

There is extension fatigue in Parliament. Frequent questions are asked why extension has failed; what is happening in our country. There have been a number of experiments, like the World Bank Atma. None of them is functioning well. This is one of our problems. The National Commission on Farmers has given very detailed recommendation. The other area where we are in difficulty is pulses. We are trying to see, all over the world, from where we can import pulses. At one stage, in Delhi for Arhar, red gram, the price was Rs. 100 per kg. The Delhi

Government had to intervene and tried to give it at somewhat lower price. But there is enormous opportunity here. There is a lot of research data, if anyone of you is interested in the farm sector. You should visit some of the stations where you find new *arhar*, *mung*, *urad*, etc. The kind of support which we had in the 1960s for the Green Revolution, is not coming from the media today. I must express my sorrow. More negative aspects have been covered. Now a suicide is a news item; but there are a number of very important scientific discoveries which can be taken. The media can play a very important role here. We have now got new technologies; new media including Internet. Of course, it is a combination of the print media, cable TV, FM Radio or community radio and finally the cell phone. Cell phone now provides an opportunity for last mile and last person connectivity. There is an academy in the name of Jamshedji Tata. The synergy between radio, FM and community radio and Internet is very high. Similarly, synergy between cell phone and Internet is very high. For example, you go towards early years, when very serious Tsunami occurred in Nagapatnam in the coast of Tamil Nadu, where fishermen got very afraid of going into the sea because they never expected that the sea would rise so fast. Now they carry cell phones with GPS data which gives them information where the fish are and what will be the wave height. It has been completely transformed. Earlier they used to spend about 10 hours a day looking for fish, now they come home with a lot of fish within one hour. Now there is technological transformation of small-scale fisheries. They require information technology. Thanks to Prof. Madhavan Nair who has just retired as Chairman of ISRO. We have many block level village resource centres which have got satellite connectivity. There are satellite-connected village resource centres with Internet. The Government of India, Department of Information Technology has approved other 1,00,000 common service centres which are provided with necessary hardware. What is lacking is demand driven location specific information in local language.

Now this possibility has increased. Fonts are available in different languages. For example, if you go to Vidarbha, there are knowledge centres which provide information to every farming family in Marathi. The entitlement data base means all the schemes of Government to which they are entitled; how to access them because knowledge itself is exceedingly important. Non-farming is the problem in our country. That is why the Ministry of Food Processing has started much more work on small-scale process post harvest centres. When China started its agriculture reform in late 70s, they decided that the livelihood of people must be the bottom line of the reform. Therefore they started a very large rural non-farm enterprise called Township Village Enterprise, TVE. On the one hand, non-farm productivity and on the other hand Township Village Enterprise has given China enormous manufacturing capacity. If China can dump anything in the market, it is because they have developed their manufacturing capacity under the Township and Village Enterprise Programme.

Coming to farmer's distress, the reason why there is so much of malnutrition and under nutrition in our country is the fact that in the rural areas, the landless labourers' families and those of small and marginal farmers, they are themselves undernourished. We are only talking about ourselves, the consumers in the urban areas. The majority of consumers in this country are producer consumers, that is, the farming community, who constitutes two-thirds of the population. People complain when the Government gives a little more price to the farmers. So, we had recommended to the Farmers Commission, what we call, C2; that is, the total cultivation cost plus minimum 50 per cent. Earlier, it was 15 per cent. In which enterprise do you have this 15 per cent margin! In pharmaceuticals and other sector, they have 300-400 per cent margin. We recommended 50 per cent, and it was implemented last year with reference to wheat. We calculated it to be Rs.1080; and, this year, they have added Rs.20. The farmers also say that this year, they

will have to use much more diesel to pump out water. Even the price of rice has crashed today. But you are not taking interest in this area. For the imported rice, there is practically no duty at all. Now, it has affected the farmers of Punjab. There is a bumper crop there even though there may be drought here. They have produced much more. But then the price has crashed, and they are in distress. Now, the National Rainfed Area Authority was set up. There was a lot of discussion in Parliament. The Prime Minister himself announced the creation of it. It has just started to function. It has two important functions. One is to prepare anticipatory programmes to manage different kinds of drought, early onset of drought, withdrawal of rain, alternative cropping strategy, seed reserves, etc. Then, there is this arrangement of training one woman and one male member in every Panchayat as Climate Risk Managers. That is an important area. The non-farming initiatives are also involved; like, more use of biomass. For example, if 200 million tonnes of foodgrains is grown in an area, there will be production of 400 million tonnes of other biomass. Now, there are these rice bio-parks which are coming up to utilise the biomass. There is a strategy for producing 100 million tonnes of wheat in another five years through defending the gains already made and extending the gains to the Eastern India, which we call as sleeping giants, that is, Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the whole of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and up to Assam and West Bengal. Safeguarding the heartland of Green Revolution has become exceedingly important. For example, free supply of electricity has led to over-pumping of water. So the public policy will have to be examined, not in populist terms, but in terms of environmental sustainability and pro-active use of land and water. When we talk of livestock, there is the problem of nutrition of livestock. If you go to Rajasthan and other desert areas, this is what has kept them alive in terms of sustainable livelihood. In relation to land use, our policy is to see how much of land can be diverted for bio-diesel or bio-fuels. By and large, the policy now, under the national

Action Plan for Climate Change, gives a lot of emphasis on solar energy and all forms of renewable energy. Bio-security has become exceedingly important. In the H5N1 strain of poultry and H1N1 strain in terms of human influenza, more and more transboundary pests are getting to be important. How do you really use the biotechnology? For example, the Supreme Court, now and then, gives advice on biotechnology. We had recommended the National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority as a statutory body. It is a highly professional body which will conduct its proceedings in a transparent way so that the reasons and benefits are analysed in a manner which instils public confidence, media confidence and political confidence. Today, most of you have no confidence. That is why Bt Brinjal has been criticised very widely, although the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee had gone through all the tests. You do not rely on those tests. So, how to create a credible mechanism is an important aspect. We had also recommended National Commission for Farmers. It comes up every now and then. We should have something like the Indian Trade Organisation, which will be the WTO's counterpart, in order to prepare our country, and not take ad hoc decisions on import, export, sugar prices, and so on. It will be our green box for the National Policy. If the WTO has its own green box, blue box and so on, we have to have our own boxes for our people.

As regards credit, we recommended 4 per cent interest. It became 7 per cent. Some States are giving credit at four to five per cent, and also a four to five year credit cycle. One of the reasons for farmers' suicides in Vidarbha and other places is that when they are unable to repay the credit in the same year because of drought and failure of crops, they go to money lenders. So, in all these dry farming areas, there has to be a four-to-five year cycle. Then, Mahila Kisans has become very important today. There has become a need for a multiple source of income. Poor farmers go to cities and town for jobs, leaving agriculture in the

hands of women. Therefore, women require a lot of support system. There are special categories of farmers, the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers. In the last two days, the Prime Minister has been addressing the tribal areas and saying that they require special attention. And there are also the pastoralists, plantation labourers and urban farmers.

The other major problem -- the late Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh had been very much concerned about it -- is on the question of how we give power and economy of scale to small farmers. In case of very small farmers, their competitive power is low.

Then, there is the climate change which affects agriculture. I will not go deep into it. The impact of 1-2 degree Celsius increase in temperature has disastrous consequences on our agriculture. We have to get prepared for it. Most of the calculations today show that temperature rise may go up to 4 degrees Celsius.

Then, the traditional food crops like ragi, bajra, jowar and millet are getting important in the context of climate change because of their cultivation pattern. They are, in fact, quite nutritious. It is wrong to call them 'core cereals'. The draft National Food Security Act mentions not only wheat and rice, but it also adds other grains which are going to be more and more important in the era of climate change.

One of the criticisms which the media has been making is the large scale spoilage in storages. When the country needs to import certain foodgrains, there is a need for ultra modern storages. I have, personally, been pleading for 50 modern Grain Storages in different parts of the country, each with a capacity for storing 1 million tonne of food grains in a health condition. This is an abject necessity. I don't know why, but it is more than 40 years since we declared the Green Revolution -- in 1968, Indira Gandhi had released a special stamp -- but, 40 years later, our storage conditions are still very deplorable. This is very inexcusable.

My last point is that there is no time to relax because conditions of food security are going to be much more challenging in the years to come. It is already challenging because of so much of under-nutrition. We are home to the largest number of malnourished children, women and men in the world, more than sub-Saharan Africa. As a single nation, we have the largest under-nourished people. Now, we will have a large number of problems. We have global climate change as a result of diversion of prime farmland to non-farm purposes, increasing population continuously, so much so that even if we can stabilise our population around 1.5 billion or so by 2030 or 2050, the 1.5 billion population would still require double the present production. It has to come not only from the existing land, but probably lesser land. Fortunately, the only difference between China and India is that China has practically exhausted its potential in agriculture in the sense that their average yields are already very high. Ninety-five per cent of the area is irrigated. The average yield is five to six tonnes of paddy and so on; ours is 2.5 tonnes. So, we have a large untapped production reservoir; it is like your bank deposit; if you have a reserve in the bank, it is an advantage. So, that is one of our advantages. But that has to be utilised effectively. That would require symphony approach, which I mentioned earlier, the technology, the services, the public policies and, above all, ways to rekindle the enthusiasm in farming amongst farmers. If they say that they would quit farming, how are you going to attract and retain young people in farming unless it becomes much more intellectually challenging and economically rewarding? The younger generation will not be attracted to farming. This is why, technological upgradation of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries and so on becomes exceedingly important.

श्री उर्मिलेश: डा0 स्वामीनाथन, आपका धन्यवाद।

दोस्तो, इससे पहले कि हम इस सेशन का समापन करें, मैं चाहूँगा कि हमारे जो पत्रकार साथी यहाँ मौजूद हैं, उनके दिमाग में श्री दामोदरन और डा0 स्वामीनाथन की बातों

को सुनकर जो-जो सवाल उठे हैं, यदि वे चाहें तो दोनों से पूछ लें। वे यह कोशिश करें कि सवाल बिल्कुल संक्षिप्त और सटीक हो ताकि इसमें ज्यादा समय न लगे। सबसे पहले श्री दामोदरन साहब से जो भी सवाल पूछने हैं, वे पूछे जाएँ।

श्री संजय शर्मा: मैं "वीर अर्जुन" से संजय शर्मा हूँ। मेरा सवाल श्री दामोदरन एवं डा० स्वामीनाथन, दोनों से है। अभी किसानों के बारे में बातें कही गईं। आज उनके सामने सबसे बड़ी समस्या मार्केटिंग की है। हर कोई अपना जो उत्पाद बनाता है, उसकी कीमत वह खुद तय करता है। एक किताब बनाने वाला अपनी किताब की कीमत खुद ही तय करता है और पेन बनाने वाला भी उसकी कीमत खुद तय करता है। एकमात्र किसान ही ऐसा उत्पादक है, जिसके उत्पाद की कीमतों को दूसरे लोग निर्धारित करते हैं और फिर बाद में उसकी बन्दरबॉट होती है। किसान पैदावार के उत्पादन का काम खुद करता है और दूसरे लोग उसके उत्पाद की कीमत निर्धारित करते हैं और उस पर अपने ब्रांड्स की मुहर लगा कर उससे और भी ज्यादा कीमत वसूल करते हैं। इसमें ऐसा क्या किया जाए कि किसानों को अपने उत्पाद की कीमतें खुद तय करने का मौका मिले। इसमें पार्लियामेंट और मीडिया क्या रोल अदा कर सकते हैं? यह मैं आपसे जानना चाहता हूँ।

DR. M.S. SWAMINATHAN: Marketing is the key. When you have harvested the crop finally for the farmer, assured and remunerative marketing is the key for successful farming. That is why, all these problems of WTO and so on are there, because marketing and trade have become very important. In our country, Green Revolution became possible in the '60s because the Prices Commission was established and an agency like the Food Corporation was established for purchasing crops at the minimum support price announced by the Government. But although the Prices Commission gives support prices for 25 crops, it is only in the case of wheat and rice that the scheme is being implemented; pulses and so on are in the hands of traders. I cannot go into details but so far as the power of scale to small farmers is concerned, it has become increasingly clear that either farmers have to form their own marketing cooperatives or there has to be a really fair and equitable contract cultivation where somebody else takes over but gives you a fair price like the

Government gives. This is an area which requires the greatest attention, as also the problem of perishable commodities. Our milk revolution came and people said that Dr. Kurien is not concentrating on cross-breeding and so on. He said, if he assured marketing for milk, farmers would do the cross-breeding, that we do not have to do it and the farmers would take care of it. So, if you give a fair and reasonable income to the farmers, they would take care of the rest of the things. This is going to be our great challenge in the coming years. Government alone cannot do everything because they have no stores even for wheat and rice. There will be a problem if they buy all the other commodities. In the case of potato, for example, the prices just crash. It may be selling at 15 rupees a kilo in Delhi but the farmers do not get it. Today, marketing is highly distorted. It is against the farmer. Farmers do not get the benefit. All the others are getting the benefit. But this has to be rectified by farmers' own associations supported by the Government.

Question: My question is to Dr. Swaminathan. There were talks of corporatisation of agriculture. What is your view on this? Will it help in increasing the agricultural production?

DR. M.S. SWAMINATHAN: In our country, I see very little scope for corporatisation because land is life to a farmer; he will hold on to it. But what is needed is to give them advantages of mass production. But how do you give advantages of mass production agriculture like corporate farming? The corporate sector, in my view, should concentrate on services like the ITC. It is a good example for tobacco cultivators. They have not taken over tobacco farming. But they purchase tobacco at reasonable price and at a price which people know. More and more contracts of those kinds are needed. For wheat and rice there is a contract between the Government and the farmer. The Government has already announced this year the price of Rs. 1100 per quintal for wheat and they honour it. Even if the purchases go up to 30 million tonnes or 40 million tonnes, I must say to the credit of the

Government, they have been honouring their commitment to ensure that they buy from the farmer. This is a key question. I believe, corporatisation will lead to a lot of confrontation, a lot of law and order problem and you will have a large number of people who are unemployed or under-employed. I have seen people's land being bought by some of the companies for different purposes; within one year the farmer becomes a landless labourer. If he has one acre, even if he gets five to ten lakhs, he becomes bankrupt because he has various other expenses and so, he goes to work as a landless labourer. There have been conflicts as a result. So, it has a social dimension also. It is not a question of efficiency and economics. The social sustainability of corporate farming, in my view, is practically nil in this country.

MS. SABINA: I have two questions for each of the panelists. Swaminathanji, you have mentioned about the media today being very different from what it was during the time of the Green Revolution. You have been in the Parliament. You also talked about the media raising issues which are mega events such as drought and suicides by farmers. I tend to report Parliament and I feel that Members of Parliament themselves raise issues about drought and suicides by farmers. Now, you have been in the Council of States. We have Members of Parliament who are representatives of the people. If you go through their bio-data, a large number of them say they are farmers. I just wanted to check with you; according to you, what is the amount of interest that our Members of Parliament show in issues of agriculture and farming?

DR. M.S. SWAMINATHAN: One of the great difficulties I find in dealing with whether droughts or floods is a more pan-political approach is lacking. It is all highly politicised. If there is a calamity, the Opposition feels the Government is to blame, whether it is a natural calamity or an artificial calamity. There is not an objective discussion on an pan-political platform so that you take the issues. For example, I have been crying hoarse about the storage for a very long time, not now, from the

days. But, still we are keeping the grains and so on, produced at great effort and cost, at a time when we can't afford it, in a very bad condition. Many of these critical issues don't come up. If there is a calamity, that attracts attention. But, for example, there is no half-a-day discussion on the question of even drought not in terms of purely who is to blame something, but in terms of what are the lessons of the 2009 Drought, and are we having some what they call de-briefing or post-mortem analysis and how do we prepare ourselves to meet the next drought in a much more effective way? This kind of serious discussion is lacking both in the Media and in Parliament.

QUESTION: My second to Mr. Damodaran is this. You have been the Chairman. You talked about the code of conduct. I may have missed the point, but I just wanted to check that being the former Chairman of the SEBI, and the fact, that you have to look into the interests of the investors that they are not being cheated, and more we see in the media today they could be taken for a ride. So, while you have anguished about it, what is your recommendation in this regard? Do you think that this issue must be taken up? Do you think that it should be taken up by the SEBI or should it be taken up by some Members of Parliament, should questions be raised? What would be your advice to, let us say, the Media as well as, let us say, our Parliamentarians?

SHRI N. DAMODARAN: Your question triggers a set of thought which I wanted to keep private, but, nevertheless, I will express them. These are areas of discomfort. I am extremely uncomfortable, as someone who was born in the year of Independence and has grown up with this country, about some of the things that are happening here. One of the things that worry me is awards being conferred on persons in the Media space not for stories that are great stories, not for uncovering things that ought to be uncovered, but because of proximity to political set up. And, I have no hesitation in saying it here; I don't intend to pull my punches. The other

is something that one is tragically aware of, which is Media personnel battling in order to get into Parliament. I think, you are a part of the solution, when you are outside Parliament and you are in a position to comment objectively. But, if you think Media persons ought to get into Parliament in order to strengthen their positions, what gets weakened in the process is the objectivity that attaches to Media. Where are the modern day Nikhil Chakrabortys, the ones that turned down the awards? I have not seen too many Nikhil Chakrabortys in recent times. But, you see people that go out and seek the awards. All of that said, I would say that the Media, given its importance, its power, its sense of responsibility and all of that, needs to regulate itself. You should not look at external regulation. The problem with external regulation is that it passes into the hands of the people who have neither domain knowledge nor the understanding of the sensitivities involved in the profession. There must be, given the history of Indian Media, given the role that it has played from the times of Independence Movement and things of that kind, I have reason to believe, there is adequate leadership in the Media that on occasions must step back from its own immediate business interests and look at how to provide the sense of direction that the Media needs because my worry is, today the Media is powerful. As you have gained power, there has been some erosion of credibility in the eyes of those that had the time and hopefully the objectivity to look at what there is in the Media related to, what they know and see whether things are coming out as they ought to be coming out. So, as power has increased, credibility has taken a knock. I dread the day when you would be extremely powerful and far less credible than it is at this point of time. It is a luxury that a country like this cannot afford so. Better late than never, even today, I think, big people in the Media should sit together. I recognise it is a business; I recognise that there is money ought to be made. It is not selflessness that drives people into setting up newspaper and Television channels. I recognise all of that. But, today, we have got to say

where commerce has just now overtaken content, but commerce is in a sense pushing content to a place where you cannot recognise where the content is. I am reminded of what happened in the television programme sometime ago. I was told by a young kid, not even ten years old, who said, "that I love the commercials. The story bit that is coming between the commercial breaks is what is distracting me. I think that is really the worry. What really is the message that we are getting across is it content, is it commercialism? That, I think, worries me a lot.

QUESTION: It is a pointed question directed to Mr. Damodaran and Mr. Swaminathan. First to Mr. Damodaran. Mr. Damodaran, you mentioned about the co-option of the media by the political forces or the other way round. But, what worries me, there is a tandem co-option of the Media by the market and that is increasing. Now, I want to ask you a pointed question. Do you think there are adequate processes in place -- this is regarding the collusion between promoters and the Media -- to scan, detect and stop this kind of collusion and stringent and deterrent steps would you recommend? If they are not there, at the moment, can it be brought in? Should I ask the question to Mr. Swaminath now or after? Can I ask it right now? Mr. Swaminathan, you mentioned about the lack of interests the Media has, as of now, in the agricultural sector compared to the 60s. Now, I think, I put it to you that it is related with the political economy of the Media, as at present. But also, there is even if you take, for instance, the Government funded Media, you know, in the 60s, you had this concept of 'Radio Rice', you know, the radio was propagating the Green Revolution. But, now, you have a Prime Minister to direct the I&B Minister, who, in turn, direct, anyway, she should not be doing it, but, in turn directing the Prasar Bharati to get across framers in the problem of Avian Flu, which it should be doing all the time. So, there is a kind of a break in the mindset of using media for socio-economic gains.

SHRI N. DAMODARAN: I would like to respond to your first question whether there are processes that can be put in place to look at this unhealthy manifestation of the relationship that exists between...

QUESTION: I wanted to know whether they are already in place, if not, what would you recommend?

SHRI N. DAMODARAN: Well, if there are processes that are in place I, at least, have been very draft. I have not seen those processes because if there were healthy robust processes in place, some of what we get to see now clearly, we would not have got to see. Who will put those processes in place? Clearly, it cannot be an external agency that will put it in place because either there will be over-kill because we recognise that this is an area where you need to have freedom, you need to have liberty and there could be an over-kill if some externality puts in place processes that can then kill the profession itself. That is entirely possible that somebody could over-prescribe. There are endless examples that you can have of that. Can Media do it themselves? I think, it is something that Media ought to do sooner rather than later. Look at what ought to be done, and, I think, there is a collective power that resides in those that report in the Journalist community somewhere some people must stand up and say to the proprietors that we recognise that you are in business; we recognise that we are working for you, but also recognise that between both of us there is the larger responsibility of getting something across to a large population outside there, that depends on us to get information out to them. And, therefore, do not let commerce completely obliterate whatever ought to be disseminated in the name of news. My worry is, as I had mentioned a little while earlier, that today I do not know what news is. Earlier, it was the advertisement space that was being sold; today it is the news space that is sold. I do not know whether the editorial space/comments are sold; I know there are outsiders who are being asked to write editorials in newspapers. I grew up in this

country believing that editorials are written by people who are within the newspaper office and they reflect the policy and things of that kind. I also recognise that there are different shades of opinion. In today's newspapers, for example, one paper says that the two judges ought not to have vacated the positions of the bench because conflicts of interest should not be pushed---that far! There is another paper which says, no matter your wife owns only four shares in NTPC, there is still a conflict of interest. I respect that. The plurality of opinion must be captured. But, in an attempt to capture that plurality opinion, let that not be driven by a business agenda. That is my only request.

PROF. M.S. SWAMINATHAN: Again you have raised a very important issue. Generally, my own feeling is that a majority of the print media feel that the days of serious readership has gone and hence you have a very large number of items which are dealt with in a very, very superficial way. There is no in depth discussion of the important issues. There are exceptions like Mr. Sainath, and so on, who deal with issues of importance. In those days, maybe because we were under terrible pressure in 60's, there was a greater interest in every one, media included; but, now, take for example this year's drought. Some of the economists say, 'Well, drought is all right, but the 9% growth rate may come because the agriculture's contribution to economic growth is very limited.' But it does not deal with the human dimension of the problem, even in the discussion on naxalism and so on. Jharkhand, for example, I have studied it; in Jharkhand, with a single-crop land with rain, if that rain fails, there is no crop at all. Mid-October to May, more than a crore of men are sitting idle there; there is nothing that they can do. Single crop and there is no water harvesting; what will these idle men do? Idle mind is a devil's workshop. We are not going into the depth; it is only the police going to be there as an answer. This country will be in a very serious difficulty. So, I had said earlier, agriculture in this country is not just a food-producing machine, it is the basic

backbone of the livelihood security for nearly two-thirds of the population. Hence, media, Government and all political parties, if they do not take up the human dimension of the agriculture---not only the production dimension is important, but also the human dimension---we as a country will be the loser.

श्री ऊर्मिलेश : प्रो. स्वामीनाथन के इस जवाब के बाद मुझे लगता है कि हम बहुत आगे नहीं बढ़ सकते, क्योंकि उन्होंने मीडिया के सामने आज जो भी सवाल हैं, समाज से जुड़े हुए या राजसत्ता से जुड़े हुए सवाल हैं, उनको एक तरह से conclude किया है, इतनी महत्वपूर्ण बात उन्होंने कही है ... (व्यवधान) देखिए, हमारे पास समय बहुत कम है, इसलिए मैं चाहूंगा कि आप संक्षेप में अपना सवाल पूछ लीजिए।

QUESTION: Prof. Swaminathan has said that farmers are also the largest consumers. Sir, are you happy with the hike of Rs.20 hike in MSP in wheat?

Prof. M.S. SWAMINATHAN: I think, it is not adequate; but, you know, it is a support price. The support price and the procurement price could be different. The support price is to give some idea to the farmer on economics, how much the farmer can invest in terms of inputs and so on. They can calculate, with this support price if I get 40 quintals of wheat, this is my gross income. That is the purpose of announcing the price. But, invariably, in our country, we find that there is a difference between the support price and the procurement price. State Governments too augment it. So, I would consider the present announcement as a reasonable minimum support price. I will not be able to say whether it is good or not until the month of March or April when the crop is ready for harvest. Some years, when there is no electricity at all, when the farmer had to buy diesel, the diesel prices are high. Then the cost of production goes up in Punjab-Haryana region. My feeling is that the present minimum support price is a reasonable one. I should not judge now on what should be the procurement price until later in the crop cycle.

(Ends)

श्री ऊर्मिलेश : हम इस सेशन का समापन करें, इससे पहले राज्य सभा की तरफ से हमारे दोनों आदरणीय वक्ताओं को mementos दिए जाएंगे।

मैं एक बात कहकर इस सेशन का समापन करना चाहूंगा कि डा. स्वामीनाथन ने जो बात कही है, वह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है। मैं 1983 में जब जर्नलिज़्म में आया था, तो मुझे बार-बार पढ़ाया जाता था, कहा जाता था कि जर्नलिज़्म हमारी व्यवस्था का चौथा खंभा है। मैं बार-बार सोचता रहा कि यह चौथा खंभा क्यों है? न्यायपालिका, कार्यपालिका, विधायिका - ये तीनों जो हमारी महत्वपूर्ण संस्थाएं हैं, इनकी तरह भारत के संविधान में हमें ऐसी कोई चीज नहीं दी गई है, जिसके तहत हम अपने को इस व्यवस्था का खंभा कहें। मुझे लगता है कि जर्नलिज़्म की जो सारी समस्याएं हैं या मीडिया का जो रुळान बदला है, क्यों आज कृषि का क्षेत्र इतना महत्वपूर्ण नहीं है, जो agrarian crisis है, जो बहुत सारे issues हैं, वे इतने महत्वपूर्ण नहीं हैं, क्यों वे हाशिए पर चले जाते हैं, क्यों आज मार्केट इतना महत्वपूर्ण हो गया है, मुझे लगता है कि इन सभी सवालों का रिश्ता इस बात से जुड़ा हुआ है कि कहीं न कहीं हम मीडिया के लोग अपने को व्यवस्था का चौथा खंभा मानते हैं। अगर हमने अपने को इस समाज व्यवस्था का, इस सोसायटी का, इस देश का, आम लोगों का जो जन-जीवन है, उसका पहला खंभा माना होता, तो शायद मीडिया को सही दिशा मिल सकती थी और मीडिया सही दिशा में जा सकता था। अभी बहुत वक्त नहीं गुज़रा है, चीजें अब भी बदल सकती हैं, लेकिन जरूरत है जद्दोज़हद की, जरूरत है अंदर की बहस की, जो लगभग मीडिया से गायब है। मीडिया जनतंत्र का बहुत बड़ा फोरम है, लेकिन यह कैसी विडंबना है कि मीडिया के अंदर स्वयं जनतंत्र नहीं है या इतना कम है जिससे कि बहस-मुबाहिसे का माहौल बने। मुझे लगता है कि आज की गोष्ठी के माध्यम से जो शुरुआत हुई है, वह बेमिसाल है, बहुत अच्छी है। भारत के जनतंत्र का जो सबसे बड़ा मंदिर है, वहां से शुरुआत हुई है, क्यों न हम मीडिया के लोग प्रभावित होकर, इससे inspire होकर इस डिबेट को आगे बढ़ाएं। बहुत सारी यूनियनें हैं, लेकिन वे क्या करती हैं, मुझे नहीं मालूम है। मुझे लगता है कि हर individual journalist को इसके बारे में सोचना चाहिए कि हम इस देश के लोगों का, इस देश की समाज व्यवस्था का पहला खंभा बनें, हम चौथा खंभा बनकर अपना सीना न फुलाएं, हम वाकई चौथे खंभे नहीं हैं, अगर हमें बनना है, तो पहला खंभा बनना है। धन्यवाद।

(Mementos to Prof. M.S. Swaminathan and Shri M. Damodaran were presented)

अब आप सब लोग चाय के लिए आमंत्रित हैं।

(The assembly then adjourned for tea)

**THE WORKSHOP ON PARLIAMENT AND MEDIA
CONTINUED AFTER TEA-BREAK AT 1.20 P.M.**

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SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Welcome to you all. We are in the last part of the session which we are having here after two days. I would request the staff of Rajya Sabha to present a bouquet to Shri Nilotpal Basu. Mr. Nilotpal Basu is not new to us. We have seen him working in the House, Rajya Sabha. We have heard his speeches. He is very well known as a fiery speaker in the House on various issues. We have reported him also. Today, Mr. Basu is going to talk about the Committee System which is there in Parliament for many years. Yesterday, we were told that there are 24 Standing Committees of the Parliament and some issues were raised whether the Committee system should be opened to Press, the work which is being done in the inter-session time. All these things were raised in one or two days. Some answers came and some answers still remain to come. So, I would request Mr. Basu to proceed with his presentation.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Good Afternoon. I think it is my privilege to be invited here by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat to speak in this very important workshop on Media and the Parliament. Now, to start with, it is very refreshing for me to have come here because it brings back old memories and I see a lot of people among our friends in the media and also officials of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. This gives me an occasion also to express my indebtedness to many of the officers from whom I have also understood what Parliament is all about. Now, the first point that I would like to make is that the relationship between Media and Parliament is symbiotic. The Parliamentary democratic system that we have adopted in this country is based

on three pillars, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. I think, all of us understand that the strength of our democracy is schematised on the basis of a very clear-cut definition of the powers of these three pillars and the separation of those powers. The Parliament's main function lies in the capacity of the Parliament to make the Executive of the day accountable. Accountability is the watchword for the relationship between Executive of the day and the Parliament. The relationship between the Media and the Parliament is symbiotic because the legislature on its own cannot really make the Executive accountable but for the manner the media covers the Parliament. We have seen day in and day out that some serious Parliamentarians and many of my colleagues in those days -- and some of the Parliamentarians that I do see -- doing all kinds of strange things day in and day out. But, at the same time, there is definitely a committed band of Parliamentarians always around who work and who articulate and who take the best of efforts to make the Government accountable on the Floor of the House. Now, in the morning at 11.00 A.M. when the Question Hour starts, the kind of application of mind, the kind of experience, the kind of follow-up that a serious Parliamentarian puts up in the 30 seconds he has in his or her disposal is to really ask a pointed question and put the Government on the map. The next day you find in the morning newspapers that even though in that 30 seconds the best effort that the Parliamentarian has put up in putting the Government on the map is not reported and the less we talk about the electronic media, the better. Earlier, we had advanced version of the Parliamentary proceedings on the porticoes. Thankfully, the Speaker intervened. Now that kind of scene is not there in the portico. Nevertheless, we find there is very little Parliamentary reporting on what goes within the House and therefore, any Government for that matter can get away with murder. There failure actually does not get reported and several people, and, I know lots of very serious media persons also harbour this illusion. How is it that the Parliamentary standard is going down?

At the same time, all of us have to look inwards. What are we doing to make the Parliament accountable to the people in articulating the right kind of issues? If there is an incentive in media reporting of the Parliament, which really does not highlight that serious part of the activities of the Parliament and sensationalism, it gets disproportionate premium. Then are we also not collectively contributing towards disincentivising mindless role that the Parliament plays and disincentivising serious Parliamentary work in terms of making the Executive of the day accountable to the Parliament?

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (CONTD.): Therefore, I think, the first point we need to know is about the symbiotic relationship between media and Parliament. In a sense, both of them are very important institutions. They must combine together to make the Government of the day accountable to Parliament and, through Parliament, to people. We are, by definition, committed to this objective and if something is amiss today in present times we need to look inwards towards that.

The second question immediately comes to my mind is how Parliament will make the Government of the day, the executive of the day, accountable to people. Fortunately, I can share my personal views here. I grew up, at least, in my formative days as Parliamentarian reading those Monday columns of Kieth Flouri who used to cover the Rajya Sabha. He was the one gentleman who was sitting on chair from 11 to 5 or till whatever the time Parliament carried out its business. For many of us who had some sense of commitment to our work in Parliament, one line of praise in that Monday column of Kieth Flouri was really a trophy. A sentence or a couple of them sharply criticising our stupidity during the earlier week would, actually, help us in finding our feet in Parliament and understanding what needs to be done in terms of holding the Government accountable. I think that kind of media reporting or that kind of incisive insight into the functioning of Parliament really made great contribution in the emergence of the institution of Parliament.

Many of our senior friends in the media would lovingly remember Keith Flouri's role and contribution to media reporting of Parliament. I can very frankly share with you that some of us could do something meaningful in Parliament largely due to the kind of contribution which came from media.

One of the major instruments that are available to legislature is Committee System. I tried to follow, now-a-days, newspaper. I do not watch TV much. I can tell you that there is hardly any coverage about how the Committee System functions in Parliament. I can also frankly say that if that is the case, it is loss for the media, rather than that of anybody else. It is because our Committee System evolved over the years combining the best of both the British and the American System. As you know, in the American System, the President is directly elected by people. It is an executive Presidency. Therefore, the accountability of the administration is to the Senate and the Congress. The Secretaries come and appear before Committees and plays an important role. But the British System is similar to our system. But what we have done in our country is a combination of the two. If you follow the evolution of Indian Parliament -- in the early 90s -- the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees have evolved mainly drawing upon the experience of the American System. Earlier, what we had? We had the major replication of the British system. We had Parliamentary Committees in Parliament to exercise rights and privileges of Parliament. There is a difference between the earlier generation of Parliamentary Committees and the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees. If you look at our Constitutional scheme of things, there are three exclusive functions of Parliament. The first one is to legislate, secondly, to pass the Budget and the third one is, if need arises, to amend the Constitution. No other institution -- Executive or Judiciary -- does have the right to perform any of these functions. Unfortunately, I would not go deep into this new debate that has come about the role of judiciary and the question of

judicial activism and extreme case of juridical overreach. Sometimes, an impression is created that as if the judiciary has the God given right to take executive decisions. It is because, many-a-time, judicial orders also go into the areas of exercising the executive powers. And we, sometimes, find judiciary opining on legislation. Also, in extreme cases, we have seen how judiciary opine on how the Parliament or the Assembly should conduct itself. Now, these are aberrations. These are taking place precisely because the executive or the legislature is not able to discharge their functions in the manner that they should have been. Our Constitutional democratic scheme is so clearly defined that if these two organs -- executive and legislature -- fail to discharge their responsibility and when void is created thereupon then the judiciary asserts in a manner that some of the responsibilities and the powers of the executive and legislature are taken over by the judiciary. So, therefore, it is all the more important in the overall interest of Parliamentary system of democracy that the executive has to be made accountable. I will give you an example. One of the committees that we have traditionally in Parliament is a Committee on Petitions. In the earlier days, if you go through the Parliament records, there were umpteen records of public petitions coming to the Speaker or the Chairman and the Committee on Petitions has certain quasi judicial functions. And, it was directly attending to those issues. But, as and how, this process has weakened. Even see the large number of public interest litigations, which are taken up by the Judiciary. It is one of those areas where we find the judicial overreach in great abundance. Actually it is the Parliament, as the representative of the sovereign, to discharge this function. That was envisaged as a key instrument to deal with public grievances, the kind of difficulties that people face on day-to-day basis. And, the Parliament was also a right forum to make the Government accountable. So, we had this elaborate system of Parliamentary Committees through which the Government could be made accountable.

To start with, we have the Public Accounts Committee. Here the convention is so strong that somebody from the Opposition would Chair the Public Accounts Committee. The budget-making is the third most important function of the Parliament. The responsibility of the executive of the day to justify, defend its Budget and the actual expenditure is taken up by the Public Accounts Committee. So, the Public Accounts Committee happens to be the 'Mother of all Parliamentary Committees'. And, that is the way it should be. To strengthen, to reinforce this idea, I mean, it is out of nothing that this idea did not arise, but because of making it practical that somebody from the Opposition is made the Chairman of this Committee.

Then, there is the Estimates Committee, which is also a financial Committee and mainly constituted by the Lok Sabha Members. Then, we have Committee on Public Undertakings, which is, again, a Joint Parliamentary Committee where Members from both the Houses of Parliament study the functioning of public sector units. I don't know, the way things are going, the need of this Committee will any longer be there. Then, we have Committee on Petitions, about which I have already briefly referred to. We have, then, the Assurance Committee, which is, again, very important because the Government day-in-and-day-out gives assurances in the House. Ranaji is sitting next to me. I had the privilege of working with him. Now, we have the RTI. But, in those days, there was no RTI. And, it was really a very, very big challenge to get information even out of the Government. And, if you have to make somebody accountable first of all you have to get the information from the Government. Therefore, the Assurance Committee was actually the only instrument available not only to Parliament, but also, maybe, to the people to find out what the Government was doing. I remember, in response to certain pointed questions, we had an assurance that the Government will come back with the information. That 'coming back' was really an exercise in perpetuity. The system

was, Ranaji will be able to tell me, that after three months, if the Government had not fulfilled what it had committed in the House, it constituted a default under assurance that they had given in the House. So, after three months, the Government would ask for extension for another three months, and, then, for another three months. So, it needed a real persuasion by the Parliamentary Committee on Assurances to actually make the Government come out with those assurances not only just in terms of information, but also other concrete responsibility or concrete commitment in terms of implementation of something that the Government had committed and it had not fulfilled. So, that also constitutes a part of the Assurance Committee. So, these are the ideas, which, again, I tell you, to reinforce the basic point. The basic function of Parliament is to make the Government accountable. And, these Committees constituted a very powerful instrument in the hands of Parliament to make the Government accountable.

Then, we have the Committee on the Papers Laid on the Table. This Committee is about reports and the accounts that the Government needs to submit before the Parliament because they are either public sector entities or formed on the basis of statutory provisions that the Parliament has created statutory institutions, it is the Parliament, which was, in a way, their Annual General Body. I mean, the Annual General Body functions of a corporate has to be substituted by the Parliament in terms of making the people, who are responsible for governance, accountable. And, it is in this regard we found that the Parliamentary institution did not function effectively. There were instances where for 10-12 years the Annual Reports and Annual Accounts had not been submitted to the Parliament by these bodies. Whenever this Committee started functioning, we saw it. Then, it was made mandatory that, at least, if the Government fails to submit the Annual Report, it had also to come up before the House to explain as to why it was so. And, there were public-spirited Parliamentarians also who would take up this question on the

Floor of the House, of course, along with the Committee. And, that would put a pressure on the Government. I think, with this kind of reporting also things have improved. When we always lament about degeneration of the system where Parliament has been able to function effectively, I don't think that media ever reports that; I mean, when a Parliamentarian or a Parliamentary Committee makes the Government accountable which leads to the improvement of the functioning of the system, there is hardly anything reported. As ordinary citizens also, we must be concerned about, be sensitive to the sense of cynicism that is developing in the citizenry also. And, we have seen that this is one system where there is some possibility of making the system work in the larger interest of the people. If those instruments are not used and, in default in the usage of that instrument, if it is not reported to the people and people are not sensitised about those defaults, I think, we all of us are collectively doing a great disservice. I mean, sometimes people turn to extremism. They may also be having good reasons to do so because if all of us, who are entrusted with certain responsibilities to make the system accountable, to make the system sensitive to the sensitivities of the people, their difficulties, I think, this is bound to happen in a much bigger way. Therefore, the Committee on Papers Laid on the Table is there. The Assurance Committee is there. Apart from the Public Accounts Committee, there is Committee on Public Undertakings.

Other than that, there is another set of Committees which deals with the infrastructure, the utilities and the facilities needed to run the Parliament. We have House Committee which goes into the accommodation aspect; we have the Committee on Members' Amenities, etc. We also have a Committee on how to conduct the proceedings, that is, the Business Advisory Committee, which meets very regularly and all the important Parliamentarians, representing different parties, are Members of this Committee -- of course, the Presiding Officer is also there --

which decides about the working and the kinds of legislations that will come up. So, that is the second set of Committees.

Then there is another Committee which does not figure so prominently nowadays after the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees have started functioning. This is called the Select Committee. Now, because legislation is an exclusive prerogative of Parliament, sometimes, a misunderstanding crops up among the people. Sometimes, a very complex issue comes up and the people complain that the law is outdated and, therefore, the Parliament should pass a new law. But whether there will be the passage of a law on a very vital subject or not does not depend on Parliament alone. The law becomes the property of the Parliament only after a legislation is introduced by the Government in the Parliament. As I said in the very beginning, legislation is an exclusive prerogative of the Parliament; but there is a slight self-contradiction in such a description because the legislative process is such that it cannot get initiated unless the Executive introduces the proposed legislation in the Legislature. So, though the exclusive prerogative on a legislation is that of the Legislature, yet it is dependent on the Executive in the manner in which the Executive initiates a particular legislation. So, the Select Committees are instruments where there is a major controversy on any legislation and on some of those legislations which used to have far-reaching consequences for the society at large and for future generations, Parliament used to constitute Select Committees which used to go into the proposed provisions of the legislation, work through that legislation, and, if needed, come up with a new legislation which was to be placed before the House.

I will now come to the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees and the way they examine the proposed legislations. There is a fundamental difference between the functioning of the Select Committees and the functioning of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees. If a legislation goes to

the Select Committee, then the prerogative of the Executive on the legislation itself is shifted directly to the Legislature. The Legislature, through the Select Committee, could come up with a completely fresh legislation which the Standing Committee cannot do. So, it is the Select Committee's proposed legislation on which the Legislature is voting for ensuring the final passage. So, we can say that this was the old generation of Parliamentary Committees.

Now, during 1993, if I can recall correctly, it was the then Speaker Shivraj Patil, who initiated this process. First we had only three Standing Committees. It was an experiment only. I think, the whole idea came up because of the fact that the Parliament was unable to discharge two of its basic functions, i.e., making legislations and preparing and passing the Budgets, in the manner it should discharge. It is because in the Parliament session, in the plenaries, it is difficult to address some of the new complexities that were coming up in addressing the quality of legislation that is needed. Therefore, this idea of the Standing Committees came up.

I will also give my personal views on the controversy that the Vijayji has referred to, i.e., the controversy of throwing the functioning of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees open to the media.

Now, I think, it is also important to mention here that in our system, the Ministers normally do not appear before the Committees. There are, of course, occasions where some Parliamentary Committees have been created because of the huge public controversy on a particular issue. Sometimes to study a specific subject also, the Parliamentary Committees are formed. I can give you an example. We had the Share Market Scam in 2001, which came to surface and, therefore, a Joint Parliamentary Committee was set up, which went into the matter for 16 months. I think, some of these issues might have been covered by Mr. Damodaran in the first lecture. Now, that Joint Parliamentary Committee also decided to call some of the

Finance Ministers or former Finance Ministers in some of its sittings. On such occasions, there is a provision that with the permission of the Speaker or the Chairman, you can also call the Ministers. But, normally, it is the officers who defend the position of the Government before the Committees. There is a big difference. In the House, it is the Minister who defends the work of the Ministry and the collective principle of accountability of the Cabinet that is discharged in the Parliament, but in the Committee system, before the Committees, it is the actual officers who exercise the executive powers, defend, explain and justify the actions of the Ministry. There is a hell and heaven difference between the two. If you work in the system, you will find that there is a hell and heaven difference between the two. The additional advantage of these Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees, as it has evolved, is that the Committee can decide that any private citizen, who is an independent expert on the subject that is being studied by the Standing Committee, can be summoned as a witness and he or she can enrich the collective understanding of the Committee on that subject. Sometimes, that becomes very, very important. For example, to unravel the accounts of a public sector company, it becomes almost impossible for non-experts like some of us were to understand the financial accountability of a company unless you have a professional. Fortunately, I had the experience of working with the present hon. Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri K. Rahman Khan, who himself is a qualified Chartered Accountant. While serving in Committee, he was very smart and invariably caught hold of the company management in finding out the mistakes or blunders. Sometimes, things are done by company management with mala fide intentions. Normally we do not have that system and in the Secretariat also, unfortunately, we do not always have such officers who would be having expertise on all aspects. It is a very, very important, especially with the complexity that has come about in the overall functioning of the economy in the country today and functioning of the

Parliament. So, that is a very big improvement that we can call the experts and understand the subjects and specialise the nature of information and knowledge that is necessary for the Parliament to be empowered with to deal with the issues and the kind of seriousness that it deserves. The third point is availability of time. In the House the time available for going into the nitty gritty of legislation is not available. The same factors are there for the study of Budget. Those of you who cover Parliament Sessions may be aware of this. We have a very good system. Once we have the general macro-level debate on the Budget in the beginning about the broad directions and so on and so forth, then the House gets adjourned for three weeks roughly. Then the Committees go through the Demands for Grants where the nitty gritty of the Budget is involved. Then the Parliamentary Standing Committee comes up with concrete observations about the specific aspects of the Budget. Enriched with Standing Committee's recommendations and observations, the hon. Members can take part in the discussion of a particular Ministry and makes the Government "accountable" on the floor of the House on certain omissions and commissions in the Budget and in terms of its capacity to fulfil or not to fulfil the expectations of the people which is ultimately the final objective of making the Government accountable. So, number of Committees increased. There was also a very major debate on constitutional aspects because legislation as a whole, the Parliament as a whole has three exclusive functions. They are Budget making, law making and amending the Constitution. Of course, I have missed out one of the major functions, that is, making or un-making of Government. Without Parliament's majority, Government cannot function. After losing the confidence in the House, Government cannot function. Out of these three or four functions, two functions are exclusive for Lok Sabha, and that is why people sometimes taunt at Rajya Sabha Members. But I think that Rajya Sabha Members should not be overly-sensitive about this. Both the principle functions, that is, Budget making and making or

unmaking of the Government are bestowed exclusively on Lok Sabha because our bicameral system is evolved like this only. Rajya Sabha basically acts as a "safety valve" for people who are not in the thick of the day-to-day political activities so that they can react objectively and dispassionately on some of the legislations. In the heat of the movement, some legislation may come up, so there has to be safety valve. But this system is evolved in this manner only. Rajya Sabha is often seen as a backdoor entry for people who do not get elected. I should not elaborate on people who have chosen that route. It does not sound nice. Our Constitution makers have understood that there has to be some greater importance attached to Lok Sabha which consists of people who are directly elected. Therefore, these two functions of making or unmaking Government and of Budget making are with Lok Sabha. When this question of legislation came and of Budget study came, the question arose that the Constitution has not provided for Rajya Sabha Members to be part of what you call Money Bill or financial business of the House. They, of course, have a role. Unlike the British system where the House of Lords have no role to play in the financial business, in the case of Indian system we have a provision that Rajya Sabha can discuss on the Money Bill. If the views of Rajya Sabha are different from that of the Lok Sabha, then the views of Rajya Sabha become infructuous and redundant. They can debate and they have opinion, but ultimately it is the say of the Lok Sabha which prevails upon Rajya Sabha. If the Rajya Sabha does not pass the Money Bill within 14 days after its passage to the Rajya Sabha, then it is deemed to have been passed by both the House of Parliament in the form in which it was passed by Lok Sabha. In the Constitution, there is no role assigned to Rajya Sabha in terms of Money Bill and financial business. But in the overall functioning of the Parliament and in the Parliamentary Standing Committee, especially the Joint Parliamentary Committees, participation of Rajya Sabha Members is absolutely necessary. If you look at the composition of

Rajya Sabha, the composition of Rajya Sabha itself represents the totality of the political complexion of all Provincial Assemblies taken together. So, in the Joint Parliamentary Committees, you are virtually having a representation of the entire political spectrum of the country in a proportional manner. On the other hand, Lok Sabha has representatives directly elected by people. It has legislative or moral authority that it represents virtually the entire political spectrum of the country. So, exclusion of Rajya Sabha Members from this newly formed Standing Committees was ruled out. But again the problem was that if it includes the Rajya Sabha Members then how can the recommendations of Parliamentary Committees on financial matters have mandatory character? So, the compromised formula was that two-thirds Members from Lok Sabha and one-third Members from Rajya Sabha will constitute a body whose recommendations will be voluntary, not mandatory. Its recommendations will not be mandatory; only voluntary. But, what has evolved over the years that the usefulness of the Parliamentary Standing Committees, the quality of reports was so good that in most cases, especially on legislations, you will find that almost the entire set of recommendations, that comes from the Standing Committees, is indeed accepted by the Government, barring few exceptions. The quality of the legislation, of course, improves because of the kind of scrutiny which goes on. And, as I was explaining, the Committee with the hindsight also has the advantage of best expertise and advice that is acceptable to the country. So, this system has come to function. Therefore, the quality of the Parliamentary Standing Committees is generally very good. I will be frank with you and share my private views that cutting across party lines, a small portion of the Parliament is very serious, very good and very committed. In the Committee system, it is this small minority of Parliamentarians who are actually authoring the reports and they cut across political lines.

Then, I come to my personal view of having strong opposition to throwing the Parliamentary Committees open to the media. I can share that. I had also personal discussions with former and very eminent Speaker that we had in Lok Sabha. He was very much for this thing from the standpoint of transparency. But, as a practising Parliamentarian, what we found that the kind of bipartisan unanimity that you can evolve in the Committee system will go the day Parliamentary Committees are thrown open to the media. Then, it will be a replication of what happens in the House. People will speak along Party lines. I think, there are issues which need a national response, and sometimes, because of the manner in which our polity stands fragmented today, it is well impossible to achieve that kind of a response if what happens in the Committee becomes a replica of what goes on inside the House. Secondly, from my personal experience, I can also tell you that there are officers who will also find inhibited by the presence of media in, sometimes, coming out with the truth. When these Committees investigate matters, I mean, they do not have the advantage of investigative arms attached to them. Suppose a Parliamentary Committee has examined some scam. It comes out with details based on the replies of the Government and governmental agencies themselves and comes up with the recommendations that it should be referred to the CBI, or, for that matter, to any other investigative agency. So, the basic observations about those issues will have to be based on the replies of the Government more than the written statements that these Government departments or governmental agencies come up with. It is the efficiency or the effectiveness of the Parliament Members who are Members of the Committee, who, through the grilling process, bring out the truth. Then, if you have a situation where it is happening in front of the media, I am sure, many of the officers will find inhibited to come out with slight deviations from the official position that the Government may have already taken. But, those are very important small leads on the basis of which a

Parliamentary Committee comes up with its report. Then, I was making a point that this is loss for media because these Parliamentary Committees' reports are gold mine of information. On the basis of these reports, you can file hundreds of stories. But, again, this is really a regret that while media is rightly sometimes very critical of the stupidities that sometimes Parliament indulges in, but the real serious work of the Parliament, which has now been, in a big way, shifted and vested in the functioning of the Committees, that does not get the coverage that it deserves and the role that it plays in making the Government accountable. So, I think, some of us, over the years, have taken it up with the Presiding Officers. I know of occasions where both, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, have even called meetings of Editors of newspapers and channels to urge them to properly cover the outcome of the Committee functioning. But, I think, not very appreciable results have come out. But, perhaps, that has more to do with the new corporatised structure of the media and the pre-set agenda that the media may have on different issues. So, this is all what I have to say. I did not strictly stick to the Committee system alone, but I think all the essential aspects about the Committee system have been shared with you.

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: Thank you, Mr. Basu. In fact, you touched three very important issues. We talked about the accountability of the Executive and where the Parliament and the media have come together, as you have said, the symbiotic relationship between the two can force the Government to be accountable to the people and to the country as well. Secondly, you spoke about the nuances of the working of different Committees. I think many of us are aware, but most of us, who have joined this profession recently, or, those who have started coming to Parliament recently, will really find this information very useful that you have given us on how the Parliamentary Committees work. In fact, I have also been covering Parliament for a long time. I feel the reports of the Parliamentary Standing

Committees, which are released during the session of Parliament, are most extensively covered in hundred of stories which are published. I think, the Press is covering, to a large extent, what is exposed by the Committees, and the recommendations given by the Committees are reported. But, there is some lacuna. As you said, not every Committee's report is reported in a manner in which the Chairmen and Members of Committees may want. Now, I would like the session to be thrown open to a few questions here.

SHRI SUHAS BORKER: At the outset, I would thank Shri Nilotpal Basu for giving such a schematic and wide overview of the Committee system. But, he had very interesting observation and the observation was that there should be a kind of introspection in the media itself on its contributions in undermining the Parliamentary system because you went to the extent of saying that for the falling standards of debate in the Parliament, media is responsible. Do you link it up with the political economy of media? And, there is kind of an attempt to undermine the system itself. As you referred in the last point, at the end of your talk, that the corporatised media is undermining Parliamentary democracy.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: This is a very interesting, very tempting question but, at the same time, I think, the capacity in which I am speaking here also demands certain circumspection. I cannot fully share with you my personal views because I do not want to unnecessarily embarrass the Rajya Sabha Secretariat by thrusting upon people my personal views. What I meant to say is that any democracy worth its salt is a dynamic process and since political economy is very much a major driving force of the society, of course, it will impact all our functions. Why is it that many things, which we have not seen in the yesteryears, are happening today? So, obviously, it has an impact. Forget about all other issues. Take the example of column centimeters that are dedicated to Parliament coverage. I would like to say something without contradicting my good friend, Vijay ji. Each one of you in the media come out with the old data, say of, fifties or sixties or even seventies, and, compare the amount of coverage that then was accorded to the Parliament with what is accorded now. You will see a clear change. This is a part of a process,

and, people's voice is getting disproportionately circumscribed, if not, delegitimized. I mean the role of elected representatives is getting weakened, eroded. There is no doubt about that. But further elaboration would really require taking a very, very specific political position, which I want to avoid from this platform.

SHRI RAKESH KAPOOR: You said that the media and the Parliament are symbiotic. Of course, it is symbiotic. Now, it has become synergetic rather. The extension of power to media, and, in turn, the power, which the Parliament has in itself have become to mitigated that it has now become a problem for the common Indian, for a common person to distinguish between what is going on in the Parliament and what is going on in the Press. Both have become so synergetic.

Secondly, my last and pertinent point which I want to make is that the corporatisation of media is not the only concern today; the corporatisation of the Parliament is also a concern. You can see each and every lobby's Members in Rajya Sabha. You can see the consumer products baron there, you can see the media baron there, and, you can also see the liquor baron there. In the earlier days, you could not think of all this. Now, it has become difficult for any person to know whether it is the Parliament of India, which is running the country or it is the media, which is running the country because both have shared interests.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: As I started in the beginning, the heart of our Parliamentary democracy scheme lies in the definition of the powers of each of these three organs and the separation of those powers.

I think, it is not a question rather it is a judgement that you have made. I largely share it. The point is that in terms of actual functioning of the Parliament, what I see is a role reversal. Earlier, the media was reporting what used to go on in the Parliament but, today, more Parliamentarians are using more material, which

comes out in the media. That role reversal has been there. That is why I find that we can use each other as symbiotic entities to float and sink; the choice is ours. I think, more sensible people will tend to agree that we are symbiotically sinking ourselves more than floating.

On the lobby issue, that you spoke about, unfortunately, some of us had this bitter experience when the legislation relating to election and representation in Rajya Sabha came up. I was the person who opposed the Bill on all the three stages; firstly, on the question of constitutionality of the legislation, secondly, at the stage of the actual legislation, and, then, at the third reading. Unfortunately, we were in the minority, and, that Bill got passed. It was on that date when this Bill was passed that it really opened up these floodgates. In the name of controlling corruption in Rajya Sabha election, much more momentous scope of use of money power and corporate power was opened up.

SHRI KALYAN BAROOAH: I have a question on conflict of interests. Recently, there have been incidents of businessmen and industrialists sitting in the Committees, which have a major say in taking policy decisions. Do you think it should be made mandatory for Members to declare their interests before sitting in a Committee?

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Once, I had a personal experience. I do not mean anything. I had the best of personal relations. When we were having discussions on the tourism policy of the Government, one gentleman -- I will not name him, he is no more -- who was representing the hotel lobby, got up and put a very pointed question which could have an impact on his bottomline, let us put it crudely. I got up and told the Chairman, this gentleman happens to be from the hotel lobby. (Interruptions) I know. I know. I will come to that. I am just giving the background.

So, this point was there, and, many other small, small issues came up. In fact, I should have mentioned in the beginning itself about the Committee on Ethics. This is how it evolved on those lines. We had a recommendation, which has now become part of the Rules of the House. In case of some of these Committees, which have a bearing on the functioning of the House, the recommendations of that Committee get incorporated into the Rules of Business by adoption by the House itself.

I think, it is Rule no. 294, Declaration of Interest, where three provisions are there. It states very categorically, "(1) Whenever a member has a personal or specific pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in a matter being considered by the Council or a Committee thereof, he shall declare the nature of such interest notwithstanding any registration of his interests in the Register, and shall not participate in any debate taking place in the Council or its Committees before making such declaration. (2) On a division in the Council if the vote of a member is challenged on the ground of personal, pecuniary or direct interest in the matter to be decided, the Chairman may, if he considers necessary, call upon the member making the challenge to state precisely the grounds of his objection, and the member whose vote has been challenged shall state his case, and the Chairman shall then decide whether the vote of the member should be disallowed or not and his decision shall be final; provided that the vote of a member is challenged immediately after the division is over and before the result is announced by the Chairman." So, you have got some provision. But, again, who knew that Madhu Koda had four thousand crore rupees? So, the Members may always not be in a position to precisely locate the kind of information that is necessary to make this enforceable.

QUESTION: Sir, you talked about media largely ignoring the Standing Committee Reports. But, what about the Government? You can cite a number of examples where the Government just takes opposite decision what the Standing Committee

had suggested or recommended. What should ideally be media's role there? Should media pressurise the Government to take a decision in accordance with the Standing Committee's direction?

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: I think, on this point, I don't agree with you on the magnitude of the problem. Of course, there are cases where the Government does not accept the Committee's recommendations. But, what is happening more than often is that Government is actually accepting or implementing bulk of the recommendations that the Committee makes. When there is a disconnect, it is for the Members to pick on those disconnects that are there between the actual course that the Government takes on the floor and the Standing Committee's recommendations. What I said earlier about pendency of the process, the one advantage is most of the recommendations, or you can say 99 per cent of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committees are unanimous in nature. So, they have a moral weight and when that moral weight is also ignored by the Government, it is a serious matter. It usually blows up and, I think, media at times actually discharges its responsibilities. But, there are also occasions when media does not do the follow-up work which ought to be done.

प्रश्न: सर, जब सरकार पार्लियामेंटरी कमेटी की रिक्मेंडेशंस को मानने के लिए बाध्य नहीं है, तो फिर इसकी जरूरत क्या है?

श्री नीलोत्पल बसु: इसकी जरूरत इसलिए है कि पार्लियामेंट जो अपनी राय सुनाएगी या सिफारिश सुनाएगी, सामूहिक तौर पर पार्लियामेंट की ओर से ये बातें आ रही हैं, उसका एक अलग महत्व है। दूसरी बात यह है कि पार्लियामेंटरी कमेटी के पास वह औजार है, जिसके जरिए पार्लियामेंट यह निश्चित कर सकती है कि जो जानकारियाँ आम तौर पर लोगों को या पार्लियामेंट को, उपलब्ध नहीं हैं, सरकार उनका खुलासा करे। तीसरी बात यह है कि जब कोई बाध्यता न होने के कारण सरकार किसी पार्लियामेंटरी कमेटी की सिफारिश को अनदेखा करती है, तो उसके आधार पर आम तौर पर जनता के बीच एक और बड़ी बहस होने का भी एक मौका हाथ लगता है और उसी जगह पर मीडिया की भूमिका है। ज्यादातर यह होता है

कि मीडिया यह भूमिका नहीं निभाती है, लेकिन मीडिया के काम करने के लिए भी वह एक औजार के रूप में उपलब्ध होता है। वह उसके काम में आएगा या नहीं आएगा, वह उसको अनदेखा करेगी या नहीं करेगी, यह तो मीडिया के ऊपर निर्भर है।

SHRI VIJAY NAIK: I specially thank Nilotpal Basuji for being here. I thank you all for attending the three-day workshop which is the first workshop on behalf of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and its Media Advisory Committee. The interesting point which has been brought by Mr. Nilotpal Basu is that the subject of this workshop is 'Reflections of Parliament in the Media'. I think, we can have next workshop on the 'Media's Reflections in the Parliament', as he has just suggested because more and more media is now reflected. I remember his mentor Mr. Jyoti Basu and people like Madhu Dandavate, Madhu Limaye and many others actually spending hours together in the library and rushing to the House and raising very important issues of peoples' interest as well as national interest. Now, because the library is a little bit away, I think, Members may be finding it difficult to go to the library and do the research work. But, I think we should have that kind of a workshop also. I am thankful to all of you. I am also thankful to N. Ram, Mrinal Pandey, Vinod Sharma, Arun Jaitley, Pawan Bansal and Mr. Nilotpal Basu to have addressed us, enlightened us on lot of issues which we are dealing in everyday reporting. Thank you so much. Before I conclude, I would request the staff to give a momento to Mr. Basu. After that I will request Mr. Joshi to give his concluding remarks.

(A momento was then presented to Shri Nilotpal Basu)

SHRI N.C. JOSHI: We are indeed grateful to Mr. Nilotpal Basu for having come here and spoken on the Committee structure and how your perception is about the functioning of the Committees of Parliament and what kind of reporting of Parliamentary Committee Report should be there in the media. I express my sincere thanks to hon. Vice President and Chairman, Rajya Sabha and Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha for their presence at the inaugural session of this workshop.

In order to decide the format of this programme, useful inputs were received from Mr. Vijay Naik, Shri Rajgopalan and Shri Urmilesh who were ably supported by Shri Gurdeep Sappal and Shri Prasanna. And, the Secretary-General indeed lent his support. But for his support, perhaps we would not have been able to have this programme in such a scale. The logistic support was provided by the training unit and the present media unit of the Research and Library section. They deserve our thanks. Our reporters, our interpreters, our Watch and Ward staff, our CPWD services, both Civil and Electrical, as well as Horticulture and catering services deserve our thanks. Many of our officers and staff are working very sincerely for making this programme a great success. Our special thanks to the Lok Sabha TV and other members of present media who extensively covered this programme during all these three days. We express our gratitude to the eminent speakers, including Shri Nilotpal Basu who is present here before us, who attended various sessions of the workshop and made their presentations and shared their views with the participants. I also thank all of you for attending the workshop and for your overwhelming support and response to this workshop. In the end I would like to share one information with you and that is about some information which was wrongly given by a journalist member sitting here about the usage of library by our Members. In fact, Mr. Vijay Naik also referred to it. He told about the shifting of the library from old building to new building. The person concerned, who was here, made a reference that Members are not using the reference service and according to him may be 20-25 persons are using it. Then, I got the data collected and there is a note of the joint secretary and in-charge of Parliament Reference Service which reads as: "During the period from first January 2009 to 31st October 2009, 3290 references on various subjects of national and international topics have been supplied to hon. Members of both the Houses of Parliament". This data pertains to

period from February to July when there was no Parliament session going on. With these words I thank you all.

You are requested to please join for lunch.

(The Workshop then adjourned for the day)