

Festival of Thinkers: An interaction with eminent journalist Rajdeep Sardesai on January 11, 2015

“The studio has turned into a courtroom. Today, we embrace people we would have shunned years ago. We are now a nation of hyperventilation”- Mr. Rajdeep Sardesai

Gracing the Symbiosis campus with his presence, Mr. Rajdeep Sardesai addressed students from across various colleges in the university on Sunday morning. Talking about the ‘future of media in the internet age’, Mr. Sardesai opened up a critical discussion regarding the role of the media in an age where tweets and Facebook posts reach faster than a news broadcast. As part of the ‘Festival of Thinkers’, an initiative by Symbiosis International University which aims to facilitate student-industry interactions by inviting eminent thinkers from various professions, Mr. Sardesai led an interactive session with the students.

How we experience reality around us has changed over the years and the internet has proven to be one of the major catalysts for this change. Taking this forward, the session was centred around the idea of democratization of public opinion with the digitization of news. The day began with Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar, the Principal Director of Symbiosis addressing the audience. She was followed by Dr. Rajni Gupte, Vice Chancellor of the university introducing Mr. Sardesai.

Setting the agenda for the day’s session and discussing his camaraderie with Mr. Sardesai was Dr. Dileep Padgaonkar’s welcome address. His address was met with an enthusiastic response by the crowd. He recounted his days through his career and he shared anecdotes about some of the most interesting situations he had ever been in. Elaborating upon the social media space and its dangers, the mood throughout the address was light and cheerful.

With a nostalgic tone to his voice, Mr. Sardesai interacted with the audience about his journey in the television space so far. Establishing his connection with Dr. Padgaonkar and the Times of India, from where he started as a journalist, Mr. Sardesai discussed about the power of the camera and its capacity to capture events like nothing else. Elucidating upon the discourse of the news media, he raised a pivotal question to his audience. As a part of the media fraternity, who sets the national agenda? Who decides what news is, and what can be conveniently ignored? Ranging from issues of sensationalism to stereotypes about the Kashmir valley and the North-East, Mr. Sardesai managed to engage an audience under a common platform. With 403 licensed 24/7 news channels in the nation, has quantity enhanced quality? His witty rhetoric coupled with satirical anecdotes made the session worth remembering. Ending on a poignant note, he argued, that to adopt constructive journalism, we need “Television Respect Points” and not “Television Rating points”.

The day continued with a Question and Answer round with the audience. The vote of thanks was delivered by Professor Chandan Chatterjee whose address marked as a befitting end to the discussion opened up in the course of the day. Mr. Sardesai also autographed copies of his latest book ‘2014: The Election that Changed India’ for the students. Throwing the house open with stimulating discussions and thought provoking questions, the session was extremely engaging and productive.