

1st Justice Verma Memorial Lecture delivered on 18 .1.2015 by Mr Arun Jaitley, Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs & Ministry of Information & Broadcasting

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It is a tremendous privilege for me to have been invited to deliver the first Justice J.S Verma Memorial lecture being organized by the NBA.I have been asked to speak on the “Freedom and Responsibility of the Media”.

The fact that this has been named after Justice Verma itself is a tribute to one of the tallest judges we have had in recent times. He was an unusual judge. He was outspoken, he spoke his mind out, he never minced his words, he was a man of immense scholarship, and he was committed to both moral and constitutional values. And above all at an individual level he was a man of great affection – those who knew him, will tell you that. I won't repeat the landmark judgments that he has laid down, and the contributions that he made – Justice Raveendran has dealt with them in length. He became a Judge in 1972 at a relatively young age and he probably had one of the longest innings any individual has had as a judge of the High Court or the Supreme Court. In 1972 he became a Judge and barely within three years of his elevation he was a party to a judgement in the famous Habeas Corpus case. The ADM Jabalpur case along with another Judge was decided by him in the Madhya Pradesh High Court, a view that did not find favour with the Supreme Court and a judgement of the SC which perhaps till date remains the most controversial and the most criticized judgement the Supreme Court has ever delivered.

As a Judge of the SC, whether it was gender equality or it was human rights or it was probity, judicial independence, all his judgements leaned in favour of what was morally and ethically right. He found and discovered the constitutional rationale to support that point of view. After his retirement, he decided not to go in for any assignment. The only one that he was persuaded to accept, because that was a job only meant for former Chief Justices was to become the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission and it was only after great persuasion that he agreed to accept that assignment – a job which he performed to the best of his ability. He remained a conscious keeper of the society. He wrote, he spoke on issues on which he felt very strongly. I remained in active touch with him during the period when he lived the life of as ordinary citizen and on a number of occasions, he would pick me up , pick up the telephone, contact and speak to me either agree or disagree with the view that I had expressed in Parliament. And when I needed some advice, it is no secret that I went up to him. I remember on one occasion there was a suggestion being informally mooted and we were being contacted on whether we would support that, about alteration in age relating to Supreme Court judges. The first person, I decided to go and confide in was Justice J.S Verma. He almost warned me that you are on trial and I will be watching you, please don't allow this to happen. And he gave good strong constitutional and moral reasons why this should not happen. My last conversation with him was in this very room. It was a private function of somebody who was a non lawyer, a doctor who was looking after his wife and a function in their family which both he and I were attending, it was a social occasion. There were not too many people that we both knew, so we sat next to each other. He was so deeply interested in the affairs of the society that I remember the last sentence that he told me. It was on the quality of governance in India in general – both in the Government of India and in the States and he used a sentence which I probably find difficult to forget. He said look if at below par governance India can grow at 8 or 9 percent, what would happen if we had much higher quality of governance in India. We haven't been able to realize the potential. He said it very simply and this was the quality of his thought on account of which he's left his

footprints behind and he is going to be remembered for his extra ordinary capacity, his character, his ability.

“Freedom of Media and Responsibility of Media” is the subject of which I have been asked to speak. Over the last two decades, the conventional contours of the subject have completely changed. Have completely changed because the nature and content of media has changed and this is primarily on account of changes brought in both by technology and also changes in the economy itself. In the first instance, the definition of news has changed. Conventionally when we read our newspapers in the morning, we were all told that the news has to be accurately reported. The reporters or the newspapers’ viewpoint on the news is not relevant and the conventional saying was that the news is sacrosanct and the editorial page is which belongs to the Editor, he can express his views there. But then with the advent of 24x7 television, particularly the camera changed the definition of news. At this transient stage the definition of news was news is what camera can capture. What camera cannot capture ceases to be news. It had no value for television. And therefore what was sensational, what was exciting, what could help the TRP’s itself was news. The camera in particular had a wicked character. It loved bad news. So if there was a great harvest, it was no news, if it was a normal monsoon, it was no news, if there was no human tragedy it was no news. But if it was crime, it was controversy, it was corruption, it was floods, it was earthquake, it was famine, the camera always preferred to show something which was more destructive because it was out of the ordinary. And therefore news channels started concentrating on crime, corruption, controversies. Probably cricket and cinema were the only two sober TRP generating things that they would show. And we thought that to look for accurate news we had to go to newspapers in the morning but those who picked up the newspapers in the morning, had seen most of the news several times over the previous evening. So newspaper reporters then started going in for not reporting accurately what had happened, but really the story around the news. And this transient phase has continued.

In the last few years I am finding it that we are now in the next stage of transition where the digital medium is taking over and the digital medium is going to perhaps impact it more than what the television medium impacted on news. The impact of technology is now that almost by the minute you get to know what has been happening. You have flashes on your I pads and smart phones which inform you almost in real time the developments as they take place. And therefore what you watch on television whenever you get the time to watch television, that news is also no longer the fresh news because you have already come across headlines or detailed news on the digital medium itself. And slowly this impact is going to be on the economy of the medium because the size of the cake is limited and therefore advertisement revenue is going to be shared between all these mediums with the FM radio now bringing back the relevance of radio itself. For once, we had thought at one stage that radio was a dying medium but FM particularly the languages in the FM, and once you have the first round of auction, then you have you have 100s and 100s of cities where you have FM channel in their own regional languages are going to be there, there’s going to have an equal share of the advertisement revenue. So it is newspapers, television, digital medium and radio which are all going to now share the revenue and therefore the financial pressure of each of these mediums is going to increase. How does it impact on the viewer? I have already said that it is leading to a change of habits. I found that after the advent of 24/7, the time I spend on the newspaper was a reduced timing. Today I read my newspapers on the I pad or on the smart phone at night before I go to sleep because a very large part of the news is already loaded on to the sites of various newspapers by late evening and therefore rather than disturb my busy schedule in the morning with newspapers just before I go to sleep, after dinner, I have started reading my evening newspapers and those are exactly the newspapers that I have to otherwise read in the morning. There are cities in the world which have abandoned published newspapers. The largest newspaper groups have informed me that their circulations

are certainly not growing. The circulations are dipping. Magazine journalism is facing the most severe challenge after all these mediums. Some of the best known magazines in the world have closed down and gone over in to the digital fold. And therefore these are the changes which technology is bringing about. What is the stake holder's view of this and I think it is a huge empowerment of all sections which is taking place. The stakeholder and I consider myself as a participant in public life and a stakeholder –it's brought a huge change as far as our dealings with the medium of newspapers and channels is concerned. The 2014 election, I'll just give 3 illustrations, all three are personal but they illustrate a larger point. How do we communicate with the media? Of course you have press conferences, you have various other speeches which media will cover. In the month of August 2013, I decided till the last vote was cast, to write a Facebook blog every morning. It took me about 10 minutes to dictate it, another 4 to 5 mins to correct it and with 15 mins effort it was loaded on to the Facebook. As time passed by in weeks and months, others started reposting the same post those who were our political associates and friends. I continued this from August till the day of the polling till the last ballot was cast and an estimate was made that it was being posted to 15million people every day which is probably bigger than the size of the biggest newspapers. You don't have to change newspapers and news channels to report what you are saying, they would pick up whatever they wanted to pick up. There'll be people who will be writing against you, there'll be people writing for you and you could participate in the debate itself or lay down the agenda for your point of view using the new medium. The second illustration – traditionally we were upset if something which was wholly incorrect was being said. You had to ring up dozens of Editors and Reporters and explain your point of view. Today we don't bother to do that. Your counter view point is simply posted on to the social media. A debate starts, and your view point in due course, in due course in this case means minutes and hours and not days is picked up across the media with equal importance. It is as though you are running your own newspaper without investing a rupee. That is the empowerment of the stakeholders which has taken place. How it can be effectively used for a positive purpose, I have one illustration. In the initial months of the government, I had the additional responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. In the Kashmir Valley, four young men tried to allegedly break an army barrier. There was a confrontation and two of them died and two of them were seriously injured. The news has not appeared in the media as yet. But from the valley some one posted that this is an unfair incident that has taken place on to the social media. I was immediately informed about it by somebody who had picked it up in the social media and as the Defense Minister I spoke to the Chief of the Army staff. He had also not heard about it. So the social media informed us prior to the army set up informing its Chief. He found out...he gave an explanation which the local units must have given to him. I wasn't exactly convinced with the rationale of the explanation and it seemed that the death of the two young men was unfair. By this time the news had started breaking out and one impact of such a news of this kind that takes place is, that it acts as a trigger for the separatists to foment trouble because it gives them an opportunity to campaign against the Indian state 'look some young men have been unfairly killed'. Within minutes of the incident, I put a small post and a tweet regretting the incident as a Defence Minister. This is probably the first time that the Government of India within minutes of the incident regretted something that had happened. The next morning the army commander went to the residences of the victims, the army offered them compensation. Now instead of there being huge protests, it created another reaction. There was anger of course, but this is the first time the state has acted with a sense of responsibility. Ordinarily I would have come to know after a day, it would have taken some more time for the enquiries to be held, on day three we would have expressed our reaction, by this time hell would have broken loose, but the capacity if the social media to inform us before the army could inform its Chief even before the reporters could put it out in the news channels, is a fact that stakeholders today are able to utilize this change that is taking place much to the advantage of the larger public interest.

Of the rights of the media, I think the issue is today beyond any form of any debate. Article 19(1)(a) that guarantees freedom of expression. In India, unlike in some other jurisdictions free speech in terms of freedom of press is not a separate right and it is included in the larger ambit of freedom of expression. And those who drafted the Constitution, created an exception. The exception was, that whereas in relation to other fundamental rights, you had a general exception of what is reasonable, could be restricted on the fundamental right — the generalized restriction was not there in the context of free speech. So, free speech was given a more elevated status and you define six or seven circumstances only on account of which there could be a restriction on free speech. So, a general concept that there is a reasonable restriction against free speech is no longer a valid consideration. It had to have an access to the security of the state, to the maintenance of public order, to friendly relations with foreign countries, contempt of court, privilege and so on.

This pre-eminent position which has been given has now to be utilized by media with great circumspection. This is particularly because the media now forms the eyes and ears as far as the citizens are concerned, it also has a very powerful impact and the powerful impact is that the power of audio visual of the media is far stronger, it reached every home, it is capable of generating a public opinion and if the reporting is on sensitive subjects it can also generate a frenzy and therefore the sense of responsibility is also to be there.

The second important aspect is that whereas the Supreme Court while laying down the laws of free speech and freedom of Press — in context of other fundamental rights, we have had our up and downs; the habeas corpus case was a low point as far as personal life and liberty is concerned. But in relation to Article 19(1)(a), consistently with every judgment, the predominant thrust of the judicial institution has been to protect, preserve and to expand the right. And therefore, we've very rarely had a view taken by the judicial institution which curtails the right as far as free speech is concerned.

Today, the right extends not merely to your right to report — but its horizons have been widened: What should be the size of a newspaper? The court said that the government can't restrict it. What should be the volume of advertisements vis-a-vis news in a newspaper? The court said the government can't get into it. What should be the extent of taxation on a newspaper? Now, any form of taxation is normally upheld, unless it is confiscatory in character. But in case of 19(1)(a), if the impact of unreasonable taxation is to compel a medium to raise its cost and reduce its circulation, it impinges on 19(1)(a). So whereas taxation generally would be judged on principles of Article 14 and 19(1)(g), taxation judged in the context of 19(1)(a) is entirely different.

And therefore, the distinction between the content of a medium and business of the medium also has been obliterated. Is the business of a newspaper or a news channel entirely 19(1)(g)? The answer is "No", to the extent that if you pinch the pockets of a newspaper or a news channel, and therefore, infringe on its free speech, you impact adversely on Article 19(1)(a). And therefore, the business itself can't be segregated as far as free speech is concerned. The right to know, the right to information — these are all the rights which have been read into Article 19(1)(a) with its horizons today expanded.

What are today are the threats? Traditionally we thought a newspaper or a channel could be banned. The days of bans are over. You could victimize someone by saying that state advertisements will not be given to you. With the huge expansion of the private sector, the role of the state advertisement is almost miniscule. That threat is over. You can censor a medium; in fact, a part of the fear that was created during the Emergency was on account of the censorship of newspapers itself. But today, technology has made censorship impossibility. So from the initial technological developments like the fax machine to the internet, to the

email, and now the satellite is impossible for the government to impose any form of censorship. Assuming there was Emergency imposed today under Article 352 of the constitution, the impact of censorship would be nil. The satellite itself defies geographical boundaries —the emails don't honour it, the fax machine doesn't honour it and therefore, what had to be secretly distributed as Emergency literature, would today be freely available all over the country. And the more you ban, greater would be the curiosity to access that material! So the threats really are no longer such great external threats. You may have odd cases where the state itself takes extra interest in setting up its own medium but the threats that are coming now, I would use the word “challenges” rather than “threats” — are really from within on account of the nature of the medium itself. And one of the first great challenges is the changes which are taking place on the ownership pattern itself. I mentioned at the very outset that today the advertisement revenues are being shared by four different mediums – the newspapers, the channels, the digital medium and the radio. The financial model of most media organizations is becoming extremely challenging and in some case is becoming a high suspect. The largest newspapers, the large channels, are all able to sustain themselves. But then most are not able to sustain themselves. And there unable to financially sustain themselves, how do they sustain and survive. The first trend which is taking place is that when you cannot survive, the normal principle which is taking place all over the world in other businesses is of consolidation, mergers, amalgamations and takeovers. So those with deeper pockets will tend to acquire the medium that can also lead to conflict of interest in many cases. Then along with the ownership there is the ever hanging question and a debated question of, to what extent do you allow foreign equity to enter the medium. I'll place both the arguments. The traditional argument was that the media controls the human mind unlike other commodities or industries, and therefore to what extent do you allow the foreign medium to come in. The supporting argument was that those who framed India's Constitution, rights like equality, liberty, they ensured that every person gets it but Article 19 rights were given to only a citizen. So per se did they want non citizens not to get into areas like this, the medium itself? The counter argument is that technology has made this distinction completely irrelevant. It has obliterated the distinction. So a 100 percent foreign channel can be beamed into India from outside, the digital media can be seen. The physical newspaper may not be available here but I can read the Financial Times of the NY times on the internet morning and evening. So do these restrictions have any meaning? Should we allow in this age where there is an uncertain financial model, more equity and more resources to come from outside or not. Currently we are now at 26 percent, but the debate on whether to allow more or not, are still a wide open debate as far as India is concerned.

The challenge in the case of news channels which is a far costlier medium is far more. The challenge is far more because, news channels have to divide their resources, between news collection and news distribution. The cost on news distribution has become phenomenally high. In order to get on to get on to any platform whether it is a cable or a DTH platform, a huge amount of premium is to be paid. Therefore the cost of circulation is extremely high, as a result of which channels are compelled to cut costs as far as news collection is concerned. This directly results in lesser number of reporters, lesser paid reporters, impact on quality of news gathering and so on. This now leads to the next question. If you go into the large countryside in India, you will find city based channels, state based channels, which are really being circulated as news channels without an adequate resource. And once they get in without that adequate resource, immediately it was found they were getting their resource from invisible sources and the invisible sources have now become the main resource.

But as far as both print media and channels were concerned, at the time of elections, it was an open secret, a very large of candidate's election budget was being spent on management of news. It's a hard reality however difficult it may be. The Election Commission tried its best to find out the details and stop it but because of the nature of the underground activity in

which it happens it was reasonably impossible for the election commission to take action on this. The SC judgement in the TATA Press case which mentioned that commercial news is also news and therefore protected under Article 19(1)(a). I have always wondered how the paid news menace is going to be tackled in view of that where advertisement is also article 19(1)(a). Would this aberration of paid news also be protected under the wide horizon that the court has laid down or would have to be kept out on account of some principles, I hope that correction is made some day, so that it could be made or converted into a penal offence. There had an impact of impacting on the quality of news itself. In that race for TRPs, pressure on the news collection budgets of the news channels, recruitment of staff which is qualitatively not the best across the country, some of course hire very good staff, this directly impacts on the quality of reporting and therefore if there is a complicated issue, you would find different versions of it as appearing as news. For instance I can safely assume that a serious analysis that we are making just now could find itself reported with a headline 'Jaitley slams media' because that is an easy way to understand a more complicated subject. I recently found two recent speeches reported which I had not delivered. I tried to find as to how this aberration took place. I delivered another speech, I saw a report of something else. Both functions were held early morning and generally reporters are not in the habit of covering early morning events. So somebody who must have gone and covered it inaccurately reported it and the others all followed suit. So it is an occupational hazard for us but now as I said earlier there is an empowerment of the politician also because the moment you see a wrong reporting you don't run after Editors, you just put your own blog. So I have got into the habit of putting on to the Facebook or YouTube the actual speech with is nothing that I have said. What has been reported is completely at variance with what is being reported. Those who are interested may watch the speech at this address. The relieving fact is that there are so many channels, so many different medium newspapers, that it really today doesn't matter even if two or three of them misreport. Because your correct reportage and fairness will emerge out of the competitive system. Even if somebody unfairly targets you or somebody takes a view which you think is unfair, there will be at least 95% of others who would be broadly taking a correct and fair view. So you have a medium available with you to resort to that medium itself. The challenges therefore are from within. It is a challenge of quality. It is a challenge of competitiveness but still being fair, it's a challenge of credibility. The digital medium it is today is still not certain as to what the financial model of the digital medium itself is going to be. It is too early. But I am sure as the medium is growing and maturing the financial model itself would also evolve.

As far as the sense of responsibility is concerned, it is difficult to define this. Justice Ravindran mentioned that the government would try and discipline those who are outside the scope of the self-regulatory mechanism. Sir I find it extremely difficult, because it may have its own pitfalls if the government got into the business of starting to discipline media organisations. I would be more comfortable if viewers or readers decided to disapprove. If they find media way off the mark, rather than the government step in and tell media what to report and what not to report, I'd rather that viewers — just with the power of the remote in their hands — decide to switch to something else. Therefore when you find your own falling viewership or readerships that will be a much better way for people to deal with it. The media today has a responsibility to be credible, to be fair, to be an educator on sensitive issues, and itself to maintain the highest standards of financial integrity and ethics. I am also of the opinion, the medium will have to be extra careful, where its own interests are involved and therefore wherever there is a possibility of conflict of interest, an adequate disclosure to that effect has to be made. In terms of responsibility, there are at least three such specific illustrations, where media will now have to seriously introspect.

The first is how do you report instances when an insurgent action is on, when a security operation is in full play. The desire of the media to be an actor in these events and to go into

the midst of the scene, and therefore report from the spot, as to what is happening or should the media have some constraints. You have the reporting of 9/11 vs the reporting of 26/11. You had the intelligence information to say that because Indian television channels had decided to make the 26/11 reporting in almost in real time to what action was being taking place the terrorists inside the hotels were being informed on their satellite phones by their handlers as to what the Indian security forces were doing from outside. And therefore in the larger interest of the 19(2) exception, the security of state can this be permitted to go on. Our security agencies and Ministry of Defence is clearly of the view that this cannot be allowed. And therefore during the limited duration where a security operation is on, a very strict discipline on the kind of reporting which is to take place from the place of the incident will have to be imposed. This issue is under serious and advance consideration as far as the country is concerned.

The second issues relate to privacy of individuals. The privacy of individuals even in high profile cases is also a part of their right and therefore the media will have to evolve in ethics as to what was the relationship between the husband and wife, what was the kind of conversations they were having. These areas which have absolutely no bearing on larger public interest, can only add some spice to the content of the reporting. The media will seriously have to introspect as to what extent this has to be reported.

The third illustration which Justice Raveendran just mentioned, has the subjudice rule completely been given a go by. I can quite understand that in the larger matters of public interest merely because an issue is pending in a court, you cannot have a complete gag on the media. There'll be issues relating to assuming there is a constitutional confrontation between a centre and the state or between a state and a state. The issue will find a mention in the media. But if it is issues relating to individual culpability, where innocence or guilt has to be judged, the parallel trial concept therefore prejudicing the entire environment around which a person is to get justice, is seriously under challenge where India is concerned. I am constrained to observe that as far as trial courts are concerned, this may not hold true of the judicial institution all through, are under tremendous pressure particularly in high profile cases where media has conducted a parallel trial and almost declared somebody guilty or innocent. The other illustration is where there is social tension in society. It could be a caste problem; it could be a communal problem, as to the nature of reporting. Print media conventionally followed a principle as to the manner in which the reporting is to be done. But if a trouble is on, media is capable of creating frenzy. We saw a recent frenzy about a year or two years ago where children from North Eastern States, started migrating en masse from various States back to their homes because of the kind of frenzy against them which was not there on the ground but a campaign on the media had been created. How this can impact on fairness of trials, my earlier point, and the most illustrative case is the O J Simpson's case. Trial by jury it showed the failure of the jury system where the media reporting the testimony of every witness, then analyzing the quality of the testimony of every witness, being a national debate on American television., the entire jury, in the Simpson case was then split on racial lines. People belonging to one colour sided with one view and people belonging to another colour took another view. So this is the kind of frenzy the media has the capacity to create. Therefore in social tensions, in trials, what is the extent of the frenzy that a media can create and there fore the extent of restraint that is to be required in the quality of reporting. Just as privacy was the right to be left alone, the digital media unlike newspapers and televisions which have a momentary impact, a one day impact or one hour impact, the digital media has a permanent record. And therefore something which is inaccurate, something which is defamatory, something which is scandalous, relating to an individual, appears on the digital media, digital media has shown a tendency that its standards of responsibility, are still lacking compared to the other sections of the media. It can lead to permanent libel against the individuals and they make them symbols of controversy. So just as the courts of India and

elsewhere in the world have evolved the right to be left alone, the European Court of Justice has evolved the Right to be forgotten. I have a right not to be in public gaze all the time and therefore if something inaccurate has been said about me, I have a right to decide that I must be kept away from public gaze and therefore directions can be issued to the digital media as a part of my right to be forgotten to erase what has been on the digital mode itself.

We are discussing this at a time when I mentioned the capacity of the media to create blasphemy, to create a frenzy particularly in religious matters in relation to caste and religious matters, the reporting has to be done with utmost care. The kind of trends we are seeing globally, and I cannot conclude this lecture held as a tribute to Justice Verma, without a reference to what happened in Paris. What should be the content of what is published is one issue of the debate and I am sure that the issue will go on. But what should be the reaction against that what happened in Paris, against a magazine which specialized in humour, sarcasm, I think has to be condemned by one and all because if this trend picks up, we've had threats from the state, but as civility in public administration has grown, the threat from the state in terms of banning, in terms of censorship, have globally diluted. We have now challenges from within, we have the financial challenge and so on. But if attacks of this kind take place, a humour magazine or a sarcasm magazine is supposed to make fun of people, it is supposed to be one step ahead of the rest of the media, and therefore if they are to be slaughtered in this manner, free speech is likely to be very adversely affected. In fact if we recollect a case nearer home, a period which is always fresh in my memory, the Emergency, where all newspapers were censored, the first and one of the only magazines to decide to close down its publication was the Shankar's weekly. Shankar's Weekly for decades was India's humour and sarcasm magazine and therefore it had to make fun of people who were in governance and in public life. By making fun of people they have to be told, the governors had to be told what people think of them. I was in prison at that time, when Shankar's Weekly decided to close down and Mr Shankar wrote the closing editorial. I don't remember the exact language but it was broadly to this extent...he started by saying that 'humour has no place in dictatorships because dictators don't like people laughing at them and therefore my magazine has completely lost its relevance and I have decided to close down this magazine'. Shankar's Weekly closed down during the Emergency with this observation. While I conclude there are two issues, which are currently in debate even in India in relation to the nature of media and the subjects that I have addressed. I referred to the Sakal and the Bennett Coleman cases as to how much a newspaper can publish, what should be the volume of advertisements. It would be music to Rajat and other media persons' ears on hearing this view from me. My ministry – the Information and Broadcasting Ministry a couple of years ago, came out with a statutory amendment to law saying, no channel will telecast advertisement beyond so many minutes. I have been struggling myself in my own mind since then as to how this meets the challenge of Article 19(1)(a). Is the government supposed to tell channels and newspapers how much advertisement and how much news or if the viewers or the readers find it monotonous they have the power to switch on to something else? Because Government getting into how much news and how much advertisements in my personal view is a bad precedent to lay down. And if we go by the traditional test may be a suspect as far as Article 19(1)(a) is concerned. The challenge is before court. Some of my officers are also here and they are already familiar with my views on this particular subject. The second view which I am placing for public discussion and debate. Most jurisdictions were, banned crossholdings in the media. If you own newspapers, you can't own channels. If you own channels, then you can't own the medium through which a channel is telecast that is the cable or DTH. Some jurisdictions like the US has very strict disciplines on this but then they don't have Article 19(10)(a) in the exact language. We have no such restrictions. Should all these mediums, including the medium to communicate, can they vest in the same individual? How is larger public interest going to be impacted by this? I think a time has come for this debate in the media circles and in the judicial circle at some stage, and certainly thereafter as

Parliament is concerned, to be initiated so that Indian society can form a mature view on these kinds of restrictions that other jurisdictions have and I am sure with the kind of maturity the Indian society shows in dealing with free speech have the rights, this debate will also evolve and lead to a conclusion.

Finally I once again pay my tribute to the memory of Justice Verma whom we all admired...
