

Title: Regarding coverage of Parliamentary proceedings by media.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA (PANSKURA): Sir, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

I know that I am raising a matter of sensitivity, but I am not raising it as a complaint. Please do not take it that I am raising it as a complaint. It is only out of anguish. Maybe my anguish will be shared by many or all in this House. My anguish is this and that is why I am raising the matter. I wish that parliamentary proceedings might be adequately covered in the media than they are being done now.

In a democracy, media is a powerful organ of the State, not only of the State but also of the society. Executive, Judiciary and Parliament - all these three important components are there to make democracy more fruitful. But, at the same time, it is true that media plays a powerful role. People of the country have a right to have an access to information as to what the parliamentarians are doing, what is being discussed, what is the policy of the Government, what is the impact of that policy on the life of the people or economy of the country. It is a matter of national importance. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Now, you are being seen and heard throughout the country.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : The credit goes to you for that. ...(*Interruptions*)

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): The credit goes to the hon. Speaker. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : But it has a very limited coverage. In a country of 110 million, I do not know if everybody can cover, but print media and electronic media collectively can cover a substantial part. My anguish arises because there is not adequate reflection of what is happening in the House. If something unusual happens in the House, if there is a boycott, and if there is a hold up, it is widely reported. ...(*Interruptions*) Media has a right to report according to its choice. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: They have the freedom.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I also believe firmly in the freedom of the Press. In an open society, freedom of the Press is a valuable weapon to protect not only the openness but also to protect the society as a whole. While saying so, Press also has its responsibility. My anguish is because there is always a tendency to sensitize the news. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Gurudas Dasgupta, we should not advise them. It is for them to decide.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I am not here to advise anybody. I am free to express my anguish. ...(*Interruptions*) My anguish is sensitisation is choice of anybody who does it. But my point is that important debates take place, important statements are made, and important deliberations take place. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I am sure they will consider.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I hardly find a place in the media, particularly in the print media.

Sir, you kindly permit me to give an example. I am not naming the Press. I should not. I will just give one example.

MR. SPEAKER: As we have our rights, the Press has their rights.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Sir, I know.

MR. SPEAKER: Therefore, they will exercise judgements in their own wisdom.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Sir, I am a firm believer in the freedom of the Press. ...(*Interruptions*) But Sir, it is also true that there is a word "social accountability". We are accountable to the people. You are accountable to the people and also, the people have the right to know what is being done here.

MR. SPEAKER: I hope, all of us remember that.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : That can only be done if there is a fruitful media. Sir, I give you an example. Day before yesterday, with your kind permission, we discussed a human issue "the problem of pre-natal determination of sex and no penal action being taken and the status of women". It was an extremely sensitive issue. I found in a particular Press, a particular paper, that the news of a rape was placed in the first page saying the victim of a rape is being requested to marry the person who has done it. It is in the first page, but the status of women in the country that the Parliament deliberated upon, with your kind permission, was completely left out. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I think, the Press has also played a glorious role in our history.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Sir, we are not condemning it. It is a question of appeal to the conscience. I can appeal to the conscience of the media, I can appeal to the conscience of the people, and I can appeal to the conscience of the industry. I believe that faithful selection is their choice.

MR. SPEAKER: Certainly.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : They have the right to select. Selection is their choice. Freedom is their choice. Let Parliament be not ignored. We want Parliament to be reflected in the media so that people can have access to information. Sir, it is not happening. I appeal to the Press, through you, of the whole country like this. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR (BARRACKPORE): Sir, I would like to associate with Shri Dasgupta by saying that the Press has the right to criticize Parliament and Parliament also has every right to express ...*(Interruptions)*

कुँवर मानवेन्द्र सिंह (मथुरा) : मीडिया वाले टीवी पर जब न्यूज़ पढ़ते हैं तब सोनिया, अटल, मनमोहन कहते हैं। वे इन नामों के आगे जी नहीं लगाते हैं। *(ब्यवधान)*

MR. SPEAKER: I do not understand what you are doing.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing will be recorded.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Kunwar Manvendra Singh, I am requesting you - I have requested you many times - to please give up this habit.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I wish to make a comment. Parliament represents the people. Obviously, important issues are discussed here.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: You are interrupting me. That is a gross violation of the rules.

...*(Interruptions)*

श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव (झंझारपुर) : अध्यक्ष जी, मैं माननीय दासगुप्ता जी की भावनाओं से अपने को सम्बद्ध करता हूँ।

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, you are associating. Please sit down. This is a very sensitive matter.

...*(Interruptions)*

* Not Recorded.

श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव : अध्यक्ष जी, प्रेस की आजादी के हम लोग प्रबल समर्थक हैं। कल चुनाव सुधारों पर संसद में बहस हुई। इस बारे में केवल इंडियन एक्सप्रेस में आया है, और अखबारों में तो बिल्कुल ब्लैक-आउट किया है। प्रेस की आजादी के लिए सन् 1988 में जब बिहार में काला बिल आया था तो 36 संगठनों ने लाठियां खाई थीं। प्रेस लोकतंत्र का चौथा स्तम्भ है। *(ब्यवधान)* लेकिन प्रेस में हमारी पार्लियामेंट की प्रोसिडिंग को सही स्थान मिलना चाहिए। हमारी प्रेस से यही अपील है।

MR. SPEAKER: I will not allow anybody else.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Do not record anything. I will not allow anything to go on record.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: We have all to introspect. Please sit down. Shri Rao, nothing is being recorded.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dikshit, this is not the way to raise an issue. There are methods of raising it.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI SANDEEP DIKSHIT (EAST DELHI): I also wish to associate and say that the cable operators are not giving live telecast of parliamentary proceedings though in a lot of areas, people are applying to their cable operators to provide it.

13.00 hrs.

MR. SPEAKER: I am requesting all the hon. Members that this is not the way to do it. You say that it is violation of law, but it is a basic need for some.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You are a very articulate Member.

* Not Recorded.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Rao, you are crossing the limit.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI K.S. RAO (ELURU): No, Sir. I am not crossing the limit. I am only requesting you to allow me to speak for a minute on this very sensitive issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Rao, you are not sitting down. I am requesting you to sit down.

SHRI K.S. RAO : Sir, we are not opposing what you say, but a different picture is going through the media about the Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, you go on. This is why it is not being reported in the media.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: This will not be recorded at all.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. I have not allowed you to speak.

This is a very sensitive matter. The Parliament is an important institution. There is no doubt that hon. members of the media are fully aware of the importance of the Parliament, where we are discussing important issues. But freedom of Press in this country is a very treasured freedom, and we have also known of the very glorious role played by the media in this country.

Some sentiments have been expressed by the hon. Members, and I have allowed them to be raised here. But it cannot be a matter of just utilising the floor of the House to criticise each other. Therefore, my request to hon. Members is this. You have made your points on this issue. Now, it is entirely for the free Press to decide how to conduct itself, which I do not dictate. We can make some suggestions. I treat the points raised by the hon. Members as suggestions that have come. No criticism, as such, is being permitted here. I do not treat it as a criticism.

...(Interruptions)

* Not Recorded.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Sir, I have never said that I am criticising the Press.

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR : Sir, it is not a criticism.

MR. SPEAKER: Therefore, it is entirely for them to decide. They are as much a relevant part of the democratic system as the elected representatives of the people.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet again at 2 p.m.

13.01 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till

Fourteen of the Clock.

14.06 hrs.

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Six minutes

past Fourteen of the Clock.

(Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal in the Chair)

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House shall now take up Matters under Rule 377.