16/12/21 (A great day for Delhi women)

Tutorial #3:

Stated question: “Is media autonomy a myth or a reality? Analyse the factors that affect media autonomy. How can the news consumer overcome this?”

Unequivocally a myth.

1. Primary argument: a legitimately free press impossible under current economic structure of the information industry.
2. Secondary arguments: legal loopholes to obstruct the right to freedom of speech & ownership.
3. Potential addendum: Press Council as a nominal institute.

Qt Statement: “*[...] It can be tempting here to want to separate the news from the entertainment; to draw a distinction between the reporting & the creativity, the tabloid & the broadsheet; the hard & the soft. A less than fine line between say, a Netflix & an NDTV, & to say that so long as one of these media is answerable in what it publishes & what it does not, what the other does is irrelevant. But this argument fails for three reasons:*

1. *The distinction is utopian. It only stands in an environment where the press is awarded the financial & the administrative independence to be in a position to choose what it publishes. A news outlet that is publicly owned is under direct financial & administrative control of the state. A crowdfunded publication like the Wire is under constant threats of defamation & sedition lawsuits so long as its journalistic licence is overshadowed by “reasonable restrictions”. A news outlet that is owned privately & depends on ratings & investments to keep itself running is a business, one that breathes if it makes money & dies without it. To hold it to a different standard than a movie production house or the fictional media market is ostentatious & meaningless. Put simply, journalistic integrity cannot be a reasonable expectation from the press, until the press is free. [...]*”

[Ref: [A Shared Delusion](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eQF6QIEMvBE95Vwpzk1QfjWrznDSzO6HBR9dgmKSAo0/edit?usp=sharing), Mouli Sharma]

Elaborations on Points 1 & 2 as they were discussed:

Point 1: Primary argument - steady metamorphosis of India's economy & the economies within it from mixed-socialist to conventional capitalist models. Current structure of the indian information industry (including both creative as well as news media) best befits a Monopolistic Competition, a type of imperfect competition under the models of market structure where goods are *differentiated* rather than different, & maintain an illusion of heterogeneity within a mostly homonormative contest of product. This is a structure that not only discourages true heterogeneity, but *requires the absence of it*, thus a truly free press, i.e. one that can choose *what* it publishes, is made economically unaffordable.

Point 2: Secondary argument - the only form of institute that can even theoretically possess both financial & administrative autonomy is one which is self/crowdfunded which is doable if inconvenient, but the autonomy of even *such* an institute is merely nominal so long as laws like sedition, defamation & IP laws are so conveniently malleable & ill defined as to be used against them so often & with such frivolity as they are, not to mention the courts always so readily available to entertain them (overworked as they are). Youtube strike downs, website bans, the active threat of destruction of property & harassment, both cyber & otherwise; the environment will always be hostile to disagreement, but the problem *is* systemic, once that hostility becomes law.

[On how the news consumer can overcome this] Scepticism. That’s all there is.

[On whether the common man is equipped to critically analyse media] the way the world works, conformity is something that is bred into people, institutionally, from the day that they begin asking questions till the time they understand, for good, that they are not supposed to. Over time the common man’s natural instinct of doubt is killed, (& this killing is not accidental; it’s premeditated & in cold blood. It’s murder) efficiently & systematically by the very system that will later criticise him of being incapable & unskilled in the fine art of critical thinking. This mentality is disingenuous, inaccessibility to education doesn’t make people stupid, ignorance & hypocrisy do. The idea that critical consumption & understanding of media requires some sort of acquired ‘skill set’ that the uneducated or anyone that doesn’t fit the western idea of ‘modernity’ lacks is inherently classist & extremely condescending. You do not need to be taught doubt. All the common man needs to do is care. It’s a different matter that, in this economy, apathy is more often than not all the common man can afford.