

FRIDAY

RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi
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FRIDAY, 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2022 AT 3:00 PM

SRINIVAS SEMINAR ROOM, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SEVANTI
NINAN



LABOUR AND THE MEDIA: WHY INDIA'S WORKERS REMAIN INVISIBLE

Abstract:

This presentation examines why media coverage of labour has shrunk in the past three decades. It looks at post-liberalisation changes in the media universe – major expansion riding on advertising, catering to an affluent readership with little interest in workers' issues; and the expansion of consumer-related beats, with labour coverage subsumed under business reporting. A different breed of reporters evolved to cover the privatising economy, focused on GDP growth and the ease of doing business. The informalisation of the labour force has contributed to its invisibility. Contractualisation of work undermined unions, and a recognizable labour leadership (once regarded as news sources) disappeared. With no regular labour beat in general and financial papers, the recent Labour Codes (which replace 29 labour laws) have not received the close scrutiny they deserve. The presentation profiles *Worker Web*, a media initiative to regain visibility for labour, and the challenges it faces.

The Speaker:

Sevanti Ninan is a media commentator and researcher. She has been a media columnist for the *Indian Express*, *Hindu*, *Mint* and *Telegraph India*, and founded the media watch website, *Thehoot.org* in 2001. Her publications include *Through the Magic Window: Television and Change in India* (1995); *Headlines from the Heartland: Reinventing the Hindi Public Sphere* (2007); *The Hoot Reader: Media Practice in Twenty-first Century India* (2013); and "How India's Media Landscape Changed Over Five Years" (*The India Forum*, 2019). Since January 2021 she has been publishing *Worker Web*, a weekly newsletter.