

Opening: Shri Raghu Rai, world-renowned photographer, spoke to the students of the Indian Institute of Public Health, Delhi (IIPHD) on May 3rd on integrity as the fundamental principle in photography.

Picture:



Read more: Shri Raghu Rai, world-renowned photographer, the first from India to be associated with the Magnum Group (which represents the world's most distinguished photographers), spoke on May 3rd to the students of the Indian Institute of Public Health, Delhi (IIPHD). He highlighted the need for integrity as the fundamental principle in photography. A global celebrity, he describes himself as "just a simple man". Indeed, his response was gracious and immediate when approached to speak on a topic seldom discussed in public health classrooms.

Prof K. Srinath Reddy introduced Shri Rai and expressed admiration for photography as a valued art form that allows for a moment to be preserved in the flow of time. "A picture is worth a thousand words", and some images are powerful enough to stand on their own.

Shri Rai spoke fluently on his life as a photographer and advised a worldview through "honest eyes". "See with your eyes and think with your heart, not your head while taking pictures" – he advised, if you want the soul of the image to emerge. Mother Teresa, the greatest influence in his life, had taught him to observe and learn quietly. Shri Rai revealed that he tries to capture - the split second interaction between people, light and form - feelings expressed through the eyes.

Referring to the contemporary deluge of visual images now possible with camera phones, Shri Rai suggested a disciplined approach – to “live in the moment”, and view photography as a journey to achieve the spectacular, to capture a moment that is forever memorable.

Visibly moved when asked about his personal involvement in photographing the Bhopal gas tragedy, he conveyed the despair and tragedy he saw and felt, depicted in development photography at its finest. In his view, colour images have an element of joyousness; he prefers black-and-white as a medium when extreme tragedy needs to be communicated. Shri Rai advised against showing gore and violence, when simple and creative imagery can portray desolation and destruction. The dignity of the human soul must always be paramount while taking pictures.

It was a privilege to hear Shri Raghu Rai share his views on life and photography. His talk was embellished with poetry and imagery. Indeed he brought out so beautifully, the power of photography to pass on stories that can forge the links that tie us to our land and culture, that have the ability to preserve and transmit ideas, gifts that enrich the world.