

G. Kasturi: An editor with Vision and Principles

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It is a great honour and privilege to write about G. Kasturi whose birth centenary falls on Dec 11, 2024. 'The Hindu' is a newspaper which is highly respected, because of the credibility it commands. The reputation that this newspaper enjoys is the result of the leadership provided by the editors and their team. G. Kasturi was an editor with a vision and he led 'The Hindu' for 26 years between 1965 and 1991.

As editor, G. Kasturi exhibited many outstanding qualities. First and foremost, he was a keen observer of the political and economic events. Under his leadership 'Hindu' stood by the three principles of objectivity, clarity and authenticity.

Objectivity is difficult to define. Perhaps, it can be best defined in negative terms. Objectivity implies that the presentation of the news is not distorted deliberately to suit the views of the paper. Every newspaper has a philosophy; it has a view on every issue and it expresses this through its editorials. In a sense, these editorials are the ones that give character to a newspaper. It must, however, be recognized that there is a distinction between editorial opinion and the presentation of news. A good newspaper should let the information provided to speak for itself. Clarity demands that the news be presented in a manner in which the reader can understand and grasp the events. Sometimes a background may be needed to help the readers. Authenticity demands that the events reported are true to the best of the knowledge of the reporters. In these days of instantaneous and sensational journalism, it must be admitted that this is a difficult virtue to maintain.

G. Kasturi excelled in yet another aspect of the newspaper and that was to keep pace With technological advancements in publication .He was an excellent photographer himself.

I came first into contact with G. Kasturi when he as editor launched in 1977 what was called 'Outlook,' a series of group discussions. In the first presentation, he invited five of us to discuss the subject 'Development –where do we go from here and how'. There was no time limit set and it was printed in full. This was an innovation which was one example of Kasturi's propensity to experiment with new ideas. Since 1977, we met often. By 1982, I had moved to Reserve Bank. He came to Mumbai frequently and we exchanged views mainly on economic matters. He was a pleasant conversationalist.

To be an editor of a newspaper is not an easy task. There are multiple objectives for any responsible newspaper. Its role in shaping and moulding public opinion must be balanced against its primary role as an objective and unbiased instrument of information supplier. Activism in a cause is justifiable. But journalistic activism, just like judicial activism must be tempered by self-imposed limits. These limits are essential in order to be effective. The reputation of G.Kasturi as an editor rested on the delicate balance he was able to achieve in terms of the multiple objectives.

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