

## **DON'T BREACH STANDARDS OF ETHICAL JOURNALISM, VICE PRESIDENT CAUTIONS MEDIA**

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Ethical Concerns & Dilemmas in Government & Private institutions incl. issue of "Conflict of Interest"

Vice President's Secretariat

### **Don't breach standards of ethical journalism, Vice President cautions media**

**Urges Fourth Estate to be beacon light of uprightness and objectivity;**

**Don't mix news with views;**

**Pays rich tributes to veteran editor and writer, late Shri Gora Sastri at the latter's Centenary Celebrations**

Posted On: 20 JUL 2019 2:28PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has cautioned the media against breaching the standards of ethical and independent journalism and urged the Fourth Estate to be a beacon light of uprightness and objectivity.

Paying tributes to veteran editor and writer, late Shri Gora Sastri at his centenary celebrations, in Hyderabad today, the Vice President emphasized that difference of views and opinions must always be tempered with and find expression through dispassionate discourse.

Reminding the audience of the fiercely independent journalism pursued by Shri Gora Sastri and the powerful editorials written by him, the Vice President said he was recalling those instances "to underscore the importance of independence and fearless journalism, which is seen more in its absence today. All around us in the present scenario we find news fused with opinion, thus making it challenging for us to glean news from views and arrive at a considered opinion or conclusion. The real picture gets blurred behind a smokescreen of half-truths and obfuscations", he added.

The Vice President expressed his concern over the degeneration of values in various fields, including journalism and emphasized that news should not be mixed with views. He advised journalists to leave the final judgment to readers and not to give judgments themselves.

Shri Naidu said that the media today - be it electronic, print or digital - needs to look up to stalwarts like Shri Gora Sastri, who were a blend of commitment and forthrightness, modernity and tradition. "As contemporaries, he and Narla Venkateswara Rao exemplified the finest principles of journalism and strode the stage of Telugu newspapers like titans", he observed.

The Vice President said that he had few occasions to interact with Shri Gora Sastri, whose vision was deeply imbued with the spirit of nationalism. His wit and humour, breadth of knowledge of both Telugu and English literary works, and his unwavering adherence to independent journalistic standards, set him apart from the common run of journalism, Shri Naidu reminisced.

The Vice President also wanted journalism courses to include lessons on the lives of great journalists.

In paying tributes to Shri Gora Sastri, all of us here are recollecting the contribution of one of the great writers of our times to have adorned the pages of the history of journalism, and a giant worthy of emulation by media persons of all hues, said the Vice President.

Earlier, the Vice President released the book "Vinayakudi Veena", a collection of articles penned by Shri Gora Sastri.

The Secretary of Sahitya Academy, Shri K. Srinivas Rao, the President and Secretary of Veteran Journalists Association, Shri G.S. Varadachari and Shri K. Laxmana Rao and several prominent senior journalists were present on the occasion.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"In my long and eventful journey through the world of politics and public life, I have come across many shades of media personalities. Very few have left such a deep impact on my mind as the veteran journalist of yesteryears, Sri Gora Sastri.

I feel truly honoured to be here at this function to mark the centenary celebrations of a multi-dimensional writer, whose sharp intellect and insightful analysis shone through in his editorials and articles, as also his fictional work.

Sri Govindu Rama Sastri or Gora Sastri, as he was popularly known to his readers, was a colossus of Telugu journalism and literature, who served as a fountainhead of inspiration to a generation of journalists and writers. He groomed many a journalist who went on to become famous in later years in the media landscape.

Sri Gora Sastri, who had made a mark as a writer of short stories, forayed into journalism. Sri Khasa Subba Rao, one of the most revered names in Indian journalism and former Editor of *Indian Express* at that time, took Sri Sastri under his wing.

Khasa, an austere idealist, was fearless and forthright and was an embodiment of commitment and rectitude. He would never influence the opinions of others and gave his colleagues untrammelled freedom when it came to expressing their views. Khasa was a close friend of Chief Minister of the erstwhile Madras state, Rajagopalachari and yet, unsparing when it came to sharp criticism. It was a profound lesson Sri Gora Sastri absorbed as a young journalist.

After he moved to Hyderabad in the late fifties, Sri Gora Sastri became the editor of *Andhra Bhoomi* and distinguished himself in this role as a journalist without fear or favour. A writer who wielded a facile pen in both English and Telugu, he was requested by the management to write editorials for the *Deccan Chronicle*, as well.

In the tradition of fiercely independent journalists, he wrote some powerful editorials which remain etched in memory to this day. Sri Sastri was unflinching in his criticism of some of his close friends in public life, in both Telugu and English.

One such instance which bears testimony to this fact comes to mind. The late former Prime Minister, Shri PV Narasimha Rao was the Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh. He and Sri Gora Sastri were good friends, but as editor, Sri Sastri was highly critical of PV's handling of the Telangana agitation at that time. He wrote several stinging editorials including one for the Deccan Chronicle which bore the caption "For God's Sake Go." In the process, relations between him and Sri PV are said to have soured, but he told the Chief Minister that, as editor, he had to be true to his calling. Such was his frank and dispassionate stand as a journalist.

I am recalling these instances to underscore the importance of independence and fearless journalism, which is seen more in its absence today. All around us in the present scenario we find news fused with opinion, thus making it challenging for us to glean news from views and arrive at a considered opinion or conclusion. The real picture gets blurred behind a smokescreen of half-truths and obfuscations.

The media today, be it electronic, print or digital, needs to look up to stalwarts like Sri Gora Sastri, who, were a blend of commitment and forthrightness, modernity and tradition.

As contemporaries, he and Narla Venkateswara Rao exemplified the finest principles of journalism and strode the stage of Telugu newspapers like titans.

I had on few occasions to interact with Sri Gora Sastri and remember him as an editor and thinker, whose vision was deeply imbued with the spirit of nationalism. His wit and humour, breadth of knowledge of both Telugu and English literary works, and his unwavering adherence to independent journalistic standards, set him apart from the common run of journalism.

Dear sisters and brothers, we cannot afford to breach the standards of ethical and independent journalism. The Fourth Estate should be a beacon light of uprightness and objectivity and difference of views and opinions must always be tempered with and find expression through dispassionate discourse. In paying tributes to Sri Gora Sastri, all of us here are recollecting the contribution of one of the great writers of our times to have adorned the pages of the history of journalism, and a giant worthy of emulation by media persons of all hues.

Thank You

JAI HIND"

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