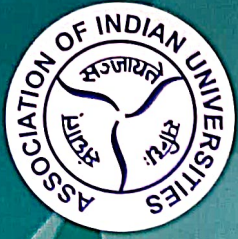


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Tributes to Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan: Architect of Indian Education and Space Exploration for *Viksit Bharat @2047—Part-I#*

Sreelogna Dutta Banerjee* and Jayanta Mete**

Dr. K. Kasturirangan, born in 1940 in Ernakulam, Kerala, is a towering figure in the fields of both space research and education reform. As one of India's foremost scientists and visionaries, he played a foundational role in shaping the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and later spearheaded transformative changes in India's educational landscape through his leadership in drafting the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

In his capacity as Chairman of ISRO between 1994 and 2003, Dr. Kasturirangan led the organization during a pivotal period of growth and expansion. He was instrumental in the successful development and operationalization of the Indian National Satellite System (INSAT) and the Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) satellites, both of which significantly strengthened India's capabilities in communication, meteorology, and earth observation (Chakrabarti, 2019). Furthermore, under his leadership, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) reached operational maturity, laying the foundation for more ambitious future projects. One of his notable achievements was advancing the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) program, enhancing India's capacity to launch heavier payloads into geostationary orbits (Chakrabarti, 2019).

It was during Dr. Kasturirangan's tenure that India's first serious discussions about lunar exploration began. Although the actual launch of Chandrayaan-1 occurred post his retirement, the conceptualization, strategic groundwork, and early feasibility studies were carried out under his stewardship. Recognizing that India had firmly established itself in earth-centric applications, he argued that planetary exploration was a natural and necessary evolution for the nation's space ambitions (Ramesh, 2021). Between 1999 and 2000, ISRO, under his leadership, initiated internal studies and consultations leading to the formation of a Lunar Mission Task Force that would chart out potential scientific objectives like high-resolution mapping, mineralogical analysis, and lunar exosphere studies (Sridhar, 2020).

Another crucial contribution of Dr. Kasturirangan was his focus on indigenous technology development. He insisted that India must develop its own deep-space communications systems, scientific payloads, and navigation capabilities to maintain autonomy and technological self-reliance. His strategic investments in the PSLV upgrades enabled

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