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A Unique Personality

K Balagopal was unique in many respects. To my mind, he can be counted along with E M S Namboodiripad, A K Gopal and such others, who had given up all personal possessions and aspirations and struggled for the oppressed poor. Balagopal straddled the intellectual and activist domains in an amazing and most effective way. But that effort took him away from us: he literally worked himself to total exhaustion. Following K G Kannabiran, another fighter in the same mould, he worked tirelessly to strengthen a movement for civil liberties in Andhra Pradesh, and later extended his domain of activities to the whole country through the Human Rights Forum.

Balagopal had the courage to raise serious questions about how Marxism is practised in India by all those who call themselves Marxists. He raised questions about basic human values, about social concerns that transcend ideology, and as a consequence became something of an outcast in Marxist circles. But to the last breath he worked for the poor and the oppressed.

N Krishnaji
HYDERABAD

Protecting State Universities

The article by Neeraj Hatekar, "Changing Higher Education Scenario in India" (EPW, 19 September 2009), rightly describes the challenges before state universities in the context of reforms started by the central government in the higher education sector.

The author's suggestion that the "postgraduate and research component in the state higher education system must be taken out of the hands of the state government" could be a step in the right direction to help build the research capacity in the state universities. However, removing the postgraduate teaching and research component entirely from the state's jurisdiction and appending it to the central government may not be practical. State governments and the university administration are unlikely to give up their control easily and the central government is just as unlikely to be willing

to take on the fiscal responsibility of running all the postgraduate courses and research across the country. Moreover, having two administrative set-ups – the postgraduate wing managed by the central government and undergraduate by the state government – in a single university will cause a lot of confusion and chaos therefore not desirable.

A plausible solution would be to develop a mechanism of reimbursement of the financial expenditure incurred on postgraduate teaching and research in state universities by the central government. This will provide financial support to postgraduate wing of the state universities without taking out from the state's jurisdiction. Such a system is working effectively in Australia where, in order to boost their research capacity, universities get a lump sum grant on the completion of MPhil/PhD degrees and a 100% reimbursement of postgraduate students' tuition fees. Different formulae exist for the different streams of subjects, which reflect the actual cost of doing the research. In general, universities tend to get between A\$50,000 and A\$75,000 for the successful completion of PhD courses in humanities and science, respectively. If one adds the postgraduate tuition fees for three years, which amount to about A\$30,000, a reasonable sum of money is generated to maintain research activities in the university sector. To further strengthen and support quality research, additional funding is provided depending on the number of refereed journal and conference publications by the staff and students. This system provides incentive to students to pursue research degrees as the tuition is free, as well as to universities, who are encouraged to increase the output of research both in quality and quantity. Another advantage of this scheme is that academicians of high research calibre and output are respected and taken care of within the university itself as they bring funding to the university.

The adoption of such a system in India should not be considered problematic as it would not curtail the powers of state government nor would it place the total

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