

# Coordination of Democratic Rights Organizations

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## TRIBUTES TO RIGHTS LEGEND BALAGOPAL

**The sudden demise of Balagopal is a big shock to all democrats. It is difficult to fulfill his place in the Rights movement. In fact Balagopal's contribution is tremendous in getting recognition and trust to the rights movement not only in A.P., but all over the country. He gave a new orientation and vision to the Human Rights movement and dedicated his life to achieve the same. Balagopal had a unique character and his extraordinary personality was a combination of an intellectual, writer, leader and ordinary activist. Though he was the leader of the organization, he used to paste posters, distribute pamphlets and sell publications, like an ordinary activist. He became voice of the peoples' rights in A.P. and created his own space in the history of rights movement.**

**During 1970's, the government unleashed fascist repression on Srikakulam Tribal movement, specially by way of fake encounters. In order to oppose the above repression Civil Liberties Movement Started in Andhra Pradesh. Even after Emergency the Civil Liberties Movement gained importance and geared up**

its fight against the State violence. Balagopal, took the inspiration from the democratic movements that were going on in the State, came closer to the APCLC in 1980 and actively participated in the activities of the organization. In a short span, 1983 he became the General Secretary of the organization and continued as such for 15 years in the position.

The first and foremost quality that a Civil Liberties activist should have possess is to withstand to State repression. In this regard one has to learnt a lot from Balagopal. When state repression became severe on APCLC and Gopi Rajanna, Japa Lakshma Reddy, Dr. Ramandham and Narra Prabhakar Reddy (Martyrs of APCLC) became victims of State violence, he showed his bravery in leading the organization. He never looked back, though he was kidnapped and threatened by the police. He expanded the Civil Rights perspective, by defining rights angle to every social problem. In Balgopal's own words "*Rights are just and necessary for each and every individual to lead respectable life in the society. Rights are an instrument to question the dominance, exploitation and inequalities*".

According to him rights are universal. He wished there should be a social and economic environment that should give opportunity to every one to enjoy the rights. He studied extensively on various issues to understand how the rights of the common people are being violating and the socio, political and economic circumstances that are leading to these violations. He critically analyzed the policies of the government and prepared reports. He would say that the fact findings are not just to collect the facts and issue press-statements, but the reports should be able to create rights conscious among the people and give courage to the people to fight for their rights independently. His method of work is role model to all the rights activists. He inspired hundreds of rights activists working in different organizations. He felt that it is the duty of the rights movement to understand the aspirations of the democratic movements in society and to support them from the rights angle.

Balagopal played a very important role in APCLC in expanding the understanding and perspective of the organization. In the light of "Karamchedu Massacre" on dalith's, he understood that 'Caste system' is on of the main reason for the violation of rights in the society and started to fight against the atrocities against Dalith's. He recognized that the 'Patriarchy' is one of the main reasons for domestic violence. He explained how the government is responsible for the famine and how the basic right to life is being violated due to famine. He strongly felt that one has to understand the violence of dominant institutions of the society apart from the State violence. 'One has to oppose the violence with the rights spirit and to work for democratization of the society', he argued. He was popular not only in A.P., but at every place, where peoples movements are going on. He visited several States and participated in several fact findings and raised his voice against the rights violations in Kasmir, Narth East, Gujarath, Orissa and West Bengal, Chhattisgarh etc.

Due to difference's of opinion in the perspective and understanding of certain issues, he left APCLC in 1998 and formed "Human Rights forum" (HRF), led the same till his death. But, he worked with APCLC on various issues of rights violation of common understanding. APCLC and HRF jointly organized several programmes. Though he criticised the violence by the movements, but he never compromised in criticizing of State violence. Just few days before his death, he gave a call to all the democrats to oppose Operation Green Hunt, since it would cause a lot of misery to the adivasis.

The demise of Balagopal is a huge loss to the rights movement. But any movement is collective. Without the co-operation of the activists, no movement would go further. S If the movements are structurally and collectively strong they with stand to the challenges. Rights movements are facing several challenges. Leaders and activists of the rights movements are facing severe repression. Government polices are deliberately denying the basic peoples rights. In this context in order to protect the rights of the people, there is a need to fight collectively. The only tribute that has to be given to Balagopal is that "*his sincerity and honesty has to be assimilated in us to fight for protection of rights.*"

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