

ET

By Invite

# Restoring Our Universities as Temples of Learning



**M VENKAIAH NAIDU**

The Delhi high court's eye-opening observations on the anti-national activities at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) vindicate the stance taken by the BJP that such acts are unpardonable and also highlights the urgency with which all stakeholders need to act to restore universities as temples of learning. In its bail order of Kanhaiya Kumar, the high court observes that the "infection" of anti-national activities needs to be nipped in the bud before the cost of controlling such behavior escalates prohibitively. To this effect, both the incidents at the Hyderabad Central University (HCU) and JNU have a common thread — they reflect a sinister plot of setting up needless confrontation within our society, creating schisms by driving a wedge under the grab of free speech and ultimately celebrating the disintegration of this country by working from within.

against the state but against the nation, of which the state is only a part. The fact that such slogans were raised at a university campus in the garb of free speech shows a total lack of understanding of the law and outright disrespect for our soldiers who are braving severe adversities at the frontiers, including the extremely inhospitable Siachen, and protecting our borders so that we can live in freedom and enjoy the freedom of speech.

## Role of Faculty & Administration

The high court has stated that the "feelings or the protest reflected in the slogans need introspection by the student community whose photographs are available on record holding posters carrying photographs of Afzal Guru and Maqbool Bhatt". However, the larger responsibility always lies with the faculty of such esteemed institutions. Central universities are provided autonomy because of the inherent belief that the teachers and administration of such universities have the wisdom to keep the interest of students and the country central to the learning process. This autonomy that universities are granted

## Anti-Death Penalty Vs Condoning Terror

In HCU, one particular student body offered homage to Yakub Memon, who was responsible for the brutal killing of innocent people in Mumbai. The aim of the body was to portray Yakub Memon as a martyr who was unjustly hanged by the Indian State. The decision to hang Yakub Memon was not taken by the Narendra Modi-led NDA government, but by the Supreme Court which did everything in its capacity to ensure a fair and free trial. The NDA government did everything as per procedure with respect to the hanging of Yakub Memon. The opinion on imposing death penalty by the courts is divided and one should respect the view of the others in this regard. However, when a student association uses the ruse of protesting against the death penalty selectively, only to valorise a terrorist, then it is nothing but justifying violence and condoning terrorism against the people of India. The incendiary placards stating "if one Yakub Menon was killed, hundreds of Yakub Menons would take birth from each house" is not an anti-death penalty slogan but a call to brutally kill our fellow citizens through violent acts of terror against the Indian state.

## Free Speech Vs Sedition

The Delhi Police had filed a case of sedition (Section 124A of IPC) against some JNU students who had participated in an event on February 9. This gathering was surreptitiously organised to commemorate the hanging of Afzal Guru that took place in 2013, besides valorising and even questioning the wisdom of the highest court of this country. It is a matter of serious concern that a former home minister of the country shared the same wisdom. The slogans that were raised at JNU, such as "Bharat tere tukde honge Insha' Allah, Insha' Allah" and "Bharat ki barbadi tuk jung rahegi jung rahegi", were disturbing for any responsible citizen. They were not meant to protest death penalty but a clear call for disintegration of India. They were not only aimed at inciting violence



KRISHNENDU CHAKI

## FOR REASON & WISDOM

Let our higher centres of learning be breeding grounds of reason, wisdom and responsibility

comes with responsibilities just as the fundamental rights elucidated in Part-III under Article 19(1)(A) of the Constitution comes with duties that are elucidated in Part-IV under Article 51 (A). Thus the judgment observing the responsibility of the faculty of JNU and its role in guiding the students on the right path so that they contribute to the growth of the nation, came as a timely reminder of the task at hand.

I am confident that the new National Policy on Education, which is being spearhead by my colleague in the HRD ministry through over 2.75 lakh direct consultations, will restore the sanctity of universities of temples of learning.

Let our higher centres of learning be breeding grounds of reason, wisdom and responsibility instead of being fountainheads of anti-national activism. That is why such tendencies that were manifest at the JNU should be nipped in the bud.

**The author is Union parliamentary affairs & urban development minister**