

Drifting towards Chaos?

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These past 11 months Bengal has witnessed a virtual return of authoritarian rule. This time the party in power is Trinamul Congress. In tackling any democratic voice of dissent it is equally ruthless like its predecessor-CPM. Peasants are committing suicide, shanty-dwellers are being regularly evicted, social-activists are booked under notorious UAPA, with alleged maoist link, as it is in the case of incarceration of Debolina Chakra-borty and Abhignan Sarkar. The situation is slowly but gradually drifting towards chaos. And things are changing for the worse for thousands of part-time college teachers who actually bear the brunt of higher education. Regime change or no change, things are equally deplorable for them.

There are about 450 colleges (432 general non-government degree colleges plus 20 general government degree colleges), in the state where more than 8500 part-time teachers are engaged in to carry on higher education. They have already been doing this job for many years without getting proper salary and minimum honour. The CPM-led Left Front government was quite ambivalent towards the plight of part-timers. And the present dispensation is no exception to the general rule set by the CPM-lords. For the last three years there was no recruitment of permanent lecturers in the colleges although there are more than few hundred posts lie vacant. Already consecutively held three SET passed candidates are awaiting to face an interview to get absorbed in the service only to see no light at the end of the tunnel.

Unless, the part-time lecturers who have surpassed the full time lecturers in number in most of the colleges are treated as full timers higher education in the state may collapse. From the table it is clear how part-time teachers matter in higher education. They are also engaged in other activities such as administrative jobs, evaluation of answer scripts etc. They also conduct and supervise students' union elections, perform their duties in various sub-committees like the full-time lecturers, participate in UGC sponsored seminars, sports, conduct NSS activities of the colleges to help the college to obtain better grade in NAAC rating. Barring all those they are also performing different academic activities like publishing books and journals, organising state, national and international seminars, conferences, working in literacy programme, doing relief works in areas devastated by natural calamities and also engaging themselves in extensive research works.

It is an irony of fate that doing the same job or sometimes more a part-time lecturer is getting the sum ranging from Rs 9,450/- to Rs 13,500/- whereas UGC approved full timers get salaries ranging from Rs 35,000/- to near about Rs 1 lakh. The previous government has only done the job to offer job security of 60 years (vide Govt. order no. 751-Edn(CS)-5P-46/99 dated 21.09.2010). But the order forbids them to serve in any other profession other than teaching in their respective colleges. The previous government order has the provision for a part-timer to work in two colleges and they used to get maximum remuneration according to

experience from one college while in other college they got the minimum. Accordingly their maximum income had raised to Rs 17,000/- but now according to maximum experience (i.e. ten or more than ten years of service) one part-time lecturer is getting only Rs 13,500/- which is Rs 3,500/- less than the previous one. Also they are now earning less despite a 35% hike in previous salary made by the outgoing LF govt. Not only that, there is delay in payment. At present for the last 11 months they are not getting their salaries, thanks to TMC populism! Few colleges have received the arrear of the part-timers although many other colleges, are yet to receive the arrears. Sometimes the college authorities after receiving the memo (i.e., the sum allotted to give remuneration to the respective part-time lecturers) deposited it in their college bank accounts but did not release the amount in favour of legitimate part-timers on time. Part-time lecturers of Bagha Jatin Sammilani College had gheraoed the Principal to release the amount to pay off their arrear on 17 April 2012. In some other colleges the arrears of erstwhile part-timers (as he or she had to leave a college according to the last G/O) are being misappropriated by the college authority. In this regard no step has been taken by any government although specific allegation was made against the college authority. This columnist has been deprived of six months' salary (April 2010 to September 2010) from Dhruva Chand Haldar College of South 24 parganas even after the sancation of the memo from the DPI. Nobody bothers and this mal- practice is going on even in the present regime of Trinamul.

The present government in the near future is going to take decision not to recruit permanent lecturers in the posts already occupied by the part-time and contractual lecturers. The directorate of public instruction (DPI) of higher education department has already organised a camp in the early March of 2012 for hearing with the college principals in its Salt Lake office to take stock of the situation. According to the source of college service commission (CSC) office there are more than 4,500 posts being vacant in West Bengal colleges. But due to government's present policy only 600 posts can be filled up. In this regard 80 colleges of this state may lose recognition due to present state government's recruitment policy. According to 12b and 2f clauses of UGC statute at least eight permanent teachers are required to run a college but here in West Bengal more or less 80 colleges lack such norms. The outgoing Left Front Govrenment opened up more or less 80 colleges during the last decade of its tenure where only one or two full-time lecturers are running the respective college, even part-time lecturer too is running the college (table shows in Jamalpur College, Burdwan TIC is a part-time lecturer). At present there are 5,900 part-time lecturers and 900 contractual lecturers who have got approval from the higher education department of the state. The outgoing Left Front Government can be blamed for not creating any posts for a long period during their tenure in power. Since 2008 CSC did not advertise for interviewing the UGC qualified candidates to fill up the vacant posts for unknown reasons. Even more than 150 colleges are without any principals. The last advertisement for the recruitment of principals was published during the tenure of L F Govt's rule in 2009-10.

In this precarious situation Prof Agnibina Deb of Baghajatin Sammilani Mahavidyalaya was compelled to commit suicide due to long standing non-payment of her salary. Another teacher

of Katoa college too committed suicide as he could not bear with such a situation. There are four part-time lecturers' organisations of which College and University Teachers' Association of Bengal (PTT) (CUTAB) is the largest one. This organisation has already organised an Assembly march (Bidhansabha Abhijan) on 30th March, 2012 to place their demands to the state's Chief Minister. They also met the governor on 7th April 2012 and placed their charter of demands to redress their grievances. Anyhow, the Governor Narayanan consoled the delegation team that he would look after their demands and convey the matter to the CM and the higher education minister. They have demanded revised pay scale according to the year of service, full term job like full timers, PF, Gratuity and Pension benefits after the retirement from the service, representation in college governing bodies and teachers' councils. If this situation lingers further the higher education system will suffer much. If the government fails to redresses the plight of the part-time lecturers the higher education system may crumble anytime soon. □□□

Table

Table Showing Full-Time Lecturers Compared to Part-Time Lecturers

Sl. No.	Name of the College	in some of the Colleges of West Bengal			
		Full-time Lecturer	Part-time Lecturer	Contractual Lecturer	Guest Lecturer
1	Asutosh College	71	06	22	83
2	Bankim Sardar College	23	10	-	04
3	Barabazar BT Memorial College		02	13	- 04
4	Bengal Music College	05	09	-	01
5	Bhagini Nibedita College	08	17	-	06
6	Chittaranjan College	02	12	01	03
7	Dhrubachand Haldar College	28	41	-	-
8	East Calcutta Girls' College	15	28	03	10
9	Jamalpur College, Burdwan (TIC is a part-time lecturer.)	00	09	-	04
10	Jibantala Rokeya Mahavidyalaya		02	12	01 06
11	Jogesh Chowdhury Law College		02	07	09 -
12	Keshpur College	03	23	-	-
13	Panskura Banamali College	33	56	10	15

14	Purnidevi Girls' Mahavidyalaya	07	22	-	-
15	Sagar Mahavidyalaya	05	17	-	07
16	Shahid Anurup Ch. College	07	17	02	-
17	Sammilani Mahavidyalaya	25	35	01	20
18	Sarsuna College	24	41	03	-
19	Sir Gurudas College	08	34	01	-
20	South Calcutta Law College	01	09	07	-
21	Tapan College, South Dinajpur	01	00	00	08
22	Vivekananda College for Women		29	44	- 03

[Source : Adhapak Barta.,Vol.II, February 2012]