

By Sidharth Mishra



Last week a sad news emerged from the Delhi University. A scholar who had been teaching at the prestigious Hindu College for almost six years committed suicide. He took the step allegedly after being rejected by interview panel which had assembled for making permanent appointments.

Identified as Samarveer, the deceased DU teacher came from a village in Rajasthan's Baran district. Though no suicide note was found, according to a cousin, with whom Samarveer shared a room, he was under depression after he lost the job as an ad hoc lecturer in the Hindu College in February.

This unfortunate incident has been followed by the teachers and students alleging that a sizable number of long-serving ad-hoc teachers, who otherwise fill all the eligibility criteria for teaching posts advertised by DU colleges, and have worked in particular institutions, were being displaced in the interviews being held for making regular appointments.

This has been contested by the Delhi University officially. Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh recently presented a report before the Delhi University Court, the highest policy making body of the university, where he claimed that the rate of displacement was meagre and in single digit.

This is not agreed by the various teachers groups who say that the ad hoc teachers losing jobs was much larger. The truth lies somewhere in between but the fact is that getting an ad hoc job in a college cannot be a guarantee for a permanent appointment.

There is a laid down process for regular appointment in the Delhi University colleges. Which on face of it looks to be full-proof and merit based. But the process could be contaminated by evils like nepotism, regional and ideological parochialism and so on. It would be wrong to say that such allegation are new and that they never existed before.

The problem at hand is the long years of gap between the last regular appointments done and the present regularisation process initiated by Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh. During this long gap, the process of aging did not stop and many a teachers superannuated leaving vacancies.

These vacancies were filled by the ad hoc teachers. At the start of the present regularisation process, more than half of the faculty strength of DU consisted of the force of ad hoc teachers.

The appointment of ad hoc teachers in various colleges of Delhi University is governed by many other paraphernalia than just the quotient of merit. There are two main players in appointment, the principal of the college and the teacher in-charge of the subject in the college.

The professors at the university department largely wield their influence through the teacher in-charge. The various teacher groups aligned to various ideologies again influence the process through these two, as do the university officials, University Grants Commission (UGC) officials, the list is pretty long.

If a person remains on an ad hoc position for long, there is a possibility that the halo of influence that she or he commanded at the time of their initial appointment may wane by the time regular appointments are made. Then there is also the dilemma of those on the regular selection committee, who would want to be influenced only by the merit of the candidates and their performance in the interview.

These leads to displacement of ad hoc teachers. The question is why let a situation of ad hoc appointments arise in the first place. The university could always create a mechanism, where vacancies are filled with regular appointment in less than two years' time. This could help save life of somebody like Samarveer and a bad name for the university.

Adhocism gnawing at Delhi University's prestige

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