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MINT

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Foundational values for Civil Service - Integrity, Objectivity, Impartiality & non-partisanship

The IPS officer's sarcastic post on the 'loyalty' of TMC leader Partha Chatterjee aide Arpita Mukherjee has now gone viral.

As the Enforcement Directorate (ED) digs deeper into the teachers' recruitment scam, a tweet from IPS officer Arun Bothra about Arpita Mukherjee, the close aide of ousted Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee, has gone viral. A few days after the pair were detained, on July 28, Bothra shared a tweet on Mukherjee.

11,809 , pic.twitter.com/BzJWCR0bjL

"Whatever you say, Arpita-ji has set an example of loyalty," Bothra posted in Hindi, "She was supposed to pay the (housing) society 11,809, a notice was put on the door but she kept another person's money in full custody."

The IPS officer's sarcastic post on the 'loyalty' of the Bengali model and actress has now gone viral. Many people have shared their two cents on the issue. "It is rare to meet such an honest person in today's Kali Yuga. Such rare human beings can be found only on the holy land of India," one user wrote.

One of the users went sarcastic about demonetisation and said, "But we heard that black money had disappeared after demonetisation?"

The TMC is likely to go in for a major organisational overhaul as well as a reshuffle of the state cabinet following the arrest of now-suspended senior party leader Partha Chatterjee in a multi-crore school jobs scam. Sources said the reshuffle will also aim at an image makeover for the party hit by school jobs scam probe.

Chatterjee, the former virtual number two both in the TMC and the government, was [stripped of all ministerial responsibilities](#) and suspended from the party following his arrest last week and the recovery of around 50 crore from flats of his associate Arpita Mukherjee.

On Thursday, Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee had indicated that a cabinet reshuffle will take place shortly.

"Partha Da has been relieved of his ministerial responsibilities. For the time being, I will keep his ministries till a cabinet reshuffle takes place," Banerjee had said.

According to senior TMC leaders privy to the development, overhauling the cabinet was being planned for quite some time, but Chatterjee's arrest hastened the process.

"The idea is modeled on Kamaraj Plan of the 1960s when several top Congress ministers had resigned to work for the party. Our plan was mooted last year after TMC returned to power for the third consecutive term.

"Now, only time will tell whether there will be a wholesale reshuffle or only a few key ministries

will be changed," a senior TMC leader told PTI on condition of anonymity.

(With PTI inputs)

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HE RECOGNISED THE VALUE OF DISSENT

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct

P.S. Appu. Photo: Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration

The year was 1980. I joined a band of nervous new recruits to the Indian Administrative Service to train in the L.B.S. National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie. Our first day we were privileged to encounter a man who would in many ways define for us, not so much by his words but his actions, the highest standards of public service. His name was P.S. Appu.

Erudite and brilliant, Appu was extraordinarily understated. He spoke to us with steely conviction, but little embellishment. He was fiercely intolerant of what he found dishonest or mediocre, but was remarkably friendly and accessible. I recall days when I stormed into his open office, to brashly protest a lecture which I felt glorified police firing against democratic protest, or a senior officer who instructed us on ways to hide and deny starvation deaths, or the Academy requirements that we wear suits for formal dinners. He would smile delightedly at my youthful, immature protests, clearly enjoying and welcoming dissent. He was non-hierarchical, and had an unshakeable moral core — qualities I was to learn in later years were extremely rare in the senior civil services.

Appu introduced us to land reforms and rural development. He spoke of the paramount values of political neutrality and independence of civil servants, and the duty to offer fearless and honest advice, even if it angers one's political leaders. We had heard many legends about his administrative career in Bihar. When appointed as Chief Secretary, he wrote to the Chief Minister the many reasons why the CM should reconsider his decision. When the CM still insisted, he laid down several conditions, including that he should have a free hand in restructuring administration, making appointments, with no interference in delegated spheres. Ruthless action should be taken against corrupt and incompetent officials. He explained that "I did not lay down the above conditions because of my arrogance or any feeling that I was indispensable. I did so because I felt that the situation in Bihar was so bad that there was no hope of effecting the necessary improvement unless those conditions were fulfilled." Seven months later, when he felt that the CM had failed to stand by his commitments, he refused to continue as Chief Secretary.

The turning point

The most important lesson that Appu taught us was one that I would repeat, to myself and my younger colleagues many times in the two decades that I spent in the civil service. It was that no one can force an officer to do what she or he believes to be wrong. If any officer tells you that you can be forced in government to act according to the dictates of your conscience, that person is lying. Of course there will be costs; but if there were no costs, everyone would do the right thing.

We did not realise how quickly Appu would teach us the truth of this counsel, once again with actions and not just words. We were deeply dismayed to return after a year's district training to find that he no longer headed the Academy. But his absence taught us more than his words ever could.

In the batch which followed ours, during the mandatory trek in the Himalayas, one male officer whipped out a loaded revolver and threatened two women trainees by pointing the weapon at their heads. He also threatened some men trainees by brandishing the same revolver. This

young man had been asked earlier to leave the National Defence Academy for indiscipline. Appu was convinced that such a person would be dangerous to retain in public office, and recommended his discharge from service. But allegedly because of his closeness to the then Home Minister, he was let off lightly, with only a reprimand. Appu put in his papers in protest. He explained his decision in a letter to Indira Gandhi, who was Prime Minister at the time: "The only conclusion the probationers will draw is that with influence in the right quarters one can commit even heinous crimes with impunity." The matter rocked Parliament, and his decision was ultimately upheld. But the country lost one of its most upright civil servants.

In his years of quiet retirement with his son in Bangalore, he remained a moral compass, right up to when he lost his last battle with cancer. When Gujarat burned in 2002, he wrote to the President of India. "Today I hang my head in shame as an Indian, a Hindu and a former member of the Indian Administrative Service. In the short span of eight weeks the evil men who rule Gujarat, shielded by their patrons in Delhi, have succeeded in besmirching beyond repair India's reputation as the classic land of tolerance and moderation To the eternal shame of the permanent services, the majority of IAS and IPS officers collaborated with their political masters." He recommended President's rule, advice which was once again ignored.

Thirteen years after I first met Appu, I returned to the Academy in Mussoorie, this time to join its faculty. My first lecture to every batch of young trainees would be titled: "The right and duty of a civil servant to dissent." It was my own small tribute to my great teacher and mentor.

(Harsh Mander is a social worker and writer. A former officer of the Indian Administrative Service, he is currently a member of the National Advisory Council .)

[Our code of editorial values](#)

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