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Problems of music college

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THE College of Music (later Government College of Music) established twenty-five years ago was a bold and innovative step. The study and pursuit of music as an academic discipline was, in 1963, a unique idea in this country and not very commonplace even in India which had not introduced academic courses in music till after independence. The leading musicians of the '60s worked wholeheartedly for the novel institution, chief among them was the college's founder and first principal, the maestro Barin Majumdar.

The going was tough for Barin Majumdar and his colleagues. Pay was meagre and irregular and as for the state of art and culture, the time was Monem Khan's. Art and culture was farthest from the mind of the rulers of the time. But one looks back, with agreeable surprise, to find that response among students was quite favourable and the music college did not lack pupils.

There seems to be considerable misconception among the people about the course and curricula of music college. The degree one recei-

into the college and passing out from it. Their number was small but as a professional college it was not expected to have a large roll. As far as can be gathered, the students after qualifying from this college did not ordinarily establish themselves in a music career but otherwise had no difficulty in landing jobs. Thus the college had served its purpose as an academic institution but whether it was able to create any great impact in the field of music or culture is another question.

The college initially had all the problems of a non-government college and much else besides because it was a music college. In 1984 the government took it over. One might reasonably think that its problems would be over and they were substantially over, with emphasis on the word, substantially. This qualifier has been necessitated due to two recent government regulations which create difficulty in staffing. The

government has not regularised the services of some members of the staff who have been teaching music at the college for many years on the ground that they do not possess M. Mus. degree. Now M. Mus. degree is not given in Bangladesh and the music college cannot even start the Masters degree course because there are not enough teachers. Some of these music teachers are reputed exponents of their art but their future has become uncertain following the government takeover. It is felt that while the government is fully justified in laying down eligibility criteria for future recruits, the existing members of the staff, according to norms and precedents are to be absorbed and regularised. It is further felt that till the country has introduced M. Mus course and the first batch has passed out the qualification barrier should be waived or relaxed.

For a long time the college has no teacher for such a vital subject like classical music. The post is vacant, recruitment is to be made by the Public Service Commission whose requirement is not only that the candidate should be M. Mus but also one who has successfully completed BCS and indicated his option to join education service. In other words, the candidate, the future Mr X, will be required to have three types of qualification—of a musician, of a college lecturer and of a civil servant. And after that, the candidate himself should give his preference to join the music college rather than any executive post in the government to which he will also become entitled after qualifying BCS. How can a professional college, particularly music college, run under these bureaucratic constrictions?

Absence of appropriate principles and mechanism for recruiting teachers is also affecting the morale of the 200 plus students. What will they do after passing B. Mus if the col-

lege does not start M. Mus. The staffing problem tends to cripple the growth of the college in a vital way. The college has discontinued courses in instrumental music and only vocal music is taught. What struck your writer as mentionable is that students are given lessons in music with the help of the harmonium whereas the music institutions pointedly reject the harmonium. The harmonium is regarded as a crude instrument because its automatic notes produce inaccurate frequency ratios and do not permit soft swings between notes. The college authorities are aware of the advantages of modern acoustic equipment at the learner's level which some music institutions have tapped and they think some day it can be installed in this college. But when?

It was a laudable venture on the part of the government to take over the college but some accompanying measures are essential to make the college really work.