

Newsmaker | Career bureaucrat to Rajya Sabha MP, why Jawhar Sircar has Trinamool Congress riled

Written by Sourav Roy Barman New Delhi | Updated: September 3, 2022

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Jawhar Sircar entered [Kolkata](#)'s Presidency College (now Presidency University) at a time when the city's campuses were in ferment, with the Naxalbari uprising radicalising an entire generation of young undergraduates, many from rather affluent families.

However, Sircar did not swim with the tide. He turned to English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson to channelise his angst, writing, "Theirs was not to reason why, Theirs was to do and defy." Reproduced in the Golden Jubilee Souvenir of the college's Political Science Department in 2011, the piece, in which Sircar tweaked Tennyson's words from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, was his way of expressing bemusement at the acts of violence committed by the "young Che Guevaras".

Cut to 2022, after the [bureaucrat-turned-MP spoke out against the "rotten section" of his party Trinamool Congress \(TMC\)](#), a large section of the leadership is finding it difficult to process his statement, much like a young Sircar found the deeds of many of his batchmates confounding.

It all began with Sircar's remark, made during an interview to Bengali news channel ABP Ananda, that "a section of the TMC was completely rotten" and that the party could not fight the [BJP](#) in the 2024 [Lok Sabha](#) polls with such elements.

Sircar said visuals of stashes of cash recovered from the apartments of former minister Partha Chatterjee's associate [Arpita Mukherjee](#) were so revolting — Chatterjee was sacked from the Cabinet and expelled from the party — that his family urged him to quit politics. In 2016, Sircar quit as Prasar Bharati CEO, four months before the end of his tenure, over his disagreements with the BJP-led Central government.

The remarks elicited sharp reactions from most TMC leaders, who demanded disciplinary action against him. "If he is so embarrassed by

the recent developments, then why is he still holding his post? He should immediately resign as [Rajya Sabha](#) MP,” TMC Lok Sabha MP Saugata Roy told reporters.

That matters had come to a head became clear when the TMC leadership deputed its Rajya Sabha deputy leader Sukhendu Sekhar Roy to speak to Sircar. “I met him and conveyed the party’s stand. Sircar also communicated his position to the leadership through me. That’s all I can share at this moment,” Roy told [The Indian Express](#) on Friday.

When contacted, Sircar refused to offer any direct comment on the issue and spoke about the factors that motivated him to join politics after quitting bureaucracy, where he rose to the post of secretary in the Union government. Between November 2008 and February 2012, he was the Culture Secretary, before joining Prasar Bharati as its CEO in 2016. He entered the Rajya Sabha as TMC MP in 2021.

“I had problems with Modi’s unacceptable communalisation of politics and his authoritarian streak. Since quitting Prasar Bharati, I have been openly combating both of these — through every public platform. Joining politics is a later development. I accepted (West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC chief) [Mamata Banerjee](#)’s offer to carry on the fight to Parliament, even though I am not intrinsically political. This struggle against communalism and authoritarianism will never cease — until we restore India’s grand secular democratic tradition, or die, whichever is earlier,” Sircar told The Indian Express.

Sources close to Sircar claimed he spoke out “not to damage the party, but keeping its best interests in mind”. They pointed to an article that he wrote for The Wire in May 2021 after the TMC’s victory in Assembly polls. In the article, he underlined that the “surge against the BJP was led by a solid bloc of liberal and educated Bengalis, the much-discussed bhadralok”.

A person close to Sircar said, “For the TMC to ensure that it gets at least 35 seats in the 2024 general elections, it needs these votes also. The recent developments threaten that prospect, which is what the party needs to realise.”

But the criticism against him is showing no signs of letting up. “A career bureaucrat, having enjoyed all the perks and privileges, will now teach Mamata Banerjee politics? And he plans to do that by embarrassing the party. This is ridiculous. The party should act against him immediately,” said a TMC leader.