

## A Cry for Dignity on a Sacred Day



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The morning broke like any other Teachers' Day in Assam. Classrooms across the state were filled with garlands, songs, and the eager smiles of children bowing before their teachers. But while thousands of students offered prayers and gifts, more than 9,000 tutors left their schools behind and walked instead to the Latashil playground in Guwahati.

It was here, on this very day of reverence, that the tutors chose protest over celebration. With banners aloft and voices hoarse with slogans, they demanded not flowers but justice.

"We have given our entire lives to teaching," one grey-haired tutor said, his eyes moist, his voice trembling. "Today we should have been in the classroom, blessing our children. Instead, we are here, begging the government to recognize us as teachers, to give us the dignity we deserve."

The crowd, drawn from every corner of the state, echoed his words. They were men and women who had been provincialised under government orders in 2021, yet left with only the title of “tutor” and salaries that barely reached ₹10,000 or ₹12,000 a month. They spoke of families they could no longer support, of sick parents without treatment, of children whose education was at risk while their own parents taught the children of others.

Their demands were plain: equal pay for equal work, recognition as full-fledged teachers, gratuity for bereaved families, pension rights, and training for those without professional qualifications. Nothing extravagant, only what their peers already enjoy.

Yet the path to Raj Bhavan was blocked. A day earlier, authorities had banned protests within five kilometres of the Governor’s residence. Denied the right to march, the teachers remained at Latashil, their chants filling the ground: *“Give us dignity, give us our rights!”* A small delegation was eventually allowed to carry their memorandum to the Governor’s office.

The protest was led by the All Assam Provincialised ME and LP Tutors’ Association, whose leaders Rabindra Borgohain and Bhuvan Sharma stood before the gathering, urging patience yet promising persistence. For years, they said, successive governments had turned deaf ears to the tutors’ pleas. The Himanta Biswa Sarma government was no different.

And so, on the day meant to honour teachers, the state witnessed a different image: not of children seeking blessings at their gurus’ feet, but of gurus themselves, weary and wounded, demanding their due.

One tutor, his voice rising above the din, summed up the mood. “We teach, we guide, we bear the same responsibilities as any other teacher. Yet we are treated as lesser beings. Today we are not celebrating. Today we are mourning the dignity denied to us.”

Thus, Teachers’ Day 2025 in Assam shall be remembered not for garlands and applause, but for the sound of 9,000 voices raised in unison against neglect.

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