INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, teaching has been labelled as a “Noble Profession”. Teachers played a very important role in developing the qualities and building the society. It was a service to the cause of humanity. Traditionally, teachers used to acquire adequate knowledge through hard work and research, and used to feel it their duty to render it to the learners of younger generation through their apt method of teaching.

In the ancient times, the teachers acquired immense satisfaction by rendering services to help an individual to develop his/her potentialities, and become productive citizens. As a result, they were highly praised and received respect from the community. They were even worshipped, and occupied a position second to none, as a Guru. They enjoyed their social status, and loved as idols of the society. They found a commendable position and deep personal satisfaction in helping individual citizens, but their success as teachers in democracy, is reflected chiefly in the students’ attitude towards the nation. No other professional, does have the opportunity to feel that his efforts are so much contributive to the development of the nation.

Our first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had emphasized the supreme importance of “Investment for men” for the development of the country. He said, “If we want good teachers, we have to give them amenities of life, and we have to give them something that is even more valuable, the respect due to a person who is charged with the greatest task of all, the moulding of human being.” (Presidential Address by Sri K.R.Narayanan, the then Vice-President of India, at the presentation awards of Teachers’ Day, 1997)

Traditionally, society has held great esteem for teachers, and similarly, teachers have fulfilled their duty of moulding the younger generation successfully. But, along with passage of time they are entrusted with greater duties to perform, to uphold the best in Indian tradition, values and culture;
and to be ideal agents of society for human development and social transformation. Gandhiji had said, “That a teacher is one who sets an example of good behaviour” (Narayanan, 1997). In this world, when there is confusion of values and standards, and when teachers tend to fall from old pedestals, it has become necessary to refurnish them as ‘role model’.

In the Indian mould of Gurukula system, the students stayed with the teacher, rendered services to him and received the “Sparks from heaven”, which was the order of those times. The student-teacher relation was quite strong in those days. Even in the holy text of Bhagwat Gita, the omniscient teacher cleared the doubts raised by a disciple. Such relation can only bear the necessary fruit. (Madhavan, 1998).

In the earlier days the teachers were the mentors whom the students worshipped and sought to emulate. The student surrendered himself fully to his teachers, who in return accepted the responsibility and considered it to be their duty to mould an individual to become a good citizen and a fine human being too. In return, they ignored any minimum favour. So the students and the society as a whole respected them profoundly, and could happily sacrifice anything, if necessary, for the cause of the teachers. In this connection, we can make relevant reference to the mythological character Ekalavya, who did not hesitate to cut off his right thumb to please his teacher Dronacharya.

In those days, the classroom atmosphere was considered to be so different, that a cordial and meaningful interaction between the teacher and students reigned supreme. The teachers’ personality, his extreme devotion to his work and his love towards the students played a vital role in guiding the young minds in the right direction. The students too never hesitated to follow the path shown by their teacher. Such a condition continued for a long period of time, till the establishment of the British rule in our country. During the British regime, substantial changes had taken place in different aspects of the society including the education system of the country, with special reference to the teacher’s role and duty in imparting education; and where the teachers were instructed specially to teach the students in a manner to become the
required "servant of the government". Accordingly, curriculum was designed and attempted to be introduced.

Along with the passage of time, several significant incidents had taken place – the World War, independence (mainly economic) and rapid development in the science and technology as well as concomitant changes in the socio-economic framework including life-style. Such series of incidents necessarily initiated to change in the curriculum, role and responsibility of the teachers in Indian Education System involving primary, secondary and higher education of the country, being prescribed by different education commissions and introduced time to time by the government. Teachers were also required to be educated and trained accordingly and took up the responsibility.

As teachers constitute the most important component of any educational structure, the subject of their pay scale and service conditions in universities and colleges has received due attention of the government of India since independence. Providing emolument and service conditions commensurate with the role of teachers in the development process has therefore, been a major policy concern of the University Grants Commission (UGC) - established in 1956 for the promotion and co-ordination of university education as well as for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in the universities across the country. Successive Education Commissions and Committees, appointed by the Government of India and UGC have, therefore, gone into these aspects in detail. Towards this end, the relatively more significant one was the, "Mehrotra Committee" which was constituted in 1983 by the UGC, and was specifically asked to examine and recommend a structure of emoluments and conditions of service of the university and College teachers, "keeping in view the necessity of attracting and retaining talented persons in the teaching profession". In addition this committee, uniquely, for the first time proposed a comprehensive scheme of career advancement (popularly known as Merit Promotion Scheme or M.P.S.) along with creation of facilities for the professional development of the teachers. This was to be achieved by the
teachers through participation in orientation programmes, refresher courses, seminars, symposia and conferences as well as successfully completing M. Phil./Ph.D. programmes and publication of research articles and books. Accordingly, a cluster of competent Lecturers in the colleges and universities were promoted to senior Lecturers or Readers, and Readers in the university were promoted to Professors under such Merit Promotion Scheme, in the years 1986 and 1987.

Unfortunately after that U.G.C., had abruptly withdrawn such promotion scheme (M.P.S.), especially from Readers to Professors in the universities with a declaration that they would sanction an adequate number of the post of Professors in different universities. But since than, till today not even a single post of Professor was sanctioned to any existing department of any university (excepting a few newly established departments of some universities) by the U.G.C. As a result, almost all the departments of all universities in different states had to run the teaching-learning processes with the help of thin existing number of teachers of whom a sizeable percentages are Readers – majority of them were working in the said post since the last twelve to fifteen years and even more in several cases. In the context of the said circumstances, it is quite obvious that a sizeable proportion of the teachers designated as Readers are suffering from an 'Occupational locking-in' condition as most of the departments in almost all Indian universities have had only one or two substantive or sanctioned posts of Professors and that too are not vacant. So the possibility of getting promoted to the post of Professor is very difficult to most of those stagnated Readers during their service tenure, in spite of the fact that they possessed good academic records including Ph.D. degree, research publications, teaching experience and other prescribed prerequisites to become a Professor. Consequently those teachers are assumed as the victims of 'Locked-in' circumstances in their profession and which tend to generate unfavourable and undesirable consequences either in case of promoting the teaching-learning process or in elevating and maintaining the
desired level of motivational pattern of a concerned teachers group or even in protecting their mental health as well-adjusted professionals.

Such demoralizing conditions of the teachers initiated the present investigator to think and consider the issue as a research problem in Applied Psychology. Accordingly, an outline plan was submitted on the concerned issue and which was approved by the Ph. D. committee (Ref. No 3934 Ph.D. (Sc), Dated 14/02/1997, University of Calcutta). Meanwhile the U.G.C. appointed another Pay Review Committee, known as Rastogi Committee on the revision of pay scales, minimum qualifications for the appointment of teachers in the universities and colleges and other measures for the maintenance of standards. The schedule tenure of that committee was up to May 1997. On the basis of the recommendations of the Rastogi Committee, the U.G.C. notification was declared during the last quarter of 1998 and the necessary Government order sent to the universities sometime during November 1999. Following the stipulations and other constraints, the process of implementation has just started during the later part of 2000. During this period, many of the senior stagnated Readers have attained their age of superannuation and failed to gain the benefits of the recommendations.

The findings of the present investigation have tried to provide certain information about how those ‘Locked-in’ university teachers experienced occupational stress and coped with it, as well as affected by it.