

Conference Report

Report of the One-Day Seminar on “Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar’s thoughts on Education” held on February 8, 2020

In order to celebrate the 200th birth anniversary of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Institute of Science, Education and Culture (ISEC) in collaboration with Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM), Kolkata organized a one-day Seminar on “Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar’s Thoughts on Education” on 8th February, 2020 at the Seminar Hall, BITM, Kolkata. The seminar was financially supported by Higher Education Department, Government of West Bengal. Prof. Anil Kumar Ghosh, the President of ISEC, inaugurated the Seminar with an enthusiastically and academically spirited inspirational speech focused on the topic of the mentioned seminar. He also welcomed all the participants including the honourable speakers, chairpersons and convener. The keynote address was presented by Dr. Swapan Kole, Faculty of AKPC College, Bengai, Hooghly and who is also the EC Member of ISEC. In his most valuable opinion, it was reflected that without the active inspiration of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, women education in Bengal was not possible and he was the pioneer of learning Sanskrit as a basic language with Bengali in prosecuting education through mother tongue. Not only opening so many Sanskrit Schools and publishing “Betel Panchabingsati”, “Byakaron Kaumudi” and the “Barna parichay” he translated the poetry of Shakespeare. His was actively involved in so many social works especially in the tribal zone in Jharkhand area and founded different schools for their social upliftment. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was Bengal’s Path-breaking Reformer.

Technical Session I was started after tea break and Prof. Chittabrata Palit, the Director of Institute of Historical Science and EC member of ISEC, was the Chairperson. The first lecture

was delivered by Prof. Priyambada Sarkar, Department of Philosophy, Calcutta University, Alipore Campus, Kolkata. She focused on “Secular Humanist, Educationist and Ideas of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar”. According to her opinion, Vidyasagar is also credited for the reconstruction of Bengali alphabets and simplification of the Bengali typography into 12 vowels and 40 consonants. Ishwar Chandra Bandyopadhyay, a key figure of the Bengal Renaissance, was a Bengali polymath who was born on September 26, 1820. He was a philosopher, educator, publisher, reformer and philanthropist and his efforts to simplify and modernise Bengali prose is well documented. One of the most prominent campaigners for widow remarriage among Hindus, he also received the moniker ‘Vidyasagar’, meaning the ocean of knowledge, from Sanskrit College for his knowledge in the language and philosophy. Prof. P. Sarkar was felicitated by a memento on behalf of the ISEC.

Lecture II was delivered by honourable speaker Dr. Purabi Mukherji, formerly Professor of Mathematics, Gokhale Memorial Girls’ College, Kolkata. Her topic was emphasized on “Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar’s role in Bengal Renaissance”. Vidyasagar championed in women causes in India. One of his major characteristics was that unlike his contemporaries, who sought to create alternate societies, he attempted to change society from within and with the help of noted contemporaries like Akshay Kumar Dutta, introduced the practice of widow remarriage to mainstream society. Furthermore, Vidyasagar was strongly opposed to the then prevailing custom of Kulin Brahmin polygamy, which allowed elderly men, sometimes on their deathbeds, to marry

teenage or prepubescent girls, supposedly to spare their parents the shame of having an unmarried girl back home. Many times, these 'brides' would be left behind at their paternal places without a second glance, specially, if they were subsequently widowed. Subjected to semi-starvation and a hard life many of them would flee and became prostitutes. Vidyasagar sought to change this as well. Then the Session Chair discussed on both lectures. After that Dr. Mukherjee was also felicitated by the ISEC.

Technical Session II was started after a Lunch Break under the Chairmanship of Dr. Sudip Budhaditya Deb, Deputy Chief and Executive Officer in WBCAFMPA, Government of West Bengal. Lecture III was delivered by honourable speaker Prof. Chittabrata Palit, the Director of Institute of Historical Science, EC member of ISEC and he was formerly professor of History Department in Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He focused on "Stages of Education in Vidyasagar's Thought". He pointed out that one of the key figures of India's renaissance in the nineteenth century, the social reformer, philanthropist and anti-colonial activist made more than one contribution that have made the annals of our history richer. He agitated for women's education, their rights to a normal life after widowhood, and against the malevolence of various oppressions still weighing on them in late nineteenth century in Bengal. Then the second important contribution of Vidyasagar was that he wrote down the Bengali alphabet as it is known today. His original publication on the subject is called "Barna Parichay", literally, an introduction to the Alphabet. We think whether there was no alphabet before? Of course there was. Just as there was writing, there were stories, there was education, and there were children. But everything has a date and a beginning because

from there starts the categorisation and the classification. Vidyasagar made it uniform by removing some letters, adding others, confirming how many there must be and what the exact shape and sound of each was. He further made a rhyme to introduce each to the child-learner. He published the alphabet accompanied by beautiful wood-cut illustrations. Dr. Palit was felicitated by the memento by ISEC.

Lecture IV was presented by the honourable speaker Dr. Lily Biswas, a Member of Faculty, Department of Philosophy, University of Kalyani. She explained the "Role of Vidyasagar in Developing Child Education and Varnaparichay". She said that another contribution by Vidyasagar was the fact that he reconstructed the Bengali alphabet and simplified the Bengali typography into 12 vowels and 40 consonants. The Bengali alphabet had remained unchanged since Charles Wilkins and Panchanan Karmakar had cut the first Bengali type in 1780. He made significant contributions to Bengali and Sanskrit literature with works like Varnaparichay being considered a classic. Dr. Biswas was then felicitated by the ISEC with a memento.

At the end of the brilliant presentations of the eminent speakers, Vote of thanks was offered by Dr. Bandana Barman, EC member of ISEC and Faculty in Kalyani Government Engineering College, with an appreciation of the Seminars as well as the opinion of the honourable speakers after a fantastic song sang by Mr. Manas Kumar Saha, Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering in Engineering Institute for Junior Executives and life member of ISEC.

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Report of E-Summit 2020 of E-Cell of Kalyani Govt. Engineering College

Despite the challenges in this lockdown condition, E-Cell (Entrepreneurship Cell) of Kalyani Govt. Engineering College (KGEC), Kalyani with Prof. Santanu Das as its Chairman has managed to organize their E-Summit 2020 on June 6th-7th

2020 to bring in formal events for every aspiring entrepreneur. The E-Summit had a series of talks and panel discussions on previous occasions, but this time it is organized in online mode.
