

## OUR ASSOCIATION

**Prof. Dr. Rajat Kumar Chakraborti\***

At the very advanced age of my life I have been asked to write about the Association of Engineers, India . I came to know about this important Association for the engineers of the country from our student and my colleague , Dr. Madhusudan Bhattacharyya, at Jadavpur University. I was told that the Association is the oldest institution of its kind in India . The founder fathers wanted to have a platform to propagate and nurture the talent of Indian engineers without the domination of the foreign Bureaucracy.

I joined the Association as a Life Member in the year 1977. At the beginning I tried to attend as many meetings of the Association as possible in the Head Office at 24, Netaji Subhash Road. The Head Office is in a very old building and the space was inadequate to hold large seminars or classes. Association could not move out of the old building because of financial constraint. Soon I realized that the number of membership did not increase over the years as the Association did not have many student members to infuse fresh leadership for future expansion of the institution.

After a long and hard work we prepared the syllabii and rules and regulations for examination and approached the appropriate authority for approval of our Diploma as equivalent to what was given to other such institutions. Unfortunately we were asked to hold the examination for three consecutive terms and then apply for approval. We contacted teachers of different universities in and out of Bengal requesting them to set question papers for Section A and B examination of the Association. Application Forms for enrollment, student membership, question papers , venue and time were all fixed and we advertised in papers. Number of students came and enquired whether our Diploma was recognized or not. We could only tell them that it would be recognized after the examinations are held. But as ill luck have it, our's was a case of "Horse first and Cart afterwards" or "Cart first and Horse afterwards". Stipulation of the authorities concerned was "Hold the examination and recognition will be given." Students' demand was to have the recognition first and then we enroll. Thus we missed a big opportunity of expanding our horizon and the strength of the Association. Even as of today I am unable to reconcile the fact that a near century old institution was not given even a provisional permission to satisfy our students that the Diploma would get the approval. Where did we miss it?

We were looking for a suitable plot of land in and around Calcutta to have a office -cum-seminar center. Dr. M. Bhattacharyya, Dr. N. R. Banerjee and myself went to meet the Hon'ble

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\* Retd Professor & Head, Mech. Engg. Dept., Jadavpur University; Immediate Past President & Life Fellow of the Association; Ex. Member of Parliament.

Minister, Sri Prasanta Sur, Government of West Bengal, and prayed for a plot of land in Salt Lake area. Sri Sur helped our Association on several occasions and this time it was also, no different. Sri Sur was able to allot a 6 cottah plot at Salt Lake, Sector V, but it could not be taken as the price was beyond our reach. Sri Sur then allotted a plot of 3 cottah near the tank no. 13 for which the Association made full payment to the Government.

Land was acquired and walled up but construction was delayed due to paucity of fund as stated earlier. The Association advertised for the members/promoters/builders to come forward and construct the building on some sort of financial arrangement. There was no response although some member appeared in the scene only to vanish with his lip service. However, on being approached Sri S. K. Majumder, who was doing some civil work for Jadavpur University, agreed to build a two storied house on condition that he would retain the ground floor at a nominal rent.

Later on we found that not only the ground floor was given to some people by Sri Majumder ( as per agreement), first floor was also occupied by some unauthorized person . After informing the Local Police Station (Salt Lake) and with the help of Sri Rathin Talukder and some gentlemen of the locality we could manage to take possession of the first floor. Full scale activities started under the able guidance of President Dr. Madhusudan Bhattacharyya on and from 1991-92.

The Association decided to start some short term and some long term courses for working people in the industry. In this matter West Bengal Government Labour Department helped the Association by suggesting the courses to be offered which will be useful and also gave some financial support.

As the years went on the Association started offering various courses having industrial application like Management Development, Signature Analysis etc. and later on rain harvesting system. This particular course became popular and the Association helped in constructing several such plants in different schools and buildings.

Gradually the financial position of the Association improved and more seminars and classes were held . Dr. M. Bhattacharyya and Dr. Subrata Pal donated the royalty from the sale of their Drawing Book which also helped to organize other activities like social work and so on. I wish fervently that fresh graduates from different universities and private engineering colleges join this Association as Associate Member and help it to expand more, an Institution which was established in the year 1919.