



VICTORIA INSTITUTION (COLLEGE)

78-B, ACHARYA PRAFULLA CHANDRA ROAD, KOLKATA-700 009

Phone : 91 33 2350 1959 ■ Fax : 91 33 2360 0046

Website : www.victoriacollege.co.in

Ref. No. :

Date :

Institutional Distinctiveness

Title: Our Heritage, our Inspiration

Victoria Institution (College) was established during the glorious period of Bengal Renaissance by one of the flag bearers of the movement, Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen. He was one of the pioneers of women's education and a visionary social reformer. The college has already completed its journey of more than 90 years in imparting women's education and it continues to carry forward the legacy which was seeded by its founder. The residential quarters of Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen popularly known as Lily Cottage (*Kamal Kutir*) located at 78-B, A.P.C. Road, is the present site of Victoria Institution (College). The college also houses within its campus the '*Nabadevalaya*' where in Keshub Chandra Sen had initiated a break away socio-spiritual reform movement from Brahmo Dharma / Samaj, known as the '*Nabavidhaan*'. Victoria Institution (College) not only stands as a testimony to the history of social reformation movement of Bengal but also as an institution serving the same purpose. Kolkata being one of the epicentres of socio-political reformation in 19th century colonial India, the college stands out to be the first of its ilk which propagated the spirit and necessity of women's education.

West Bengal Heritage Commission (Government of West Bengal) has listed Victoria Institution (College) campus as one of the integral heritage sites of Kolkata. The enlistment was done on 5th September, 2006 by the organisation. The Commission rightly states that, 'Kamalkutir' or 'Lily Cottage' is the place which bears the footprints of Thakur Ramkrishna Paramhansadev, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Girishchandra Ghosh, Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore and other luminaries of 19th and 20th century. In 1927 Maharani Suniti Devi of

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Coochbehar, the eldest daughter of Keshub Chandra and President of the Governing Body of the Institution, bought the entire property of Lily Cottage - the present premises of the college and donated the same to Victoria Institution through a trust deed. A steady rise in the enrolment and progressively good academic results prompted Suniti Devi and other members of the Governing Body like Sucharu Devi, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, and others to dream that the seeds of female education sown by Keshub Chandra Sen should grow into an institution of higher education, teaching modern courses under the University of Calcutta. Thus, Victoria Institution College came to be affiliated under the University of Calcutta in 1932. Unfortunately, Maharani Suniti Devi did not live long to see the progress of the college. After her demise on November 1932, a solemn memorial service was held in Kamal Kutir, presided over by none other than Rabindranath Tagore himself. Beside the residential quarters and the burial ground of the Sen family members (a testimony to Brahmo tradition) the college also possess a priceless collection of rare books, furniture and few personal belongings of Keshub Chandra Sen. The College Central Library has a priceless collection of 269 rare books on the life and contributions of Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen towards the cause of women empowerment. The collection is labelled separately as J.M. Collection in the central library. It is through such citations that the historical significance and heritage value of the college has travelled far and wide. This in turn has brought individual researchers several times to the college for gathering information.

The pride and interest that the teachers and students take in this heritage value of the college and its priceless legacy eventually culminated in the formation of a Heritage Club, dedicated towards preserving of the same. The overall mission behind this endeavour is to engage

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students in research, preservation and cataloguing multiple snippets of the history creating a repository of knowledge, for posterity. Interested students members engage themselves in rudimentary research aimed at collecting old photographs of intrinsic historical value, pamphlets, secondary research material like old biographies, for the benefit of future researchers. The present age being the age of information, the Institution further intends to make the best of it by engaging students in researching, and collating whatever worthwhile information related to the history of Bengal Renaissance, life and contribution of Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen is available in the public domain. All such finds, be it an old photograph or an old report or a scholarly exposition are collected and displayed under the Digital Archives section of the College Website. Digital preservation of these books under J.M. Collection will also be taken up by the College soon. Since these books are an eclectic collection of biographies, philosophical commentaries, translation of old texts it will also compliment the pursuit of Indian Knowledge System which the College prioritizes.

The college is seriously devoted towards the preservation of the old residential quarters which form an integral part of the college premises. To further this cause, college administration maintains a regular correspondence with the members of Adi Brahma Samaj to carry out any restorative work through active collaboration. The primary commemorative days like the birth and death anniversary of its founder, Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen is carried out with the active participation of the members of Adi Brahma Samaj each year by the college. A marble plaque has been mounted adjacent to the entrance of the family burial ground of Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen. The plaque encapsulates a brief history of this institution and the contribution of Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen along with his

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daughters towards the cause of women's education, in both English and Bengali. The overall purpose of this installation is to instil a sense of collective pride and identity among the teachers, students and staff of the college.


Through all such practices the college intends to uphold, preserve, and nurture the institutional distinctiveness. All the endeavours and activities that the college undertakes aiming at showcasing, nurturing, and preserving its distinct identity as one of the old and significant institutes of higher learning for women. The college celebrated its legacy of ninety years 2023 during the annual prize distribution ceremony and has already set in motion the elementary preparations leading towards the celebration of its centenary in 2032.

- **Link to Digital Archive** - the very repository of the findings of the Heritage Club about Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen, his Nabadevalaya and the history of the Institution so far, for the future progeny and researchers interested in this area of study.

<https://victoriacollege.co.in/digital-archive>

- **Link to the Heritage Club** devoted towards preserving & documenting the rich history and heritage of the Institution and its founding family, simultaneously engaging the upcoming batch of students in an interesting research activity altogether.

<https://victoriacollege.co.in/heritage-club>


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