

# Science Communication Conclave 2020

Meher Wan



**I**NDIAN Institute of Technology-Kharagpur organized the “Science Communication Conclave-2020” during 28-29 February 2020, in which science journalists, journalism students, science writers, and researchers from different research organisations came on the same platform to discuss how to bridge the gap between the media and research institutes for efficient science communication to the public.

IIT Kharagpur decided to celebrate February 28, celebrated in India as the National Science Day in commemoration of Prof. C. V. Raman’s announcement of the discovery of the Raman Effect, by hosting a two-day conclave to bridge the gap between the media and the scientific world. In his address to the audience, Prof. Sriman Kumar Bhattacharya, Deputy Director, IIT-KGP, asserted, “National Science Day is a reminder of the importance of science dissemination and it should be done by any means possible.”

The conclave comprised three panel discussions and several lectures on different issues related to science communication and journalism. The journalists raised their concerns and academic researchers discussed their issues to understand each other better. Some issues discussed in the conclave were: How do scientists’ reservations about not opening up to the media jeopardize the science & technology news? Are strict deadlines and pressures of time responsible for misrepresentations in science and

technology news? Is science meant for breaking news? Is scientific jargon a barrier in the way of effective science journalism? How to make science more popular in different media platforms?

Prof. Baidurya Bhattacharya, Dean, International Relations, IIT KGP and convenor of the conclave delivered the opening lecture and highlighted the follies and lack of rigour demonstrated by journalists in the widely known case of cloning technology. He said, “There is an enormous need to disseminate factually correct information and at the same time to live up to the demands of the media industry.”

Journalist and former Managing Editor, *India Science Wire* talked about the organizational constraints of media houses, dependence on advertisements, and asserted that more science and technology news must get place in the mainstream media.

Senior science journalist Ms T.V. Padma delivered her lecture on “Evolution and Futuristic Trends in Indian Science Journalism”. She explained the current status of science journalism in India and tried to predict the future trends with the help of available data in the field of science communication.

Veteran journalist Mr Pathik Guha discussed the methodology for science communication through vernacular story-telling. He suggested budding science communicators to read and learn from well known international cases of reporting for great discoveries. Shashank Shekhar Dubey, Deputy News Editor, *Times of India* highlighted the challenges of science stories in Indian print media. Dr Ipsa Jain, Graphic Artist & Science Communicator talked about visual science communication and graphics. Ms Sahana Ghosh, Science Journalist, *Mongabay India* delivered a lecture on “Solutions & Data Journalism for Science Reporting, Multimedia and Social Media Outreach”. She exhibited how their group is communicating science to the deprived and indigenous communities of India and helping them in solving their technical problems by their own efforts.

From the researchers’ side, different case studies pertaining to science journalism were presented and new scientific studies of direct concern to the society were also showcased. Prof. Parthasarathi Chakraborty discussed the recent advancements in environmental geochemistry



Dinesh C. Sharma talks about organizational constraints of Indian media houses



Prof. Chacko Jacob explained the hype cycle of emerging technologies



Prof. Sangeeta Bhattacharya talking on how to cover public health effectively in light of COVID-19

and ocean pollution. He explained the effects of mercury contamination on human health, specifically the outbreak of the famous Minamata disease in Japan due to Methyl mercury compound and similar potential cases in India.

Prof. Sudeshna Sarkar discussed how artificial intelligence is changing the world. Prof. Swagata Dasgupta delivered a talk on “The Art of Science Storytelling – Case Study of Enzymes” while Prof. Bhargab Maitra highlighted the engineering aspects of “Urban Safety Planning and Transportation” to reduce road accidents and improve living.

Prof. Abhijit Mukharjee discussed his recent findings about “Water Resources: River Linking, Water Security, Virtual Water Flows, Water Governance”. He emphasized on the preparation of a groundwater policy to save groundwater on time. He said that urgent government intervention in addition to public awareness is needed to save the groundwater in India.

Prof. Brajesh Dubey asserted the need for smart waste management and presented new methods to do so in his popular lecture. He mentioned that proper waste management can't be done without public awareness and science journalists/communicators can play a very important in spreading awareness.

Prof. Sangeeta Bhattacharya talked on “Covering Public Health”, taking the case of COVID-19, and explained how the news about public health should be covered by science writers and journalists. Prof. Dilip Swain talked about innovative ways to increase the production of crops using much less water. He also talked about food security and innovative ways of crop production management to maximize food production using minimum resources.

Prof. Chacko Jacob highlighted the hype cycle for emerging technologies by taking nanotechnology as an example. He suggested that communicators must be sensitive to the hope, hype and reality cycle of new technologies to avoid projected over-hyped expectations of the newborn technologies.

The burning questions of media-scientists relationship were discussed in panel discussions which comprised

several renowned media persons and scientists. The topics of the panel discussions were: “Lab to Media — Bridging the Language Gap”, “Is Science meant for Breaking News?”, and “Role of Alternative Media in Taking Science to Wider Audience”.

Prof. Pallab Dasgupta asserted the complimentary roles of scientists and journalists in making our society better. He said, “Remember, we are not adversaries. We need each other to take the news related to science to the people.” Prof. Sunando Dasgupta pointed out, “Science is a process of inquiry. You cannot expect breaking news to happen on a daily basis...”

The writer of this report was also a part of a panel discussion and highlighted the role of CSIR-NISCAIR in the dissemination of science and technology to the public including bridging the gap between media and scientists. Prof. Satdal Saha, Prof. Jenia Mukharjee, Satarupa Sen Bhattacharya, Lipsa Panda and others also joined the discussion. Panel discussions were moderated by Prof. Anandroop Bhattacharya, Prof. Baidurya Bhattacharya and Chiroosree Basu.

The conclave also showcased the art works of Ipsa Jain and Lipsa Panda who are using art and aesthetics to communicate science.

Celebrated professor and Dean of Sponsored and Industrial Research Cell, IIT KGP Prof. Suman Chakraborty highlighted the need for training science communicators and scientists to disseminate the scientific news in a factually correct way. He asserted that such training should be a part of the advanced research trainings.” In the concluding lecture, Prof. P.P. Chakraborty, former director of IIT KGP, proposed to take science to school children through innovative storytelling.

The two-day conclave was attended by a wide number of research scholars, students, journalists, science communicators, science writers and professors.

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Dr Meher Wan is a scientist at CSIR-NISCAIR and assistant editor in *Science Reporter*.