

# VERSATILE VIDYASAGAR: A SUPERIOR SCHOLAR, MODERN PHILOSOPHER, REAL EDUCATIONIST & TRUE SOCIAL REFORMER

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## Research

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## ABSTRACT

In the period of the 19th century, India has given birth to a starlike personality in the name of Ishwar Chandra Bandopadhyay. He was a real hero and down to earth in his habit. He dedicated his life for draw out the nation to light from the darkness. He was a polymath, educator, social reformer, writer, and philanthropist. He was one of the greatest intellectuals and activists of the 19th century and one of the pillars of the Bengal Renaissance who had given a shape and direction. Above All, he is a strong symbol of a versatile personality. He is called in the name of Vidyasagar (The Ocean of Knowledge) and Dayarsagar (The Ocean of Kindness) for her dignified thoughts and works. Researchers have highlighted the versatility of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in their theoretical research. From their research, Vidyasagar will be known as such a meritorious student; Similarly, there will be an opportunity to know Vidyasagar's philosophical thoughts, educational thoughts, social reform, responsibility towards women's education, etc.

## INTRODUCTION

India is a big name in this world because of her luminary son and daughters. Otherwise, this country has the topmost unity in diversity in the whole world. This India has given birth to so many luminary personalities like Raja Rammohan Roy, M.K. Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh, Swami Vivekananda, Subhas Chandra Bose, Matangini Hazra, Savitribai Phule, S. Radhakrishnan, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and so on. These great personalities have been felicitated in whole through their magnificent thoughts, ideas, and actions. During the initial period of the 19th century, India has given birth to a starlike personality in the name of Ishwar Chandra Bandopadhyay. He was a real hero and down to earth in his habit. He dedicated his life for draw out the nation to light from the darkness. He was a polymath, educator, social reformer, writer, and philanthropist. He was one of the greatest intellectuals and activists of the 19th century and one of the pillars of the Bengal Renaissance who had given a shape and direction. Above All, he is a strong symbol of a versatile personality. He is called in the name of Vidyasagar (The Ocean of Knowledge) and Dayarsagar (The Ocean of Kindness) for her dignified thoughts and works. His realistic and humanistic and scientific approaches were in the background of his greatness. He was another builder of modern India.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are follows;

1. To know the versatile Vidyasagar.
2. To know about Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar as a superior scholar/masterpiece student.
3. To discuss about the philosophical thoughts of Vidyasagar.
4. To know about the contribution of Vidyasagar in the field of education.

To discuss about the social reform activities of Vidyasagar

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The great men who came forward to take the helm of the then aged India, by whose hands the foundation stone of the Renaissance was laid; Notable among those greats was Dayarsagar Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. His prudence, kindness, self-sacrifice and struggle towards the society helped the society to be free from filth. As he was a very gifted student at the same time, his contemporary ideas, education reform, social reform, etc. gave life to the sick and broken society. But, he did not get the dignity that people deserve in that way. Therefore, just as the greatness of this great man can be spread through our research, it will also be possible to express our respect and gratitude to this great man as a responsible citizen.

Researchers have highlighted the diversity of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in their research. From their research,<sup>[1]</sup> Vidyasagar will be known as such a meritorious student; Similarly, there will be an opportunity to know Vidyasagar's philosophical thoughts, educational thoughts, social reform, responsibility towards women's education, etc.

### METHODOLOGY

This study is purely theoretical and prepared on the basis of secondary data. Data were collected from basically secondary sources such as; books, journals, book chapters, websites, newspaper, blogs, etc.

### DISCUSSION

Vidyasagar is one of the most remarkable personalities in India. On September 26, 1820 in a poor Brahmin family in the village of Birsingha in the present West Midnapore district of West Bengal. Ishwar Chandra Bandyopadhyay was born in the lap of the mother Bhagawati Devi and father Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay. From an early age, his keen intellect and prudence and curiosity made him extraordinary even among the common people. As he got older, his efforts became more organized and intense. Later, the story of his becoming Vidyasagar or Dayarsagar or philosopher, educator, social reformer was discussed in the next discussion.

#### **Vidyasagar; A Superior Scholar**

He himself compares Vidyasagar. He was very scared from his childhood, however; He is also very curious, talented and hardworking in his studies. As a result, science itself relied on it and unthinkable scholarship is still a burning example in people's minds.

Little Vidyasagar's educational life started with the help of his parents. Later, in his early childhood, Vidyasagar was admitted to the Sanatan Biswas school in his village. But the Teacher Sanatan Biswas enjoyed more punishment than teaching, which was the reason for dislike of most of the people in the area like the boy Vidyasagar and his father Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay. That is why Ishwar Chandra was admitted to the school at the age of eight when an enthusiastic young man named Kalikant Chattopadhyay from a nearby village set up a new school in Birsingha village on the initiative of Ramjoy Tarkbhushan. In his eyes Kalikanta was the ideal teacher. In Kalikantha's school he received the traditional Bengali education of the time. After completing his schooling in November 1827, he came to Calcutta with his father to pursue higher studies. It is said that on his way from Medinipur to Calcutta on foot, he saw English numbers on the milestones along the way and mastered them effortlessly. On Monday, June 1, 1829, he was admitted to the Calcutta Government Sanskrit College (now known as the Sanskrit Collegiate School) in the third class of grammar. According to Vidyasagar's autobiography, he studied in that class for a total of three and a half years. While studying grammar, Ishwar Chandra was admitted to the English class of Sanskrit College in 1830. In March 1831, he received a monthly stipend of Rs. 5 and a grammar book and Rs. On the other hand, after studying grammar for three years, he entered the poetry class at the age of twelve. The teacher of this class at that time was the eminent Pandit Jayagopal Tarkalankar. In 1833, Ishwar Chandra also got 2 rupees as a 'pay student'. In 1834, Ishwar Chandra, a sixth-grade English student, received a book worth Rs. 5 as a prize for his achievement in the annual examination. In 1835, he received the Political Reader No. 3 and the English Reader No. 2 prizes as a fifth grade English student. In the second year, he won the first place in the literary examination and entered the ornament class at the age of fifteen. But within a year, he gained his origin in literary works such as 'Sahitya Darpan', 'Kavyaprakash' and 'Rasgangadhar'. In 1838 he finished the ornament lesson. 'Raghubangsham', 'Sahitya Darpan', 'Kavyaprakash', 'Ratnabali', 'Malati Madhav', 'Uttar Ramcharit', 'Mudrarakshas', 'Vikramorbashi' and 'Mritchakatik' won the first place in the annual examination.<sup>[2]</sup> In May 1836, his monthly stipend increased to eight rupees. In the same year Ishwar Chandra was admitted to the Smriti class (equivalent to this part is the studying of today's Sanskrit College). In that era, if you wanted to study Smriti, you had to read Vedanta and Nyayadarshana first. But the authorities, satisfied with Ishwar Chandra's talent, admitted him directly to the memory class. He also excelled in this examination and passed the examination of the Hindu Law Committee. Although he got the post of District Judge in Tripura, he refused it at the request of his father and was admitted to

the Vedanta class. After completing the Vedanta course with the first place in 1837, he was awarded the 'Manusanghita', 'Prabodh Chandrodaya', 'Ashtavingsattva', 'Dattaka Chandrika' and 'Dattaka Mimansa'. Ishwar Chandra also received a prize of Rs 100 for the best prose composition in Sanskrit. Ishwar Chandra taught in the class of justice in 1840-41. He received prizes in multiple subjects in the second annual examination in this class. He won first place in the fair examination for 100 rupees, 100 rupees for verse composition, 8 rupees for Devanagari handwriting and 25 rupees for the company's regulation examination in Bengal - a total of 233 rupees. Vidyasagar used to sign under the name 'Ishwar Chandra Sharma'.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Vidyasagar; A Modern Philosopher

In no description is sufficient for Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. For, just as he was a very talented student, he was also a very keen visionary philosopher. However, he did not blindly imitate any philosophical doctrine. He has embraced idealism, humanism, feminism, materialism, realism, naturalism, pragmatism as well as Indian philosophical doctrines. The combination of these different philosophical doctrines has given him a distinct identity and his far-sighted thinking is still ingrained in the minds of people and society.

Vidyasagar was not blindly influenced by idealism. However; He has embraced the moral aspect of idealism. Vidyasagar was not unfamiliar to idealistic Western philosophers like Plato Aristotle, but he did not blindly accept everything. Earlier, he rejected Bishop Berkeley's philosophy from the Sanskrit college syllabus and argued for a practical and useful philosophical approach. He also did not believe in the ideological aspect of Indian philosophy. At the same time, he took Samkhya and Vedanta philosophy in the syllabus of Sanskrit College to give an opportunity to know the semantic difference between Indian philosophy and Western philosophy and the lack of his own philosophy. He was not interested in the education of the ancient Indian Vedic Brahmins, who were essentially blind imitators of idealism and religion. He has accepted the moral aspect of idealism only for the purpose of building the moral values and beautiful character of the countrymen and the people.

He understood that unless the eyes of the common man were opened, thought would not develop. In fact, there were a combination of opposing qualities in his character. As he studied Vedanta philosophy, justice, astrology, theology, etc., the mystery of these scriptures influenced his character. As a visionary, he sought to turn the tide of social development towards modern rationalism and science-based cultural consciousness. He made a concerted effort to free education and the education system from the shackles of this reform, to bring Kupmanduk out of the court of orthodox scholars, and to establish it at the center of rational cosmology and culture. He wrote and edited several Sanskrit books. Madhavacharya's 'Sarvadarshan Sangraha' is one of his famous books. The idea of Charbak philosophy in which exists. This Charbak philosophy was realized from the 5th century AD. After that, this philosophy became connected with materialist philosophy and took place in people's minds in many ways. Needless to say, Vidyasagar engaged himself in the practice of this Charbak philosophy. However, it cannot be denied that the scope and depth of his knowledge of this philosophy was sufficient. After the publication of his edited 'Sarvadarshan Sangraha', the main idea of Charbak philosophy and materialist philosophy was revealed in Bengal and India as well as abroad. It was from this book that the people at home and abroad came to know about the uncompromising, atheistic, anti-Vedic and materialist philosophy of ancient India.<sup>[4]</sup> Prior to this, modern scholars had very little idea about Charbak philosophy. Between 1853 and 1857, the 'Sarvadarshan Sangraha' was published in its entirety. As Vidyasagar was closely associated with the Sanskrit College at this time, he reformed the education of this college and devoted himself to the application of modern rational and science-based teaching methods. Besides, he became interested in materialist and rational philosophy by taking a firm stand against irrational superstition.

Vidyasagar is a burning lamp in the chest of India. An ocean with a deep heart and a rock-like personality has remained in the minds of the people as an invincible man to the entire world. However, this mysterious personality reveals some philosophical theories. Only those philosophical thoughts that were hidden behind his works were discussed. The inexhaustible curiosity of knowing his unknown as a boy, and the unprecedented lack of a hundred thousand, have made him an invincible horse of pursuit of education. Starting from the courtyard of the rural traditional government primary school, Kalikant Chattopadhyay, a student of the neighbouring village, enrolled in Calcutta Sanskrit College in 1829 and achieved countless achievements. He was rejected by the Tripura District Judge after passing the Hindu Law Committee examination. After passing the desired scholarship, he again passed the Hindu Law Committee examination with credit and from there he obtained the certificate bearing the title "Vidyasagar" on May 7, 1839.<sup>[5]</sup>

While it may be tempting to compare Vidyasagar with that great Bengali reformer Raja Rammohan Roy; the father of Modern India, Subrata Dasgupta has underlined the distinction between the two, in terms of their approach towards religion. The Raja's worldview was always theocentric rooted in his propagation of Vedanta and close study of Christian monotheism; the Sanskritist, on the other hand, had a manifestly secular outlook.

Among so many, she was also a feminist. Throughout much of her life, she has been extremely sensitive to the plight of women. For example, the prevention of child marriage, the introduction of widow marriage, the relentless fight against polygamy, the establishment of separate schools for the education of girls, etc. are the manifestations of his sensitivity.

### Vidyasagar; An Real Educationist

After completing his education at Sanskrit College in 1841, on 29 December of the same year, at the age of twenty-one, Vidyasagar became the headmaster of the Bengali department of Fort William College. On 6 April 1848, at the age of twenty-five, he became the assistant editor of the Sanskrit College. In 1848 he set up a book shop called Sanskrit Press Depository. He also set up a printing press called Sanskrit Yantra in partnership with his friend Madan Mohan Tarkalankar. On 1 March 1849, he became headwriter and treasurer at Fort William College. He became Professor of Literature at Sanskrit College on 5 December 1850 and became its Principal on 22 January 1851. In December, the doors of Sanskrit College were opened for people of all castes. In 1853 he established an unpaid school in his native village of Birsingha. On 16 July he established a normal school in the morning section of the Sanskrit College for the purpose of training Bengali teachers. In 1853, he set up five model schools or Banga Vidyalayas in four districts of South Bengal, including five in Nadia, five in Burdwan, five in Hoogly and four in Medinipur district.<sup>[6]</sup> On 14 January 1857 he established the Fifth Bangabidyalaya at Medinipur. In February, his story was published based on the story of Ishop.

Calcutta University was established on 24 January 1858. Vidyasagar was nominated as one of the members of the board of directors of the university. Out of 39 members of this association, only six were Indians. In the same year, she set up seven girls' schools in Hoogly district and one in Burdwan district. In 1857 he established thirteen more girls' schools at Hoogly, ten at Burdwan, three at Medinipur and one at Nadia. From 1857 to 1857, Vidyasagar established a total of 35 girls' schools in the whole of South Bengal. He used to run these schools with a total of 1300 students. In April 1861, Vidyasagar was nominated as the secretary of the Calcutta Training School. The Metropolitan College was established in January 1873. This private college of that era is now known as the famous Vidyasagar College of Calcutta.

In addition to setting up schools to spread education, he has made unimaginable contributions to the establishment of colleges, the management of schools and colleges, the preparation of textbooks, and various literary works, which have since become milestones.

Based on Hindi 'Betel Pachchisi'; He published his first book, 'Betel Panchabingshati' (1848), which successfully used punctuation. Next; He edited 'Annadamangal' (the first printed book of Sanskrit Yantra Press) in two volumes in a refined form according to the text of the original text of the 'Annadamangal' poem preserved at Krishnanagar Rajbari in Nadia district. Based on Marshman's 'History of Bengal', he wrote 'History of Bengal - Part II' (1849). His 'Jeevancharit' (1849), based on the biographies of eminent English scholars by William and Robert Chambers, was published. In August 1850, in collaboration with Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, published the magazine 'Sarvashubhakari', the first issue of which published a Bengali essay entitled 'The Fault of Child Marriage'. It was at this time that his book 'Bodhodaya' (1851), based on the Rudiments of Knowledge, was published. Also he published a book series Part - I, II & III in the name of 'Rijupath' during 1851-1852 and 'Sanskrit Byakaran Upakromonika' in 1851. He continued to publish the first, second and third volumes of his famous book, 'Byakaran Kaumudi' (1853). 'Shakuntala' (1853), based on Kalidasa's 'Abhijnanasakuntalam', was published.<sup>[7]</sup> Besides; An article titled 'Widow marriage should be practiced' was published in 'Tattvabodhini Patrika'. In April 1853, on the day of Bengali New Year, the groundbreaking Bengali children's textbook 'Barnaparichay' was published. He is said to have prepared a manuscript of caste identity while sitting in a palanquin while visiting a school in interior area. Even the second part of the book 'Barnaparichay' was published in June. A weekly called 'Somprakash' was published on 15 November 1858; Which was no less his contribution behind the scenes. His famous book 'Sitar Banabas' (1860) was published based on Bhavbhuti's Uttar Ramcharita. It is said that he wrote the book in just four days. The first and second parts of his revised 'Akhyan Manjari' were published in 1866. In April 1869, Kalidas's 'Meghdutam' was published under his editorship. The Bengali book 'Vrantibilas' (1869) based on William Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors was published in December. In May 1873, in response to the protests of anti-widow scholars, he wrote a two-volume book under the pseudonym 'Kasyachit Upoyukta Viposya', entitled 'Ati Alpa Hailo' and 'Abar Ati Alpa Hailo'.

The names of the men who come first in the history of the spread of women's education; Vidyasagar was their pioneer.<sup>[8]</sup> He realized that the real advancement of Bengali as well as Indian society and culture was through the advancement of women recovery is possible. So far Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and John Elliot Drinkwater Beaton took the initiative to establish Bethune School (then Hindu Girls 'School) in Calcutta in 1849, the first girls' school in the history of India. With the aim of spreading education among rural women, she established numerous 'Strishiksha Vidhayani Sammelani' and 'Balika Vidyalayas' in different districts of Bengal on her own initiative. His relentless and relentless lobbying to the government later forced the government to agree to bear the financial cost of these schools.

### Vidyasagar; A True Social Reformer

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's name is at the top of the list of social reformers in India; With such devotion and concentration, he devoted himself to the work of social reform. Contemporary India was plagued with various social problems. Among these are child marriage, widow marriage is not in vogue, polygamy, religious orthodoxy and superstition, and so on.

Despite the conservative social system of the time, Vidyasagar's tireless work eventually gave birth to the Widowhood Act. He wrote various books for the purpose of introducing widow marriage. Vidyasagar soon became the focus of discussion. In October 1855, Vidyasagar sent a petition signed by 96 people to the Government of India to introduce widow marriage.<sup>[9]</sup> The first draft of the Widowhood Bill was raised in the Council on 16 November 1855. It was raised for the second time on January 9, 1857. Surprisingly, there was a public outcry against the passage of the Widowhood Act and on March 17, 1857, a petition signed by 33,000 people went to the Government of India against the passage of the Widowhood Act. Not only that, many times more and more applications are coming to the government from the side of widowhood. Finally, on 19 July 1857, a draft was raised for the third time to pass the Widowhood Act. And above all, the Widowhood Act was passed on July 26, 1857. On 11 August 180, he married his 22-year-old son Narayan Bandopadhyay to 14-year-old widow Bhavsundari Devi.

Vidyasagar hoped that if widowhood was introduced, society would prosper and women's grief would be alleviated. But behind the widowhood, a new problem has arisen. Unwanted polygamy begins.

Vidyasagar studied many religions and learned that there is no such thing as polygamy in traditional religion. Polygamy was common among the noble Brahmins as there was a great shortage of sons. Again, if the daughter of an aristocratic Brahmin was married to a nation other than the aristocracy, she would no longer be given a place in the Brahmin society. This aspect of the society was also full of superstitions. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar sent the first application to abolish polygamy on 26 December 1855. But his application fell on the table due to the mutiny. However, he did not give up and re-applied on 1 February 1857. An application with 300 signatures was submitted to the government on 24 May 18. The petition called for the enactment of a law abolishing polygamy as well as the abolition of gambling. The abolition of polygamy in the true sense of the word and the abolition of the gambling movement started from here. Various activities are being carried out by the government to abolish polygamy. Meanwhile, Vidyasagar's book in Bengali 'Whether polygamy should be abolished or not should be judged' was published in 1871. Later, three more books on 'Prevention of Polygamy' were published.<sup>[10]</sup> Vidyasagar also met Lieutenant Governor Bidon Saheb demanding passage of a law to prevent polygamy. But it is a pity that in his lifetime he could not pass the law without polygamy.

In addition to the above activities, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar helped finance the education of poor students, fought against pan-practice, and spoke out against religious orthodoxy and superstition. In order to save the society from its dilapidated condition, he has continued his pioneering efforts to spread science and rational thought in the society. She has relentlessly tried to spread education to bring women into the mainstream of society. The great poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta called him 'Dayarsagar' for his actions

### CONCLUSION

In the above discussion, the greatness and diversity of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar have been highlighted; However, it is not possible to reveal Vidyasagar by applying a few rhetorical sentences. Because, the less is said about his greatness, his greatness, his diversity, his generosity. His alternative is himself. He is one and unique. His greatness, diversity, perseverance, generosity are as vast as the infinite sky, as deep as the sea, and as diverse as the rainbow. World poet Rabindranath Tagore called him 'the first successful artist of Bengali prose'. He is also the father of Bengali prose. Speaking about him, the great poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta said, "The wisdom of the ancient sage, the diligence of the English and the heart of the Bengali mother". Therefore, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's varied life affected the society of that time as much as it is relevant to the present time.

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