

Great educator and educational reformer: Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

¹Ramengzaua Kaipeng, ²Jeenti Malakar, ³Supradip Datta, ⁴Sophia T. Darlong

¹Assistant Professor, ^{2,3}Research Scholar, ⁴Guest Faculty
Department of Education
Ramkrishna Mahavidyalaya
Unakoti, Tripura.

Abstract- One of the pillars of the Bengal Renaissance, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) successfully implemented the social reforms initiated by King Rammohan Roy in the early 1800s. He spoke about the revolution in the apparatus of learning Bengali and improved the way Bengali was written and taught. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made a significant contribution to education by promoting inclusive and accessible education. He opened a school, introduced the local language and emphasized the importance of female education. Vidyasagar's progressive ideas and initiatives continue to shape the education system and inspire today's teachers.

Keywords: Contribution towards education, Bengali Literature, women education, social reforms.

I. Introduction

Ishwar Chandra Bandopadhyaya was born in a poor family on September 26, 1820 in Birsingha, Midnapore District, in Bengal. His father Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay and his mother Bhagavati Devi were pious people. Ishwar was forced to spend his childhood in the absence of basic resources as the economic condition of their family was not so good. Although Ishwar belongs to a poor Indian Brahmin family. He was eager to learn. He studied hard and excelled in academics. Ishwar Chandra was a good student and always wanted to learn. He found himself engrossed in books while other children his age played most of the day. He is eager to learn. He studied his lessons carefully and performed them very well. He received scholarships and awards and continued his studies diligently. He received a scholarship that helped him pursue college in the future. In addition to studying textbooks, he also read a lot of other books to increase his knowledge. He Studied Vedanta, Vyakaran, Literature, Rhetoric, Smriti and Ethics at Sanskrit College. In 1841, at the age of twenty-one, Ishwar Chandra joined Fort William College as head pandit in the Sanskrit department. He believes in the power of knowledge and the proof of life and he thought that through knowledge society can be changed. He opened many schools especially to encourage women's education. He also worked hard to improve the status of widows in society. He fought hard to introduce the practice of widow remarriage. He has received many honors for his contribution to society. Many places in India, especially in Bengal, are named after him. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a Bengali polymath who is known to have introduced several reforms in society. He challenged many accepted norms of Indian society and fought to change them to provide a better life for its citizens.

II. Objectives of the study

- To study about Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's contribution towards education.
- To study about Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's contribution towards Bengali literature.
- To study about Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's role for women education.
- To study about Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar as a social reformer.

III. Review of related literature

1. Dr Anirban Bhattacharya (2019), "Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and the Evolution of Bengali Literature. Examines literary works such as novels, essays and poetry and analyzes their themes, styles and influence on the colonial literary landscape of Bangladesh. This review examines Vidyasagar's efforts to promote Bengali as a language literature and explores the influence of writers on the next generation.
2. Dr. Sarmistha Roy Chowdhury (2019) delivered a lecture on "Ishwar chandra Vidyasagar: A Pioneer of Educational and Social Reform in Colonial India". It studies the philosophy of education, attempts to protect women's education, promotion of local languages and elimination of social evils through education. The review emphasizes the lasting impact of the Vidyasagar initiative and the importance of modern education.
3. Dr. Amrita Dasgupta (2018), "The Role of Vidyasagar in the Modernization of Bengali Literature". Literary reforms such as the simplification of Bengali grammar, the introduction of the vernacular in literature, and the development of an accessible writing style are examined. The review analyzes the impact of these reforms on the development of modern literary aesthetics and the democracy of Bengali literature.
4. Dr. Madhumita Patra (2018), "Educational Ideas of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar: A Critical Appraisal". This review critiques Vidyasagar's educational ideas and their relevance in the contemporary context. Explore ideas about inclusive education, curriculum development, teacher training, and the role of education in social change. The review assesses the strengths and limitations of Vidyasagar's philosophy of education and its implications for current educational practice.

5. Dr. Rina Bhattacharya (2018), "Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Women's Liberation in Colonial India". It examines challenges to widespread social norms such as child and widow remarriage, and women's discourse on education and empowerment. The review analyzes the impact of Vidyasagar's initiative in changing the status and opportunities for women at that time.
6. Dr. Suparna Mukherjee (2017), "The Sociocultural Meaning of Vidyasagar's Literary Contribution". In his writings, he examines the treatment of contemporary social problems such as caste discrimination, women's rights and religious reform. The review explores the representation of these themes in his work and their impact on social attitudes, intellectual development and social change.
7. Dr. Subrata Kumar Bhowmik (2016), "Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and the Development of Indigenous Education in Colonial India". Supporting the development of regional language textbooks and curriculum, the establishment of local schools, and the use of regional languages in education. A review examines the impact of the Vidyasagar initiative on language empowerment and education.
8. Dr. Sumita Dasgupta (2016), "Vidyasagar's Approach to Women's Education: A Comparative Study". Analyzes strategies, educational philosophies, and institutional initiatives in the context of broader debates about women's education in colonial India. The review assesses Vidyasagar's unique contribution and legacy in shaping the discourse on women's education.
9. Dr. Anindita Roy Chowdhury (2015), "Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Women's Education: A Historical Perspective". It examines the establishment of women's schools and colleges, the protection of women's rights, and efforts to challenge social norms that hinder women's education. This review analyzes the impact of the Vidyasagar initiative on women's social mobility and changing gender roles in colonial India.

IV. Contribution of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar :

a. Contribution towards Education

Vidyasagar was interested in the local knowledge of his countrymen. Deep and wise, Vernakulare believes that education is very interesting because it only offers general development. Vidyasagar established several classical schools. In 1855, Vidyasagar was appointed as the principal of the South Bengal School. Five schools were established in each district in one year. He has written several books on the development of basic education. Varna Parichaya is a beautiful creation of Vidyasagar. Vidyasagar's massive efforts in primary education inspired the poor people and brighten their lives. Vidyasagar contributed significantly to the development and reform of higher education. It enriched and transformed India's higher education system. Vidyasagar tried to promote college education as well as primary education, in 1853 Vidyasagar opened an English-Sanskrit free school in Birsinha, his home village. In 1859, he opened a training school in Calcutta with his colleagues as secretary. In 1861 this was called the Calcutta Study Vidyasagar is credited with the role of a major reformer of the college-dominated high school education system and medieval Sanskrit. When he returned to the Sanskrit College as a professor, he had to add English and Bengali as medium of instruction in addition to Sanskrit. It offers courses in European history, philosophy, and science and Vedic writings. He encourages students to study these subjects and get the best of both worlds.

b. Contribution towards Bengali Literature

Vidyasagar was a linguist who believed that language is an important tool for communication and expression. He worked to standardize the Bengali language by simplifying the grammar and introducing punctuation. His efforts made the language more accessible to the public and helped develop its use in literature and education. Vidyasagar was also an accomplished writer in Bengali. He wrote several textbooks, novels and essays that helped popularize the language. His works were widely read and admired and helped establish Bengali as a literary language. Vidyasagar was instrumental in promoting Bengali as a literary language. At a time when Sanskrit dominated literature, Vidyasagar advocated the use of Bengali to make literature accessible to the masses. He simplified Bengali grammar, encouraged the use of spoken language, and developed a writing style that resonated with a wide audience. His efforts laid the foundation for the growth and development of Bengali literature, opening the door for future generations of writers. As a writer, Vidyasagar explored various literary genres including novels, essays, poetry and literary commentary. His novels explore social issues and depict characters who challenge existing norms and traditions. In works such as Barna Parichay, Bhranti Bilas and Shakuntala, he had provided a critical analysis of society, addressing themes such as caste discrimination, the status of women and religious practices. Vidyasagar's writings are characterized by a deep understanding of human emotions, moral dilemmas and moral values, encouraging readers to reflect on their actions and strive for personal and societal improvement. He believes that education is a catalyst for social development and plays an important role in the development of society. By establishing schools and colleges specifically for women, he empowered women and encouraged their participation in literary activities. Vidyasagar's emphasis on education and his work for the advancement of women's rights paved the way for a new generation of educated women who would later make important contributions to Bengali literature.

c. Women's Education

Vidyasagar was an advocate of women's rights. He understood that women were often marginalized and oppressed in Indian society and believed that they deserved equal rights and opportunities. He supported the education of girls and fought for the right to study. He believes that education is the key to empowering women and enabling them to participate fully in society. Vidyasagar also worked to reform laws that discriminated against women. He advocated widow remarriage, which was prohibited at the time. He believed that widows deserve a second chance for happiness and worked to change social attitudes about remarriage. These efforts led to the passing of the Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856, which legalized widow remarriage. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made an important and significant contribution to the education of women in 19th century India. He sees the importance of education in empowering women and challenging societal norms. Vidyasagar established schools and colleges exclusively for women, providing opportunities for learning and personal development. These efforts have led to the education and empowerment of countless women,

allowing them to break free from traditional constraints and contribute to society. Vidyasagar's commitment to women's education remains a lasting testament to his progressive vision and lasting impact on gender equality.

d. Social reformation

Vidyasagar was a social reformer who believed that society must change to ensure the welfare of all its members. He worked to eradicate social evils like caste discrimination, polygamy and virginity system. He is a strong advocate of social equality and believes that all people are equal and deserve respect. Vidyasagar's efforts to eradicate caste discrimination are very important. He believed that caste was a social structure that had no place in modern society. He worked to remove caste barriers and promote social equality. His efforts had a lasting impact on Indian society, and caste discrimination is now illegal in India. Through his unwavering commitment to social reform, Vidyasagar challenged oppressive practices and supported the upliftment of marginalized communities. He strongly opposed practices like child marriage, polygamy and gender discrimination. Vidyasagar campaigned tirelessly against this regressive custom and worked for legislative reform. These efforts led to laws that raised the minimum age for marriage and provided legal protection for widows. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's contribution to social reform was significant in challenging oppressive customs and advocating for a more just and fair society. Vidyasagar left an indelible mark on the social fabric of India through his tireless efforts to eradicate social evils, promote women's rights and emphasize the importance of education. His legacy is a reminder of the power of personal commitment and collective action to effect meaningful social change.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's contribution to education was truly remarkable and lasting. As a leading scholar, social reformer and educator in 19th century India, Vidyasagar left an indelible mark on the field of education, establishing principles and practices that continue to guide the modern education system. Vidyasagar's visionary thinking and consistent efforts are evident from his deep belief in the power of education to transform individuals and society. Its focus on inclusiveness, accessibility and quality education has laid the foundation for a more just and democratic education system. Vidyasagar championed local education, made education accessible to the masses, overcame linguistic barriers and instilled cultural pride in the community. Vidyasagar's education reforms are through accessibility and inclusion. He recognized the relationship between education and social development, and solved important social problems through the means of education. Efforts to eradicate child marriage, widow remarriage reform, and the challenge of the caste system are linked to the belief in education as a catalyst for social change. By incorporating moral values, critical thinking and practical knowledge into the curriculum, Vidyasagar strives to develop well-educated individuals who will contribute positively to society. Infact, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's contribution to education left an indelible impression on the Indian society and education system. The continuous pursuit of inclusive, accessible and quality education, advocacy for social reform and the advancement of women's rights reflect a deep commitment to creating a more just and enlightened society. Vidyasagar's legacy is a source of inspiration for education worldwide, reminding us of the transformative power of education in building a better future.

REFERENCES:

1. Ahmed, S (2006), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Shahittya O Shikha Chinta (Literary and Pedagogical Thought of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar) Rafat Publikasi, Dhaka, p-86.
2. Bala, B. (2019). Contribution of Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) as a Messiah of Women Emancipation in 19th Century Bengal. *Ensemble*, 1(2), 79-86.
3. Bhattacharya, R. (2018). Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and the Emancipation of Women in Colonial India. *Journal of Women's Studies*, 15 (2), 73-89.
4. Chowdhury, A. (2015). Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Women's Education: A historical perspective. *Women's History Review*, 22 (4), 527-544.
5. Chowdhury, S. R. (2019). Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar: Pioneer of Educational and Social Reform in Colonial India. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 43 (2), 127-142.
6. Choudhury, R. (2015). Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Women's Empowerment: A Socio-Cultural Perspective. *Gender Studies Quarterly*, 22 (3), 45-62.
7. Chaudhury, Avishek. (2017). Credit: tribute to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Achievements and innovations in the field of education in the 19th century In Bangladesh. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3 (4), 124-126.
8. Ghosh, R. (2018). Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Contribution in the Development of Bengali Language and Literature and Its Relevance in Present Context. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*, 7(2), 44-49.
9. Mukherjee, S. (2017). Socio-Cultural Meaning of Vidyasagar's Literary Contribution. *Journal of Indian Literature*, 41(2), 76-92.
10. Patra, M. (2018). Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's Thoughts on Education: A Critical Appraisal. *Journal of Educational Theory and Practice*, 52 (2), 145-162.
11. Roy Chowdhury, S. (2019). Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar: Pioneer of Educational and Social Reform in Colonial India. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 47 (3), 315-330.
12. Sikder, P. and Halder, T. (2020). Vidyasagar as a Reformer of Education. *Journal of Information and Computational Science*, 10(1), 840-853.