Two-Day International Seminar on

From Thought to Action in Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Philosophy and Life-World

Hybrid Mode

Organised by

Department of Philosophy and the Life-world
Vidyasagar University, Midnapore, West Bengal, India

10 - 11 March, 2026

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

The Two-Day International Seminar titled "From Thought to Action in Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Philosophy and Life-World" will be held by the Department of Philosophy and the Life-world, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore, West Bengal, India, on March 10th and 11th, 2026. This seminar aims to provide a critical and interdisciplinary platform for the re-examination of the philosophical legacy and practical contributions of one of India's most distinguished intellectuals and social reformers. Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar occupies a distinctive place in modern Indian thought for his remarkable integration of philosophical reasoning with ethical action. His life exemplifies a rare harmony between reflective intellect and social commitment, where ideas were not confined to theoretical discourse but translated into transformative engagement with the realities of his time. The seminar seeks to explore this dynamic relationship between philosophy and the life-world by situating Vidyasagar's thought within the concrete social, cultural, and moral contexts of nineteenth-century India. The concept of the life-world underscores the seminar's central concern with lived experience as the grounding horizon of philosophical reflection. Vidyasagar's engagement with issues such as women's education, widow remarriage, linguistic reform, and social justice emerged from his deep sensitivity to everyday human suffering and injustice. His rational humanism, moral courage, and unwavering commitment to dignity and equality render his philosophy profoundly relevant to contemporary global debates on ethics, social reform, and human values. This International Seminar aims to foster meaningful dialogue among philosophers, historians, social scientists, educators, and scholars from diverse intellectual traditions. By encouraging critical reflection on Vidyasagar's philosophy as a living and socially embedded practice, the seminar aspires to move beyond purely historical appreciation toward a revived perceptive of philosophy as praxis and capable of responding to present-day ethical and social challenges. The seminar will include keynote lectures, plenary sessions, and paper presentations. It will provide an engaging space to explore how Vidyasagar's ideas remain important in our changing world. The seminar aims to show how philosophy can change lives. It connects thinking and action, reason and empathy, and ideas with real-life experiences.

Inaugurator

Professor Dipak Kumar Kar
Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor
Vidyasagar University

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CONCEPT NOTE

The legacy of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–1891) is often compartmentalised into separate spheres: the scholar, the social reformer, and the philanthropist. A more in-depth academic investigation reveals that these roles were not separate but rather a cohesive expression of a singular Secular Humanist philosophy. This seminar seeks to explore the connection between Vidyasagar's "Thought" - his intellectual foundations rooted in Sanskrit Nyāya (Logic) and the Western Enlightenment, and his "Life-world" - the lived social and cultural reality he aimed to reconstruct. Vidyasagar's philosophy was distinct from the metaphysical abstractions of his contemporaries. He significantly critiqued the Vedantic curriculum as abstract and pedagogically obsolete in the context of modern social necessity. His philosophy centred on Praxis: the belief that truth must be validated by its capacity to alleviate human suffering. The concept of the "Life-world" (*Lebenswelt*) serves as an ideal framework to examine his influence. It embodies the shared horizon of social practices, language, and cultural norms. Vidyasagar did not merely theorise about equality; he actively reshaped the life-world of Bengal by engaging in Linguistic Democratisation: Reforming the "high" Sanskritized Bengali to make it accessible to the masses. Institutional Structuralism: Establishing schools as tangible manifestations of his commitment to universal reason. Legal Interventionism: Challenging the moral life-world of the Hindu household by advocating for widow remarriage and opposing polygamy. Centring its inquiry on the intersection of tradition and transition, the seminar interrogates how Vidyasagar reconciled the rigorous dialectics of Shastric debate with the empirical rationalism of the global "Age of Reason" to forge a distinct indigenous modernity. It seeks to analyse his celebrated "Ocean of Compassion" (*Daya*) not merely as an emotional impulse, but as a deliberate ethical framework designed to disrupt subaltern marginalisation by dismantling the caste and gender hierarchies embedded within the nineteenth-century life-world. Through an exploration of his educational and legal reforms as tangible expressions of his philosophy, the seminar ultimately interrogates whether Vidyasagar's concept of "Traditional Modernity" a fusion of local cultural foundations and universal liberal principles, provides a more resilient and pertinent sociological framework for the twenty-first century compared to the radical, deculturized Westernisation embraced by his contemporaries. In an age of growing social fragmentation, revisiting Vidyasagar's life and work presents a compelling model for "Intellectual Courage." This seminar encourages scholars to go beyond conventional biographies of saints and engage in a thorough investigation of their ideas. The event aims to explore how the thoughts of a single individual can profoundly influence the actions and direction of an entire civilisation.

CALL FOR PAPER

We invite original abstracts and full papers, both in English and Bengali, from students, research scholars, teachers, and academicians across disciplines. The abstract should not exceed 200 words (5-6 keywords). The length of the full paper should be confined to 3000 words (including abstract and references). The author(s) name, affiliation, and the title of the paper should be clearly mentioned. Abstract and full paper should be mailed to: philosophyvuseminar@gmail.com

The contributors may address the following sub-themes, but not limited to:

- Philosophy of Praxis and Social Transformation: Vidyasagar's Approach
- Vidyasagar's Life-World and Cultural Reform in 19th-Century Bengal
- From Birsingha to Calcutta: Vidyasagar's Journey of Humanism
- Institutional Structuralism and the Philosophy of Education
- Legal Interventionism and the Pursuit of Gender Justice
- Human Values, Ethics, and Social Responsibility in Vidyasagar's Thought
- Vidyasagar's Legacy in Contemporary Society and Policy
- Reviving Classical Sanskrit: Pedagogy and Literary Reform
- The Role of Sanskrit in Vidyasagar's Educational Philosophy
- Phonetics, Script, and Pedagogy in *Varna Parichay*
- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Method of Reduction and the Phenomenology of Social Reform

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RESOURCE PERSONS

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Former Professor, Department of Political Science, Vidyasagar University, and
Former Vice-Chancellor of Vidyasagar University

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Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar

IMPORTANT DATES

Registration starts on: 05.02.2026
Abstract Submission Deadline: 28.02.2026
Notification of Acceptance: 02.03.2026
Registration Deadline: 08.03.2026
Full paper Submission: 05.03.2026
Registration fee: Rs. 250/- (For all)

Venue:
Room No. 210, Dept. of Philosophy and the Life-world
Vidyasagar University

PAYMENT DETAILS

The registration fee should be transferred to the following account:
A/C Name: Department of Philosophy & the Life-world
A/C No.- 17480110102145
IFSC – UCBA0001748
UCO Bank, Vidyasagar University Branch

Google link for Registration:
https://forms.gle/DEyWCn9X3PaVaDnt7

Joint Convenors:

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