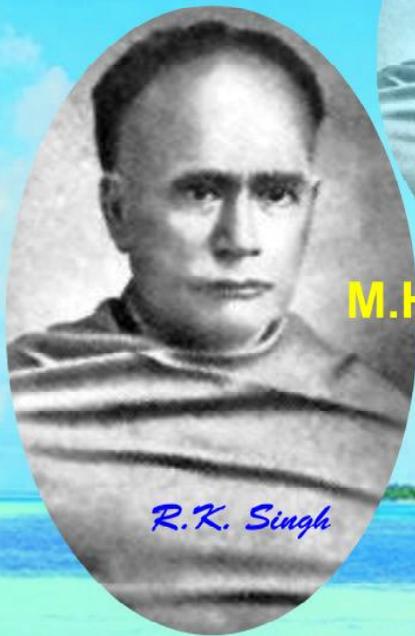


Iswer Chandra Vidyasagar



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An Illustrious Life

Birth and Ancestry

Great educationist and social reformer, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was born on the 26th day of September, in the year 1820, corresponding with the twelfth of Ashwin, 1227, Bengali Era, of a poor, but respectable Brahmin family, at Birsingha, a small village in the district of Midnapore, in the lower provinces of Bengal. His father's name was Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay. Ishwar Chandra was his first-born son. The village Bir-singha is 52 miles to the west of Calcutta, the metropolis of India, and is only 5 miles from Ghatal, which is one of the subdivisions of the Midnapore district. But Birsingha was not the original home of the family. Vidyasagar's grandfather had removed there from Banamalipur, where the family had been living for several generations. Banamalipur is a village in the Hooghly district, lying to the west of Tarakesvar, a sacred place with the Hindus, where thousands of pilgrims from different parts of India assemble annually to offer their *puja* (prayer and offerings) to their god Tarakesvar or *Siva*. The life and character of a man are greatly influenced by his surroundings. This was amply verified in Vidyasagar. We should therefore begin with a brief description of the family, he was born in. His pedigree may uncontrovertibly be traced to his great grandfather. In this respect it would be better to quote what Vidyasagar himself has said in his autobiography:

"My paternal great-grandfather, Bhuvanesvar Vidyalkar, had five sons, of whom the eldest was Nrisingha Ram, the second, gangadhar, the third, Ramjay, the fourth, Panchanan, and the fifth, Ramcharan. The third, Ramjay Tarkabhushan, was my grandfather. After the death of my great-grandfather (father's grandfather), his first and second sons managed the family affairs. In a short time, my grandfather, Ramjay Tarkabhushan, had some dispute with his elder brothers about the family property, and soon the dispute rose into downright quarrel and breach of brotherly friendship. Ultimately, my grandfather left the village in disgust.

"There lived, at that time, in the village of Birsingha, a famous Pandit (profound Sanskrit scholar) named Umapati Tarkasiddhanta. My grandfather, Ramjay Tarkabhushan, was married to Durga Devi, the third daughter of Umapati Tarkasiddhanta, Ramjay Tarkabhushan, had by this wife, two sons and four daughters. Of the two sons, Thakurdas was the first, and Kalidas, the second. Of the four daughters, the eldest was Mangala, the second, Kamala, the third, Govindamani, and the fourth, Annapurna. Thakurdas was my father.

"After Ramjay Tarkabhushan, my grandfather, had left his native village, his wife Durga Devi was living with the family at Banamalipur. But, unfortunately, the brother's of her husband, in a short time, began to look down upon and neglect her and her children; and the neglect soon rose to such a height that she was compelled to leave the village, and take shelter in her father's house at Birsingha. For a few days she lived here comfortably, but presently her misfortune began anew, for she soon saw that she could not live peacefully in her father's house, as she had imagined.

"Umapati Tarkasiddhanta, the father of Durga Devi, had grown too old to look to the management of the family affairs, which had consequently to be left in the hands of his son, Ram Sundar Vidyabhushan. This Vidyabhushan and his wife were not well disposed towards Durga Devi and her children, and were always a source of oppression and terror to them. The husband and wife treated them with such disdain and inhumanity that Durga Devi had no other alternative than to leave at once this dreadful shelter, namely her father's house. Her father, Umapati

Tarka-siddhanta, was deeply and sincerely pained at the conduct of his son and daughter-in-law, but he was now quite helpless himself. He, therefore, had a hut built for his daughter in the neighbourhood, not very far off from his own house; and here Durga Devi began to live with her children, and passed her days in a most wretched state.

“At that time, many poor, helpless women of Bengal earned their livelihood by spinning cotton into thread by means of a spinning wheel, known by the name of *Charka*, and by selling them to the weavers. Durga Devi was now compelled to take to this industry. But the income from this source was too small to maintain herself and her six children. Her father helped her now and then, but even this, added to her own income, was barely sufficient to feed and clothe them. As a matter of fact, Durga Devi was most miserably circumstanced, and she always shed tears at the sight of her barely-fed children. Her eldest son, Thakurdas, was at this time fourteen or fifteen years old. At this young age, he, with his mother’s permission, left her cottage, and proceeded to Calcutta in search of livelihood.

“Sabharam Vachaspati, a near kinsman of whom he had left in a most deplorable situation, made him forego this design. At last, it was definitely settled that he should attend to such education! as would soon enable him to earn some money.

“At that time, a little knowledge of English easily procured berths in European mercantile firms; and it was, therefore, thought advisable for Thakurdas to have a little English instruction, instead of Sanskrit. But English education was not easily obtainable then, because there were only a limited number of English schools, and these were resorted to only by the rich, as they were very costly, and the poor could not afford to pay for such education. Under the circumstances, it was quite impossible for poor, helpless Thakurdas to obtain his English education in a school. It was finally settled that he should read English with a friend of Jaganmohan Nyayalankar’s, who had a tolerable knowledge of English, and who, at the request of his friend, the famous Sanskrit professor, consented to give Thakurdas, lessons in English. This gentleman was employed in a mercantile office, and so he had no time during the day to impart his gratuitous instruction to

Thakurdas. He told the boy to come to him after nightfall, and the poor pupil daily attended the night school and received lessons free of cost.

“It has been said before, that Jaganmohan Nyaylankar used to give food and lodging to many poor outsiders, who had very little or no relation with him. In the evening, the feeding of these poor people was finished immediately after sunset. And this was the time when Thakurdas had to leave Nyaylankar’s house and go to his teacher for the sake of a little English education; and when he returned from his teacher’s house, it was too late, and he had to pass the night without food. This happened to him every night, and he thus grew thinner and weaker day by day. One day, his teacher asked him the cause, and he, with tearful eyes, explained to him the real cause of this sad change. While this conversation was going on, a kind-hearted gentleman of the *Sudra* caste was sitting there. He was deeply moved at the sad tale, and he told Thakurdas that he should no longer lodge in the house of Jaganmohan Nyayalankar, and that if he could cook his food, he was ready to give him (Thakurdas) food and shelter. As was expected, Thakurdas was highly delighted at the proposal, and readily accepted the kind offer. The next day he left his former refuge, and took shelter in the house of his new benevolent patron.

“But the earnings of this kind-hearted benevolent gentleman were not equal to his generosity. He was an ordinary broker, and earned a very scanty livelihood. He lived from hand to mouth, yet his kind heart always melted at the tale of other people’s distress. Thakurdas considered him-self very fortunate that he now had two belly full meals every day. But this happy state of things did not last long. As ill luck would have it, in a short time, the paltry income of this benevolent benefactor was still reduced, and what he daily earned, was not always sufficient to maintain two persons with comfort. He used to leave his house early in the morning, and toiled hard to earn a few piece, not only for his own sake, but also for the sake of the poor Brahmin boy, whom he had kindly taken under his protection. But, unfortunately, many a day he could not return to his house in time, and consequently, on those days, Thakurdas had to remain without mid-day meal.

"Thakurdas had no other property than a small brass *thala* (shallow dish) and a *lota* (waterpot) of the same metal. He used to eat his rice from the *thala*, and drink his water from the *lota*. In some parts of India, even in Calcutta, a few teak leaves stitched together are used by the poor to eat their rice from. Now, Thakurdas thought within himself thus: 'The purposes of a *thala* may be well-served by teak-leaves, I shall be able to manage the eating of my rice even without a *thala*. So if I part with it I shall not feel its want. Let me sell this *thala* and retain the *lota*. The sale proceeds shall be my pocket money, I shall use this money in cases of upmost emergency. The day I shall be deprived of my midday meal, I shall lay out a piece in buying something to eat, and thus save myself from starvation". Having thus thought himself, he went one day to a brazier's shop, and offered the *thala* for sale. But the brazier declined to buy the *thala*, saying that purchase of old plates and utensils sometimes threw them into great difficulties, as most of the articles thus purchased were stolen property, Thakurdas entreated the brazier earnestly, but he turned a deaf ear. He then went to the other braziers, one after another, but none of them yielded to his request. Greatly dejected at the disappointment, he returned to his lodging, quite as helpless as ever.

"One noon, when the sun was in its zenith, Thakurdas Under intense pressure of hunger, began to pace up and down the street, in the hope that his mind would 'thereby be diverted from the thoughts of want of food, and he would thus forget the pangs of hunger. Unconsciously, by slow movements, he walked - from Barabazar to Thanthania, a distance of nearly two miles. But far from the results he had anticipated, the physical labour caused by his pedestrianism, kindled his appetite more fiercely, and he was so much over come with hunger and thirst, that he was quite unable to move farther. Presently, he found him-self standing before a shop, where a middle-aged widow was selling such poor victuals, as *Muri* (fried husked rice) and *mtirki* (fried paddy soaked in molasses). On seeing him thus standing, the woman asked him kindly, "Why are you standing here, my boy?" Thakurdas answered that he was thirsty, and begged for a little water to drink, The kind woman very affectionately told him to sit down, and thinking that it would not be proper to give the Brahmin boy

only a little water with nothing to eat, gave him some *murki* and some water. She gazed at him as he greedily devoured the *murki*, and asked him whether he had eaten any food that day. Thakurdas replied, 'No, mother, I have had nothing to eat today till now. Thereupon the kind-hearted woman told him to desist from drinking water, and to wait a little. She at once hastened to a milk man's shop, and came back with some curd, which she graciously placed before Thakurdas, and presenting him with some more *murki*, pressed him to make a belly full meal of the curd and *murku*. After the meal had been over, the benevolent woman, by kind and affectionate words, drew out from Thakurdas all particulars of his circumstances, and at last told him to come to her, whenever he would be in want of food.

"Henceforth whenever he felt the pangs of hunger, and could not procure food in the daytime, he used to go to the kind-hearted woman, and she was always very glad to feed him heartily in the manner related before.

"Some time after this, Thakurdas, with the help of his protector, secured a berth worth two Rupees a month. He was highly delighted at this appointment, but did not leave the protection of his benefactor, who had given him shelter in times of dire need. He lived in the same house with his protector as before, and without minding in the least his own privations, began to regularly send the two rupees every month to his mother to mitigate her sufferings. He was very intelligent and industrious, and performed his duties most willingly and cheerfully. For this reason, his employers, whereinssoever he was employed, were all highly satisfied with him.

"In two or three years, Thakurdas had a pay of five rupees a month. The sufferings of his mother, brother, and sisters were now much relieved. At this time, my grandfather (Thakurdas's father) returned to his native place. At first, he went to Banamalipur, but not finding his wife and children there, he came to Birsingha, and there joined his family. At his return home after an interval of seven or eight years, every one was delighted. He considered it humiliating to live *in* his father-in-law's house or in its neighbourhood. He, therefore, designed to remove with his family to Banamalipur, his paternal home. But when Durga *Devi* his wife,

related with tears in her eyes, the inhuman conduct of his brothers, he gave up his design, and most reluctantly consented to settle down permanently in Birsingha. It was in this wise that Birsingha became our place of abode.

“After a short stay at Birsingha, Ramjay Tarkabhushan, my grandfather, came down to Calcutta, to see his son, Thakurdas. When he heard from Thakurdas’s benefactor and protector of his son’s patience, forbearance, and diligence, he was highly delighted, and showered upon his son his choicest blessings. At this time, there lived, in the Barabazar quarter of Calcutta, a certain well-to-do gentleman of the *Uttar Rarhiya Raya-stha* family, by name Bhagavat Charan Sinha. My grandfather had a great intimacy with this gentleman, who was a perfect pattern of a Hindu householder. He was very kind and benevolent. On hearing from my grandfather everything connected with him, from the time of his leaving his native place, he was deeply touched, and proposed that henceforth Thakurdas should put up with him in his house, and that he would undertake to provide him with proper meals, adding, at the same time, that when Thakurdas was able to cook his food, there was not the slightest chance of any inconvenience.

“My grandfather, Ramjay Tarkabhushan, was very pleased at the offer, and readily accepted it. He placed Thakurdas under the care of this kind gentleman, and then returned to Birsingja. From this time forward, the troubles of Thakurdas with respect to his meals were over. On receiving regularly the necessary belly full meals twice a day, he considered himself entering into a new life. This happy combination did not only put an end to his troubles of proper food, but was also the means of providing him with a better appointment. Bhagavat Babu secured for him a situation worth eight rupees a month. When his mother came to learn that her son, Thakurdas, had got an appointment bringing a monthly salary of eight rupees, her delight knew no bounds.

“Thakurdas was, at this time, twenty-three or twenty-four years old. My grandfather considering this a marriageable age, married him to Bhagavati Devi, second daughter of Ramkanta Tarkavagis of Goghat. This Bhagavati Devi was my mother. In her childhood, she had been brought up with the family of her maternal grandfather”.

Ratnkanta Tarkavagis had, in the prime of his youth, lost the sanity of his mind. His father-in-law, Panchanan Vidyavagis of village Patul, therefore, took him with his wife and children to his own house, and housed them there. In spite of medical treatment of different kinds, for a long time, by experts, Ramkanta did not recover from his malady, and he died quite insane. It was for this reason that Vidyasagar's mother, Bhagavati Devi, had been brought up in the house of her maternal grandfather. Ramkanta Tarkavagis had two daughters, of whom Bhagavati Devi was the younger, Her mother's name was Ganga Devi who again was the eldest daughter of Panchanan Vidyavagis. He had five other children, four sons and one daughter, besides Ganga Devi.

Vidyasagar was famous for his spiritedness, truthfulness, frankness and love of independence. It appears that he imbibed these virtues from his father and grandfather. Ramjay Tarkabhushan, his grandfather, was a man of independent spirit. He never flattered anybody, nor was he ever daunted by the threats of malicious persons. It was this love of independence and spiritedness that turned his brother-in-law (wife's brother) and his partisans to be his enemies. His idea was that the country, at that time, was devoid of men (i.e. good men) and that it was full of blasts: His amiability, modesty and truthfulness were equal to his spiritedness. It is said that while he was travelling to the different pilgrimages after leaving his home, one night he heard somebody say to him in dream:— Your wife has left your native village, Banamalipur, and has been living in Birsingha". At this, he returned to Birsingha, and once again took charge of his family.

The land-owner of the village, Birsingha, offered to him his homestead land free of rent, and his friends and relations urged him to accept the offer. But he thankfully declined it. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, in his autobiography, thus speaks of his grandfather:

He never depended upon, or flattered, any body. It was his firm conviction that death was preferable to dependence on another person. He was a vegetarian, and ate only one meal a day. His character was stainless and purer, and he always took great care to devote most of his time and attention, to the worship of his heavenly father.

Ramjay Tarkasiddharita's bodily strength was equal to the strength of his mind. Body and mind are so very closely connected that the strength or weakness of the one is generally followed by the strength or weakness of the other. We have seen, with our own eyes, the truth of this verified in Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and we have heard of it in his grandfather, Ramjay Tarkasiddhanta. Ramjay always travelled fearlessly with an iron cudgel in his hand. One day, on his way to Midnapore from Birsingha, a bear came upon him. At the sight of the animal, he took his stand behind a tree. The bear tried to seize him with its fore paws. No sooner had the beast stretched out its paws to catch hold of Ramsay, than he seized it by its out-stretched paws, and began to rub the ugly beast against the tree. Soon the bear was nearly dead. Seeing that the brute was completely overpowered and almost dead, Ramjay left it really and proceeded on his-journey. But the beast, was not dead, and no sooner was his back turned, than it rose, and tore his back with its sharp nails. Ramjay had now no other alternative than to let fall his iron cudgel on the bear's head, which killed it on the spot. He had to suffer for upwards of a month from the effects of the wound, and the sore mark was visible on his back as long as he lived.

When Thakurdas was able to- work well and take good care of the family, his father, Ramjay Tarkasiddhanta, again went out on a pilgrimage, and returned home a second time, when his grand-Son, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, was in the womb of his mother. It is said that, one night, when he was staying on the top of a hill, Ratrijay dreamed that a good male child, who was destined to do "much real good to the country and to win a world-wide renown, was going to take its birth in his family. This dream made him forsake his ascetic life and return again to his home. This child was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

When Ramjay returned a second time to Birsingha, he saw that his daughter-in-law, Bhagavati Devi, was really pregnant, but at the same time quite insane. She had lost her sanity from the moment she had conceived the child in her womb. This insanity lasted throughout the whole period of her pregnancy. Strange to say, that although with continued treatment of different kinds for tea months failed to cure her, yet no sooner was she delivered of

the child, Ishwar Chandra, than she began to regain her sanity even without any medical help. In a short time, she was as sane as ever, and continued so to the last day of her life. Kind-hearted as she naturally was, she was ever after-wards seen to feed and clothe the poor. As is the custom with unallowed Hindu women, she cooked food with her own hands, and took great delight in distributing it to the guests and the needy, without distinction of caste or creed. Her generosity, kindness and benevolence were unparalleled. We shall try to give a more detailed description of her character later on, but we may mention here, in passing, that kindness of heart, which figured so conspicuously in Vidyasagar's character, and endeared him to all classes of people, and which caused his name to be lovingly cherished in memory by everybody, was due mostly to his ever-kind and bounteous mother. George Herbert used to say: "One good mother is worth a hundred school masters". The truth of this saying has been verified in all such great men, as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Napoleon Bonaparte, and others.

Formerly in India, the science of astronomy, palmistry, and fortune-telling, generally known by the name of astrology, like all other sciences, had risen to perfection. Even at the time of Vidyasagar's birth, there were many astrologers, palmists and fortune-tellers, who could by the help of their occult science, foretell the future of a new-born child. Before Vidyasagar's birth, Bhavananda Bhattacharya, a great astrologer of the time, had predicted that Bhagavati Devi (Vidyasagar's mother) would give birth to a child, who would be a bodily incarnation of humanity, and that after the birth of the baby, she would recover her former sanity. This prediction of Bhavananda Bhattacharya was fulfilled to the letter. It was for this, or some similar, reason that Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a great admirer and advocate of this occult science.

Childhood

It was noon when Ishwar Chandra took his birth. His father, Thakurdas, was not at home, at that time. He had gone to the neighbouring *Hat* (market) of Kumargaiija, which was nearly a mile off from his village. On his way back from the market, he

met his father Ramjay, who told him that a bull-calf was born that day in their house. By this he alluded to his newly born grandchild by way of joke, but in this jest he darkly hinted at the future character of Vidyasagar. What he really meant by this joke, was that the child would be as stubborn as a bull-calf; and, most probably, he foresaw this from the marks on the child's fore-head and the lines on the palm of his hand. Besides, the science of astrology showed that the child was born at the moment when the moon was connected with the *bull* (one of the signs of the zodiac). Those, who are born at such a time, must be stubborn and strong-minded like a bull, The *Sastras* say:

“One, born at a time when the master of the night (*i.e.* the moon) is at the *bull*, must be righteous, ever-pleased, complaisant, true to his word, fer-famed, large-eyed, strong-bodied, and of amiable appearance”.

Stubbornness was one of the principal features of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's character, and it was conspicuously visible in most of his acts. Stubbornness generates fixedness of purpose. It was for this reason that Stephen Gerard employed under him men of stubborn character. Ishwar Chandra had a great fixedness of purpose. Whatever he handled, whether good or bad, he never left undone or half-done.

Thakurdas could not grasp the real purport of his father's jest. He understand the simple meaning that a bull-calf was actually born in their house, as at that time one of their cows was pregnant and her delivery was expected every moment. Both father and son soon returned home. Thakurdas went into the cow-shed, and found that the cow was not yet delivered. Thakurdas's father then took him to the nursery, and showed him the child, saying, at the same time, that this was the bull-calf he referred to, and then explained its real meaning.

Sambhu Chandra Vidyaratna, one of the young-er brothers of Ishwar Chandra, says in his, *Life of Vidyasagar*:

“Our grandfather, Ramjay Bandyopadhyay, who had then returned from his pilgrimage, wrote with lac-dye a few words in the lower part of the newly-born child's tongue, before the severance of its umbilical cord, and then told his wife, Durga

Devi, that as an effect of this writing the child would be incapacitated for a little while from sucking the breast of its mother. He also said that the infant's delicate tongue, being handled by his hard, rough hand, the child would stammer for a time; but that, being born at a most auspicious moment, the child would in future become a great man, and that his fame would spread far and wide". All this, Sambhu Chandra says, he heard from his father and from his paternal and maternal grandmothers. But Vidyasagar himself has made no mention of this in his autobiography.

Shortly after Ishwar Chandra's birth, Kenaram Acharyya, a great astrologer of the time, prepared his horoscope, and he was greatly surprised at the indications, He foresaw that the future of Vidyasagar was very auspicious, and that he would become a great man. That the Hindu astrology is no myth, but a well-founded science, is clearly proved from Vidyasagar's horoscope. At its predictions were fulfilled to the letter. As the subject is very abstruse and incomprehensible without a careful study of the science, we forbear entering into a discussion of Ishwar Chandra's horoscope.

As we have said before, Ishwar Chandra was born at a propitious moment, and this was verified by the surrounding circumstances. Slowly, but surely, his father's troubles lessened. He began to have a larger income, and soon there was a sudden change, on all sides, for the better. There was a general talk in the neighbourhood that a most fortunate child was born to Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay. Hence Ishwar Chandra was a great favourite with the neighbours. The grandfather, Ranvijay Tarkasiddhanta, gave the child the name, Ishwar (which means *Lord*).

Early Education

The village Birsirigha was not in a very flourishing state at that time. It had no English-teaching school. There was only a vernacular *pathasata* (primary school) for giving little boys an elementary education in reading and writing the Bengali language. After a few year's training in this school, the sons of comparatively well-to-do Brahmins were sent to *tois* (seats of Sanskrit education), where they had to study hard for several years, and then undergo a set of examinations held by the professor himself. After the final

examination, the professor gave the pupils each a degree or title, and then dismissed them, who; in their turn, then opened *Tots* and set themselves up as independent professors of Sanskrit.

Ishwar Chandra was now five years old, and it was time, according to the Hindu Sastras, that he should begin to read and write. At this time, there was a primary *pathsala* in Birsingha under the teachership of Sanatan Sarkar, School-masters of this class were generally rigorous and fond of using their rods freely. They were strict followers of the ancient proverb,—‘Spare the rod and spoil the child.’ Sanatan Sarkar, the village school-master of Birsingha, used to beat mercilessly the tender-aged boys under his care, and he was an object of terror to them. Ishwar Chandra’s father, Thakurdas, disapproved of this harsh dealing, and he heartily disliked Sanatan. He was, therefore, in great anxiety with respect to his little boy’s education, and began to look out for a more humane teacher, who would use his rod less freely, and in whose hands he could safely place his little son.

His choice fell on a Kulin Brahmin, by name Kalikanta Chattopadhyay, who had formerly been a native of Birsingha, but had subsequently removed to his father-in-law’s at Garuti, a small village close to Bhadresvar in the district of Hooghly, This Kalikanta had many wives in different places, as was the custom with the Kulin Brahmins of those days. Thakurdas sent for him at his father-in-law’s, and on his arrival, set up another *pathsala* at Birsingha with Kalikanta as its teacher. Kalikanta, unlike his fellow-brother Sanatan, was a man of amiable disposition and considerable humanity. His treatment of his pupils was mild, decent and genial. He very seldom gave them corporal punishment. He tried, by gentle and soothing words, to rectify their mistakes, and to impart to them educational and moral lesson.

He secured the warmest love and esteem of his pupils, and sincere friendship and patronage of their guardians. Such was the village school-master, who was introduced into Birsingha, and into the hands of this worthy teacher; was Ishwar Chandra placed by his father, at the early age of five years.

The boy, Ishwar Chandra, had uncommon parts, which began to develop early in this elementary school. He finished the course

of study taught in this kind of school in three year's time, and at this early age of eight, he wrote a very good hand. Good handwriting had a very high place at that time, and was taken to be the best recommendation, a bride could have, The teacher, Kalikanta, was greatly surprised at the degree of intelligence and memory displayed by young Ishwar Chandra, and he was often heard to say that this boy would become a great man in his after-life.

After he had been one year with Kalikanta, Ishwar Chandra was seriously ill with Enlargement Spleen and Dysentery. He had, therefore, to be removed to the house of his maternal uncle at village *Patul*, for treatment. His younger brother, Dinabandhu, accompanied him. Here he was placed under the treatment of Ram Lochan *Kaviraj*, a native physician of Kothra, which is a village, close to Khanakul Krishnanagar in the Hooghly district. Under the treatment of this able physician, he was soon cured perfectly. When he regained strength enough to be able to undertake a journey, he came to his native village, Birsingha, and he was again placed under the tuition of the worthy teacher, Kalikanta, who loved his young pupil, Ishwar Chandra, exceedingly.. In the evening, after he had dismissed his school, Kalikanta used daily to give him seperate lessons in native Arithmetic, Mensuration, and other subjects, which formed the curriculum, of study in elementary vernacular schools of those days, and then, when the lessons were over, he used to carry the boy to his home. For this reason Ishwar Chandra adored him ever after.

In his early years, Ishwar Chandra was very naughty, and many stories are told of his childish waywardness and mischievous freaks. Surely enough, most boys are naughty and mischievous in their early years, but their naughtiness is never called to mind, nor does it ever appear in the pages of immortal history. But one feels a sort of curiosity to hear, with thrilling pleasure, the tales of mischievous freaks of those who, in after years, led a glorious life, and left a good name. Chaitanya, otherwise known as Gauranga, the great Hindu reformer of *Vazsknatsm*, while a young boy, used to steal and eat up fruit and other articles of divine worship offered by his compatriot Brahmins. Shakespeare, in his early days, associated himself with some other wicked boys, and stole deer. The famous poet Wordsworth, in his boyhood,

exceedingly tortured his mother. It is said that, one day, young Wordsworth, on looking at an old picture hanging from the walls, suddenly caught hold of his elder brother's arms, and requested him to lash the picture. His elder brother declining to comply with his inhuman request, he himself took up a whip, and with it lashed the picture several times. The rever-end Doctor Peli was very naughty in his early years. He was a terror to his neighbours, who could not rest peacefully at night, for his depreciations. Robert (afterwards *Lord*) Clive, the founder of the British Empire in India, while only a little boy, used to ascend on the steeple of a very high church, and sit there composedly. Instances of such childish naughtiness on the part of men, who in after-life attained superiority and greatness, tend in a great measure to excite curious pleasurable feelings. The early part of the lives of many of these great men is conspicuously marked by freaks of childish naughtiness.

During his latter days, on one occasion, a gentleman paid Vidyasagar a friendly visit, accompanied with his young boy, Vidyasagar remarked that the boy would become a great man, at which the visitor smiled, saying that the boy was very naughty. Vidyasagar retorted as follows: 'Never mind, my friend, I too was very naughty in early days. I *used* to steal fruits from the orchards of my neighbours, and defile with soil other people's clothes left to dry in the sun. I was an object of terror *to* my neighbours.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was often heard to frankly admit his childish haughtiness. One Mathur Mandal was his near neighbour. Almost every day, on his way to or from school, he eased himself in front of Mathur Mandal's outer gates. Mathur's mother and wife removed "the soil with their own hands. Mathur's wife, now and then lost her temper, and wanted to punish the culprit, but her mother-in-law prevented her, saying that she had heard from the boy's grandfather that he would become a great man. Whenever he passed by a rice or other corn field, of which there are plenty in Bengal, he used to tear away the ears of the newly-ripe corn and trample them under foot, or scatter them to the winds, thus causing a great mischief to his neighbours. Now and then he chewed and devoured a few of the unhusked grains. On one of these occasions, the awn of a barley stuck into his throat, and he was in danger of his life. His grandmother drew

it out with great dexterity, and thus saved the boy from imminent death. This wicked boy, in after-life, became a most inoffensive, humble, peaceful, pious man. In fact, such was the case with many men, who though very naughty *in* their early years, turned afterwards to be good and great men.

Further Studies

While still in the Belles-lettres class, little Ishwar Chandra had acquired a great proficiency in grammar and language. He could at this early age, for he was then only thirteen years old, compose beautiful verses, elegant both in style and rhetoric. His *slokas* won admiration from all classes. On occasions of his visits to his native village, Birsingha, during College-vacations, he used to compose *Sraddha slokas* (invitation letters in Sanskrit verse). On one of these occasions, at the *Sraddha* of a rich man, Ishwar Chandra was asked to compose an invitation *sleka* for the householder. The *sloka*, he composed, was so beautiful that the Brahmin pundits from different parts of the country, assembled on invitation, admired the *sloka*, and wondered who the writer was. And when little Ishwar Chandra, who was also present in the assembly, was pointed out as the author of the *sloka*, their wonder waxed hundred-fold. They blessed the lad with all their heart, and remarked, that the boy, in time, would be the best pundit, surpassed, nay equalled, by none.

Was not Ishwar Chandra gifted with genius? Milton was considered a genius, because at an early age, he simply attempted at poetical composition in English, his mother language, and a language spoken in nearly every part of the world. But young Ishwar Chandra wrote elegant, poetry in a dead, classical language, spoken nowhere. Which of the two was greater, we leave the readers to decide.

To Calcutta for Higher Studies

One day, after Ishwar Chandra had finished his preliminary education in the primary school of his native village, his teacher, Kalikanta, came to his father, Thakurdas, and said:—“This boy is very intelligent. He has finished his curriculum here. You should now take him to Calcutta, and place him in a good English school

there so that he might receive proper English education. Thakurdas agreed, and resolved to take the boy to Calcutta. But their departure had to be deferred for a few days, owing to the death of Ishwar Chandra's grandfather, Ramjay Tarkasiddhanta, who had been suffering for some time from dysentery. After the funeral and *Sraddha* ceremonies (last rites in honour and memory of the dead in accordance with the Hindu *Sasifas*) had been over, Thakurdas, accompanied with his little son; Ishwar Chandra, started for Calcutta, one day in the month of November, 1829. Ishwar Chandra's beloved teacher Kalikanta, and Atiandaram Gutti, a menial servant, were their sole companions; Ishwar Chandra's affectionate mother, Bhagavati Devi, began to cry bitterly and loudly when she heard that her dear little boy of eight years was going to Calcutta where he would have to put up with many troubles.

The journey, at that time, from Birsingha to Calcutta was very difficult and tedious. There was no railway or anything of the kind. In fact, there was no good road, properly so called. The communication between the two places by water also was not very easy. The new Uluberia canal was not then dug, and it was not considered safe to pass the rivers by boat. There was the fear of storms, which rose quite suddenly, over and above the dread of pirates, who were always in search of prey, and plundered and killed the passengers whenever opportunity presented itself. Boats belonging to traders and merchants journeyed on in company during day-light, and took shelter before dusk at some convenient, safe harbour. Ordinary passengers dared not travel by the rivers.

These considerations led Thakurdas to prefer the land route. So he followed by his son, the village schoolmaster, and the servant, started for Calcutta on foot. At the end of the first day's journey, they came to the house of the maternal uncle of Ishwar Chandra's mother in the village of Patul, and there lodged for that day. The next day, they travelled twenty miles, and about sunset, arrived at the residence of a gentleman, who was nearly related to Thakurdas, and here they rested for the night. The third day, they were on the metalled road from Sheakhala to Salkea.

The extraordinary intellect and memory, with which Ishwar Chandra was gifted, and which raised him to such eminence,

showed themselves in the little boy on this Salkea road. Here way visible the sprout which subsequently grew into a big tree, with, spreading branches bearing nice fruit and sweet-smelling flowers, under which many a wearied traveller found shelter, and ate of the fruit, and smelt of the flowers. There were milestones on the road, and the boy, Ishwar Chandra, with childish inquisitiveness, enquired of his father what these stones were for; His father smiled at the simplicity of the boy, and replied that these were called *mile-stones*, explaining, at the same time, that they were placed at intervals of a distance of mile, which was nearly equalled to half a Joengali krosch, to indicate the length of the road. The boy learned the English figures (1 to 10) from the numbers engraved on the mile-stones, Presently, a little farther on the road, a milestone was not shown *to* the boy purposely, in order to test the boy's knowledge. When they came to the next milestone, Ishwar Chandra remarked that they had omitted to notice a mile-stone, upon which his teacher, Kalikanta, said that the omission was intentional and made on purpose to see whether he (Ishwar Chandra) had been able to learn the English figures.

They walked the whole day, and, at about sunset, reached Salkea. Here they crossed the river Hooghly; and arrived at Barabazar, Calcutta, where they repaired to the house of Babu Jagaddurlabh Singha, son of Babu Bhagdvat Charan Singha, who had formerly given shelter to Ishwar Chandra's father, Thakurdas. Bhagavat Charan had died sometime before this. "Jagaddurlabh Babu was, at this time, only twenty-five years old. He knew Thakurdas from his early years, and revered him as his own father. His mother, who was the mistress of the house, an elder sister and her husband and two sons, a widowed sister and her only son—these were the sole members of Jagaddurlabh Babu's family.

The boy, Ishwar Chandra, was a great favourite with every one of the members of this household, He surprised them all by his wonderful memory; On the second day of their arrival at Calcutta, his father, Taakurdas, was engaged in ad ling up the amounts of several bills written *in* English, belonging to Jagaddurlabh Babu. Ishwar Chandra was sitting close to his father, and looking at the bills. Presently, he whispered in his father's

ears that he could, if permitted, sum up the figures. With this, he began to add the figures, and in a few minutes summed up the amounts of the several bills correctly, without a single mistake. Every one present was amazed at the marvellous parts" of the little boy. His teacher, Kalikanta, who was sitting by him, was exceedingly delighted, having, affectionately kissed him, said:

"Well done, my dear boy, may God give you a long life. The love I bestowed on you has not been in vain". The reader may laugh at the story with incredulity; but this is not very incredible. When we study the lives of great men, we find many instances of extraordinary power in every one of them. All talented men, endowed with extraordinary powers of the mind, are known to have given clear indications, in their early years, of their future greatness. The germs of their future eminence put forth their sprouts at an early age, and indicated the place they were to occupy in their after-life. Milton used to say:—"The child shows the man, as morning shows the day".

It is said of the famous Bengali poet, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, that when he first came to Calcutta he was only seven or eight years old. Shortly after his arrival, one of his father's acquaintances asked him, one day, how he was faring in Calcutta. The future poet, at once replied in verse, that he was living in Calcutta with mosquitoes in the night and flies in the day.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the best novel-writer of Bengal, is said to have learnt the Bengali alphabet in one day.

Johnson was known to be the possessor of many qualities. He had a superior memory. One day, when he was only a little boy, and had only begun to read and write, his mother asked him to learn a prayer-book by heart, and leaving the boy with the task, went upstairs. The little boy ran after his mother, and scarcely had she reached her room, when Johnson appeared before her and repeated the prayer-book from the Beginning to the end, without missing a single syllable. His mother was quite surprised and delighted at the marvellous memory of her little son. To tell the truth, he read the book only twice and learnt it all.

The famous poet, Pope, wrote his "Ode on Solitude" when he was only twelve years old. He used to compose verses at a still earlier age, but his father did not approve of this, He told Pope Not to waste his time in writing poems, but the boy would not hear him, and when his father, one day, gave him a severe beating, he cried out in verse:

Papa; papa, pity take,
I will no more verses make".

Milton composed verses at a very early age, and the famous writers of the time were amazed at the beauty of his poems, Such instances are not rare.

Everyone admired the extraordinary powers" of the little boy Ishwar Chandra, and earnestly requested his father to place him in a good. English school. Thakurdas was highly delighted at the praise bestowed on his son, and expressed his desire that he would send him to the Hindu College. Those present suggested that he could not aspire to that, as he was getting a pay of only ten rupees a month, out of which he would have to pay a school-fee of five rupees every month, if he sent his son to the Hindu College. Thakurdas-replied that he would somehow or other manage to defray his household expenses at five rupees. Thakurdas's mind was then full of aspirations, and was animated with the ardour of giving his son a decent education. He called to mind his little son's extraordinary talents, and, encouraged with the prospects of Ishwar Chandra's future greatness, wholly lost sight of his pecuniary difficulties.

Although he had resolved to send his son immediately to the Hindu College, Thakurdas could not carry out the project for three succeeding months. These three months Ishwar Chandra devoted in obtaining a little more preliminary instruction in a neighbouring vernacular *pathsala* under the tuition of a veteran teacher, Svarup Chandra Das, of whom Vidyasagar thus speaks in his autobiography.—'The teacher of the *pathsala*, Svarup Chandra Das was perhaps more skilful in the art of teaching than my former teacher, Kalikanta'. Ishwar Chandra must have considered himself very fortunate in finding shelter with Babu Jagaddurlabh Singha, whose kindness of heart was equal to his means. Not only

did he give the boy and his father shelter, but he provided them also with food and clothing, and treated them most kindly and affectionately. The female members of his household were equally kind and lovely. Jagaddurlabh Babu's younger sister, Raimani, loved the boy, Ishwar Chandra, dearer than her own son. In his autobiography Vidyasagar thus describes her:—I have never seen a woman equal to Raimani in kindness, affection, amiability, loveliness, and openness of heart. The image of this noble woman has been indelibly engraved in my mind. She was a goddess to me. I adored her as my mother. Even at this old age I cannot help shedding grateful tears at the recollection of her amiable appearance and noble qualities, whenever her name is mentioned in passing.'

In fact, without the affectionate kindness of this motherly, noble woman, it would have been very difficult for young Ishwar Chandra to live *in* Calcutta. For a few days after his arrival at Calcutta, he was much pained at the recollection of his affectionate mother and grandmother. His father could not always remain with him. Thakurdas used to go out daily to his place of employment at nine O'clock in the morning and came back in the evening at the same hour. He was thus absent from his son continuously for twelve long hours. All this time, Raimani and the other inmates of Jagaddurlabh Babu's house, tried their best to divert his mind by kind and gentle words. They gave him food and drink whenever the boy required, and comforted him. In this way they won over Ishwar Chandra's heart.

In India many such poor boys have found shelter with kind-hearted noblemen, who have taken great care to bring up and train these helpless boys. Some of these poor boys are known to have become great men and to have left an everlasting name. Who is there in Bengal who has not heard the name of Ramdulal Sarkar, the then great millionaire of Calcutta? And what was he in his early years? He was only a poor, helpless urchin, wandering in the streets of the large city, with no one to care for him. But how did he then succeed in amassing such immense wealth, and rising to such eminence? He found shelter with the benevolent Dattas of Hatkhola, a highly noble family in Calcutta, who not only fed and clothed him, but also brought him up as the son of

a gentleman. He was then provided by them with a suitable employment, and, gradually, by dint of his honesty, truthfulness, and business capacity, he soon became one of the foremost and wealthiest native merchants of Calcutta. When we think of the utter destitute and helpless state of the poor boy, Ramdulal, and the kind and generous treatment he received from the Dattas, we forget that the world, we live in, is wicked. On the contrary, it appears to be a heaven, and its inmates, angels.

After Ishwar Chandra had been three months in Calcutta, he had a sudden attack of acute dysentery of a very severe type. The stools were too frequent and bloody. His father, Thakurdas, nursed him, and removed the soil with his own hands. He was placed under the treatment of Durgadas Kaviraj, a neighbouring native physician of great repute. But the foul disease grew more serious every day, and, at last, his life was despaired of. No sooner did the news of his illness reach Bir Singha, than his old grandmother hurried to Calcutta, and was soon by the bedside of her dear, little grandson. She nursed him tenderly for a few days, but when she saw that the disease was growing worse every day, she took him away to his native village, Bir Singha, where he soon re-covered even without any medical help.

To regain his former health, Ishwar Chandra had to stay at his home for three months. By the end of May he returned to Calcutta in company with his father, who had gone home to bring him back. They resolved to travel by land as before. On the former occasion, they were accompanied by a menial servant, Ananda Ram Gutti, who, at intervals, bore the boy Ishwar Chandra on his shoulders. Thakurdas now asked Ishwar Chandra whether he would be able to walk such a long distance, or Ananda Ram should accompany them, to which the boy replied with great enthusiasm that he would be able to walk, and that Ananda Ram would be an unnecessary accompaniment. Ishwar Chandra was fearless and enthusiastic from his very childhood.

Both father and son started on foot, and after walking a distance of more than twelve miles, came to village Patul, where they lodged for that day. This first day Ishwar Chandra felt no difficulty. The next morning, they started for Ramnagar, a village twelve miles off from Patul. Annapurna, a younger sister of Thakurdas's,

had been married to a respectable Brahmin of Ramnagar, At the time, of which we are speaking, she was living with her husband, but was ill. Thakurdas and Ishwar Chandra were going to Ramnagar to see her, on their way to Calcutta. When they had walked only six miles from Patul, Ishwar Chandra was quite disabled to move farther. His legs and feet were swollen and painful. It was a hot and sultry day of Indian May, and the sun was then in its zenith. Thakurdas was in great peril, What was he to do now? How was he to help his son on? The path was lonely. There was no conveyance available. Thakurdas showed the boy a yonder field of melons, saying that he would feed him with a belly-full of melons, if he would only walk to the field. Thus encouraged, Ishwar Chandra limped slowly towards the field, which he reached with great difficulty. He ate melons there, and appeased his appetite, but his feet became more painful and refused their office, Thakurdas was now exceedingly annoyed. In great vexation he left Ishwar Chandra on the spot, and walked on, at which the little boy began to cry. Thakurdas came back to his son, and took him up on his shoulders, but he was a feeble man himself and quite unable to carry a stout lad of eight years.. He then set down the boy on the ground, and began to upbraid him for not allowing Ananda Ram to bear them company. The father, who had never before laid hands on Ishwar Chandra, now smote him in the face, Ishwar Chandra renewed his cries more loudly. But all this would not do. Anyhow the boy must be borne, or he would die on the road. The father again took up the child, and moved slowly on. In this way he carried the boy with utmost difficulty, and, at about sun-set, arrived at Ramnagar. Here they rested for that night and the next day. On the fourth day they came to Baidyabati, and from thence by boat to Calcutta.

Now was the time to send young Ishwar Chandra to school. This time Thakurdas thought of giving him Sanskrit education. His idea was that if Ishwar Chandra learnt Sanskrit well, he would be able to open a *tal* (Sanskrit school) and set up as a Sanskrit professor. Madhusudan Vachaspati, a not very distant relation of Ishwar Chandra's was then a student of the Sanskrit College, Calcutta. This Madhusudan was cousin to Radha Mohan Vidyabhushan, who was maternal uncle to Ishwar Chandra's

mother. Madhusudan advised Thakurdas to send his son to the Sanskrit College, where the system of imparting instruction was more perfect. Besides, he said, there were plenty of paths open for the successful students of this school. There were good prospects even for him, who would aspire to a respectable situation. The post of *Judge-Pandit* (legal adviser to a District civil Judge on Hindu law) was reserved for those brilliant scholars who, after passing the course of training in the other branches of the Sanskrit Literature, also passed the Law-Committee examination.

Madhu Sudan delivered this advice in a most impressive manner, and Thakurdas, convinced of its propriety, approved of it. Pandit Gangadhar Tarkavagis was, at that time, one of the professors of Grammar in the Sanskrit College. Thakurdas consulted also the learned professor on the subject and the latter was of the same opinion as Madhu Sudan. Ultimately, it was definitely settled that Ishwar Chandra should be placed in the Sanskrit College.

Admission in Sanskrit College

Ishwar Chandra was admitted into the Sanskrit College on the first day of June, 1829. The chief aim of the College till then, and some time after, since its establishment, was to diffuse Sanskrit education. English was not then compulsory. It was optional. Very few boys took up English as a second language, and it was taught only meagrely. From this, it seems that the authorities had Sanskrit most at heart and that their object was to impart Sanskrit education to the exclusion of English, Whatever their object might be, practically English was excluded from the curriculum of the College.

The mode of imparting instruction, too, adopted in this seminary, at that time, was wholly indigenous. There were no benches for the pupils, no chairs for the teachers. Only Brahmin and other *Dvija* (twice-born) boys were allowed to enter the College. The pupils had to sit on mats spread upon the floor, and their teachers sat opposite to them, reclining on heavy pillows, as is the practice in *toils*.

The Sanskrit College of Calcutta was established in the year 1824. At the time of its foundation, Raja Ram Mohan Ray, the

founder of the modern Brahma faith, and the first Hindu native of Bengal, who dared leave the shores of India and cross the ocean, and who has immortalised himself in the pages of history as the first Hindu native of India, who raised his hand against the practice, then obtaining in this country, of burning living *Satish* in the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, and some other influential men of the time, who had got English education and imbibed Western notions and civilisation, raised many objections in its way. Their chief contentions were that what the country needed, was not a separate Sanskrit College, but an English College on a sound basis for instruction of European Arts and Sciences, In as much as there were a good many *to/s* in Bengal, where Sanskrit was well taught. On the other hand, the other party argued that there was already the Hindu College for English instruction, that there was no good institution for Sanskrit education, and that the Hindus were in urgent need of such a seminary as would teach Sanskrit in all its branches more systematically. Raja Ram Mohan was deeply disappointed at the failure of his attempts.

The Hindu College, of which mention has been made before, was seven years older than the Sanskrit College, No doubt, the students of the Hindu College learnt English well, and gained a good knowledge of the Arts and Sciences of Europe, but they had one great failing. They saw that the English were a most powerful and civilised nation, and were masters of the soil. Their idea, therefore, was that whatever the English did, was good. Most surely, the English possess many good qualities, but they are men, and have their faults too. In their endeavours to imitate the English and other Europeans, the students of the Hindu College failed to imbibe any of their good qualities, but merely copied their frailties and evil practices. They forsook their national customs, and took to European manners in many respect. They cast aside *Dhuti* and *Ckadar*, their national dress, and dressed themselves in trousers and coats. They even took pride in drinking wine and spirits, and in eating beef, the restricted food of the Hindus. They considered their fathers no better than barbarians, and treated them accordingly. They were thus an eyesore to the orthodox Hindu community, who were deeply pained at this state of things, and

yearned for a school, where Hindu boys might obtain a decent education, without losing their nationality. Thus originated the Sanskrit College, and, perhaps, this was one of the reasons, which led the orthodox Hindu, Thakurdas, to alter his mind, and forego his former design of sending his son, Ishwar Chandra, to the Hindu College.

Ishwar Chandra was admitted to the third form of the Vyakaran (Grammar) class of the Sanskrit College, Sanskrit grammar is the door to Sanskrit knowledge. Without a perfect mastery of this subject, one can have no sound knowledge of the Sanskrit literature, It is, therefore, that a Student of this ancient tongue has first of all to apply himself to the study of Grammar, There are many books on the subject, of which *Mugdha-bodha*, *Kalap*, *Sankshiptasar*, and *Panini* stand foremost, and a student of Sanskrit must take up any one of these. *Sankshiptasar* was selected for Ishwar Chandra, because his father, Thakurdas, had some knowledge of the book, as he had read a great part of it in his early years, and, he thought, he would thus be able to give some help to his son in his home study, Ishwar Chandra had to repeat, every night, to his father what he had learnt of Grammar in his college-class in the day. As we have said before, Pandit Gangadhar Tarkavagis of Kumarhatta was one of the professors of Grammar in the Sanskrit College, and Ishwar Chandra was placed in his hands. We give below, in passing, a full list of the learned professors, then engaged on the instructive staff of the College. *Grammar*—Gangadhar Tarkavagis, Hari Prasad Tarkalankar, and Haranath Tarkabhushan. *Rhetoric*—Nathu Ram Shastri; *Smriti* (Hindu law) Ram Chandra Vidyavagis; *Philosophy*—Nimchand Siromani; *Vedanta*—(Theology) Sambhu Chandra Vachaspati; *Belles-lettres* —Jay Gopal Tarkalankar; *Astronomy*—Yogadhyan Misra; *Ayurved* (Hindu medicine)—Kshudiram Visarad. These were the best Sanskrit scholars of the time, and were selected by Professor Wilson for the Sanskrit College at the time of its foundation Gangadhar Tarkavagis was exceedingly pleased at the uncommon intelligence displayed by young Ishwar Chandra, and loved his little pupil dearly. In addition to the usual daily lessons in grammar, the professor used to teach him, every day, some *Udbhat Slokas* (extempore verses composed at different times by

different bards), of which there are an infinite number in the Sanskrit language.

To attend his school, Ishwar Chandra had to walk from Barabazar, the residence of Jagaddurlabh Babu, where he was putting up, to Pataldanga, where the Sanskrit College was located, a distance of over two miles. For the first six months, his father, Thakurdas, used daily to accompany him to school at nine o'clock in the morning, and again bring him back at four in the evening, for fear lest the little boy should miss his way. This had also the effect of preventing him from mixing with bad boys, who loitered on their way, or wasted time in seeing sights, or doing mischievous deeds of different kinds. At the end of the six months, he won a scholarship of five rupees a month. When he was familiar with the roads he had to pass, and had a sufficient knowledge of the boys he was to keep from, he was left to walk to the College by himself.

In his early years, Ishwar Chandra was a dwarf, that is to say, he was not tall to his age. His stature was diminutive, but his head was larger in proportion to the other limbs. His school-fellows, therefore, humorously gave him the nickname of *Jasure Kai* (i.e. the *Kai* fish of Jessore), at which Ishwar Chandra used to be greatly annoyed. The boys were much amused at his futile rage. Sometimes, by a wilful misplacement of the sounds *J* and *K*, they called him *Kasure Jai*, instead of *Jasure Kai*, and then he was provoked to the extreme. But he could not give utterance to a single syllable, as he was a great stammerer, at that time. Had the boys been able to foresee that this little large-headed dwarf, whom they thus nicknamed jocosely, would become such a great man in after years, they would never have ventured to tease and annoy him in this fashion.

Thakurdas was a man of rigour and irritable temperament. It has been mentioned before, that what Ishwar Chandra read in his class in the day, he had to repeat, every night, to his father. If he ever missed a single word or syllable, he had to receive a good thrashing from the hands of Thakurdas. Even at this young age he had to sit up a great part of the night. His father returned home from his place of business at nine o'clock in the evening, and after that, he cooked food for himself and his son. All this time Ishwar Chandra had to read his lessons, or repeat them to

his father, If accidentally he fell asleep, either from exhaustion, or any other cause, his father was sure to thrash him. The beating was sometimes so severe, that the other inmates of the house were aroused by the loud, pitiful cries of the little boy, when the kind Raimani, Jagaddurlabh Babu's sister, mentioned above, hastened from her inner apartments, and saved Ishwar Chandra from further chastisement, It is said that, on one occasion, Thakurdas beat his son so severely with a huge fire-wood, that lay close by, that Ishwar Chandra fled from the house, and took shelter with Babu Ramdhan Ganguli, the then clerk of the Sanskrit College. Ramdhan Babu comforted the boy by kind and gentle words, and after feeding him, took him to his father. When the tale of this incident reached Jagaddurlabh Babu's ears, he was very sorry and displeased with Thakurdas. He remonstrated with Ishwar Chandra's father on the impropriety of his conduct, and even threatened to remove him from his house, if he continued to beat the little boy so heavily. This had the desired chastening effect on the father, who henceforth lessened the severity of his treatment to wards the boy. Ishwar Chandra, too, grew every day more careful. He took great care to keep himself awake till his father slept. For this purpose, he poured into his eyes mustard-oil, which caused them a great irritation, and prevented them from closing their lids.

Ishwar Chandra studied in the Grammar department for three years. In the first two years, he stood first at the annual examinations, and won prizes. But, in the third year, he neither topped the list, nor secured any prizes. Ishwar Chandra was so much disappointed and dejected at this, that he even thought of quitting the College and prosecuting his studies in a *Tol*. No wonder. Every one knew that he was the best boy in the class, and toiled hard, day and night, for the examination. What was then the cause of his failure? Some say, that Mr. Price, a European, was appointed examiner of Grammar for that year. The examination was conducted orally. Whatever questions were put to Ishwar Chandra, he took time to weigh them carefully in his mind, and then made answers slowly, but correctly, without committing a single blunder. But this was a fault in the eyes of Mr. Price, or he himself was unable to grasp the full meaning of what Ishwar Chandra said. Whatever that might be, the examiner

gave more marks to those boys, who answered the questions with readiness and promptness, though their answers were defective or wrong.

After much persuasion, Ishwar Chandra was induced to come back to the College. The next six months he devoted to the study of *Amarkosh* (a Sanskrit Dictionary, which every student of Sanskrit must learn by heart, before he begins the Belles-lettres). At this time, Ishwar Chandra's waywardness and obstinateness showed themselves clearly. What is considered to be a fault in ordinary men, turns to good account in the case of those who are gifted with extraordinary talents. Such was the case with Ishwar Chandra. He was zealous, enthusiastic, and obstinate. He chose to be guided by nobody but his own will. He did not care for what other people said or would say. Menaces and threats, or even punishment, could not move him a single step from his design. If his father told him to change his dirty clothes and put on clean ones, he would act quite the contrary. If his father told him to bathe, he would never do it. In short, if his father told him to go one way, Ishwar Chandra was sure to take the other.

Thakurdas was very much annoyed at this wilful waywardness of the boy, and beat him severely; but Ishwar Chandra would have his own way. Thakurdas then devised other means. He gave out in words directions quite contrary to what he really meant. If he wished that the boy should bathe, he directed him not to bathe, and Ishwar Chandra would be sure to wash himself. If the father wished his son to change his dirty clothes, he told him not to change them, and Ishwar Chandra at once put on a clean dress. But, at last, the boy found out the tricks played upon him by his father, and then he very carefully weighed the directions, and tried to discover what the father really wished determining always to go against his wishes. This stubbornness of mind, which formed a principal element of his character, ripening with age, was productive of many noble deeds, for which Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's name will be ever remembered with grateful reverence.

The stubbornness of Ishwar Chandra reminds us of the stubbornness of Johnson in his early years. It is said of Johnson that in his childhood, a servant used daily to accompany him to and from school. One day, the servant was a little too late, and

Johnson walked out of the school by himself. The governess being apprised of this, ran after the child, for fear lest he should miss his way and fall into some trouble. When Johnson found, that he was followed by the governess, his pride was touched, that she must have been doubtful of his powers. He was so much provoked at what he considered to be a deliberate affront on the part of the governess, that he retraced his steps, came back to school, and struck her. This stubbornness was very conspicuous in Johnson's after-life.

When Ishwar Chandra entered the Belles-lettres class, he was only eleven years old. Besides, he was not sufficiently tall for his age. The teacher of this class, Jay Gopal Tarkalankar objected to take him into his class, and stated that so little a boy would not be able to comprehend the meaning of the Sanskrit poems. The pride of Ishwar Chandra was touched. He requested the teacher to examine him on the subject, and then to take him if he was considered fit, as otherwise he must leave the College. Jay Gopal Tarkalankar gave him a few *Slokas* (stanzas) from *Bhatti* (a very difficult poem) to explain, which the boy paraphrased and explained very creditably. There could now be no objection to take the little boy. He was accordingly admitted into this class.

We have forgotten to mention, that in the second year of his Grammar class, Ishwar Chandra had also enrolled himself as a student of English. We have already noticed briefly what the state of English instruction was, at that time, in the Sanskrit College. Very few students applied to it with due diligence, Ishwar Chandra read in the English class for only six months, and then gave it over. But Ishwar Chandra repented of it in after years, and he had to toil hard to obtain a little knowledge of the English language.

Now, let us see how he fared in the Belles-lettres department. In the first year, he studied *Raghu-vangsa*, *Kumxr-sainbhava* and *Rdgkava-Pandaviya*. At the annual examination of this class, he headed the list of successful students, and won the first prize. In the second year, he read *Magha*, *Bharavi*, *Sakuntala*, *Meghduta*, *Uttaracharita*, *Vikramorvvasi*, *Kadambari*, *Dasakumarchrita*, *Mudrarakshasa* and other poetical and dramatical works, At the annual examination of this class, he stood first and won the best prizes. Most of these works, both poetical and dramatical, he had

learnt *by heart* and could repeat with wonderful accuracy. He was best at *Translation*. Even at this early age of twelve, he could speak Sanskrit and Prakrita correctly and fluently. Not only his teachers and class-fellows, but all the pundits of the time were amazed at the wonderful powers of the intelligent, little boy. Was not Ishwar Chandra talented?

We have already stated that from his childhood, Ishwar Chandra wrote a very good hand. He was one of the best writers in the College. Every year, he won prizes for good hand-writing, Everybody admired his penmanship. He copied, with his Own hand, many Sanskrit books for himself, and the penmanship of these books, even to the present day, appears as if it were a fine wool-work executed by some skilful hand. Very few literary men have been able to win such universal praise in all respects.

We now come to that part of little Ishwar Chandra's life, where he had to struggle hard to be able to keep pace with, nay to excel, his College rivals. The adverse circumstances, under which he had to carry his point would, no doubt, damp the spirit of Ordinary people, and make them forego their design. But Ishwar Chandra was far above the ordinary rank; He had an uncommon strength of mind and fixedness of purpose. He had many obstacles in his way, but he overcame them with manly spirit and easy alacrity. The difficulties and troubles rather served to encourage him the more. He has shown to the world that poverty is no hindrance to the attainment of an object. He has left an unparalleled example of noble heroism for the poverty-stricken. With such a precedent before one's eyes, one cannot lose heart, even under most adverse circumstances.

When Ishwar Chandra was reading in the second year class of the Bsllesletteres department, his younger brother, Dina Bandhu, came to Calcutta to prosecute his studies in the Sanskrit College.

Now there were thus three members- of Thakurdas's family in Calcutta, for him to maintain with his slender means, besides those that were living in Birsingha. We have already said, that Thakurdas had a very limited income. It was not, there-fore, possible for him to retain a domestic or cook, Poor Ishwar Chandra had to do everything. He did all the marketing and cooking. Coal

had not then come into use in Calcutta for purposes of cooking, which was done by fire-wood. Little Ishwar Chandra chopped the fuel-wood with his own hands. He cooked food, and distributed it to his father *and* brother. He did all the cleaning. In short, Ishwar Chandra was both a domestic and a cook. He did not feel tired with all these daily house-hold works, but rather performed them with *his* usual cheerfulness. He felt a sort of inward pride and exultation at being able to show to the world, that he was above the ordinary rank and could beat down his compeers in every respect, even under such discouraging cirmustances. But the question now is, how could he make time for his studies? After all, Ishwar Chandra was a man, and to learn, he must read. Mere talents would not do. Ishwar Chandra was not only talented, but also industrious to the extreme, He was very assiduous, and toiled hard at his lessons, and being possessed of a retentive memory, could easily make up for lost time. He never wasted a minute. He read his books even while he was engaged in cooking, In the night, he slept only two hours. After performing the usual household duties and feeding his father and brother, he used to go to bed at 10 P. M. requesting his father, who sat up on business till 12 P. M. to arouse him (Ishwar Chandra) at that hour. He read from mid-night to day-break, when he had to put aside his books, to apply himself again to the domestic duties. It is also said, that on his way to and from College, he used to read his books and ponder over his lessons.

Nor did Ishwar Chandra's troubles end here. He had patiently to put up with difficulties most trying and painful. The readers of the present day can have no idea of the city of Calcutta of those days. The conservancy was most defective, particularly in the native quarters. The uncovered drains on two sides of the lanes were full of dirt and foul water, appearing like cesspools, with worms of various descriptions rolling about in their midst, and mosquitoes filling the air with their peculiar songs. The houses standing in rows by the sides of these drains, shut out the sun throughout the year, and they were therefore always damp, especially their lowest floors. The privies and cook-rooms for the tenants of the lowest floors were, for want of space, located side by side. Cockroaches and other insects and worms abounded in them; The very sight of them was loathsome.

The lowest floor of Jagaddurlabh Babu's house, where Thakurdas lived with his sons, was not an exception to this. It was as filthy, as damp. The air in it was filled with a most offensive smell. The worms and cockroaches from the neighbouring privies moved about freely in Ishwar Chandra's cook-room. To keep the worms away, he kept a jug of water ready at hand, and whenever they approached him, he poured down some water upon them, making them recede with the water. But it was not so easy to keep back the cockroaches. These were particularly troublesome in the night.

On one occasion, it so happened that when Ishwar Chandra was eating his supper in company with his father and brothers, but upon different seats on the floor, as is the custom with the Hindus of Bengal, he discovered a dead cockroach in one of his prepared dishes. Most probably, the insect had flown into the dish while it was in the process of being cooked, and *died* there. What was Ishwar Chandra to do now? He foresaw, that if his father and brothers should see the loathsome insect, or hear of its existence in the dish, they would certainly give up eating, and throw their meals away. Clever Ishwar Chandra, therefore, very carefully and dexterously took the insect out, and, at great risk, devoured it whole, along with a mouthful of vice. His father and brothers, quite unconscious of the matter, ate their meals as usual.

After the meal was over, Ishwar Chandra related the story, and every body, who heard it, was amazed at the little boy's wonderful forbearance and presence of mind. The manner of Ishwar Chandra's sleeping was not less difficult. The room in Jagaddurlabh Babu's house, where Thakurdas lodged with his sons, had a veranda attached to it, three feet in length by two feet in breadth. Ishwar Chandra used to sleep in this veranda upon a mat of the same size, procured by him for the purpose. Later on, when his third brother, Sambhu Chandra, came to Calcutta to prosecute his studies, Ishwar Chandra obtained permission to sleep in one of the lowest floor rooms of a neighbouring gentleman, by name Tilak Chandra Ghosh, His brother, Sambhu Chandra, slept in the same bed with him, but being much younger, he was usually permitted to go to bed, immediately after the night-meal. One night, Sambhu Chandra having a little ailment of his bowels,

eased himself on the bed and lay there sleeping, without apprising anybody of it. Later in the night, Ishwar Chandra, quite unconscious of his brother's indisposition, lay down on the bed, and quite exhausted with hard labour, both physical and mental, fell fast asleep. When he awoke early in the morning, he found, to his utter astonishment and disgust, that his back and sides were besmeared with night-soil. He immediately removed the dirt with his own hands, and washed himself and the bedding. He did neither mention this to anybody, nor rebuke the offender, Sambhu Chandra. He was as much devoted to his brothers, as to his parents.

We have not yet noticed Ishwar Chandra's clothing. India had not then been overflowed with foreign cloths turned out from machine-loom, Neither were there any weaving-machines imported from the West, set up in the country. The "native weavers used the hand-loom of their progenitors, and manufactured cloths of different kinds, both fine and coarse. There was a time, and that not long ago, when the fine muslin of Dacca, and the silk of Murshidabad and Rajsahi found favour with the fashionable of the West, and were exported to a large extent, thereby greatly benefiting the country. But, alas! those days are gone, and the sons of the former weavers have parted with the looms of their forefathers, and taken to agriculture or other means of livelihood.

Thakurdas's limited means would not permit him to give his sons fine dress. He could not afford to pay for any luxury. He was content to be able to provide them with coarse clothing. Ishwar Chandra wore a coarse *Dhuti* and a *Chadar* of similar texture. He never grumbled at this. He was always averse to luxury. Even in later years, when he became a great and rich man, he never indulged in luxuries. A coarse *Dhuti* and *Chadar* and a pair of slippers constituted his complete dress. The simplicity of his dress and manners was derived from the habits, he had formed in his early years under poverty. With such a noble example before us, we cannot but admit that poverty does not necessarily generate meanness, as some people are apt to think, but, on the contrary, in not a few cases, it has been known to be the generator of many noble qualities. The victims of poverty are electrified, as it were, by their hardships, and are incited to work with zeal and ardour. Their very privations tend to make them hard-working,

painstaking, persevering, patient and ever-cheerful. Ritcher said:— "I cannot but choose to say to poverty,—V welcome, so thou come not too late in life."

Speaking of the great Spanish writer, Servantes, one man remarked that the world had been enriched by his poverty, meaning, that he had done an immense good to the world by his books.

Carlyle said:— "He who has battled, were it only with poverty and hard toil, will be found stronger and more expert than he, who would stay at home from the battle, concealed among the pro-vision waggons, or even rest unwatchfully, abiding by the stuff".

Ishwar Chandra bore his hardships with patience and cheerfulness. But even this would not save him from his rigorous father, The slightest accidental failing on his part was sure to bring down on his head his parent's wrath. He looked upon his father with the greatest awe and dread. It so happened, that Ishwar Chandra, had forgotten the *Sandhya-Mantras* (prayers to be told at different parts of the day). He merely feigned the *Sandhya* by making an apparent show of the outward for Vnalitioe and gestures. When Thakurdas came to know, that his dear son, Ishwar Chandra, was such a hypocrite, his rage knew no bounds, and he gave the little boy a sound thrashing. Ishwar Chandra was then made to re-learn the *Mantras* on the which he did in a very short time. So sharp was his memory!

Completion of School Education

Shortly after he had passed the Law Committee examination, the post of the Judge-Pandit of Tippera, a district in East Bengal, fell vacant. Young Ishwar Chandra applied for the situation, and was favoured with the appointment. But his father would not permit him to go to such a distance. He was therefore, obliged to decline the offer. He had toiled hard to pass the law examination, and then had applied for the post, simply to help his father in his pecuniary difficulties. But when that father wished him not to go, how could Ishwar Chandra accept the post, against his father's will? He was so much devoted to his parents, that he considered

them to be his only objects of worship. He had no other gods or goddesses before them. He could not act against their wishes.

He had still two subjects to learn,— *Vedanta* (Theology) and *Philosophy*. He entered the *Vedanta* class at the age of nineteen. Sambhu Chandra Vachaspati, the learned professor of that class, was highly amazed at the merits of Ishwar Chandra, and loved him as dearly as if he was his own son.

According to the practice then obtaining in the Sanskrit College, a separate examination on essay-writing, both prose and poetry, was held every year at the annual examinations of the, *Vedanta* and *Philosophy* classes, and a prize of one hundred rupees in cash was given to each of the best essayists. Three hours were allowed for each essay,—10 A.M. to 1 P.M. for prose, and 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. for poetry, Ishwar Chandra, fancying his inability, was absent from this examination, Premchand Tarkavagis, the teacher of the *Rhetoric* class, not finding Ishwar Chandra among the examinees, began to look for him. The teacher, at last, discovered him sitting in a corner of his class-room. He remonstrated with his favourite pupil on his shyness, and after much persuasion and pressure, induced him to appear at the examination at 12 O'clock. The subject for that year's prose composition was *Truthfulness*, Ishwar Chandra's essay was considered the best, and he won the prize of one hundred rupees. He had now the satisfaction to see the tree of his hard toil fruitful. Sooner or later, honest labour must have its fruits. Such is God's dispensation. Ishwar Chandra's second composition in poetry too was considered one of the best, and he won a prize for that also.

Here, again, at this young age, we find in Ishwar Chandra a noble instance of strength of mind, independence of opinion, firmness of purpose, soundness of judgement, and gentleness of heart. While *in* the *Vedanta* class, his teacher Sambhu Chandra Vachaspati, like all his former teachers, was greatly attached to him- for his merits, and consulted him on all points. He was a widower at this time, and was grown old and infirm; but he had a great mind to enter again into married life. He consulted Ishwar Chandra, seeking his advice on the point. The young pupil heard the arguments of his teacher patiently, but could discover nothing important in them. He thought the professor's proposal extremely

unreasonable and selfish, and openly expostulated with the old man on the impropriety of his resolution. Vachaspati was greatly offended with his pupil at his strong protests, and made strenuous attempts to bring him to his opinion, but in vain, Ishwar Chandra was as fixed and immovable as the Himalayas Sambhu Chandra was, at that time, the family Pandit of Chhatu Babu and Latu Babu, sons of the late Ram Dulal Sarkar, the well-known self-trade millionaire of Calcutta, Through the influence of these two rich men and of Babu Ram Ratan Ray, the wealthy Zamindar of Narail, the old and decrepit Sambhu Chandra was married to a beautiful little girl of Barasat.

Ishwar Chandra was greatly displeased with his teacher for making such an unreasonable alliance, but being affectionately attached to each other, he could not cut off all communications with him. After the marriage was over, the old professor, one day, took his pupil to see his young bride, Ishwar Chandra went with his teacher reluctantly, and placed two rupees at his wife's feet as a present of honour. He was then receding back without looking at the unfortunate girl's face, when his teacher caught hold of his arms, and did not leave him till he had a full sight of his new wife. Ishwar Chandra only cast a glance at the beautiful girl's face, and immediately left the place. The sight move his gentle heart, and drew tears from his eyes. He foresaw the miserable, wretched life which the unfortunate, little girl robust live in a very short time, and he sobbed and wept like a child. It is superfluous to say that Sambhu Chandra died not long after the unfortunate alliance, leaving the little girl to live the austere, ascetic life of a Hindu widow.

It has already been mentioned, that his third brother, Sambhuchandra, had joined Thakurdas's little family in Calcutta, and the number of members had risen from three to four. Moreover, Thakurdas having, at this time, married his second son, Dinabandhu, he had contracted some debts, He was, therefore constrained to considerably reduce his family expenses, which had never been very liberal. It is said that only *one* pice was now allowed for the tiffin of the four members, The dishes prepared for the daily meals were very poor, and hardly fit for eating. Nor did their troubles end here, Jagaddurlabh Babu, who had so long given them shelter, was also deeply immersed in debts. The room

in the third floor of his house, where Thakurdas slept with his sons, Jagaddurlabh Babu had let to a tenant. Thakurdas was, therefore, obliged to remove with his son to a room in the lowest floor, quite unfit for a gentleman's lodging. What trying difficulties! In later years, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, alluding to the painful situation of these days, thus spoke to one of his friends:— 'I suffered many troubles in my early years, but I never minded them for my own sake. They rather served to heighten my zeal—to invigorate me—to incite *me* to action, But the sufferings and privations of my brothers rent my heart. The very sight of their dejected, mournful faces drew tears from my eyes.' Such was the depth of Ishwar Chandra's fraternal love. It was not at all strange that the universal philanthropist, whose heart melted at the very tale of other people's distress, should love: his own brothers so affectionately and sincerely.

After finishing the *Vedanta* (Theology) course, Ishwar Chandra entered the *Nyaya* (Philosophy) class. The great pundit Nimchand Siromani was, at that time, the teacher of this class. But shortly after this, he died, and Pandit Jay Narayan Tarkaratna was, at the instance of Ishwar Chandra, appointed to the post. Was it not a glory to a pupil, that he could nominate his professor? At the second year's examination of this class, he stood first and won the first prize of one hundred rupees. His paper on poetical composition was also the best, and he won a further sum of one hundred-rupees as prize for that composition. These two hundred rupees went a great way to help his father in the clearance of his debts. What wonderful talents did Ishwar Chandra possess! During the period of his studies in this class, he used now and then to visit his native village, Birsingha, and there enter into debates on this difficult subject with the learned Pandits of the neighbourhood. It is said that, on one occasion, he had an Earnest debate on old *Nyaya* with Ram Mohan Tarkasiddhanta, one of the greatest philosophers of the time. Tarkasid Jhanta was defeated, When Thakurdas heard of the indent, he ran to the scene, and laid the dust of the vanquished pandit's feet on Ishwar Chandra's head, because the latter was much younger in age.

While still-reading in the *Nyaya* class, he was appointed for two months as officiating second teacher of Grammar on a monthly

salary of forty rupees. He placed the whole of the eighty rupees of his first earning into the hands of his father, and requested him to go on a pilgrimage, which the father very gladly did. When he returned from the pilgrimage, he found that his son, Ishwar Chandra, had won one hundred rupees as first prize for the *Nyaya* examination, a further sum of one hundred rupees, as prize for the best poetical composition, twenty-five rupees as prize for proficiency in Law, and eight rupees for good hand-writing, making in all two hundred and thirty-three rupees. This sum the devoted son made over to his father, who paid it off to clear a part of his debts.

When Ishwar Chandra passed the final examination of the Sanskrit College, he won the title of *Vidyasagar* from the College. He was then only twenty years old. How many are there who can attain to such eminence at such an early age? Surely, Ishwar Chandra must have been uncommonly gifted. Every one of his teachers, from the village schoolmaster, Kalikanta Chattopadhyay, to the professor, of the College, was highly satisfied with his proficiency, and thought it a pride to have had Ishwar Chandra for his pupil. Besides the government certificate, the learned professors of the College granted him a separate certificate of his brilliant success, countersigned by Babu Rassomay Dutta, the then Secretary to the College.

Before bringing this chapter to its conclusion, we will try to notice briefly Ishwar Chandra's attempts at essay-writing.

Essay-writing is a great help to the acquisition of knowledge in a language. A piece of written composition is one of the best tests of one's command of a tongue. When Ishwar Chandra was a student of the Sanskrit College, both the teachers and the authorities of the College as well as the pupils, paid great attention to original composition. To encourage the students in this respect, prizes were awarded to the best essayists. Every student essayed at good composition. The pupils, as well as their teachers, had a great earnest zeal for this. The present University system had not then been introduced. The students were not forced to pay equal attention to the different branches. Every one was free to take up a particular branch according to his own inclination. He could thus devote his whole time and attention to that branch, and make

a good progress in it. The present system of cramming leaves no room for culture of a particular branch.

Although there were nice arrangements in the Sanskrit College for award of prizes to the best essay-writers, Ishwar Chandra had no mind to attempt at these prizes. His impression was that, in this age of degeneration, no one was capable of writing good Sanskrit. He had formed that impression from the composition of several of his colleagues. It was, therefore, that he did not appear at his first examination on Sanskrit composition. We have seen, however, that he was pressed to attend the examination. He finished his essay on *Truthfulness* which was the subject for that year, in one hour's time, and won the first prize of one hundred rupees.

It is true that Ishwar Chandra was not very eager to appear at these examinations, but when ever he did appear, his essay was considered the best, and he won prizes. Essay-writing is not practised in *Tols*, nor had there been any such practice in the Sanskrit College till 1838, when it was ruled that students of *Sinriti, Nyaya and Vedanta* must undergo a separate examination on essay-writing.

The subject of essay for the second year was *Knowledge*, and Ishwar Chandra won this prize too.

During the first two years of this examination, Mr. G. T. Marshall was Secretary to the Sanskrit College. In the third year, Babu Rassamay Dutta was the Secretary. This year, the subject of essay was "The Penance of Raja Agnidhra," Rassamay Babu gave a few words, and required the examinees to write on them a poetical composition. Ishwar Chandra's composition won the admiration of Rassamay Babu.

In the year 1838, Mr. John Mayor, a civilian, offered a prize of one hundred rupees in cash for the best poetical essay in one hundred *Slokas* on a description of this globe of the earth and the celestial globe, according to the ancient Hindu Puran, *Suryyasiddhanta*, and the modern European notions. Ishwar Chandra's poem was considered the best, and he won the prize. These *Slokas* were under publication in the form of a booklet, while Vidyasagar was still alive, but were not out of press then.

The publication has since been complete. The book now contains 408 *Slokas*. Most probably, the additional *Slokas* in excess of Mr. Mayor's requisition, were added in his later years. In the beginning: of this book, there is ample evidence of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's belief in God, devotion to his preceptor, and humility of heart.

Marital Bond

The fame of Ishwar Chandra's extraordinary talents, uncommon powers, and great proficiency in Sanskrit, soon spread throughout the length and breadth of the country, and many persons came forward with proposals of marriage, offering their daughters as brides to Ishwar Chandra. At last, the marriage was definitely settled with a daughter of one Satrughna Bhattacharya, a well-to-do Brahmin of Khirpai, It was at that time an important village. It was a great market of country-made cloth. Dealers in cloth from different parts of Bengal, nay from remote corners of western and northwestern India, resorted to this mart. Satrughna Bhattacharya was one of the most respect-able men of this large village. He considered Ishwar Chandra the best bridegroom for his daughter, and he resolved on marrying her to him.

Ishwar Chandra was thus married, at the early age of fourteen, to Satrughna Bhattacharya's daughter, Dinamayi Devi, a most beautiful girl of eight years. Satrughna said to Thakurdas: 'You see, Bandyopadhyay, I present my daughter to your son, not for the sake of your riches, for you are not a rich man, I know, but simply because your son, Ishwar Chandra, has won a great reputation for his profound erudition. At first, Ishwar Chandra had no mind to enter into such an early marriage, but he had to yield to his father's requisition, for fear of his parent's great disappointment and displeasure, We have already said, that Ishwar Chandra had always a great reverence for his father, and he now unhesitatingly submitted to his direction, Ishwar Chandra must have considered himself fortunate in having Dinamayi for his wife. Without her aid, much of his future noble deeds might have remained undone. She was as noble-minded and generous, as she was kind and forgiving. To understand her character fully, the reader should be acquainted with her father.

Satrughna Bhattacharya was a robust Brahmin of great strength, both of body and mind, of irritable temper, but, at the same time, generous, liberal and forgiving. His co-villagers dreaded him for his uncommon prowess and strength, but its escape. Satrughna then caught hold of the car, and, with -a sudden jerk, overturned it, and threw it aside, thus clearing the way for the procession. The enemy, daunted at the sight of his prowess, dispersed and ran with their lives. Satrughna was, by this time, greatly enraged, and he followed the *enemyj* unaccompanied by his followers. The leader of the antiparty, Haldar, ran into his house and shut the outer gates. Satrughna began to kick violently with his bare legs against the spiked doors, which, unable to bear the heavy blows, gave way, and he entered the house of his enemy. He then went in search of his rival, upon which some of his opponents struck him with brick-bats in the delicate parts of his body, which deprived him of his senses. He was then carried off, from the scene, by his followers.

The antiparty now fancied, that Satrughna would prosecute them, and take the matter into lawcourt, for the unwarranted heavy assault and outrage, he had received at their hands. They, therefore, sent a messenger to him, the next morning, to ascertain the truth. Satrughna said:— 'I see, why you have come. Haldar fancies, I shall see him; does he? Oh! no, I am not so fool as to fill the pockets of lawyers and bailiffs with my money. This year he has beaten me, the next year I shall beat him. If we resort to lawcourt, our *Gafan* festival, for which we have been so much at daggers, will come to an end for ever.' So saying, he dismissed the messenger, who delivered the message faithfully. The antiparty were touched at their enemy's generosity, and at once repaired to his house, and earnestly prayed for him forgiveness, Haldar said: 'Bhattacharya, I did all this simply to put your prowess to test. It has been proved beyond doubt, that you possess not only strength, but also manliness. Your valour is equal to your forethought. I crave your forgiveness. Will you not forgive me?' Bhattacharya replied:— 'You need not talk in this fashion. But none of you shall leave my house, without partaking of my poor meal. I invite you today to dinner.' The other party gladly accepted the invitation. The reconciliation was perfect.

On another occasion, as he was sitting, one day, with some of his co-villagers in a grocer's shop, a dealer appeared with a sack of pulse, weighing four "maunds, for sale. His compatriots said:— 'Bhattacharya, if you can carry the sack of pulse home, it is yours; we make you a present of it'. Satrugna replied:— No doubt, I can carry it, but not walking erect; to carry the sack, I must walk on all fours, like a beast of burden; you will only place a quilt on my back, and then lay the sack upon it.' The heavy sack was laid on his back as directed, and Satrugna, to the utter astonishment of all present, walked on all fours, with the sack of pulse on his back, to his home, a distance of more than a mile. Some two or three hundred spectators followed him to his house, enjoying the sight. On being offered the sack of pulse, Satrugna Bhattacharya declined to accept it as a bet won. He said that he had nothing to do with the pulse, but that if they would procure the necessary fed and other vegetables, he was ready to feed the Whole assembly with rice and *Dal*, prepared from the staked pulse. This was accordingly done.

A certain Ghosh of Khirpai of the *Sadgop* caste had taken to robbery. He lay in ambush in a thicket of reed or other long grass by the side of a canal, and, as opportunity presented itself, way-laid and plundered wayfarers, whom he sometimes killed, when necessity arose. He was a man of considerable physical strength, and the residents of Khirpai stood in terror of this dreadful robber. Once on a time, Satrugna Bhattacharya's elder brother said to him:— "Satu, it is strange indeed, that Ghosh is still a terror to the village, and you do not bring him to his senses; "at which, Satrugna promised to his brother to bring round Ghosh in a very short time.. One morning, Satrugna went out in the direction of the canal, and hid himself in a thicket, lying, in wait for the robber. Presently he heard a rustling sound, and saw a movement of the thicket on the other side. He guessed that Ghosh had caught his prey. And he was right for the robber had fallen on an up country man, who was not much inferior to Ghosh in strength. Both of them were engaged in deadly struggle.

Satrugna Bhattacharya now issued from his covert, and suddenly appeared before them. No sooner did the robber recognise the Herculean Bhattacharya, than he ran for his life, and

ascended on the top of a big *Simul* tree. The wayfarer had lost his sense, and Satrughna applied himself first to revive the man by sprinkling water on his face and head. He then went to the tree, where the robber had taken shelter, but could not ascend it, as he was a plump man himself, and the tree was thorny. He lay waiting below the tree for the robber, whom he asked to come down. But the robber dared not do his bidding. When Satrughna saw, that Ghosh would not descend from the tree, he thus addressed him:— 'Come down, Ghosh, swear by my feet, that you will not commit robbery any more, and I will forgive you this time.' Ghosh replied from the top of the tree:— 'If you swear by your holy thread, that you will not molest me if I come down, I may do your bidding.' Bhattacharya smiled and rejoined:— 'Will you believe me, if I say that I swear by my holy thread?' Ghosh answered:— 'You are prepared to believe me, if I swear by your feet; and is it possible, that I shall not believe you, when you, a Brahmin, will suffer by your holy thread?' At this Satrughna swore by his holy thread that he would not molest the robber; whereupon the latter came down from the tree, and swore by the Brahmin's feet, that he would never more engage himself in robbery, Satrughna now forgave the robber, and dismissed him. He then returned home with the tip-countryman, whom he had saved from the hands of the robber. He fed the wayfarer with kind care, and then let him go on his way.

Satrughna had once a painful, carbuncle, which required surgical operation. The surgeon in attendance was ready with chloroform for his inhalation to induce his insensibility. But the patient very composedly said to the doctor:— 'you need not apply chloroform; you may operate upon me, and take it for granted that I am insensible. The surgeon threw aside the phial of chloroform and applied lancet. At the first attempt, the instrument broke in two, so tough was the patient's skin. The operation was carried through with a defecting instrument, and the patient bore it with perfect composure.

Such was Satrughna Bhattacharya, the father of the fair girl, Dinamayi, who was married to Ishwar Chandra. But we have digressed too long, and it is now proper, that we should resume the thread of our narrative.

At the age of fifteen, Ishwar Chandra entered the *Rhetoric* class. Premchand Tarkavagis was the teacher of this class. He was equally erudite in grammar, language, and rhetoric, and taught the three subjects equally well. Most of his pupils attained great proficiency in Sanskrit. Of all the Students of this class, Ishwar Chandra was the youngest in age, but the best in proficiency. He won the admiration of all. In one year, he finished the *Sahityadarpana*, *Kavyaprakasa*, *Rasagangadkar*, and other works on *rhetoric*. At the annual examination, he stood first and won the highest prizes, both in books and money. The *Raghuvansa*, *Sahityadarpana*, *Ratnabali*, *Malatim adhava*, *Mudrarakshasa* *Vikramorvvasi Mrich chatika*— these were the prize books, he was awarded this year.

But, for this examination, he had to work very hard. He had to sit up night after night, and read his books, for in the day-time, he had to do every-thing of the household work, as we have said before. He had not a wink of sleep for several nights in succession. After the examination was over, he fell ill with acute dysentery of a very severe type. The stools were very frequent and bloody. All sorts of treatment in Calcutta failed, and he was removed to Birsingha, as on the former occasion. No sooner did he recover from his illness, than he again returned to Calcutta, and took over charge of the usual household duties.

Previous to this, Ishwar Chandra, on his way home from the College, used daily to visit Pandit Taranath Tarkavachaspati's house, and there read the *Sahityadarpana*. One day, the then famous philosopher, Jaynarayan Tarkapanchanan, who had called there, saw Ishwar Chandra reading the historical book. The philosopher asked the boy if he understood the book, and at once began to examine him. He was greatly surprised that the little boy had mastered the book thoroughly, and Remarked that the boy would, in time, be the best pundit in Bengal. Such was the praise young Ishwar Chandra won, at an early age, from the greatest philosopher of the day.

At this time, Ishwar Chandra got a monthly Scholarship of eight rupees, which he made over to his father every month. As has been said before, Thakurdas had a great mind from the beginning to set up a *tol*, in his native village, with Ishwar Chandra

as professor. He therefore laid out a part of his son's scholarship funds in purchasing lands for the site of the *tal* and for the maintenance of students. After the acquisition of the lands, he would not receive Ishwar Chandra's stipend money, but directed his son to spend a portion of it in buying manuscript copies of rare and valuable Sanskrit books. Ishwar Chandra procured many such manuscripts, and they are still to be found in his library.

Nor was this all. The heart of Ishwar Chandra was as soft, as his mind was strong. He was kind and sympathetic, and always eager to relieve the distress. He was a lover of mankind. His smart heart was the seat of unbounded love and kindness. The slightest mention of affliction and suffering was sure to awaken his universal benevolence. Even at this early age, whenever he saw, or heard of, any fellow-creature in distress, he ran forward with eagerness with a helping hand. He had not much means at his command, but still he spent his last piece in succouring the poor and afflicted. What remained after his charities, he spent in a little tiffin after the school hours. When there were others present at his tiffin, he was sure to divide it with them.

If he saw a poor man with ragged clothes, and happened not to have sufficient funds at his disposal at the time, he would borrow the required money from the porter of the College, and give the poor man a new piece of cloth. Whenever any of his school-fellows fell ill, Ishwar Chandra was always at his bedside, attending and nursing him with great care and affection. If anybody had a contagious disease, and no one dared approach him, Ishwar Chandra at all hazards was sure to attend his sick-bed, and nurse him gladly and fearlessly.

Whenever young Ishwar Chandra visited his native village Birsingha, he, first of all, went to his former teacher, Kalikanta Chattopadhyay, and paid him his best respects. He then called at the houses of all his neighbours, one after the other, enquired after their health and affairs. When any of them was ill, he never failed to attend the sick-bed. He thus endeared himself to his villagers, who looked upon him as their best friend and benefactor. Even the sufferings of such lower animals, as cats and dogs, drew tears from his eyes. What a fountain of universal love and sympathy was hidden in the small heart of the young boy.

Ishwar Chandra always regarded his elders with great esteem. His respect for them deepened with his age. Even in later years, when he had attained great knowledge and eminence, he never treated them with arrogance or disrespect, though they were much inferior to him in every respect. On the contrary, if his elders tried to forget their former tender love for him and to show signs of honour to him, he shrank from them with bashfulness. When he rose to be the Principal of the Sanskrit College, the then clerk of the College, Ramdhan Gangopadhyay, who loved Ishwar Chandra dearly, and to whom he had, one night, fled from his father for protection, as has been narrated before, rose from his seat, *in* honour of Ishwar Chandra, at which the latter was greatly abashed, and said:— 'You see, my dear sir, I am still your beloved Ishwar Chandra; please do not put me to shame in this way. Ramdhan Babu was quite astonished at his superior's goodness and modesty.

The reader may remember that, soon after his recovery from the severe dysentery, he was ill with, Ishwar Chandra had returned to Calcutta and taken over the charge of his usual domestic duties. But being still too weak, his younger brother, Dinabandhu, helped him now and then. One evening, Dinabandhu having gone out to market, did not return till ten O'clock in the night. Ishwar Chandra was greatly anxious for his brother, and began to search for him from one bazar to the other. At last, he was found sleeping in the veranda of a small shop in Nutanbazar. The elder brother gently awoke him, and brought him back. It is said, that Dinabandhu was never afterwards allowed to go out by himself.

After finishing the Rhetoric course, Ishwar Chandra entered the *Smriti* (Law) class in the year 1837. The general practice, at that time, was that students had to pass through the *Philosophy* and *Vedanta* classes before they could be admitted into the *Smriti* class. But Ishwar Chandra resolved to study *Smriti* first, for he had a great mind to pass the Law committee examination and become a *fudge-Pandit*, and unless one passed this examination one could not aspire to that post. He had, therefore, applied to the authorities and obtained permission from them to study *Smriti* before *Philosophy* and *Vedanta*. So difficult was the subject, that ordinary students, who had already passed through the *Philosophy* and

Vedanta classes, took two to three years to study such books, as the *Mitakshara*, *Dayabhag* and *Manusanghita*, and then to obtain a tolerable knowledge of *Smriti*. But how wondrous! Young, unbearded Ishwar Chandra, for he was then a mere lad of seventeen years, mastered the subject in six months' time; at the end of which, he underwent the Law-Committee Examination, and came out successful. Of course, these six months he neither cooked his food, nor performed other functions of a domestic, and slept daily for two or three hours only. So powerful were his memory and intellect, that in six months he learned the whole *Smriti* by heart, and could easily repeat, and give a lucid explanation of, every line in it. All his teachers, colleagues, and contemporary pundits were wonder-struck at his extraordinary abilities. Was not Ishwar Chandra a genius?

The wonderful talents of Ishwar Chandr remind us of what the great Indian poet Bhava Bhuti has very justly sung on the subject:

'The preceptor imparts instructions equally to the sharp and the dull; but he can neither increase nor decrease their powers of comprehension. The great difference in the extent of their knowledge is due to their own merits. It is a pure, transparent gem, and not a lump of clay, that has the power of reflection.'

Ancestral Home Destroyed

In March 1869, Vidyasagar's house at Birsingha with everything in it was destroyed by fire. His mother and second brother were in sound sleep at the time, but most fortunately they escaped from the fire and not a single life was lost. No sooner did the news of the sad accident reach Vidyasagar, than he hastened to Birsingha and made provisions for the re-erection of the house. He wanted to take away his mother with him to Calcutta, but she declined on the ostensible plea that without her, there would be nobody to look after the comfort of the school-boys, whom Vidyasagar had been giving food and shelter, and look after her poor neighbours. In the same year, he published a correct edition of the Sanskrit *Meghadoota* with Mallinatha's annotations.

We now come to a most painful scene—the desertion of his ancestral home. The main cause of this abandonment is attributed to a sad incident in connection with widow marriage. One Muchiram Bandyopadhyay of Khirpai, Head Pandit of the Kenchkapur School, had settled to take to his wife a Brahmin widow named Manomohini of Kasiganja. He came to Vidyasagar and implored his help in the affair. Vidyasagar at once proceeded to Birsingha to celebrate the marriage.

But the Haldars of Khirpai, a respectable body, accompanied with some advocates of widow marriage, called upon Vidyasagar, and entreated him most earnestly to prevent the alliance. The father of the widow marriage movement was so moved by their urgent entreaties, that he promised to them that he would not allow the marriage to be consummated, and told them that they might take away with them the bride and bridegroom, who had been already brought to Birsingha for the alliance. The Haldars were satisfied at the word given by the truthful Vidyasagar, and they went their way. But in the dead of the very night, his second brother, Dinabandhu, and third brother, Sambhu Chandra, with the help of some other villagers, celebrated the marriage, without the knowledge of their eldest brother. Early in the next morning, as he was sitting in his verandah smoking his hookah, he heard a conch sounded. The sound took him by surprise, but he could make neither head nor tail of it. At this moment, Gopinath Sinha, a respectable co-villager made his appearance. Vidyasagar asked him the cause of the sounding of the shell. The visitor replied—‘You are not aware? Muchiram’s marriage has been consummated.’ At the news, his face was flushed with rage.

He spoke not a word, but began incessant inhaling and exhaling of tobacco smoke. This was an indication of his serious displeasure. He had some peculiar modes of signifying his in-ward rage. His unusual reserve with gravity of countenances, and respectful addresses applied to his inferiors, signified that he had found cause of displeasure. After a long silence, he asked Gopinath Sinha whether he knew anything of the’ affair. Gopinath swore by his feet that he was quite ignorant of it At length, Vidyasagar said,— ‘I gave word to those gentlemen, but I have failed to keep my word. I therefore quit Birsingha once for all. I shall never more

come here. The truthful Vidyasagar, though the father of the widow marriage movement, was so grieved at the breach of his promise, that he deserted his fatherland for good, never more to return to it. Although he kept his word and never more visited Birsingha personally, he could not efface it wholly from his mind. The very recollection of his early scenes often drew tears from his eyes. The monthly stipends, that he had settled upon his relations and other poor families of the village, and the expenses of the charitable institutions, that he had established there, he paid regularly up "to the end of his life. It is said, that some 20 years after this sad incident, one day he received by post a pamphlet in Bengali, styled Birsingha Jananir Patra" (i.e. a letter from mother Birsingha). The pitiful appeals of the paper moved him to a flood of tears, and he resolved to pay a visit to Birsingha, if it was only for once. Accordingly he gave orders for repairs to his house, but ill-health prevented him from carrying out his plan. His illness grew serious, which ultimately carried him off this wicked world, and thus saved him from committing a breach of promise.

In August 1869, he made a gift of the Sanskrit Press Depository to Braja Nath Mukhopadhyay of Krishnagar. He had been highly dissatisfied with the working and conduct of his officials. As he was sitting one day surrounded by some of his friends and dependents, in course of conversation, he expressed a desire to give away his Depository to any body, who should come forward to receive the gift. Braja Nath, who was one of the company, said that he was prepared to receive the gift, if the donor should gladly and voluntarily give it to him. Vidyasagar at once made him the gift. It is said, that on the next day, some people offered him 10,000 rupees for the property, but he declined the offers, saying that when he had once given his word, he could not retract it even for a *crore* of rupees.

At 3 O'clock in the afternoon of the 20th February, 1870, Durga Charan Banarji breathed his last. He was one of the best friends of Vidyasagar. He was exceedingly generous and benevolent, He was a great help to our hero in relieving the sufferings of the diseased poor. It is needless to say, that the tender-hearted Vidyasagar was heartily grieved at the loss of such a sincere, intimate friend and cooperator.' The two were so

Intimately connected, that as Durga Charan helped Vidyasagar in many of his works of love and benevolence, so the latter aided him with all his heart and soul in all his difficulties. Some time before his death, his eldest son, the Hon'ble Surendra Nath Banarji, the greatest Indian orator of the day, had passed the Competitive Civil Service Examination in England in the year 1869, but the Medical Board had disqualified him as having gone beyond the restriction of the limit of age. Surendra Nath wired to his father of the difficulty, and Durga Charan implored Vidyasagar's assistance in the matter. The latter, in his turn, consulted his friend, Dwarka Nath Mitter, and sent Surendra Nath's horoscope to England, which settled the question of age. Surendra Nath was declared an Indian Civil servant, but his father had not the good luck to hear the glad tidings, as it reached India shortly after his death. Vidyasagar was often seen to shed tears at the mention of Durga Charan's name. Subsequently when Surendra 'Nath was dismissed the Civil Service, Vidyasagar made him a professor of his own College.

Durga Charan's family were indebted to Vidyasagar on many accounts. After his death, his wife and children entered into a serious quarrel about his assets, and went to lawcourt for the settlement of the dispute Vidyasagar stood up as an umpire and settled the question out of court. Not only was he a man of great learning and kindness of heart, but he was also the possessor of good business capacities. He had a great tact of settling disputes. Whenever there was a quarrel in a rich family, he was invited to settle it. On the death of Babu Asutosh Dev, generally known by the name of Chhatu Babu, son of the renowned Ram Dulat Sarkar, the self-made great millionaire of Calcutta, when the state of his affairs ran into disorder, Vidyasagar was entrusted with their management. He made his best exertions to settle the matter without asking for any remuneration, but he was so displeased at the conduct of the relations and officers of the deceased, that he was constrained to give over the charge of his own accord.

Vidyasagar had three sincere friends among men of the medical profession, who were his great helps in most of his works of benevolence, namely Durga Charan Banarji, Nil Madhav Mukharji, and Mahendra Lal Sarkar. He had an irrevocable loss in the death

of the first two, Nil Madhav having died some time before Durga Charan. He had only one left to him—Dr. Mahendra Lal, who is now on the “top of the temple of fame in his profession. In, Vidyasagar contributed one thousand rupees to the aid of Mahendra Lal’s Science Association. But latterly the two had a great difference. It is said, that it originated on the occasion of the illness of Vidyasagar’s youngest daughter, Vidyasagar wrote to the Doctor requesting his attendance to the girl; but the latter put aside the letter without opening it at the moment. After the lapse of several hours, he opened the note and called. When Vidyasagar heard from him the cause of his unusual delay in attending to such a serious case, he was deeply pained and a little offended. Thus originated the difference, which ultimately grew so serious, that the two hardly met, and if ever they met by accident, their four eyes never met. They met only again for the last few days of Vidyasagar’s life, when Mahendra Lal willingly forgot the difference and called to see the great man in his sick-bed.

In the year 1874, Vidyasagar lost one of his greatest friends and supporters in the demise of Maharaja Mahatap Chand Bahadur of Burdwan. He was a staunch advocate of all of Vidyasagar’s movements.

About this time, he displayed a noble, heroism which showed to the world that he was no hypocrite. Some people had been insinuating that Vidyasagar was a double shuffler—that he, who was the father of the widow marriage movement and was forward to consummate such alliance in others, had not yet given any member of his own family in such marriage—had not yet shown to the world that “example is better than precept” But every candid man, who knew Vidyasagar personally, must admit that he had no duplicity, in him. It is true that his opinions and convictions in many cases, particularly in matters of social reform, were wrongly formed, but there can be no doubt that he always acted up to those ideas and beliefs with sincerity. That he had not so long given any member of his family in widow marriage was because he had not had an opportunity for it. What could he do? He and his brothers had already been married; he could not make either himself or any of his brothers lose his wife. He could neither make his married daughter a widow, in order to be able to give

her in remarriage—to set an example to the public. No sooner had he this opportunity than he availed of it with most eager promptness. He gave his only son in widow marriage.

On Thursday, the 9th of August, 1870, Narayan Chandra was married to Bhava Sundari Devi, a widowed daughter of Sambhu Chandra Mukhopdhyay of Khanakul Krishnanagar. The bride's age at that time was 16 years. Some time after the death of her first husband, her mother took her away to Birsingha, and there requested Vidyasagar's third brother, Sambhu Chandra, to give her widowed daughter in remarriage, Sambhu Chandra wrote to Vidyasagar, who there-upon settled a bridegroom for the girl. In the meantime, Narayan Chandra, who was at home then, fell in love with the fair girl, and expressed a desire to marry her himself. Information of this proposal was sent to Vidyasagar, and he received the news with utmost delight and rejoicing. He sent for the bride and bridegroom, and when they arrived, he performed the ceremony with great eclat.

The marriage was celebrated in the house of Kali Charan Ghosh of Mirzapore in Calcutta. Narayan Chandra was, at this time, aged 21 years. Vidyasagar had not fetched his wife at the nuptials, for fear lest she should stand in the way and prevent the alliance. All the members of his family, particularly his brother Sambhu Chandra, were against the union. Before the celebration of the marriage, Narayan Chandra had said to his father —'Sir, I have no such merit, whereby I could add to the glory of your name. I know full well that your life-long aim is to relieve the miseries of virgin widows by giving them away in remarriage; in the achievement of that aim you have the chiefest pleasure. That lies in the power of this unworthy son. I shall never turn my back to that. If I can there-by contribute my small mite to minister to your pleasure of heart, I shall consider myself most fortunate; and your opponents will then have no cause to cast innuendoes at your honest, benevolent intentions. It is needless to say, that Vidyasagar's heart bounded with delight to hear his son speak in this strain.

We have already said, that Narayan Chandra's mother was not present at the nuptials. Vidyasagar was afraid, that she would oppose the marriage. It was this fear which led him to provide

for a separate rented house for the accomodation of the married couple. But Narayan Chandra said to us that had no objection to the alliance, and she declared it openly after the marriage. The truth of Narayan Chandra's saying is evident from the fact that when she came down to Calcutta, she lived in the same mess with her son and his wife, She was quite illiterate and a devout follower of the orthodox Hindu faith, and yet it was her love for her husband and dear child, that made her live with them in the same mess and look to their comfort. It may not be out of place to mention here, that Vidyasagar's father, Thakurdas, was opposed to female education, and he had not allowed his daughters-in-law to learn to read and write.

That Sambhu Chandra was quite against this marriage and had written to his brother to prevent the union, is evident from the letter, which Vidyasagar addressed to him after the celebration of the marriage. The letter was in Bengali; we will *try* to give its purport here in English.

My dear brother, on Thursday, the 27th Sravan, Narayan Chandra was married to Bhava Sundsri. Communicate the news to my dear mother and others. "You wrote to say, that if Naravan Chandra married a widow, our kinsfolk and relations would not eat with us and would have no intercourse with us. On this point I have only to say that Narayan Chandra has entered into this alliance out of his own motion, and not at my instance. When I heard that he was determined on marrying a widow and that his bride was also come, what could I do but gladly approve of it; I ought not to have opposed it. I am the originator of the widow marriage movement; we have already given many widows in marriage. Under such circumstance, if my son had taken to wife an unmarried girl instead of a widow, I could not have appeal in public; I would have been an object of hatred and aversion in higher society. By entering into this alliance of his own accord, he has added to the glory of my name; he has made himself worthy to call me his father. I consider the inauguration of widow marriage into Hindu Society the most virtuous deed of my life. I don't think I shall be able to do anything more pious in this life. For the furtherance of this cause I have given my last piece, and if necessity arises, I am prepared to sacrifice my life. In comparing

to this, the severance by our kinsfolk and relations of their intercourse with us is of very little consequence. Had I, on this consideration, prevented my son from contracting widow marriage, which he did from the impulse of his own heart, I would have been the basest of men. In fine, I consider myself fortunate that Narayan Chandra entered into this alliance out of his own motion, I am not a slave to the customs of my country. Whatever I may deem proper or necessary for the good of the country or myself I will do at all risks. I will never shrink from it for fear of society or of my kinsfolk. In conclusion, I have to say that those, who will not have the courage or will dislike to keep festal or other intercourse with Narayan Chandra for fear of society or for any other reason, may easily refrain from such communication. I don't think, Narayan Chandra will be sorry on that account; and as for me, I too will not be offended or displeased. In my opinion, in these matters every one is at liberty to act according to his or her own free will; no one should follow our instance or act up to our wishes. 31st Sravan.

Your well-wisher (Sd). 'Ishwar Chandra Sharma.' The letter clearly shows that Vidyasagar was no double-dealer. His advocacy of the remarriage of Hindu widows was sincere, though it must be said that his conviction was based on wrong arguments. The Hindu Society has nothing to fear from men like Ram Mohan Ray or Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who never concealed their real motives under false disguises. There is every fear of danger from those hypocrites, who proclaim themselves true Hindus in public but act quite the contrary in their private life. These non-Hindus are a pest to Society, and the sooner they are shorn off their false guise, the better for the country.

Mother's Death

In the month of August, 1870, Vidyasagar's mother set out on pilgrimage. First of all, she went to the holy shrine of Banaras to see her husband. After a short stay there, she again proceeded on her journey, and after travelling in the different shrines of India, she again came back to Banaras. She requested her husband to accompany her to Birsingha. But he declined, and pressed her to live with him in Banaras. The benevolent matron replied;—'Let

us go home now; you have still some years to live. My poor neighbours will miss me very keenly. My first duty is to succour the distressed and feed the hungry. I must go to do that now. But know this for certain, that wherever I may remain, I will come here in time, and die before you.' The prediction of this honest, faithful woman was fulfilled to the letter. It is generally found that honest, virtuous, and religious persons foresee the dissolution of their life in distant future and sometimes predict the exact day and hour of their death. We do not see how they are enabled to do so, but nevertheless it is a fact and quite inexplicable. How inscrutable are the ways of Providence!

Vidyasagar's mother left her husband to live in Banaras, she herself returning to Birsiugha. In February following: (1871), information reached Vidyasagar that his father was seriously ill at the sanctum. He at once proceeded to Banaras, and was soon joined by his mother and his second and third brothers, in a few days, Thakurdas recovered from his illness. Vidyasagar returned to Calcutta, leaving his mother and brothers to look after his father. Bhagavati Devi lived with her husband for two months, and on the last day of the Bengali year (which is a sacred day with the Hindus), she was seized with Cholera, and expired in a few hours at the feet of her husband, as she had predicted. Before her death, she had begged for the blessings of her husband, whereupon Thakurdas said:—How shall I bless you? You are a most pious woman; it is your own piety that takes you away before me: yours the victory. It is needless to say, that he was deeply grieved at the loss of such a virtuous wife.

On his return from Banaras, Vidyasagar had taken his lodgings in a rented house by the river-side at Kasipore, a little north to Calcutta, when the sad intelligence reached him. The news came upon him like a thunder-bolt. How shall we describe the intensity of his grief? Words are too inadequate to express the sufferings of his heart. He was quite disconsolate, and wept bitterly like a child. The reader is aware how devotedly attached he was to his mother. Alas! that mother, to obey whose word he had encountered the perils of a long pedestrian journey amidst thunder-storms and rains, and had plunged into the impassable stream of the terrific Damodar, was no more! Oh! the pangs of his heart—the more so,

as he had not been able to attend to her death-bed and to have a last look of her face!

He performed the Sraddha ceremonials on the shores of the Bhagirathi at Kasipore; after which he led a secluded life for several months together, during which time his main business was to shed incessant tears at his dear mother's memory. He observed the mourning rites in accordance with the tenets of the Sastras for one complete year. These twelve months he led the rigidly ascetic life of a true Hindu; he gave up fish and meat; he ate only one meal a day, and that 'composed of only rice and vegetables and cooked with his own hands, permitting nobody to help him in preparing the food save his wife, Dinamayi Devi, and that very rarely, only on occasions of his illness, when he was too weak to do the cooking himself; he gave up wearing shoes; he did not use umbrella; he slept on a rug on the floor; in short, he renounced all luxuries and comforts of life. He did not visit Banaras, the scene of her last days, for two years after the mournful incident.

In November 1873, Thakurdas was again ill. No sooner did the news reach Vidyasagar, than he hurried to Banaras. He nursed his father most tenderly, who recovered in a fortnight. Every morning he walked about the holy city with a purseful of silver coins of all values, which he gave away in alms to the poor and the needy. He had a great aversion for the Bengali Brahmins of Banaras; but he had a very high opinion of the Mahratta Brahmins, whom he treated with much respect. He even washed their feet with his own hands.

Whenever he had an occasion for feeding Brahmins, it was the Brahmins of Mahratta whom he entertained most sumptuously. He never feasted those of his own country. His main duty in Banaras was to do the marketing and cooking for his father with his own hands, and to eat the *Prasad* (the remains of a meal) left by his parent. The reader is aware that in his early years want made him do all the cooking himself. He had thus acquired a great proficiency in the art of preparing food. Not only did he cook his father's meal, but he took a great delight in feeding people with food of his own cooking. This self-imposed task was very agreeable to him.

During this sojourn at the sacred place of the Hindus, a gentleman one day called at Thakurdas's lodgings. Both the father and the son were present then. Vidyasagar thought that the newcomer was his father's acquaintance, while Thakurdas thought that the visitor must be known to his son. In the meantime, a piece of business called Vidyasagar away. When he returned to the lodgings, he found that the visitor had departed. He then enquired of his father about the man's personality. Thakurdas said,—I don't know him. I believed that he was known to you, and that you would come back and talk to him. I myself was too deeply engaged on an important matter to attend to him. 'Everything was now clear to Vidyasagar, and he was deeply sorry for what had passed. He at once set out in the direction of *Bangalitola* (that quarter of Banaras where the Bengalis reside) to find out the unknown visitor. After a diligent search of some time, he at last discovered the man. He apologised to the stranger for the apparent slight shown to him; the man was satisfied.

Vidyasagar then asked him why he had called. The stranger replied,—'I heard that you were come, and therefore called to see you. Besides, I wanted to ask you a question about religion.' Vidyasagar desired him to put his question. The gentleman wanted to know our hero's religious faith. Vidyasagar replied,—'I have never declared to anybody my faith, nor will I ever declare it; but this much I can say, that if you believe that the bath in the Bhagirathi purifies you and the worship of *Siva* brings sanctity to your heart, there is your religion.' With this, he return to his own quarters.

On a previous occasion, while his mother was still living, the Brahmins of Banaras asked him whether he believed in *Visvesvara* (the god Siva of Banaras). Vidyasagar replied,— 'I have no faith in *your* Visvesvara.' The Brahmins were highly offended at such a reply from a Hindu, and asked him,— 'What do you believe in then?' Vidyasagar answered,—'*My* Visvesvara and Annapurna (another name of goddess Durga, Siva's wife) are my *father and mother*, present here in flesh. Here was some indication of his religious faith. It might not be much amiss to infer, that his feeding of Brahmins was for the satisfaction of his parents, who were his sole objects of worship.

The Hindu Wills Act was passed on the 1st September, 1870. The Draft Bill had been introduced into the Legislative Council in the previous year. The purposes of this Law had hitherto been served by the Indian Succession Act, which operated equally on the Indians and non-Indians. Previously, since the establishment of the Supreme Court, the wealthy residents of Calcutta used to leave their testamentary Wills at their own option, which gave rise to serious litigations, consequent on frauds with respect to the deeds. Thus arose the necessity for a fresh legislation to prevent these evil practices. The Bill, introduced in 1869, was framed by the alteration of some of the sections of the Indian Succession Act. The movement caused a great agitation throughout the country.

The government asked for the opinions of all the influential, leading members of society and some of the Sastrik Pandits. Vidyasagar was also called upon to give his opinion. He bestowed his best thoughts on the subject, and opposed two points: first, according to the Hindu Sastras, the gift of something to an unborn person is un-lawful—both the donor and the donee of a gift must be cognisant of it; but in this Act, such gifts have been considered lawful in certain cases: secondly, what has been termed as Rules against Perpetuity is also opposed to the Hindu Sastras. Vidyasagar's arguments were founded on sound bases. But the government paid no heed to them, and the Bill was passed into a law applicable to the Hindus, including Buddhists and Jains.

In the course of this year, Vidyasagar had to encounter another serious calamity in the death of Maharaja Satish Chandra Rai Bahadur of Nuddea, who breathed his last on the 25th day of October, 1870. Vidyasagar was intimately connected with the Nuddea Raj family. He had a friendly intercourse with Satish Chandra's father, Maharaja Sris Chandra. The acquaintance first began when Vidyasagar had gone to the Nuddea palace for the manuscript of Bharat Chandra's works, and it gradually grew into familiar friendship in the course of his subsequent visits to Krishnagar for inspection of schools, while he was an Inspector of Schools. Sris Chandra had such a high regard for him on account of his vast erudition and noble conduct, that whenever Vidyasagar called on him, he rose from his throne, and clasped the poorly dressed visitor in his arms. In fact, he was so enamoured

of our hero, that he supported his widow marriage movement and even subscribed his own name to the petition submitted to government for legislation on the subject. We have already noticed briefly, in the chapter on Widow Marriage, how one of his ancestors, Maharaja Krishna Chandra, had baffled the attempts of Raja Rajaballabh of Dacca to introduce widow marriage into Hindu Society. But the descendant of the same Krishna Chandra felt no compunction in advocating the uncanonical renovation and lending his aid to the furtherance of the cause, though highly injurious to society and repugnant to orthodox Hindu feelings—he was so charmed and led away by Vidyasagar’s arguments and by his own Western education.

Sris Chandra died on the very day that the first widow marriage of his name sake under the new Law was celebrated with eclat in Calcutta, his son, Satish Chandra, looked upon Vidyasagar with the same regard and esteem as his father. The reader is aware how our noble hero made over to him 1800 rupees deposited by his father in Vidyasagar’s care. Even after Satish Chandra’s death, Vidyasagar often visited Krishnagar to provide for the proper management of the Nuddea Raj Estate at great personal sacrifice. It was quite natural for our grateful hero to suffer losses for the good of a benefactor’s descendants and heirs, from whom he had himself received so much benefit.

With respect to Vidyasagar’s grateful benevolence and kindness to the near relations of a deceased friend and benefactor, Jogendra Nath Bandyopadhyay, mentioned before, has tried to condemn the conduct of our hero in connection with the family of his father-in-law Madan Mohan Tarkalankar. We would ask the reader to recall the circumstances under which our hero acquired the sole right of the Sanskrit Press and the copyright of the three parts of Madan Mohan’s *Sisu-Siksha*. On the death of Tarkalankar, when his family were miserably circumstanced, Vidyasagar very kindly settled on the deceased friend’s mother, wife and widowed daughters a monthly allowance of ten rupees each. But that stipend was not sufficient for their comfortable living. Madan Mohan’s son-in-law, Jogendra Nath aforesaid, therefore begged Vidyasagar for the copy right of the three parts of *Sisu-Siksha* in the name of Kunda Mala, Tarkalankar’s second

widowed daughter, Vidyasagar accepted the proposal and consented to make her a present of the copyright. But subsequently he was so offended at somebody's behaviour, that he was constrained to withdraw his promise. Surely, this unusual conduct on the part of the truthful Vidyasagar is by no means to be justified, and has brought down some discredit on his unsoiled character. However offensive other people's behaviour might have been, or under any circumstances, however displeasing, Vidyasagar ought not to have retracted his word of gift, once pledged by him.

Maharaja Satish Chandra had married two wives. He had left a Will. One of the provisions of the testament was that if neither of his wives had any male issue, then on his demise, the younger widowed Maharani should take an adopted son, and that if she did not take to that course, the elder Maharani should adopt a son. The elder one had already died in the lifetime of Satish Chandra. On his demise, the younger Maharani, Bhuvaneshvari, expressed a wish to keep the Estate in her own hands.

The Raj-Dewan, Kartik Chandra Ray, saw that the Estate was already in an embarrassed state, and that if the Maharani should keep it in her own hands, it would grow more deplorable still. He, therefore, called On Vidyasagar, and consulted him on the point. The latter decided upon placing the Estate in the hands of the Court of Wards. Kartik Chandra thereupon requested him to persuade the Maharani to take that course.

Vidyasagar did as he was desired. He went to Krishnagar and waited upon Bhuvaneshvari. After much persuasion, he succeeded in convincing her of the advisability of the step. The Estate was accordingly made over to the Court of Wards on the 6th January, 1871. It soon prospered under the able management of the Court; all its former debts were cleared off.

The present Maharaja Kshitis Chandra Ray Bahadur, when he attained his majority and took over charge of the Estate in his own hands, received from the Court of Wards, a sum of two *lakhs* and ten thousand rupees in ready money. Kshitis Chandra had been placed in the Wards' Institution, where he received his training.

Publications

In 1871, Vidyasagar published new editions of the Sanskrit "Uttara-Charita" and "Abhijnana-Sakuntala" with his annotations. The two prefaces of these publications are very good pieces of Bengali prose reading, displaying his powers of the same sweet, serious language, the same melodious flow of elegant style, as in his former works, and discussing concisely, in a short compass, the high talents and abilities of the two immortal poets, Bhavabhuti and Kalidas.

Besides these two publications) he issued correct editions of the Sanskrit "Sisupala-Badha," "Kadambari," "Kiratarjuniya," "Raghu-Vansa," and "Harsha-Charita," without annotations. He also published, for the students of the lower forms, three Selection-books from standard English authors, namely, "Selections from the writings of Gold-smith," "Selections from English Literature" and "Poetical Selections".

Vidyasagar was a great appreciator of merits. His heart was always drawn to a spirited, amiable, kind, truthful and honest man, be he a Hindu, Brahma, Christian, or Mussulman—be he a native of his father-land or of a foreign country. Whatever might be his course, if Vidyasagar believed that he was working sincerely for the good of his country, he would clasp him in his fond embraces. Keshab Chander Sen, the famous orator of Bengal, was a great favourite with him, although the opinions of the two widely diverged on many points, simply because Vidyasagar believed that the orator wished well of the country. Keshab Chander also had a great fond regard for him. The two often met in Vidyasagar's house, and whenever they were together, they had no other talk than the device of means for the good of the country.

Raj Narayan Basu, though a Brahma, had, by his honesty and truthfulness, won over Vidyasagar's intimate friendship. The two reciprocated feelings of affectionate esteem for each other. Raj Narayan believed that if Vidyasagar had turned a missionary and preacher, he could have done a great good to the people. He even went so far as to declare his idea to Vidyasagar. The latter gave a somewhat humorous reply. He said, 'I don't want to be a preacher. If I have to suffer punishment for what I am and what I have been

doing, I must take the consequences. Suppose, I turn a missionary and convert some people to my faith. If they should be asked who converted them, *they* must point to me, and supposing' that they are punishable for their acts, it is 1 on whose back the punishment is sure to fall. I can suffer for my own sins; but how can I receive stripes for others?'

Raj Narayan consulted Vidyasagar on all important matters. He once asked for his friend's advice on the subject of his daughter's marriage. Vidyasagar conveyed his instructions by a long letter couched in respectful terms. The letter was written in Bengali; we will give here its purport in English:

'Accept my best compliments—

'It is some days that your letter reached, me; but I was very busy with different matters, and could not therefore reply to your letter in time. Please excuse me the delay.

'I have bestowed my best thoughts on the subject of your daughter's marriage, but have failed to decide upon the advice that I am to give you.

To speak the truth, it is very difficult to advise on these matters. In the first place, you are a Brahma. As you are a strict follower of that faith, you' should by all means pursue the course adopted by Babu Devendra Nath Tagore on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, if you think, that course was in consonance with the Brahma religion. In the second place, if you do not pursue the course adopted by Devendra Babu, and celebrate the marriage of your daughter in accordance with the old practice, there will arise a great obstacle to the propagation of Brahma marriage. In the third place, it is most doubtful whether the celebration of your daughter's marriage according to the Brahma practice should be considered valid on all points. For these reasons I am unable and unwilling to lend you any advice on this point. But this much I can say, that you should not jump at once into any side.

'What I really mean to say on this subject is, that it is not proper to ask for other people's advice in these matters. In such cases one ought to ask one's own heart for instructions, and act up to its dictates. For whomever you will consult on this point,

will deliver his counsels according to his own opinions and wishes; he will never consult your good or duty.

'In my opinion, you would do well to think over the matter seriously, and then determine for yourself which course to pursue.

The reader is, no doubt, familiar with the name of the saintly Ram Krishna Paramahansa, whose purity of manners, honesty of purpose, and pious conduct had drawn to him many disciples. He was fond of the company of pious and honest persons. One day he said to his disciples that he wanted to have an interview with the famous Vidyasagar, his disciples asked him why he so wished. He replied, because without God's love and divine grace, Vidyasagar could not have been so great. Accordingly he presented himself one evening before our hero. No sooner did he appear, than Vidyasagar rose from his seat and advanced to receive him; but before he could approach the Paramahansa, the latter sat down before him upon the floor of the room, and said,—'I have crossed drains and ditches, pools and tanks, and at last I am come to the *Sagar* (sea).' Vidyasagar replied,— 'As you are already come, there is no help; you may take out some salt water, if you like, or if you cast your net, you will fish only shells; there is nothing in this sea but salt water and shells.' The Paramahansa said,—'Why should I take out salt water? There is not merely a sea of salt; there are a sea of milk, a sea of curd, a sea of honey, and so forth. You are not a sea of ignorance; you are one of knowledge. When I have come to you, I will fish out pearls; you are full of pearls.' After such humorous talks for some time, they fell to serious conversation on different topics, and each was highly delighted at the other's conduct and manner of speech. In the meantime, arrived a quantity of the well-known delicious confectionary of Burdwan presented to Vidyasagar by one of his friends. He requested the Paramahansa to partake of the dainty sweets. The saintly visitor accepted the invitation and ate of the sweetmeats. Henceforth the two had a great fond regard and esteem for each other.

In June, 1872, Vidyasagar's second daughter, Kumudini Devi, was married to Aghor Naih Chattopadhyay of Rudrapur in the district of 24 Pergunnas. He was Sub-Registrar of Purulia in Manbhum.

About this time, arose some incidents, which led Vidyasagar to be highly offended with his only son, Narayan Chandra. By degrees, the displeasure grew to such a fearful height, that he was constrained to estrange him. There was thus a wide gulf between the two. God alone knew what his heart suffered at the unnatural separation, but to all external appearance he had perfect composure, which showed that he was not dissatisfied with the step he had taken. Narayan Chandra's mother was, of course, most sincerely grieved at the estrangement of her only, dear son. She never afterwards felt ease or comfort. She often remonstrated with her husband on his uncompromising conduct towards the son, but Vidyasagar was as firm as a rock. Narayan Chandra's enemies found an opportunity to be revenged upon; they brought on serious complaints against him. They added fuel to the fire, and kept Vidyasagar's feelings of displeasure against him always wide awake, thereby preventing the reconciliation so heartily desired by the mother.

Narayan Chandra, by his own efforts, became a Sub-Registrar of Assurances. He was, at that time, as spirited and self-reliant as his father. He visited his father's house now and then, but no talk passed between the two.

Instances of a father's estrangement of his child for the latter's failing in duty or improper conduct are very rare in this world. Although Vidyasagar had been constrained to be separated from his son to all outward appearance, he could not wholly efface his love for him. The ties of natural affection are too strong to be easily cut asunder. It is said, that on one occasion, a look at the son's photograph moved him to a flood of tears. Narayan Chandra's wife and children were very dear to his heart. He kept up epistolary communication with them, and aided them by remittances of money.

On the 15th June, 1872, the "Hindu Family Annuity Fund" was established. It was started with very laudable objects. The natives of Bengal, with a limited income, can leave no provision *tot* the maintenance of their parents, wives, children, or other relations. The Fund was created with a view to provide for such means. If one wished that one's wife or any other relative should have a monthly allowance of 5 rupees, after one's death, one had to deposit two rupees and a quarter every month till the last day

of his life, if one wished for a monthly provision of 10 rupees, one had to deposit a proportionate amount. In this way one might make provisions for a monthly allowance up to the limit of 30 rupees.

The necessity for the establishment of such a Fund was first determined at a meeting of some respectable and influential native gentlemen held on the 23rd February, 1872, in the premises of the Metropolitan Institution. The Fund was first opened at No. 32, College Street, with 10 subscribers. Besides, a few benevolent, wealthy persons paid considerable amounts as donations to begin with. The Paikpara Raj family contributed 2,500 rupees. For the first and second years, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and the Hon'ble Dwarka Nath Mitter were Trustees of the Fund. On Dwarka Nath Mitter's death, Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore, the Hon'ble Ramesh Chandra Mitra, and Vidyasagar were Trustees for the third year. At the outset, the following gentlemen were office-bearers of the Fund. Chairman—Syama Charan De. Deputy-Chairman—Muralidhar Sen. Directors—Ray Dina Bandhu Mitra Bahadur, Rajendra Nath Mitra, Govinda Chandra Dhar, Nabin, Chandra Sen, Isan Chandra Mukhopadhyay, Prasanna Kumar Sarvvadhikari, Nanda Lal Mitra, Rajendra Nath Bandyopadhyay, Narendra Nath Sen, and Panchanan Chaudhuri. Medical Officer and Health Examiner of the Subscribers—Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar.

Sometimes after the foundation of the Hind Family Annuity Fund, the "Albert Life Assurance Company" was started with the same object; but the latter business failed, to the great loss of many poor persons. Vidyasagar was connected with the Annuity Fund till the end of 1875. In his opinion, the Fund worked well in an organised way for years since its establishment. On the 27th December, 1875, he addressed a letter to the Directors intimating his design to sever his connection with the Fund. On the 2nd January, 1876, the Directors held a special meeting and called on Vidyasagar to give his reasons, for his intended separation. He communicated his reasons in a very long letter, dated 21st February, 1876. The letter was subsequently printed, covering over 20 pages Foolscap. The language of the letter is vigorous, and may be given a high place as a very good piece of literary composition in Bengali. The reasons set forth therein were not groundless. The gist of what he said was, that the Secretary and most of the Directors had

combined themselves into a party and had mustered strong to thwart Vidyasagar's measures and to humiliate him, and that they had brought about much irregularity in the management of the Fund. He, therefore, thought it advisable to withdraw himself from its connection.

He charged the Directors with disregard of the rules and neglect of the true interests of the Fund, and the Subscribers with indifference to its affairs. His idea was that the natives of Bengal had not yet learned to work in conjunction and cooperation. He stated it distinctly in his letter, when referring to the ill-management of the Fund. It was this conviction of his that had led him to decline to join the Fund at the outset. Groat persuasions had afterwards induced him to join it.

That the Secretary and the Directors of his party had mustered strong and brought about great irregularities in the management of the Fund, Vidyasagar demonstrated very clearly. The main charges brought against them were, that the accounts had not been properly kept, that the rules had not been altered when necessary, that the name of the Chairman had been put down in the Annual Report of the Fund without his cognisance when the latter had declined to sign it for irregular proceedings, that unnecessary withdrawals of money had been made from the Fund's Bank, and so forth. He brought another very serious charge. A clerk Toeing required for the office of the Fund, Vidyasagar had been urgently requested by the Directors to find a competent man for the post. He had at first declined to take the responsibility, but at the pressing solicitations of the Directors, he gave a fully qualified man. This man had already been holding an office in the East Indian Railway Company's service, and Vidyasagar made him resign that place, and appointed him as clerk to the Fund. But shortly afterwards, the Secretary dismissed the man, without even consulting the Directors, and thus placed Vidyasagar in a false position. The reasons set forth by Vidyasagar were most distressingly painful. He stated in clear and plain but pitiful words how sincerely he was pained at the severance of his connection with the Fund. The purport of what he said in the concluding portion of his letter was:

'I lent my utmost exertions and attention to the foundation and improvement of this Fund. you have expectations of the

enjoyment of the fruits of this tree, but I do not entertain such hopes. My idea is, that every one should try his best to do good to his native country. It was with this conviction, that I bestowed my best thoughts and endeavours on this subject I had no other motive of furthering my self-interest. I do not know whether you will believe me when I say, but still I must say, that I have a greater affection for the Fund than any of you. My inmost heart alone knows what pangs it suffers to forget that affection wholly. Those whom you have intrusted with the charge of management, do not walk in a straight path. These circumstances have led me to be afraid that my further continuance in the business of the Fund will in future bring a" great censure on my head, and I shall be made answerable before God. It is this fear only that makes me cut off my connection with the Fund, though most reluctantly and painfully.

'At your special meeting of the 2nd January, you have expressed a wish and request that I should retain my connection with the Fund; but it has become very difficult for me to comply with your request Numbers 'of people, come to consult me whether they should subscribe to the Fund, I am then put to a great dilemma. Under the present state of the Fund, I think, it would be wrong to advise any one to subscribe to it; while it would be equally wrong to deter any body from subscribing to it. The reason is, that it would be deceiving a man to induce him to subscribe to it, when a conviction has grown upon me that in future the Fund might be in a state of disorder; while to deter him would be acting in opposition to the Fund. To deceive a man wilfully, and to act in opposition to it while continuing in its connection, both are equally very wrong. If I keep any further connection with the Fund, I must commit either of the wrongs. It is this dilemma that disables me to comply with your request, for which I crave your indulgence.

'In fact, I am an unimportant person; yet you relied on me and charged me with such an important trust; I therefore pour forth my heartfelt gratitude to you. In the course of the period I held the important trust, I must have committed some errors; you will, please, be good enough to excuse me for them. So long that I was one of your trustees, I tried my best to do good to the Fund.

I never cognisantly or wilfully showed the slightest disregard, indifference or inattention to it. I hope, you would be graciously pleased to give me leave to retire.'

From this time forward he had no connection with the Annuity Fund. Some time afterwards, Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore and the Hon'ble Ramesh Chandra Mitra also withdrew their names from the Fund. Consequently, the Directors had to seek the help of the government in the affair.

Vidyasagar had put forth all his energies—had devoted himself, heart and soul, to the establishment of the Hindu Family Annuity Fund. As he was the principal starter, he was nominated one of the trustees. For one year he worked with full vigour. At the end of the first year, the enthusiasm diminished a little; in the second year, it slackened still more; and, in the third year, his independent spirit revolted at the idea of acting in subordination to others, who had in consequence of mustering strong, had the upper hand in every-thing. After all, Vidyasagar was a native of unfortunate Bengal, particularly of this degenerated age. The Bengalees of the present age have no unity among themselves; they cannot act in union and conjunction. Every one is independent; every one is arbitrary; every body follows his own opinions. It was with a view to remove this slur of his countrymen that Vidyasagar attempted to exhibit a different scenery on the stage of the Annuity Fund. But he had to yield *to* the overpowering influence of the opponents. In the short space of three years he was obliged to quit his post. In giving up the helm of the Fund, he charged others with want of unity and with in-capacity to work in conjunction; but others laid the blame on his shoulders. They said that in many cases Vidyasagar had proved his own in capacity to work in conjunction, with other people. No doubt, he joined them, at the outset, with great enthusiasm, but he could never keep to the end. This was Vidyasagar's peculiarity. Such peculiarity is undoubtedly an indication of spiritedness; but does it not sometimes lead to arbitrariness?

The letter, referred to above, clearly showed that Vidyasagar was not a double-dealer; he was never afraid to open his mind for fear of incurring one's displeasure, or to suppress his feelings for the satisfaction of another. He firmly believed that it was

wrong not to declare frankly one's own mind or opinions. As he never shrank from giving out freely his own convictions, so he was highly pleased, when he found others doing the same. We will illustrate this by an incident of his previous life.

On 'one occasion, Mahamahopadhyay Rakhai Das Nyayratna, Pandit Sibchandra Sarvvabhauma, Madhu Sudan Smritiratna, and Panchanan Tarkaratna called upon him. The last-named visitor was, at that time, still a pupil but had nearly finished his course of instruction. In course of conversation, they fell to discussing religious topics. Vidyasagar said that religion was nothing but formation of parties. 'Take for instance the following *Shloka* of Manu:

'You should take an honest course, and follow the track of your fathers and grandfathers; it would not be wrong to pursue that track,' Vidyasagar continued,—'Now, what is the meaning of this? If you would take an honest course, why then should you go to follow the track of your fore-fathers? The simple meaning is, that unless the two ways are indicated at the same time, the screw of your party becomes slack. Manu was afraid that if he indicated only the honest course and let it alone, the members of his party might quit his side, and pursue the honest course of other nations. It was this fear, that led him to bestow his best thoughts on the subject and indicate two ways at the same time.'

Panchanan Tarkaratna very humbly and politely suggested,—'My interpretation is quite different. But, under the circumstances, it is not a very difficult thing to give such a signification of the Manu's passage as may be somewhat gratifying to you.'

Vidyasagar,—'How can you give that signification to it?

Tarkaratna.—'In the expression there might be a clerical error; it might very conveniently be read; and then, the meaning would be,—'To follow the track of forefathers is the true course for virtuous people.

Vidyasagar.—'Nyayratna, this youth is very sharp, indeed!'

Rakhai Das Nyayratna and the other visitors unanimously complimented the young Tarkaratna in eloquent terms. At last,

Vidyasagar said,— ‘What is the end of all this praise? Nothing, but beggary. At this young age, he has finished the *Nyaya* and other philosophies; it is a high compliment, no doubt. But what will he do? Let him go home and starve.

In the beginning of 1873 Vidyasagar had to face a most dire calamity. On the 4th February of that year, his eldest son-in-law, Gopal Chandra Samajpati, died of cholera at Benares, where he had gone in company with Vidyasagar’s nephew, (sister’s son), Beni Madhav Mukhopadhyay, for a change, as his health had already been much impaired. The news came upon our hero like a thunder-bolt. He loved the son-in-law most dearly. Gopal Chandra was a young man of handsome and lovely, appearance. He had a profound scholastic education and a poetic genius. His manners were most affable and courteous. Vidyasagar was most grievously afflicted at the loss of such a beloved relation. But to console his dear, widowed daughter, he had to assume the appearance of external composure, which served to rend his tender heart the more. He sympathised with his daughter most sincerely. She led a rigidly austere life; Vidyasagar also did the same. She had to give up fish and flesh and to eat only one meal a day; Vidyasagar did the same. She fasted on the *Ekadasi* day; her father also observed fasting on that day. This state of things continued for a considerable period. At last, at the urgent solicitations of the daughter, he had to give up the austerities.

He made Hemlata (which was the name of the eldest widowed daughter) the sole mistress of his house-hold. She also did her best to improve the affairs of her father. Her house-wife and affectionate treatment pleased everybody. The busy, active life that she led to feed and tend her father and generally to bring ease and comfort to all the inmates of the house left her no leisure to openly shed tears for her dear husband. In fact, she was the goddess of the house-hold. Would the advocates of widow marriage open their eyes and see how a true Hindu widow can pass her days virtuously without pining away at the loss of one husband and eagerly looking out for another? Hemlata had two little boys, whose sole charge fell on the shoulders of her father. Vidyasagar brought them up with the tenderest care. He made the best provisions possible for their education. The two boys, Suresh Chandra

Samajpati and Jatis Chandra Samajpati, read English and Sanskrit at home. Vidyasagar did not think fit to send his grandsons to school. He himself taught them Sanskrit, and engaged competent teachers to instruct them in English, There was nothing in the world that he would not give them or do for them. If he ever heard them lament the loss of their father, it would pierce his heart like a poisoned dagger. The elder grandson once expressed a desire to go to England, but his grandfather and mother, both prevented him. One day, when sitting to dinner, Suresh Chandra said to his mother;—'Had *my* father been living now, I would never have gone to *ask your* father.' Vidyasagar overheard this, and was moved to a flood of tears. If he saw them undertake or carry out a noble and benevolent deed, his delight knew no bounds. On one occasion, the younger boy, Jatis Chandra, found a poor man suffering from Dysentery, lying on the road. He brought home the helpless sufferer, Vidyasagar was highly pleased at his young grandchild's humanity. He provided for the patient's treatment and nursing, and took great care of him. But, unfortunately, the poor man's days were numbered; nothing could save him from the hands of death. Suresh Chandra's abilities for good composition were a source of great delight to the grandfather. The two boys were dearer to him than his own begotten children. Suresh Chandra is, at present, the editor of the *Sahitya*, a well conducted monthly. Vidyasagar took charge not only of his own grandsons, but also of the mother, brothers, and sisters of the deceased son-in-law. He housed them in a separate rented house, and provided for their comfortable living.

In spite of these dire catastrophes, the thoughts of his educational institutions were always vivid in his mind. He never for a moment lost sight of them. The anxieties for their welfare and success made him sometimes forget "his afflictions. Even under such distressing circumstances, he opened, in 1874, a Branch Metropolitan School at Syaropukur. Like them other institution, it soon rose to high eminence and success.

Differences with the Authority

Vidyasagar had some difference with Sir George Campbell, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, with respect to the *Smriti*

branch of the Sanskrit College. Campbell was a man of highly enthusiastic and revolutionary spirit and rather chary of expenditure on high education. He revolutionised almost every department of the government under him.

The Hon'ble C. E. Buckland in his 'Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors,' says: 'Reform was the principal feature of Sir G. Campbell's government. The experiment of appointing a Lieutenant-Governor who had not graduated in Lower Bengal certainly led to great changes, and it seemed as if every department and institution had to justify its method of working. It would have been impossible for any one, in such a position and bent on such a mission as Sir G. Campbell, to avoid running counter to many cherished ideas in conservative Bengal: and it was no wonder that the pressure he applied on all officers and classes tended to render him unpopular'.

A contemporary writer thus described Sir George Campbell:—
"That he was more than a mere executive officer every one knows who knows India. His Governorship represented a virtual revolution, succeeding that of Sir William Grey. It was a change from desk management to root-and-branch administration, resting on fixed and matured views as to political principles underlying action. As a statesman, Sir G. Campbell stands foremost among the lieutenant-Governors, and it is unpleasant to add that he was the least popular".

He was a great enemy of the high education of the natives of the soil; he lowered the status of the Berhampur, the Krishnagar and the Sanskrit Colleges from the first to the second grade.

The Hon'ble C. E. Buckland, in his 'Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors,' says: "Reductions were carried out in the Berhampore, Krishnagar and Sanskrit Colleges, which provoked some expression of dissatisfaction among the upper and literate classes of Bengal. Sir G. Campbell's policy was to reduce the number of Colleges educating up to the highest point, concentrating in the remainder improved means of the highest education. The reduced Colleges were not abolished, but were still efficiently maintained to teach to the point to which experience proved that the greatest demand existed, i.e. up to the First Arts standard".

It was this too excessive economical policy of his government that led him to resolve upon making a monthly saving of 650 rupees from the establishment charges of the Sanskrit College by the abolition of the posts of the Professors of *Smriti* and two professors of English. This resolution threw the whole country in a state of great agitation. Protests and oppositions were raised from every quarter, but without the desired success. It was, however, finally settled that the *Smriti* department should be placed under the tuition of the Professor of Rhetoric. The Bengal Government had previously asked Vidyasagar for his opinion on the point, and he had opposed the retrenching policy. But still, it was stated in "government resolution published in the Calcutta Gazette, that in this matter Vidyasagar's opinion had been taken. The people of the country very naturally, suspected that Vidyasagar must have supported the policy of government. He was, therefore, obliged to address a letter to Luttman Johnson, Private Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor, contradicting the statement of government, The letter ran as follows:

"Calcutta, 23rd May 1872

"To

"He Luttman Johnson Esq.

"Private Secretary to his Honour, the
"Lieutenant Governor of Bengal".

"My Dear Sir,

"Adverting to the government order on the reorganisation of the Sanskrit College, published in the last Calcutta Gazette, I find that reference has been made to me and the Principal of the Sanskrit College as the persons among others with whom his Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to discuss the subject, and his Honour considers their suggestions 'to be so moderate and reasonable that he has much pleasure in being able substantially to comply with their wishes pending further trial of the arrangements now to be made.' These arrangements are that the first Arts classes should be revived and that the Professorship of Hindu Law should be merged in that of Rhetoric and Philosophy by giving an increment of Rs. 50 to the present incumbent for this additional duty.

"As I was asked by you under instructions his Honour to consult the leading members of the Hindu community, who take interest in Sanskrit studies before meeting. His honour, and as it might lead to an impression that the above suggestions emanated from me, I think it my duty to remind his Honour that so far as the proposed arrangement for instruction in Hindu Law is concerned, it did not come from me. Indeed I told his Honour distinctly that the importance of the subject demanded a separate chair, and I still entertain the same opinion. Hindu Law, as his honour is aware, is a vast subject— it forms the life-study of a man. It is true that there may be versatile persons, who may combine a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit literature with a profound acquaintance with Hindu Law, but such versatility is rare. To merge the chair of Hindu Law with other chairs is to give it a secondary rank and to reduce its practical usefulness, for a professor who will teach it at his leisure moments as it were can-not be expected to devote that attention to it, which the vastness of the subject demands. I find it stated in the government letter that according to the Principal of the College "Smriti or Hindu Law is now taught in a most satisfactory manner by the professor in addition to some other duties". From my experience of the working of the college as ex-principal I cannot however persuade myself to subscribe to this opinion. Perhaps his Honour would form a clear idea of the anomaly of the proposed arrangement if he would consider the effect of calling upon a Professor of Literature, Philosophy or Mathematics in the Presidency College, who may have attended Law lectures but who has not made law his special study, to fill the chair of Law in addition to other duties; I have no doubt that the legal profession would scout such an idea, and yet this is exactly the arrangement proposed for giving instruction in Hindu Law in the Sanskrit College. I have high respect for the attainments and scholarship of Pundit Mahesh Chandra, but I fear that the union of so many duties in his hands will not only result in a falling off in the study of Law but also of those branches, which he is prominently qualified to teach. His Honour observes, 'it was and is in-tended that the teaching of Hindu Law shall be fully maintained', but as I have endeavoured to show above His Honour's intention will be but ill-fulfilled by the arrangement proposed. I would therefore earnestly and

respectfully solicit his Honour to consider this part of his recent orders. The saving which the absorption of the chair effects is so small, *vis.* Rs. 100 a month, that I earnestly trust that his Honour will see the propriety of making this concession to the Hindu community, particularly as his Honour has shown a commendable spirit of moderation and conciliation in these orders.

“As it might be inferred from the tenour of the government letter referred to that I have advised his Honour the proposed arrangement for filling the chair on Hindu Law, and as I am consequently liable to be misunderstood by the Hindu community, whose feeling is very strong on the subject of the chair of the Hindu Law, I would respectfully request that in justice to me his Honour may think fit to remove the erroneous impression which his too general allusion to my suggestions regarding the reorganisation of the Sanskrit College is calculated to produce on the public mind.

“I remain &c. “Ishwar Chandra Sharma”.

To this letter Luttman Johnson the Private Secretary replied, as follows:—

“Belvedere Alipore. “The 25th May 1872 “My dear Pundit,

“I have laid your letter of the 23rd current about the recent orders for reorganisation of the Sanskrit College before his Honour the Lieutenant Governor. His honour has no doubt that you are correct in saying that you did not individually recommend the absorption of the Professorship of Hindu Law. His honour desires me to assure you that he proposes to make the Hindu Law the primary and not a mere secondary object of one of the chairs. He has every reason for believing that Pundit Mahesh Chandra is at least as qualified for the duty of teaching Hindu Law as any other gentleman whom he could have selected to succeed the late Professor, and he has the distinct assurance of the Principal that the Pundit is teaching the subject in the most satisfactory manner. Upon the whole, therefore, his honour thinks that he has been well advised in the orders which he has passed. He must in the present experiment sufficiently before he can consent to make another change.

"I remain,

Dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully Sd. "H. Luttman Johnson

"Private Secretary".

With a view to remove the erroneous impression from the minds of the public, Vidyasagar afterwards addressed a letter to the Hindu Patriot, which was published in its issue of the 10th June, 1872. The letter is quoted below:—

To

The Editor of the Hindu Patriot

Dear Sir,

As considerable misapprehension prevails among my countrymen as to the opinion I expressed to his honour the Lieutenant-Governor, when he did me the honour of consulting me regarding the Sanskrit College, particularly in reference to the Constitution of the Chair of Hindu Law, I deem it due to lay before the public through the medium of your paper the accompanying correspondence which I hope will remove the erroneous impression entertained on the subject. I am always reluctant to rush into print, but when I find myself actually abused and looked upon as the individual, who has advised the Lieutenant-Governor the arrangement about the Chair of Hindu Law, which is unhappily regarded as a piece of downright jobbery, I cannot in justice to myself refrain from letting the public know the part I have taken in this business. I need hardly add that I am compelled to resort to this step by the equivocal terms used in the letter of Mr. Bernard, Secretary to the Director of Public Instruction, on the subject. I however feel much indebted to his honour for completely exonerating me in the last letter of his Private Secretary to my address.

'Yours faithfully

"The 8th June 1872. Sd. "Ishwar Chandra Sharma". His relations with Sir George Compbell being thus much strained some of his publications were excluded by government from the list of textbooks prescribed for schools in Bengal. As a matter of

consequence, his income from books, which formed the main portion of his means, was considerably diminished. He was therefore obliged, though most painfully, to curtail some of the stipends which he had kindly settled on poor families. But as soon as he again found sufficient means for it, he raised the allowances to their former rate, which he had been constrained to retrench.

In this connection, we will notice here, in passing, the appointment of Pandit Mahesh Chandra Nyayratna as a Professor of the Sanskrit College. On the retirement of the old professor, Pandit Premchand Tarkavagis, his place in the College fell vacant. There were two candidates for the post—Rammay Bhattacharyya, a brother of the retired professor, and Mahesh Chandra Nyayratna. Both were qualified men; the people naturally expected that the first-named Pandit would get the appointment. Although the second candidate was not a student of the Sanskrit College, yet he was highly proficient in Bellesletters and Rhetoric, and had acquired a great reputation as the most learned man in the six *Darsvt* (Philosophy). Mr. Cowell, the Principal of the college, found a difficulty in making the choice. At last, he asked for Vidyasagar's opinion in the matter. Vidyasagar said,—'To teach the *Kavyaprakash* to the students of the Rhetoric class, the professor should have a sound knowledge of the *Nyaya* philosophy. Pandit Mahesh Chandra Nyayratna has mastered the whole *Nyaya* Sastra; I therefore think him to be duly qualified for the post.' Nyayratna was accordingly appointed to the vacant place.

The continued physical and mental sufferings combined with intense afflictions and griefs at the loss of his nearest and dearest relations and friends completely broke down his already impaired health.

A secluded and retired life in some salubrious climate was now absolutely necessary for him. About this time, a Bungalow was notified for sale at Deoghur, a most healthy place in upper Bengal. He offered to purchase it, but the terms being immoderately high, he gave up the idea. He then rented a plot of land, very close to Karmatar, a Station midway between Jamtara and Madhupur on the East Indian Railway Line. The place lies in the Santhal Pergunnas. It had, at that time, a somewhat jungly appearance, being covered on all sides with dense woods, and was, in

consequence, very well suited to the purpose. He laid out the land, and erected there a nice Bungalow to his mind. In its compound he planted flower plants and fruit trees, and thus turned it to a most comfortable habitation. The poor, savage Santhals were his only neighbours. The Santhals are believed to be one of the aboriginal tribes of India. They are honest and truthful. They soon perceived the flow of natural kindness and benevolence of their new neighbour, and became his objects of love and endearment—his friends and relations. In fact, some of them addressed him father, some brother, some uncle, and so forth. Their poor huts of leaves were overflowed with the flow of Vidyasagar's genial kindness and assumed a gay, cheerful aspect. Vidyasagar supplied them with food in hunger, clothes in nudity, medicine in sickness. He fed them with delicious fruits and confectionery. In winter, he gave them warm clothes. He was by their sick-bed, drenching them with physic, dieting them with light food, and nursing them with the tenderest care. He kept with him a large supply of Homoeopathic drags for their treatment. The reader is aware that he had acquired a great proficiency in the healing art of Hahnemann. His heart was a fountain of universal love and kindness. Wheresoever he was, there was nothing but love and kindness. In his daily morning walks, he visited the hut of every one of his Santhal neighbours, and very cheerily accepted their little presents of gourd, cucumber, or brinjal. He then returned to his neat and clean villa, accompanied with some of his honest, savage friends, to whom he gave whatever they required. He made them dance their barbarous dances, which gave him an infinite pleasure. In fact, in this country seat he felt a heavenly tranquility and happiness. Not only did he minister to their external improvement and physical comfort, but he also provided for their internal advancement, intellectual culture, and moral correction. For the education of their children, he founded a vernacular school at his own expense.

There were no fish-mongers in the vicinity of the place, as there were very few purchasers of fish. Vidyasagar proclaimed that he would buy all the fish that would be brought to him. The poor Santhals now found a fresh source of income. They brought to him very large quantities of fish, for which he gave them the price they demanded. He then distributed the fish among the

Bengalee gentlemen—officers and servants of the Railway Station and the Post Office. He now and then invited the Babus to dinner, and passed the days that he stayed at the place in merriment. When-ever he went to Karmatar, one of his own children or grandchildren always accompanied him. Sometimes his friends resorted to the place for a change. Vidyasagar received and entertained them hospitably. On one occasion, Pandit Nilmani Nyayalankar being seriously ill, went to Karmatar for restoration of his health. Vidyasagar tended and nursed him with affectionate care. He used to remove the discharges of the patient's bowels and kidneys with his own hands. Nyayalankar felt awkward and ashamed that so great a man should trouble himself with such menial services. But the noble-minded Vidyasagar smiled and said,—'Never mind, my dear, I pay you in earnest,' meaning that Nyayalankar would serve him similarly, in case he himself should fall ill. We have already said, that Vidyasagar was very witty, and whenever an opportunity presented itself, he would be sure to give expression to his merry humour. On one occasion, he attended the Governor's *Darbar*, accompanied by four other Pandits. The Pandits saw that all ether Indians had their heads covered with turbans, except the Bengalees. They enquired of Vidyasagar the cause of it. He smiled, and replied,—'When the Bengalees failed to do any-thing for their father-land, they gave up wearing turbans and thus lightened the weight of its burden.' This, was, no doubt, a merry joke, but very cutting indeed.

One Abhiram Mandal, a Santbal, was employed by Vidyasagar as his chief gardener at Karmatar. The poor savage was a great favourite with his master on account of his truthfulness and honesty. Vidyasagar sometimes sent to him clothes for distribution and cash remittances for payment of monthly allowances to the poor Santhals.

The Santhals were quite enamoured of him Whenever they heard a report of his intended visit, they looked out anxiously for his arrival, and as soon as he arrived, they flocked to him with their little presents—some with gourds, some with cucumbers, some with brinjals, and some with other vegetables of the like nature. A poor Santhal having nothing else to offer to his dear benefactor, brought a cock-fowl for him. Vidyasagar smiled, and producing his holy thread, said to the innocent savage,— 'You see

I am a Brahmin. I cannot accept your present The poor Santhal at once burst into tears, and insisted on his acceptance of the fowl Vidyasagar's tender heart was moved at the sad disappointment of his poor neighbour, and for his satisfaction received it from his hands. The Santhal felt highly delighted. When he was gone, Vidyasagar set free the fowl. On one occasion, another Santhal came to him, accompanied by a woman of his race. He said to Vidyasagar, —'Would you give this woman a piece of cloth?' The latter replied by way of joke,—'I have no cloth; and why should I give her?' Santhal.—'That won't do; you must give her a piece of cloth.'

Vidyasagar,—'No. I have none.'

Santhal.—'Let me have your key. I will open your trunk, and see whether you have got cloth.'

Vidyasagar laughed at the simple familiarity of the savage, and handed his key over to him. The Santhal opened the chest, and cried out *in* great delight,—'Why, there is an abundance of cloth here.' With this, he drew out a piece of nice cloth, and gave it to the woman.

About this time, Vidyasagar had to suffer a most heart-rending affliction at the loss of his most sincere friend, the Hon'ble Dwarka Nath Mitter, a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, who passed away on the 35th February, 1874. The *Englishman*, a leading Anglo-Indian newspaper, in its issue of the 3rd March of the same year, in noticing the lamented death of the deceased Justice, thus said of him:—"Amongst his more brilliant qualities was his surprising command of the English language; the readiness, the precision and the force with which he used that language are not common even among those who speak it as their mother tongue and were the theme of constant admiration".

The two friends were fellow-workers and co-adjustors in many affairs. They consulted each other on all difficult points. The two were generally of the same opinion. Their opinions diverged only in one case—on the question of the right of inheritance of a fallen woman. The case had been instituted in the High Court before Dwarka Nath's death. Before the decision of the case, Pandits Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahesh Chandra Nyayratna, and

Bharat Chandra Siromani were called upon for their opinions. The point at Issue was—if a Hindu widow, who had once inherited a property, subsequently loses her character—whether that fallen woman should be deprived of her inheritance. Vidyasagar was for the inheritance, whilst the other two Pandits were against it. Dwarka Nath was also of opinion that the fallen woman should be deprived of her inheritance, but he could not carry his point. A full bench consisting of ten justices sat to decide the case. Out of the ten, only Mr. Phear agreed with Dwarka Nath. The Hon'ble C. E. Buckland, in his 'Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors,' says: "The Hindu widow's unchastity case, in which it was contended that property once vested in a widow can never be divested on the ground of subsequent immorality, had a very strong opponent in Mr. Justice Dwarka Nath, with whom Mr. Justice Phear concurred. But the opinion of the majority prevailed, and the widows were left un-disturbed in their course of life".

In this connection, Vidyasagar said to one of his friends, "How could I give a wrong opinion? Supposing I gave one, who should hear me? Of course, I am not a supporter of lewd character; but when one had already inherited a property, how could I say, that one should be divested of it?" In that case, there would be no end of litigations on this plea.' It must be said, that in this case Vidyasagar wanted in foresight, and the whole Hindu community was disappointed in him; but It should be borne *in* mind, that he gave his opinion according to his own conviction. Some insinuate that Vidyasagar was afraid, that if a fallen widow were deprived of her inheritance, obstacles might rise in the way of the furtherance of his widow marriage cause, and he therefore gave his opinion in favour of the inheritance. But such insinuation is quite baseless. Vidyasagar was not a hypocrite—he was not a man to go astray or to designedly mislead others for the sake of his self-interest.

Dwarka Nath often said,—'Vidyasagar is the root of my prosperity. It was he who advised me to appear at the Law Examination. But for his advice, I might have taken a different course.' He had a great fond regard and esteem for Vidyasagar. He is said to have acquired a drinking habit; but he was always very cautious not to offend his friend by giving him occasion to be aware of his intemperance. He often visited Vidyasagar at the

latter's residence after Court hours. When he was a pleader, he appeared before him in his professional dress, and even when he became a Judge, he never felt degrading to present himself before his old friend in his gown. Now and then he passed his nights with Vidyasagar. He was a great help to our benevolent hero in many of his noble deeds, particularly in rescuing the poor tenants from the hands of the oppressive zamindars. When Dwarka Nath was still a pleader, some Brahmins one day came to Vidyasagar and charged their Zamindar, Babu Jaykrishna Mukharji of Uttarpara, with usurpation of their Brahmotra (rent-free) lands. Vidyasagar aided them in their law-suits against their Zamindar. At his instance, Dwarka Nath conducted these cases without fee or remuneration.

On one occasion, Dwarka Nath aid to his friend,—'Lest you should think, that I return these cases simply because I am not paid for them, I come to offer my explanation. These people have no title to the lands in dispute. Had there been the slightest evidence in their favour, I would surely have given my life for them.' Vidyasagar now saw that Jay Krishna was quite blameless in the matter. He had entertained very different views of the Zamindar, and his esteem for the latter had also lessened a little; but what he heard from Dwarka Nath served to rekindle his former feelings for the wealthy gentleman. He was afterwards heard to say, that he came to learn subsequently that Jay Krishna never usurped the lands of those who could produce evidence in support of their title.

Vidyasagar often praised him for his manly exertions by which he rose to such eminence, and for his very liberal charities. The two had a great intimate familiarity. Vidyasagar always kept himself aloof from politics and political meetings, but he now and then entered the rooms of the British Indian Association, only to have an interview with Jay Krishna Babu.