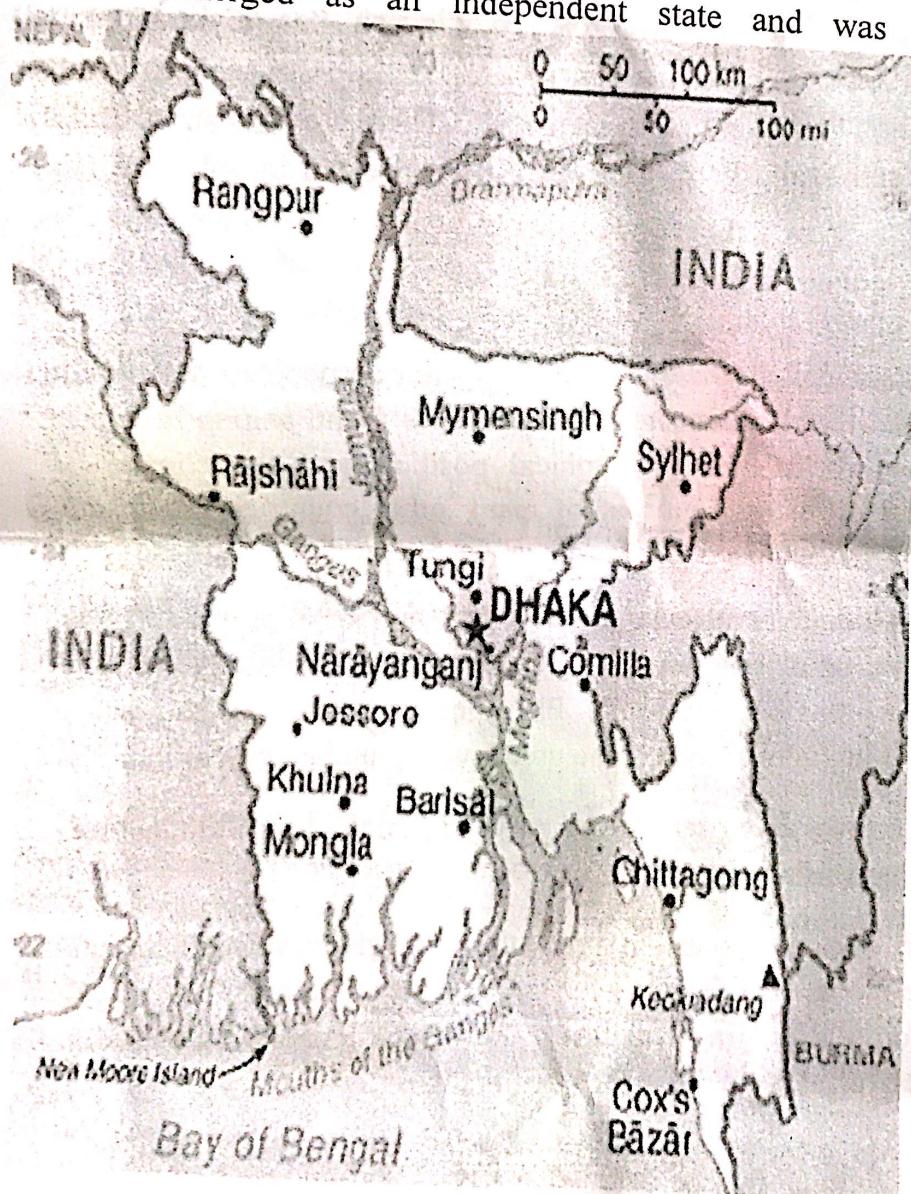


Geographical features of Bangladesh and its impact on people's way of life:

Bangladesh is situated in the south of the continent of Asia. The blue waters of the Bay of Bengal are on the south. Except Myanmar in the southeast the country is bordered on all sides by India. There have been a number of political changes in Bangladesh since the ancient time. Finally, the war of Liberation in 1971, East Pakistan emerged as an independent state and was named Bangladesh.



On the north of Bangladesh stands the mighty Himalaya. On the south is the Bay of Bengal. On the eastern side there are some big and small hills; epically the hills of Assam, Khasia, Joyantika, Tripura and Chittagong. West Bengal and the hills of Rajmahal stand on the west of Bangladesh. Besides, there is dense forest s of Santal Pargana, Jharkhanda and Mayurbhanja on the western border.

The total area of Bangladesh is about 1, 48,540 square kilometers. The populations are about 16 cores. The main rivers are the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Megna , the Teesta and the Karotoa. Bangladesh has eight principal administrative units known as divisions. These are Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh.. There are 64 districts (zilas) under these divisions and again the districts have been divided into 491 upazilas and 4,554 Unions.

Impact:

The influence of geographical characteristics is deeply felt on people's way of life .That is why variety in lifestyle, manners and behavior is found among people in different parts of the world. The geographical position and the climate of Bangladesh are greatly different from that of many other countries. There are various impacts on Bangladeshi people, these are given below:

1. The vast plain land and an advance of rivers of Bangladesh provide a great advantage for its people. The rivers bring forth alluvial soil. As a result, the soil of this country has become fertile. Plenty of crops grow on the fertile soil. In this way Bangladesh has become green with abundant crops.
2. Naturally the waterway is a great means of communication in Bangladesh. The people became skilled boatmen.
3. The naval force became expert in protecting the country from foreign attacks. It has been observed that the Muslims Sultans of Bengal always kept a careful watch on this geographical aspect. For example, Sultan Giasuddin Iwaj Khalji built a naval force at the very beginning of the Medieval Age.
4. The role of waterways for carrying people and goods is the greatest in this country. The boat has great influence on the cultural life of the people of Bengal. The vast open sky overhead and the flowing river beneath make the

- boatman find melodious music in his voice as he rows the boat. The Bhatiali and the sari songs have been created in this way.
5. Bangladesh has an abundant rainfall. The climate is temperate. This geographical environment has made people of the country gentle and peaceful in nature.
 6. The people of Bangladesh have to fight against storms and tidal waves because of the diversity of the seasons. They have thus grown a fighting spirit in them .The freedom loving people of Bangladesh have struggled for ages.
 7. The food habits and dress, houses of the people of BENGAL are related to the geographical characteristics of the land. The change of the course of the river has always affected the lifestyle and economy of the people in this reason .The old cities and ports that grew up on the banks of the rivers perished because of the change of the course of rivers. Again new habitation of people grew on the banks of the rivers in their new courses.
 8. The climate and the position of the rivers have helped the business and economy of Bangladesh. The traders do not only carry their goods by waterways inside the country, but also to many places outside the country. In the same manner, come the necessary commodities from foreign countries. Bangladesh has become prosperous because of the bounty of nature.

So, we look after that the geographical position has provided additional advantages to the people of Bangladesh in the defense matters. The hills the mountains and innumerable rivers have concealed this country from the greedy eyes of foreign powers. There was not much fear of foreign attacks. As a result Bangladesh remained independent for a long time in the ancient period.

Bara-Bhuiyans, The

Bara-Bhuiyans, The or twelve territorial landholders were the local chiefs and zamindars who put up strong resistance to the Mughals during the time of akbar and jahangir. The term Bara-Bhuiyans means twelve territorial landholders. But who were these bhuiyans could not be identified accurately for a long time. In fact, during the interregnum between Afghan rule and the rise of Mughal power in Bengal, various parts of Bengal passed to the control of several military chiefs, bhuiyans and zamindars. They jointly and more often severally resisted Mughal expansion and ruled their respective territories as independent or semi-independent chiefs. There was no central control, or if there was any, it was nominal. In such circumstances many bhuiyans raised their heads. Taking the whole of Bengal into consideration, the number of bhuiyans must have been many more than twelve.

One group of scholars says the term Bara Bhuiyan does not necessarily mean exactly twelve bhuiyans, the term was applied loosely to mean many. As number twelve was sacred to the Hindus, these scholars examined traditions from scriptures to find out in which of the cases the number twelve was used. They applied the term Bara-Bhuiyans to those who fought for the freedom of their motherland. This view was later modified by another group of scholars to say that only those bhuiyans who fought against Mughal aggression were known as Bara-Bhuiyans. Even the fighters against the Mughals were many more than twelve, so this group also failed to identify the Bara-Bhuiyans.

In recent years, the question of identification of the Bara-Bhuiyans has been studied afresh and they have been identified quite satisfactorily. Modern scholars have found that the Bara-Bhuiyans flourished during the chaotic period of Afghan rule and the period of the conquest of Bengal by the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir. So the Bara-Bhuiyans received proper treatment from the Mughal historians, Abul Fazl, the author of the akbarnamah, and Mirza Nathan, the author of the baharistan-i-ghaibi. Both of them used the numerical word ithna-ashara (twelve), to denote the Bara-Bhuiyans; it means that the word 'Bara-Bhuiyan' was not a vague term, rather it gives the exact number of the bhuiyans. They also categorically say that the twelve Bhuiyans (Bara-Bhuiyan) were people of bhati and they rose to power in Bhati. But the identification of Bhati has not been satisfactorily ascertained.

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On the basis of the confusing statements of the European writers, previous scholars also were in confusion about the identification of Bhati. The Bara-Bhuiyans fought against the Mughals in the reigns of emperors Akbar and Jahangir, and they were compelled to submit within a few years of Jahangir's accession. So Bhati of the Bara-Bhuiyans may be identified with the help of the Mughal histories, mainly the Akbarnama, the ain-i-akbari and the Baharistan-i-Ghaibi. In Bengal the word Bhati generally means low lying region and the entire low-lying area of Bengal is Bhati. It is a riverine country, and most of it remains inundated for more than half of the year; the mighty rivers the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and their numerous branches wash and water the whole of eastern and southern Bengal.

Modern scholars have, therefore, suggested that different low-lying areas of Bengal should be identified with Bhati. Some say that the whole of the low-lying tract from the Bhagirathi to the Meghna is Bhati, some others include in Bhati Hijli, Jessor, Chandradwip and Bakerganj. Keeping in view the theatre of warfare between the Bara-Bhuiyans and the Mughals, and on the basis of the details of the warfare as given in the Akbarnama and the Baharistan-i-Ghaibi the limits of Bhati, where the Bara-Bhuiyans flourished and rose to power, may be determined as the area bounded by the river Ichamati in the west, the Ganges in the south, the kingdom of Tippera in the east and Alapsingh pargana (in greater Mymensingh) stretching northeast to Baniachang (in greater Sylhet) in the north. So the low-lying area of the greater districts of Dhaka, Mymensingh, Tippera and Sylhet, watered and surrounded by the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna and their numerous branches constituted Bhati in the days of Akbar and Jahangir. The Bara-Bhuiyans rose to power in this region and put up resistance to the Mughals, until Islam Khan Chisti made them submit in the reign of Jahangir.

Mughal historians, Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, state the number of Bhuiyans as twelve, but it should be remembered that the Bara-Bhuiyans of the time of Akbar were not the same as those of the time of Jahangir, because some died in the intervening period. For example, Isa Khan, who fought against Akbar, died in his reign and was succeeded by his son Musa Khan, who took up leadership in the reign of Jahangir. Some parganas changed hands in the meantime; for example, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai were zamindars of Vikramapura and Sripur in the reign of Akbar, but in the reign of Jahangir the family was probably extinct, so that the parganas were found in the hands of Musa Khan. After the Mughal campaign in Bhati, as found in the Akbarnama, the following list of the Bhuiyans may be drawn up: (i) Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, (ii) Ibrahim Naral, (iii) Karimdad Musazai, (iv) Majlis Dilwar, (v) Majlis Pratap, (vi) Kedar Rai, (vii) Sher Khan, (viii) Bhadur

Ghazi, (ix) Tila Ghazi, (x) Chand Ghazi, (xi) Sultan Ghazi, (xii) Selim Ghazi, (xiii) Qasim Ghazi.

In the Baharistan-i-Ghaibi, the names of Musa Khan and his 12 zamindar allies are as follows: (i) Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, (ii) Alaul Khan, (iii) Abdullah Khan, (iv) Mahmud Khan, (v) Bahadur Ghazi, (vi) Sona Ghazi, (vii) Anwar Ghazi, (viii) Shaikh Pir, (ix) Mirza Mumin, (x) Madhav Rai, (xi) Binode Rai, (xii) Pahlwan, (xiii) Haji Shamsuddin Baghadi.

The patriotic Bhuiyans, who resisted the Mughal conquest, were famous as Bara-Bhuiyans or twelve Bhuiyans, but in both the above lists, there are thirteen names. Actually they were thirteen including the leader, and in fact both Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, while referring to the Bara-Bhuiyans, wrote, 'Isa Khan made the 12 zamindars of Bengal subject to himself', and elsewhere Mirza Nathan wrote 'Musa Khan and his 12 zamindar allies'.

The Bara-Bhuiyans gained strength during the chaotic conditions prevailing in eastern Bengal following the disruption of the two-hundred-year old independent sultanate in 1538 AD. Later Sher Shah's policy of decentralisation had this bad effect is proved by the several rebellions in eastern Bengal against him. The Afghan historians described this state of affairs by using the term *Muluk-ut-tawaif*, which means disorder, chaos and disintegration.

It is evident that after the fall of the independent sultanate (1538 AD) and particularly after the decentralisation of administration by Sher Shah, a chaotic condition and disruptive forces prevailed, particularly in eastern Bengal in the region of Bhati; and during this period of chaos, the Bara-Bhuiyans gained strength and rose to power. The Bara-Bhuiyans were heirs to the two-hundred-year long independent sultanate of Bengal.

The Bara-Bhuiyans were not the scions of any royal family, they were zamindars or landholders. They were patriots who with courage and valour resisted the Mughal advance for long three decades. After 1612 when Islam Khan Chishti forced them to submit, the term Bara-Bhuiyans survived only in popular tales and ballads.

Ancient Janapads of Bengal

Gaur: It is known precisely as to where the Gaur Janapada grew ancient time. Mention of the Gaur kingdom is, however, heard. It was side in the northern part of East Bengal in the sixth century. In the seventh century Shashanka was the king of Gaur. Karnasuborna was the capital of Gaur at that time. Its present location is in the present district of Murshidabad. Sometime before the Muslim conquest of Bengal, Lakhnauti of Maldah District was also called Gaur. This region was known as Gaur during the Muslim period too.

Banga: In the east and southeast portion of the present day Bangladesh there grew a Janapada called 'Banga' it is supposed that a race called Banga used to live there. Hence the region was called Banga after their name. From the old stone inscription, we learn about two parts of Banga. One of them is 'Vikarampura' and the other is 'Navya'. It is supposed that the low-lying areas of Faridpur, Bakerganj and Patuakhali were included in the 'Navya' region. The ancient Banga Janapada was a powerful region. It has been learnt from the stone inscription that the reputed 'Banga-Raj' and the Banga soldiers took in many formidable battles.

Pundra: Pundra is one of the important Janapadas. It is said that a race called the 'Pundra' formed this Janapada. It was comprised of the present Bogra, Rangpur, Rajshahi and Dinajpur district. The capital of the pundra Janapada was "Pundranagar". It was later named 'Pundra Vardhana'. Inscriptions carved on pieces of round stone s were found here. These are supposed to be the most stone inscriptions found in Bangladesh. The historians are of the opinion that these inscriptions were made during the time of Asoka in the third century B.C.

The Radha (ra-ro): Radha is the ancient human settlement of Bengal. It is difficult to locate exactly its geographical position. But historical sources suggest that Radha is the west-southern part of ancient Bengal. Howrah, Hughli and Burdwan in West Bengal are some areas of ancient Radha.

Barendra: Barendri, Barendra or the Barendrabhumi is yet another Janapada that has been known. This too was a Janapada in north Bengal. It is supposed that it constituted a part of Pundra. A large portion of Bogra district and Rajshahi district was included in the Barendri.

Samatata: Samatata existed as a neighbouring Janapada of Banga in the east and southeast of Bengal. The Chinese traveler Hiuen Sung travelled to Samatata in the middle of the seventh century and wrote an account of it. The area from the east of the Ganga-Bhagirathi to the estuary of the Meghna was included in the Samatata. Many believe that Bara Kamta of Comilla district was a part of this Janapada.

Harikela: The Harikela janapada was on the eastern end of Bengal. It is supposed that the present day Sylhet was the Harikela Janapada. Some, however, think that Harikela was not a separate Janapada. It was included within Banga Janapada.

Gupta Dynasty

Shashanka

Shashanka the first important king of ancient Bengal occupies a prominent place in history of the region. It is generally believed that he ruled approximately between 600 AD and 625 AD. The ruler of any big region under the Gupta kings was called 'Mohashamanta'. Sasanka was a 'Mohashamanta' of the Gupta king Mahashena Gupta.

Sources: Two dated inscriptions, issued in his 8th and 10th regnal years from Midnapore, and another undated inscription from Egra near Kharagpur have been discovered. Besides Shashanka's subordinate king of Ganjam (Orissa) copper plate (dated 619 AD), Harshavardhan's Banskhera and Madhuvan copper plates and the Nidhanpur copper plate of the Kamarupa king Bhaskara Varman contain information about Shashanka.

Coin: Shashanka issued gold and silver coins. A number of independent rulers flourished in Bengal in the intervening period between the decline of Guptas and the rise of Shashanka, and their existence is known from a few inscriptions and gold coins. Besides the seal-matrix of 'Shri Mahasamanta Shashanka' from Rohtasgarh and the contemporary literary accounts of Banabhatta and the Chinese pilgrim HIUEN-TSANG and the Buddhist text *Aryamanjushrimulakalpa* are important sources of information.

Capital: Shashanka established the capital in Karnasuborna.

Area: The powerful Shashanka extended his kingdom by conquering the kingdom of Dandabhukti. Utkal of Orissa, Kingdom of Kanghod and Magadha of Bihar. The Kings of Kamrupa were also defeated by him.

Political Influence: Under this perspective Shashanka attempted to extend his political influence in different parts of India. Sashanka next thought of conquering North India. There were two powerful kingdoms in North India at that time. One was Thaneswar under the Pushyabhuti Dynasty and other was Kanyakubja(Kanauj) under the Maukhari dynasty. Maukhari king Grahavarma married Rajyashri, daughter of Pushyabhuti king Probhakar Vardhana. The two kingdoms became friendly as a result of it. Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana were the two brothers of Rajyasri. Shashanka became determined to uproot the

Maukharis, the perpetual enemies of the Guptas. For this reason, he made an alliance with Devagupta, the king of Malaba.

Grahavarma was defeated and killed at the hands of Devagupta even before Shashanka could reach North India. Rajyashri was made a captive. Devgupta then proceeded towards Thanneswar. Rajyavardhana was then the king of Thanneswar. He put up resistance to Devagupta on the way. Devgupta was defeated and killed. Rajyavardhana then advanced towards Kanauj. He came face with Shashanka on the way. In the fight that followed Rajyavardhana was defeated and made a prisoner. Later he was put to death.

After the death of Rajyavardhana, Harshavardhana became the over-lord of Kanauj and Thanneswar. He marched against Shashanka to take revenge with a huge army. He made an alliance with Vaskara Varmana, king of Assam to this end. At that time Harshavardhana was the most powerful king in north India. He could not, however, succeed wholly against Shashanka. Shashanka died a little before 637 A.D.

Shashanka was a reputed ruler in the history of Bengal. He became the lord of Gaur from a feudal ruler. He extended the power of Gaur to North India.

Bengal Renaissance

The Bengal Renaissance refers to a socio-cultural and religious reform movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in undivided India's Bengal province, though the impact of it spread in the whole of India. The Bengal Renaissance is said to have begun with Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1775–1833) and continued until the death of Rabindranath Tagore in 1941. The Renaissance was a revival of the positives of India's past and appreciation of the impact of the Modern West, as it had emerged since the Fifteenth century European Renaissance. Thus, the Bengal Renaissance blended together the teachings of the Upanishad in order to create public opinion against Hindu superstitions including Sati, infanticide, polygamy, child marriage, caste-division, inter-caste hatred, untouchability etc. and the efforts of the Christian Missionaries and the British Colonial Government who introduced Western education, politics and law to administer all those who indulged in superstitions and caste-based Hindu medievalism.

Background

During this period, Bengal witnessed an intellectual awakening questioning the prevalent orthodoxies concerning the social status of women, marriage, the caste system and religion. One of the earliest social movements that emerged during this time was the Young Bengal movement, that espoused rationalism and atheism as the common denominators of civil conduct among upper caste educated Hindus.

The parallel socio-religious movement, the Brahmo Samaj, developed during this time and counted many of the leaders of the Bengal Renaissance among its followers. In the earlier years the Brahmo Samaj, like the rest of society, could not however, conceptualize, in that feudal-colonial era, a free India as it was influenced by the European Enlightenment (and its bearers in India, the British Raj) although it traced its intellectual roots to the Upanishads. Their version of Hinduism, or rather Universal Religion, although devoid of practices like sati and polygamy that had crept into the social aspects of Hindu life, was ultimately a rigid impersonal monotheistic faith, which actually was quite distinct from the pluralistic and multifaceted nature of the way the Hindu religion was practiced. Leader Keshub Chunder Sen was devotee of Brahma, Krishna, Buddha and Christ. It has been argued by some scholars like Sailen Debnath that the Brahmo Samaj movement, in spite of its universality, never gained the support of the masses and remained restricted to the elite, although Hindu society has accepted most of the social reform programmes of the Brahmo Samaj. It must also be acknowledged that many of the later Brahmos were also leaders of the freedom movement.

Literature

The renaissance period after the Indian Rebellion of 1857 saw a magnificent outburst of Bengali literature. While Ram Mohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar were the pioneers, others like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee widened it and built upon it. The first significant nationalist detour

to the Bengal Renaissance was given by the brilliant writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Later writers of the period who introduced broad discussion of social problems and more colloquial forms of Bengali into mainstream literature included the great Saratchandra Chatterjee.

The Tagore family, including Rabindranath Tagore, were leaders of this period and had a particular interest in educational reform. Their contribution to the Bengal Renaissance was multi-faceted. Indeed, Tagore's 1901 Bengali novella, *Nastanirh* was written as a critique of men who professed to follow the ideals of the Renaissance, but failed to do so within their own families. In many ways Rabindranath Tagore's writings (especially poems and songs) can be seen as imbued with the spirit of the Upanishads. His works repeatedly allude to Upanishadic ideas regarding soul, liberation, transmigration and—perhaps most essentially—about a spirit that imbues all creation not unlike the Upanishadic Brahman. Tagore's English translation of a set of poems titled the *Gitanjali* won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. He was the first Asian to win this award. That was the only example at the time but the contribution of the Tagore family is enormous.

According to historian Romesh Chunder Dutt:

“ The conquest of Bengal by the English was not only a political revolution, but ushered in a greater revolution in thoughts and ideas, in religion and society... From the stories of gods and goddesses, kings and queens, princes and princesses, we have learnt to descend to the humble walks of life, to sympathies with the common citizen or even common peasant ... Every revolution is attended with vigour, and the present one is no exception to the rule. Nowhere in the annals of Bengali literature are so many and so bright names found crowded together in the limited space of one century as those of Ram Mohan Roy, Muhammad Shahidullah, Akshay Kumar Datta, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Sharat Chandra Chatterji, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Dina Bandhu Mitra. Within the three quarters of the present century, prose, blank verse, historical fiction and drama have been introduced for the first time in the Bengali literature... ”

Science

The Bengal Renaissance saw the emergence of pioneering Bengali scientists such as Jagadish Chandra Bose, Satyendra Nath Bose, Upendranath Brahmachari and Meghnad Saha. Jagadish Chandra Bose was a polymath: a physicist, biologist, botanist, archaeologist, and writer of science fiction. He pioneered the investigation of radio and microwave optics, made very significant contributions to plant science, and laid the foundations of experimental science in the Indian subcontinent. He is considered one of the fathers of radio science, and is also considered the father of Bengali science fiction. He was the first from the Indian subcontinent to get a US patent, in 1904.

Upendranath Brahmachari was a noted Indian scientist and a leading medical practitioner of his time. He synthesized Urea Stibamine (carbostibamide) in 1922 and determined that it was an effective substitute for the other antimony-containing compounds in the treatment of Kala-azar (Visceral leishmaniasis) which is caused by a protozoon, Leishmania donovani. Brahmachari was a nominee for the Nobel Prize in 1929 in the category of physiology and medicine. He was president of the 23rd session of the Indian Science Congress in Indore (1936) as well as the president of the Indian Chemical Society, Calcutta (1936).

Meghnad Saha was an astrophysicist best known for his development of the Saha equation, used to describe chemical and physical conditions in stars. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Physics four times: 1930, 1937, 1939 and 1940.

Contributing institutions

- Asiatic Society (est.1784)
- Fort William College (1800)
- Serampore College (1817)
- Calcutta School-book Society (1817)
- Hindu College (1817)
- Sanskrit College (1824)
- General Assembly's Institution (1830) (now known as Scottish Church College)
- Calcutta Medical College (1835)
- Dhaka College (est.1841)
- Mutty Lall Seal's Free School & College (1842)
- Presidency College (1855)
- University of Calcutta (1857)
- Chittagong College (est.1869)
- Vidyasagar College (1872)
- Rajshahi College (est.1873)
- Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya (1873)
- Banga Mahila Vidyalaya (1876)
- Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (1876)
- Bethune College (1879)
- Ripon College (1884) (now known as Surendranath College)
- Brojomohun College, Barisal (est.1889)
- Murari Chand College, Sylhet (est.1892)
- Comilla Victoria College (est.1899)
- Ananda Mohan College, Mymensingh (est.1901)
- Brajalal College, Khulna (est.1902)
- National Council of Education, Bengal (1906) (now known as Jadavpur University)
- Visva-Bharati University (1921)
- University of Dhaka (1921)
- Asutosh College (1916)