APPENDIX A

Short Biographies of Some of the Important Figures in Nineteenth Century Bengal.

Nineteenth century Bengal was a period of intense activity in Bengal—literary, social, commercial, and political and religious reform. Given below are short biographical sketches of some of the important figures in nineteenth century Bengal. These are some of the people who made significant contributions in the fields of social reform, political activity, commercial ventures, religious revivalism and literary activity. Since these names have come up many times in the above chapters, an attempt is made here to highlight their diverse areas of activity. These biographies are by no means comprehensive (nor is this list all inclusive), but merely indicative of the tremendous diversity of interest and activity of these leading figures in nineteenth century Bengal, and their contributions in the fields of social and religious reform, political movements and literature.

Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846), was one of the earliest entrepreneurs of Bengal. He made significant contributions to the intellectual, social and commercial growth of Bengal. Dwarkanath was an acknowledged civic leader of Kolkata who played a pioneering role in setting up a string of commercial ventures -- banking, insurance and shipping companies -- in partnership with British traders. He is the architect of the first bi-racial agency house from India, Carr, Tagore and Company. Tagore's company managed huge zamindary estates spread across today's West Bengal and Orissa states in India, and in Bangladesh, besides holding large stakes in new enterprises that were tapping the rich coal seams of Bengal, running tug services between Calcutta and the
mouth of the river Hooghly and transplanting Chinese tea crop to the plains of Upper Assam. This company was one of those Indian private companies engaged in the Opium Trade with China. Dwarkanath was extremely rich, and there are legends about the extent of his wealth. A restless soul, with a firm conviction that his racial identity was not a barrier between him and other Britons as long as he remained loyal, Tagore was well-received by Queen Victoria and many other British and European notables during his two trips to the West in the 1840's; he died in London after a brief illness. Some scholars have been puzzled by the paucity of documents concerning Dwarkanath in the Tagore family collections spread over many generations. There are scanty references to him in the records of Debendranath Tagore, his eldest son who founded the Brahmo religion. There is absolutely no mention of Dwarkanath (except in a personal letter) in the monumental body of writings by his grandson Rabindranath. The first Indian entrepreneur who thought globally thus remains an enigma in the country's socio-cultural history.

Rammohan Roy (1772 –1833) had a remarkable influence in the fields of politics, public administration education and religion in his time. He is most known for his efforts to abolish the practice of sati, a Hindu funeral practice in which the widow sacrifices herself on her husband’s funeral pyre. It was he who first introduced the word "Hinduism" (or "Hindooism") into the English language in 1816. In 1828, prior to his departure to England, Roy founded, with Dwarkanath Tagore, the Brahmo Samaj. Subsequently the Brahmo Samaj became an important spiritual and reformist religious body. For these contributions to society, Raja Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as one of the most important figures in nineteenth century Bengal. Roy was born in Radhanagore,
Bengal, in 1772. Rammohan received his traditional Sanskrit learning at Benaras and Arabic and Persian learning at Patna. Later, he learnt English, Greek and Hebrew. He then worked as a moneylender in Calcutta, and from 1803 to 1814 worked under the British East India Company. Rammohan advocated monotheism, or the worship of one God. He denounced rituals, which he deemed to be meaningless and giving rise to superstitions. To establish his reformist credentials Rammohan published Bengali translations of the Vedas. He set up the Amitya Sabha in 1814, to propagate rational religious ideas. Rammohan’s crusade was against social evils like sati, polygamy and child marriage etc. He also fought for property inheritance rights for women. Due to his efforts, Governor General William Bentinck made sati illegal through an act in 1829.

Rammohan was also an educationist. He believed education to be an implement for social reform. In 1830, he helped Alexander Duff in establishing the General Assembly's Institution, by organizing the venue and getting the first batch of students. He supported induction of western learning into Indian education. He also set up the Vedanta College, offering courses as a synthesis of Western and Indian learning. He was a polyglot and was well versed in many world languages. Roy published journals in English, Hindi, Persian and Bengali. His most popular journal was the *Samvad Kaumudi*. It covered topics like freedom of press, induction of Indians into high ranks of service, and separation of the executive and judiciary. In 1831 Ram Mohan Roy travelled to the United Kingdom as an ambassador of the Mughal Empire to ensure that the Lord Bentick’s law banning the practise of Sati was not overturned. He also visited France. He died at Stapleton then a village to the north east of Bristol (now a suburb) on the 27th September 1833 of meningitis and is buried in Arnos Vale Cemetery in southern Bristol.
A statue of him was erected in College Green, Bristol in 1997. There is also a blue plaque commemorating him on his house in Bedford Square, London.

Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, (1827-1894) educationist, thinker, writer, and journalist, was born at Haritaki Bagan Lane in Kolkata on 22 February 1827. His father, Pandit Biswanath Tarkabhusan, was a reputed Sanskrit scholar. He was a student of Sanskrit College and Hindu College, where Michael Madhusudan Dutt was his classmate. Bhudev was a brilliant student, winning a junior scholarship in 1841 and a senior scholarship in 1843. After completing his studies at Hindu College, Bhudev joined the Hindu Hitarthi School as headmaster in 1846. He also taught briefly at Chandernagore Seminary (1847). In 1848 he joined the Calcutta Madrasa. He also served as headmaster of Howrah School (1849-56) and Hughli Normal School (1856-62). In 1862 he was appointed Assistant Inspector of Schools. He was subsequently appointed Inspector of Schools and served variously in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In recognition of his services, Bhudev was decorated with the CIE (Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire) in 1877. In 1882 he was appointed Director of Public Instruction. This same year he was nominated to the Lt.-Governor's Council as well as to the Education Commission headed by Sir William Hunter. Bhudev retired from government service in 1883. Bhudev was also involved with a number of educational journals such as the monthly educational periodical Shiksadarpan O Sangbadsar and Education Gazette, of which he was editor, from 1868 till his retirement from government service. Bhudev was a distinguished writer and thinker; writing essays, textbooks and novels to convey his ideas which combined nationalism and rational thinking. In his essays collected in Paribarik Prabandha (1882), Samajik Prabandha (1892), and Achar Prabandha (1895), he
endeavoured to reform Hindu customs and family laws in keeping with the needs of the times. He was also a literary scholar and a student of Sanskrit. The first part of Bibidha Prabandha, for example, contains criticism of some Sanskrit plays. He wrote several books for young people, among them Prakrtik Bijnan (in two parts, 1858 & 1859), Purabrittasar (1858), Englander Itihas (1862), Romer Itihas (1862), Banglar Itihas (3rd Part, 1904), Ksetratattva (1862), Puspanjali (1st part, 1876) etc. He also wrote a historical novel Aitikasik Uparyas (1857). In Shiksabisayak Prastab (1856) he discussed educational theories. In Swapnalabdha Bharatbarser Itihas (1895), he displays a remarkable blend of history, patriotism and imagination through his imaginative portrayal of Indian national characters. Bhudev was the moving force behind the establishment of a number of schools, including Rajshahi College. He also contributed to the spread of Sanskrit education. After retirement he studied Vedanta for some time at Benares. He established Bishwanath Chatuspathi, a Sanskrit school in Hughli in the name of his father, and also formed the Bishwanath Trust Fund (1894) with his own savings to provide scholarships. He established an ayurvedic and homeopathic charitable dispensary in memory of his mother. He was as an ardent nationalist. Though he advocated the study of English, he recommended the use of the vernacular as the medium of instruction. Believing in national integration, he advocated the adoption of Hindi as the state language of India. He also translated Bangla books into Hindi, and it was at his recommendation that Hindi replaced Persian in the courts of Bihar. Bhudev was a remarkable scholar and thinker. He wrote on literature, religion, society, education, history, and science. In his nationalistic outlook, he may be called a precursor of the Swadeshi era of Bengal. Bhudev died on 15 May 1894.
Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), born Ishwar Chandra Bandopadhyay is one of the most prominent figures in the nineteenth century Bengal socio-religious and literary scene. Vidyasagar was a philosopher, academic, educator, writer, translator, printer, publisher, entrepreneur, reformer, and philanthropist. His efforts to simplify and modernize Bengali prose were significant. He also rationalized and simplified the Bengali alphabet and type, which had remained unchanged since Charles Wilkins and Panchanan Karmakar had cut the first Bangla types in 1780.

In 1841, Vidyasagar took the job of a Sanskrit pundit (professor) at Fort William College in Calcutta. In 1846, he joined the Sanskrit College as Assistant Secretary. A year later, he and a friend of his, Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, set up the Sanskrit Press and Depository, a print shop and a bookstore.

While Vidyasagar was working at the Sanskrit College, some serious differences arose between him and Rasamoy Dutta who was then the Secretary of the College, and so he resigned in 1849. One of the issues was that while Rasamoy Dutta wanted the College to remain a Brahmin preserve, Vidyasagar wanted it to be opened to students from all castes.

Vidyasagar was one of the first persons in India to realize that modern science was the key to India's future. He translated into Bengali English biographies of some outstanding scientists like Copernicus, Newton, and Herschel. He sought to inculcate a spirit of scientific inquiry among young Bengalis. A staunch anti-Berkeleyan, he emphasized the importance of studying European Empiricist philosophy (of Francis Bacon) and Inductive Logic (of John Stuart Mill). He categorically stated that some of the old Indian philosophical systems, including the Samkhya and the Vedanta, were
"false systems of philosophy". Though this view of Vidyasagar antagonized orthodox Sanskrit scholars, he held it steadfastly, and after debates with the Orientalist scholar J. R. Ballantyne and others at the Sanskrit College, he won them over to his views. At his behest, Mill's Logic and Bacon's Novum Organum got included in the College's syllabus.

In the face of opposition from the Hindu establishment, Vidyasagar vigorously promoted the idea that regardless of their castes, both men and women should be receiving the best education.

In an unflinching manner, Vidyasagar championed the uplift of the status of women in India, particularly in Bengal. Unlike some other reformers who sought to set up alternative societies or systems, he sought, however, to transform orthodox Hindu society from within.

With valuable moral support from people like Akshay Kumar Dutta, Vidyasagar introduced the practice of widow remarriages to mainstream Hindu society. In earlier times, remarriages of widows would occur sporadically only among progressive members of the Brahmo Samaj. Vidyasagar took the initiative in proposing and pushing through the Widow Remarriage Act XV of 1856 in India.

Vidyasagar reconstructed the Bengali alphabet and reformed Bengali typography into an alphabet of twelve vowels and forty consonants and contributed significantly to Bengali and Sanskrit literature.

In the final years of life, he chose to spend his days among the Santhals, an old tribe in India. In the words of Amles Tripathi
Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was one of those few worthy Indians who emerged whole and enriched from the clash of cultures that engulfed their land in Nineteenth Century... Vidyasagar perceived creative possibilities within the Indian context, only if some modifications were adopted from the progressive Western values. He never confused modernization with westernization... Vidyasagar put his traditional Sanskrit learning into skillful practical use... he wanted to develop a vernacular language out of Sanskrit and spread useful western knowledge through an enriched vernacular literature... He imaginatively channelised a traditional institution into a modernizing role (9-10).

Dinabandhu Mitra (1830-1873) the Bengali dramatist, was born in 1830 at Chouberia in Nadia, and was the son of Kalachand Mitra. His given name was Gandharva Narayan, but he changed it to Dinabandhu Mitra.

Dinabandhu Mitra started his education at a village pathshala. Ajob was arranged by his father on a zamindar’s estates (1840). He did not want to do the job and fled to Kolkata, where he started working in the house of his uncle, Nilmani Mitra. Around 1846, he got admitted to the free school run by James Long. In 1850, he enrolled at Hindu College and was awarded scholarships for academic excellence. In 1855, he started working as a postmaster at Patna. In 1872, he joined the Indian Railway as an inspector.

Dinabandhu started writing literary pieces while he was in college. By virtue of his work in the postal department, he had been to various parts of the country. He got
opportunities to study humanity closely and thereby adding to his ability to unfold the drama of life with a degree of realism unknown at that time. Among his books of poems are *Suradhuni Kavya* (first part appeared in 1871; second part appeared in 1876), *Dvadash Kavita* (1872). His plays include *Nildarpan* (1860), *Nabin Tapasvini* (1863), *Biye Pagla Budo* (1866), *Sadhabar Ekadashi* (1866), *Lilavati* (1867), *Jamai Barik* (1872), *Kamale Kamini* (1873), and *Jamalaye Jibanta Manus*. He also wrote a novel titled *Poda Mahehshvar*.

Dinabandhu is, however, primarily known for his play about the plight of indigo farmers. The indigo revolt (1858) or Nilbidraha in Bengali was the revolt of the indigo farmers against the indigo planters. Nilbidraha was an important revolt in history and was just one year after the sepoy revolt (1857).

Mitra stormed the social and the literary circle of Bengal by his most notable play *Nildarpan* in the year 1860. *Nildarpan* was published from Dhaka. Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated the play into English immediately after it was published. Reverend James Long had published it. The *Nildarpan* got wide publicity in Europe where it was translated into many other languages. No other Bengali book at that time got so wide publicity at such large scale. A Law suit was filed against Rev. Long by 19 July 1861 for libelling the editor of the Englishman and libelling the indigo planters. Rev. Long was fined a sum of 1000 Rs. and a month of time in jail, the fully packed court house were full with sympathy towards the Rev. and the dramatist. The fined sum was paid at the spot by another legend of Bengal Renaissance Kaliprasanna Sinha. The court hearing against the indigo planters went for the next four years. *Nildarpan* was so emotionally motivating that when the play was staged, the notable educator and reformer
Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was so taken in by the realism of the performance of the actor playing the role of the indigo planters that he threw a shoe at the actor. The actor accepted the shoe as a compliment. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay compared Nildarpan to Uncle Tom's Cabin for its role in arousing people's awareness of the evils of indigo plantations. It played an important role in the Nilbidraha. Dinabandhu was awarded the title 'Rai Bahadur' by the British government for services rendered at the Battle of Lushai. He died on 1 November 1876.

**Akshay Kumar Datta** (15 July 1820 - 18 May 1886) was born in Chupi in Bardhaman. He studied in the Oriental Seminary under the special care of Hardman Jeffroy but had to give up his studies due to untimely death of his father. However, he could not put an end to his yearning for learning. He studied and mastered Calculus and Geometry at the Sovabazar Rajbari library. He had learnt Sanskrit and Persian, and read the Hindu scriptures at school. He was proficient in French, German and various Indian languages. At the age of fourteen he composed the poetry-book *Anangamohan*. While a youngster he used to translate new items and features for Iswar Chandra Gupta’s *Sambad Prabakar*. He even studied in Medical College for some time to gain knowledge of botany, zoology and chemistry.

In 1839, he joined the Tattwabodhini Sabha and soon became its assistant secretary. In 1843, he was appointed a teacher of the Tattwabodhini Pathshala. *Tattwabodhini Patrika* was published as mouthpiece of both the Tattwabodhini Sabha and Brahmo Samaj. As first editor of the journal, he contributed substantially towards the development of prose writing in Bengali. Akshay Kumar Datta was the first Bengali
writer to seriously work for the propagation of a modern scientific outlook, writing books on Physics and Geography in Bengali. He also wrote profusely on astronomy, mathematics and geology. The students of Hindu College used to make fun of Bengali writing and some even felt that nothing worthwhile can be written in the Bengali language. However, whenever, *Tattwabodhini Patrika* came out they not only read it seriously but even brought it to the attention of one another.

Akshay Kumar Datta was the first person in the Brahmo Samaj to boldly proclaim that that the Vedas were not infallible. He succeeded in convincing Debendranath Tagore in this respect and ultimately Brahmo Samaj adopted the thinking that while it respected all religious scriptures it did not consider any as infallible. It was in this perspective that Debendranath Tagore wrote *Brahmo Dharma*.

In 1855, he developed some kind of agonizing cerebral problem and could not continue with his massive work for the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*. Moreover, he had serious philosophical and theological differences with his employer Debendranath Tagore. He left *Tattwabodhini* and served for sometime as Principal of the Normal School for teachers' training established by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, his friend and mentor. His magnum opus was the two-part *Bharatbarshiya Upasak Sampraday* (Vol.1, 1871, Vol.2, 1883). The brilliant introductions to the two volumes of this book evince his profound philosophical, linguistic and scientific learning and depth. Among others, Max Muller, Monier-Williams and Rajendralal Mitra were greatly impressed by his profound scholarship, though not agreeing on all points. Deeply influenced by Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte, Charles Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley and Rammohan Roy, he was among the first few men in modern India who had
presented an empiricist critique of the ancient Indian philosophies. He was bold enough to point out that contrary to popular belief, much of Indian philosophy was suffused with atheist and sceptical thought.

The text book *Charupath* was mandatory reading for almost three generations. As a great patriot, his mind was always immersed in how he could free his people from the clutches of superstition and blind beliefs. Vastly learned in many subjects, he was the first Indian to write on languages.

**Deb, Radhakanta** (1784-1867) accomplished scholar and one of the leaders of the conservative Hindus in Calcutta, was the son of Gopimohan Deb, the adopted son and heir of Maharaja Nabakrishna Deb. Radhakanta's father established himself as one of the foremost leaders of Calcutta Hindu society.

Radhakanta was adept in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. He also had a fairly good command of English. Between 1822 and 1856 he published *Shabda Kalpadruma*, a dictionary of Sanskrit language in eight volumes. This publication earned him international recognition as a scholar. He received honours from the Royal Asiatic Society, London, and other learned societies in Europe. Radhakanta Deb was greatly interested in promoting education, particularly English education among the Hindus. He played a pioneering role in the establishment of the Hindu College in Calcutta in 1817. Radhakanta was an active director of the College for over thirty years.

Radhakanta was enthusiastically involved in the establishment and activities of the Calcutta School Book Society (1817) and the Calcutta School Society (1818). He also campaigned for female education. Radhakanta was an active member of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India since its establishment in 1818. In 1851,
when the British Indian Association was established, Radhakanta Deb was elected as its President, a position he held till his death.

Radhakanta strongly upheld of social and religious conservatism. He was the leader of orthodox Hindus who were bitterly opposed to liberals like Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) who advocated social and religious reforms. Although a loyal supporter of the British Government, Radhakanta was opposed to any interference by the Government in the social and religious life of the people. Thus he came forward to defend the inhuman custom of Sati when the Government contemplated its abolition. When William Bentinck finally abolished sati by a regulation in 1829, Radhakanta Deb, along with other conservative Hindus, formed a society called Dharma Sabha and protested against this measure by petitioning to the Governor General.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873) epic poet and playwright, was born on 25 January 1824 in a landed family in the Jessore district of Bengal. His father, Rajnarayan Dutt, was a law practitioner in Kolkata. At the age of seven Madhusudan was admitted to Khidirpur School, Kolkata, where he studied for two years. In 1833 he was admitted to Hindu College. Here, among other subjects, he also studied English, Sanskrit and Persian.

While still a student at Hindu College, Madhusudan's poems in Bengali and English were published in Jnananvesan, Bengal Spectator, Literary Gleamer, Calcutta Library Gazette, Literary Blossom and Comet. Madhusudan converted to Christianity in 1843, partly to escape a marriage his father had arranged. He took the name 'Michael' upon his conversion and had to leave Hindu College as Christians were not allowed to
study there. In 1844 he got admitted to Bishop's College and remained there until 1847. At Bishop's College, in addition to Sanskrit, he also studied Greek and Latin.

Madhusudan's conversion to Christianity estranged him from his family, and his father stopped sending him money. In 1848 Michael left for Madras where he started teaching, first at Madras Male Orphan Asylum School (1848-1852) and then at Madras University High School (1852-1856). Apart from teaching, Madhusudan was also involved with a number of newspapers and journals. He edited the *Eurasian* (later the *Eastern Guardian*), the *Madras Circulator and General Chronicle* and the *Hindu Chronicle*. He also worked as assistant editor of the *Madras Spectator* (1848-1856). While in Madras he published two books of English poems under the pseudonym 'Timothy Penpoem': *The Captive Ladie* and *Visions of the Past*.

While at Madras, Madhusudan married Rebecca Mactavys. Meanwhile, his mother died and then his father. After his father's death, Madhusudan left Rebecca and returned to Kolkata in February 1856 with a Frenchwoman named Henrietta. In Kolkata he first worked as a clerk at the police court and then as interpreter. He also started contributing to different journals. His friends urged him to write in Bengali. At this point of Time Madhusudan comprehended the dearth of good writing in Bengali as well as his own ability to fill this vacuum. While translating *Ratnavali* (1858) into English, he felt the absence of good plays in Bengali. In 1858 he wrote *Sermista* based on the *Mahabharata* episode of Devayani and Yayati. This made Madhusudan the first Bengali playwright. The next year he wrote two farces: *Ekei Ki Bale Sabhyata* and *Buda Saliker Ghade Ron*. In the first play he satirised the members of Young Bengal and the wayward, immoral behaviour they had acquired through western education. In the
second he exposed the hypocrisy and immorality of the leaders of conservative Hindu society.

Madhusudan radically transformed what was essentially a medieval literature into a one capable of holding its own with any great literature. He was the first to use blank verse in 1860 in the play Padmavati based on a Greek myth. This use of blank verse freed Bengali Poetry from the limitations of rhymed verse. This success prompted Madhusudan to write Tilottamasambhav in blank verse. In 1861 Madhusudan wrote what would be his masterpiece: the epic Meghnadadh Kavya. Written in blank verse, this epic was based on the Ramayana, but, inspired by Milton’s Paradise Lost, Madhusudan transformed the villainous Ravana into a hero. He also forged from Bengali a language capable of describing a heroic battle between gods and demi-gods. Meghnadadh Kavya was Bengali literature's first original epic and gave Madhusudan the status of an epic poet and a permanent place in Bengali literature.

Michael's poems reflected a new woman, self-conscious and vocal, unlike the women who had for ages been deprived, neglected, terrified, silent about their feelings of happiness or sorrow. In the play Virangana (1862), Jana, Kaikeyi, Tara tell their husbands and lovers what they desire and expect. Such boldness in women had not been seen in Bengali literature before Madhusudan. Madhusudan also wrote Krsnakumari (1861), a tragic play based on a Rajput story, and Vrajanga (1861), a lyrical poem about Radha and Krishna.

At about the same time, Madhusudan translated Dinabandhu Mitra's play Nildarpan into English. He then worked briefly as editor of the Hindu Patriot before leaving on 9 June 1862 for England to study law at Gray's Inn. In 1863 he went to
Versailles in France, staying there for about two years. In France he started writing Petrarchan sonnets in Bengali, the first sonnets in the language. It was in France as well that Madhusudan overcame the longing for England that had inspired his early works and realised the importance to him of his motherland and mother tongue. These feelings are reflected beautifully in his sonnets like 'Bangabhasa' and 'Kapotaksa Nad'. These sonnets were published in 1866 as *Chaturddashpadi Kavitavali*.

Madhusudan returned to England from Versailles in 1865. In 1866 he became a barrister. He returned to Kolkata on 5 January 1867 and started practising law. But his practice did not pick up and, in June 1870, he was obliged to give up law to work as a translator at the High Court on a monthly salary of Rs 1000. After two years he left this job and returned to his law practice, becoming quite successful. However, his habit of reckless spending ran up debts. Earlier too he had been on the verge of bankruptcy and had been saved by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. In order to make ends meet, Madhusudan also worked for Raja Nilmoni Singh Deo of Panchakot. Despite all these ups and downs, Madhusudan kept on writing. In 1871 he wrote *Hectarbadh* after Homer's *Iliad*. His last composition was *Mayakanan* (1873).

Madhusudan's last days were painful, because of debts, illness and lack of treatment. He had no place of his own and had to take shelter in the library of the zamindars of Uttar Para. On 29 June 1873, three days after the death of Henrietta, the greatest poet of the Bengal renaissance died in Calcutta General Hospital in a miserable condition.

With his uncommon talent, he brought about revolutionary changes in Bengali language and literature. Drawing profusely on Sanskrit themes for his poems and
borrowing from western literature, he set a completely new trend in Bengali literature. In almost whatever he attempted, he was the first if not the greatest writer of his time.

**Basu, Rajnarayan** (1826-1899) was an educationist, litterateur and intellectual. After studying initially at Guru Pathshala in Calcutta, he studied at Hare School and Hindu College (1840-43). Rajnarayan was a bright student and qualified for a scholarship at school. However, due to ill health he had to give up his studies.

Rajnarayan was for some time the home tutor of Rabindranath. He was an English translator of *Upanishad* at Tattwabodhini Sabha (1846-49). He taught English at Sanskrit College (1849). In early 1846, Rajnarayan became a Brahmo. He was made President of Adi Brahma Samaj and remained in that position till the end of his life. He established literary societies and debate associations, as well as girls' schools, a night school for workers at Midnapore, and a music college at Shobha Bazar. He also founded a public library at Midnapore. In 1868 he retired from government service, and, in 1868, he left for Deoghar where he lived the rest of his life. While at Deoghar, he was awarded the title of 'Risi' (Saint).

Rajnarayan founded the Jatiya Gaurab Sampadani Sabha (National Association for Achieving Pride) and Brahmabodhini Sabha. He was a member of the Indian Association and the Sanjibani Sabha. He joined the movement against the law restricting the vernaculars (1878). He wrote in both Bengali and English. Among his books are *Rajnarayan Basur Baktrta* (Speeches of Rajnarayan Basu, 1st part 1855, 2nd part 1870), *Brahma Sadhan* (Serving Brahma, 1865), *Dharmatattva Dipika* (Lights of Religious Theory, 1st part 1866, 2nd part 1867), *Atmiya Sabha Sabhyadiger Britanta* (About Members of Atmiya Sabha, 1867), *Prakrta Asampradayikata Kahake Bale* (What is Real
Non-Communalism?, 1873), Hindu Dharmer Shresthattrva (Superiority of Hinduism, 1873), Se Kal Ar E Kal (The Past and the Present, 1874), Brahma Dharmer Uchcha Adarsha O Amader Adhyatik Abhab (High Ideals of Brahmoism and Our Spiritual Deficiency, 1875), Hindu Athaba Presidency Collegeer Itibrrta (History of Hindu College or Presidency College, 1876), Bangla Bhasa O Sahitya Bisayak Baktrta (Lectures on Bangla Language and Literature, 1878), Bibidha Prabandha (Varieties of Essays, 1st vol. 1882), Sar Dharma (Essence of Religion, 1866), Tambulopahar (Gift of Tambul, 1866), Brddha Hindur Asa (Hopes of an Old Hindu, 1887), Rajnarayan Basur Atmacherita (Autobiography of Rajnarayan Basu, 1909). His English books writings include 'A Defence of Brahmoism and the Brahma Samaj', a lecture delivered at the Midnapore Samaj Hall on 21 June 1863, Brahma Question of the Day Answered (1869), Brahmic Advice, Caution and Help (1869), The Adi Brahma Samaj, its views and principles (1870), Theistic Toleration and Definition of Theism (1872), The Adi Brahma Samaj as a Church (1873), Hints Showing the Feasibility of Constructing a Science of Religion (1876), Hindu Theists' Brotherly Gift to English Theists (1881), Brahma Catechism (1882), Old Hindu's Hope (1889). Rajnarayan Basu died on 18 September 1899.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) was a great intellectual and a famous Brahmo leader who founded in 1880 a new 'universal' religion - Naba Bidhan (New Dispensation). Keshab inherited his grandfather's organising ability and his father's 'spirit of vaisnava devotion'. His grandfather Ramkamal Sen (1783-1844) was the first Indian secretary of the Asiatic Society the compiler of the earliest English-Bengali Dictionary (two volumes published in 1830 and 1834), and one of the founders of the
Hindu College (1817), the Calcutta School Book Society (1818) and the Sanskrit College (1824).

Keshab Sen's work in the sphere of social reform left a great impact on the contemporary society. He continually shifted his identity – from scientist of religion to exponent of Neo-Vaisnavism and Mother goddess, from revolutionary social reformer to restrained theoretician, from ardent constitutionalist to defender of authoritarianism, from an advocate of nationalism to a champion of 'providential' British rule.

Keshab's primary concern was the quest for universal religion. As a student of Hindu College (1854-56) he was deeply attracted to the Unitarian theological and social gospels propounded in the writings of Theodore Parker, FW Newman, RW Emerson, Miss Francis Cobbe and others. Under such influences Keshab established in 1857 the 'Goodwill Fraternity', a Unitarian religious society for the students, where he was the main speaker. Fascinated by monotheist Vedantism, Keshab joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1857 and became its central figure in 1858.

Keshab gave new life to Brahma Samaj introducing new ideas and activities in it during 1858 and 1862. Keshab started The Indian Mirror, an organ of the Brahma Samaj, in 1861, through which he spread anti-sectarian, universal religious ideas. As many as 31 branches of the Samaj were established between 1857 and 1866.

As the Acharya of the Samaj, Keshab insisted on giving up some Hindu customs and practices such as caste system, untouchability, child marriage, polygamy and became the champion of widow and inter-caste marriages. Under Keshab's leadership many young Brahmas gave up the practice of wearing the paita (sacred thread). The first
Brahma widow and inter-caste marriages took place in August 1862 and 1864 respectively.

Women's education was one of Keshab's greatest concern. This became a vital agenda of Keshab-controlled Brahma Bandhu Sabha (1863). He also actively supported educational efforts of the organisers of the Bamabodhini Sabha and Bamabodhini Patrika (both founded in 1863) and guided Bama Hitaisini Sabha (1871) to improve the moral and material condition of women.

These programmes of social reform and the emancipation of women, however, became the main issues of the controversy between Debendranath and Keshab leading to a split in the Brahma Samaj in 1866. Debendranath, unwilling to hurt the national sentiment and alienate the greater Hindu Samaj on these issues, did not approve of any radical change. So the problem of 'national identity' became paramount in the altercation between them. The formal break between them took place on 15 November 1866. Keshab named his Samaj 'Bharatbarsiya Brahma Samaj' (Brahma Samaj of India) while the old one came to be known as Adi (original) Samaj.

Keshab's Samaj became immensely popular among the young generation. By 1868 practically all the 65 branches of the Samaj in Eastern India joined the new Samaj and the number rose to 101 by 1872 throughout India. This rapid growth testified the triumph of Keshab's 'universalism' over Debendranath's 'nationalism'. Keshab preached this 'universalism' in his new temple (established on 22 August 1869) built by blending in it the architectural features of Hindu temple, Muslim mosque and Christian church. According to some it showed Keshab's drift towards Christianity which Debendranath most abhorred. However, in his lecture on 'Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia' in May 1866
Keshab carefully distinguished between 'Christ's message of universal harmony' and the institutionalised, missionary-preached Europeanised Christianity of 19th century. He never succumbed to European cultural imperialism.

Keshab's reforming zeal became stronger after his visit to England (March-September 1870). While trying to rouse Victorian England's interest in social condition of India Keshab became deeply influenced by its reform activities and 'improved' family life. Shortly after coming back from England, Keshab formed the Indian Reform Association (November 1870). Its activity had five aspects: Charity, temperance, improvement of women's material and social conditions, mass education through mother tongue and cheap reading materials. Under this Association, Keshab set up social service committees, Temperance Society, schools for girls, night schools for adults, industrial arts schools for vocational training, and medical centres in Calcutta and its suburbs. He also started publishing *Sulabha Samachar* (Cheap News), a weekly costing just a pice, from November 1870. Its circulation reached its peak in February 1872 (27,202) and till 1877, it had the largest circulation in Bengal. The paper carried articles such as: 'Distress of the Tenants', 'Lamentation of the Poor', 'The Sufferings of the Calcutta Workers'. The paper also stressed the responsibility of government in the economic and intellectual regeneration of the people.

The year 1872 is considered to be the zenith of Keshab's social reform activities. Since then he gradually became more involved in the comparative studies of major religions and in meditation. The opening of Sadhan Kanan as a form of hermitage in 1875 and the assignment of the task of studying the Islamic, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and
Christian scriptures in the original and translating them to some Brahma scholars pointed to this change.

Keshab established Bharat Ashram in 1878 to foster Brahma community life for the quest of universal religion. Dependence on Divine Messages or Adeshas for taking decisions in the works of the Samaj became a basic feature of his religious belief at that time. Keshab had close personal association with Sri Ramkrishna in the period between 1875 and 1884 and possibly under Ramkrishna’s influence he introduced the concepts of yoga, vairagya and motherhood of God in the Brahma Samaj.

The decline in Keshab’s reform activities became more pronounced in his later views regarding women’s emancipation. Once champion of the cause, Keshab began to argue against the higher education and social liberty of women. He now stressed on the development of womanly virtues rather than high level education preparatory for a career in the outside world.

This new form of Keshab’s conservatism and his absolute authority on the Brahma Samaj led the dissenters in the Samaj to form Samadarshi (liberal) group in 1874 and Samadarshi Sabha in 1877 under Sibnath Shastri which demanded constitutional rights. The growth of nationalist spirit in late 19th century Bengal and the involvement of the progressive section in it, drew the progressive section further away from Keshab. When this section started organised criticism of British rule through their organ, the Indian Association (1876), Keshab was reluctant to join it. Though he expressed his deep agony about the subjection of Indian race as early as in 1866 and encouraged growth of nationalist spirit ‘in a national way’ in 1870, the loyalty to British
rule remained the basic component of his political thinking. He stressed the 'providential' and 'sacred nature' of the British till the end of his life.

The public announcement of the marriage of Keshab's minor daughter with the Maharaja of Cooch Behar in February 1878 widened the hostility between the two groups. To the utter dismay of the rationalist Brahmans, Keshab contravened the Brahma Marriage Act of 1878 and justified his daughter's marriage as 'providential'. So the split became inevitable and the progressive splinter group formed the Sadharan Brahma Samaj on 15 May 1875 on a constitutional basis. Keshab did not name his Samaj till 1880.

In the meantime, keen on retaining his image as social reformer, Keshab revived his reform activities by establishing Arya Nari Samaj in May 1879. But as its very name suggests, it tried to inspire Brahma women to make Maitreyi, Lilavati, Sita, Draupadi and some others their role models. Pursuit of knowledge for its sake was not recommended there.

The search for a universal religion, once again, became his main preoccupation. In 1881 Keshab officially instituted Nava Bidhan (New Dispensation), a new syncretistic religion based on the union of East and West, and the mouthpiece of his new religion, New Dispensation, was started in March of that year. In this new religion he wanted to combine the 'pantheism' and 'mysticism' of Asia with 'positivism and science' of Europe. The basic idea of Nava Bidhan was eclectic. It proclaimed 'the harmony of all scriptures and prophets and dispensations'. According to Keshab it was a religion of catholicity that embraces all space and all times.
In 1883, Keshab compiled *Nava Sanghita* as a 'comprehensive law and guide to
daily religious life' of his Samaj. The central point of all his experiments was the quest
for a universal religion. In his last public lecture, 'Asia's Message to Europe', on 20
January 1883, he reiterated the need of the New Dispensation on the basis of 'scientific
unity' to end sectarian and national strife and bring 'harmony' between Indian nationalists
and British imperialists. Keshab passed away in 1884.

**Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda** (1838-1914) Born in a wealthy family of
landowners, Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda grew up in a traditional Hindu household of
rural Bengal. At the age of fourteen he came to Calcutta. As a student of the Hindu
College he became associated with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen,
Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Sisir Kumar Ghosh.

At Hindu College Bhaktivinoda received a Western education and was exposed
to the influences of European culture. He was also influenced by American Unitarianism
through the efforts of Charles Dall. When he was Eighteen years old he moved to rural
Orissa to stay with his paternal grandfather, Raj Vallabha Datta. Moving through various
low-paying teaching jobs in rural Orissa and Bengal he eventually acquired a
government job with the British in the Judicial Service. For the next twenty-five years he
worked as a civil servant and became a District Magistrate. He retired from government
service in 1892. Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda passed away in Calcutta on June 23,
1914 at age 75.

At the age of twenty-nine Bhaktivinoda became a follower of Chaitanya
Mahaprabhu (1486-1533), and eventually a leader of the Chaitanya Vaishnava
movement in Bengal. The title Bhaktivinoda was conferred on Kedarnath Datta in 1886 in recognition of his prominence as a Vaishnava theologian. Bhaktivinoda made a lifelong study of Vaishnava philosophy, theology, and literature. He edited and published over 100 books on Vaishnavism. Some of his major works include five theological works: *Krishna-Samhita* (1880), *Chaitanya-sikshamrita* (1886) *Jaiva-dharma* (1893), *Hari-nama-chintamani* (1900), *Tattva-sutra* (1893) and *Tattva-viveka* (1893) and four books of Vaishnava songs: *Kalyana-kalpa-taru* (1881), *Aranagati* (1893), *Gita-vaali* (1893) and *Gita-mala* (1893). Bhaktivinoda also published a monthly journal entitled *Sajjana-toshani* between the years 1886 and 1910. He also produced an autobiography entitled *SValikhita Jivani* (1896). As early as 1880 he sent copies of his works to Ralph Waldo Emerson in American and Reihost Rost in Europe in attempt to export the teaching of Chaitanya to the West. By 1896 some of Bhaktivinoda's English writing turned up in Canada, Britain and Australia. Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda is representative of an important group of Bengali intellectuals, the so-called *bhadraloka*. The incursion of European education and culture forced many educated Bengalis to face the traumas of modernization that challenged many traditional Hindu beliefs and practices. While many, including Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824–1873) and Krishna Mohan Bannerjee, became Christians, others such as Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–1884) and Protop Mazumdar (1840–1905) embraced the Brahma Samaj. But Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) found the means to reinterpret their Hindu religious traditions in the light of nineteenth century European thought.
Bhaktivinoda's combined modern critical analysis with the best of Hindu mysticism, Krishna-lila. Instead of relinquishing the modern approach, he utilized it in his writings; instead of rejecting Hindu tradition, he strengthened it. Bhaktivinoda's particular synthesis of traditional Hindu belief and nineteenth century rational thought is a particularly important religious and cultural blend. It generated the development of the Gaudiya Math in India during the 1920s and 1930s and later, in the West, the development of the ISKCON (Hare Krishna) movement during the 1960s and 1970s.

* For the above biographies I have relied greatly on Banglapedia, the National Encyclopaedia of Bangladesh.