

RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the father of Modern India's Renaissance and a tireless social reformer who inaugurated the age of enlightenment and liberal reformist modernisation in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on 22 May 1772 in an orthodox Brahman family at Radhanagar in Bengal. Ram Mohan Roy was given the title of 'Raja' by the titular Mughal Emperor of Delhi, Akbar II whose grievances the former was to present before the British king. In his address, entitled 'Inaugurator of the Modern Age in India,' Tagore referred to Ram Mohan as 'a luminous star in the firmament of Indian history'.

IDEOLOGY

Ram Mohan Roy was greatly influenced by western modern thought and stressed on rationalism and modern scientific approach. Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed that unless women were freed from unhuman forms of oppression like illiteracy, child marriage, sati, purdah, Hindu society can not progress. He characterised sati as the violation of every humane and social feeling and as symptomatic of the moral debasement of a race. He believed that religious orthodoxies have become causes of injury and detrimental to social life and sources of trouble and bewilderment to the people, instead of tending to the amelioration of the condition of society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy concluded that religious reform is both social reform and political modernisation. Ram Mohan believed that each sinner must make restitution for his sins and it is to be done through self-purification and repentance and not through sacrifices and rituals.

RELIGIOUS REFORM

Raja Ram Mohan Roy's first published work *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin* (a gift to deists) published in 1803 exposed irrational religious beliefs and corrupt practices of the Hindus as the belief in revelations, prophets, miracles etc. In 1814, he founded Atmiya Sabha in Calcutta to campaign against idolatry, caste rigidities, meaningless rituals and other social ills. He criticized the ritualism of Christianity and rejected Christ as the incarnation of God. In *Precepts of Jesus* (1820), he tried to separate the moral and philosophical message of the New Testament, which he praised, from its miracle stories

SOCIAL REFORM

Raja Ram Mohan Roy conceived reformist religious associations as instruments of social and political transformation. He founded the Atmiya Sabha in 1815, the Calcutta Unitarian Association in 1821, and the Brahmo Sabha in 1828 which later became the Brahmo Samaj. He campaigned against the caste system, untouchability, superstitions and use of intoxicants. He was well known for his pioneering thought and action on the emancipation of women and especially on the abolition of sati and widow remarriage. He attacked child marriage, illiteracy of women and the degraded state of widows and demanded the right of inheritance and property for women.

BRAHMO SAMAJ

Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded Brahmo Sabha in 1828, which was later renamed as Brahmo Samaj. Its chief aim was the worship of the eternal God. It was against priesthood, rituals and sacrifices. It focused on prayers, meditation and reading of the scriptures. It believed in the unity of all religions. It was the first intellectual reform movement in modern India. It led to the emergence of rationalism and enlightenment in India which indirectly contributed to the nationalist movement. It was the forerunner of all social, religious and political movements of modern India. It split into two in 1866, namely Brahmo Samaj of India led by Keshub Chandra Sen and Adi Brahmo Samaj led by Debendranath Tagore. Prominent Leaders: Debendranath Tagore, Keshub Chandra Sen, Pt. Sivnath Shastri, and Rabindranath Tagore.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Roy did much to disseminate the benefits of modern education to his countrymen. He supported David Hare's efforts to found the Hindu College in 1817, while Roy's English school taught mechanics and Voltaire's philosophy. In 1825, he established Vedanta college where courses in both Indian learning and Western social and physical sciences were offered.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORM

Civil liberties: Roy was impressed and admired the British system of constitutional government for the civil liberties it gave to the people. He wanted to extend the benefits of that system of government to Indian people. Press freedom: Through his writings and activities, he supported the movement for free press in India. When press censorship was relaxed by Lord Hastings in 1819, Ram Mohan found three journals- The Brahmanical Magazine (1821); The Bengali weekly, Samvad Kaumudi (1821); and the Persian weekly, Mirat-ul-Akbar. Taxation reforms: Roy condemned oppressive practices of Bengali zamindars and demanded fixation of minimum rents. He also demanded the abolition of taxes on tax-free lands. He called for a reduction of export duties on Indian goods abroad and the abolition of the East India Company's trading rights. Administrative reforms: He demanded the Indianization of superior services and separation of the executive from judiciary. He demanded equality between Indians and Europeans.

WORKS OF RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

1. Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin (1804).
2. Vedanta Gantha (1815).
3. Translation of an abridgement of the Vedanta Sara (1816)
4. Kenopanishads (1816).
5. Ishopanishad (1816).
6. Kathopanishad (1817).
7. A Conference between the Advocate for, and an Opponent of Practice of Burning Widows Alive (Bengali and English) (1818).

WORKS OF RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY(CONTINUE)

8. Mundaka Upanishad (1819).
9. A Defence of Hindu Theism (1820).
10. The Precepts of Jesus- The Guide to Peace and Happiness (1820).
11. Bengali Grammar (1826).
12. The Universal Religion (1829).
13. History of Indian Philosophy (1829).
14. Gaudiya Vyakaran (1833)

THANK YOU

