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RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY AND BRAHMA SAMAJ

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Introduction: Raja Ram Mohan Roy has rightly been described as the Father of Indian Renaissance and the Prophet of Indian Nationalism. Behind all his ideas of social and religious reforms, there lay the thought of brining about political regeneration of his countrymen.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833): Introduction: In the early 19th century the study of liberal ideas created an awakening in the education class who decided to remove the inherent evils in the Indian society. Bengal played the leading role in the new awakening of India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the central figure in the new awakening in India. For his pioneering efforts in Social Reforms and creating new awakening among the people, he was been regarded as the Father of the "Indian Renaissance" or even "Father of Modern India".[1]

His Early Life: Raja Ran Mohan Roy was born in a well – to – do family in 1772and gradually promised a good educational career. He had love for Hindu Religion and condemned idol worship. Without caring for the wrath of the orthodox he preached his ideas. He stated that idol worship was against the teaching of the Vedas. This shocked the people and his family too turned against him. He had to leave his house. He learnt many Languages like English, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and Greek. He was also well versed with the philosophies of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.[2] He worked in the East India Company.

[1] *V.D. Mahajan, Leaders of the Nationalist Movement, Sterling publishers, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 1-2.*

[2] *Verinder Grover (ed), Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1998.pp.4-5.*

But the gave up his job and settled in Calcutta and spent is time doing benevolent work. He took up the cause of the Mughal Emperor that the British must allow him to enjoy his privilege and titles. That is why the emperor gave him the title "Raja" in 1801. Ram Mohan Roy is considered to be the modernizer of India. It is right to say that he is the modernizer because he brought India out of the old tradition, Superstition, Caste system to modern liberal thought and democracy.[3] In he founded Brahma Samaj where he preached worship of one God. He visited England and some other countries and died there in 1833 at Bristol in England.

His Works: Ram Mohan Roy had an ambitious programme of translating all Vedas and Upanishads in important languages of the world with a critical note on his own.

(1) A letter to Lord Amherst on English Education.

(2) A tract on religious toleration.

(3) Rights of Hindus over ancestral properties according to Law of Bengal.

(4) Gifts of Monotheist.

(5) Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to peace and Happiness.[4]

To Ram Mohan Roy the press was a power. He established Sambad Kaumudi, Miratu Akhbar, Brahminical Magazine, Bengal Herald, Bangadut and associated with a large number of new papers and periodicals such as the Calcutta Journal, The India Gazettee, Jame Jahan Numa, The Bengal Hurkaru and the Samachar Durpan in order to propagate his ides and formulate public opinion on problems facing the country during his times.[5]

[3] B.M.Sankhdher, Raja Mohan Roy: The Apostle of Indian Awakening-Some Contemporary Estimates, Navrang, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 12-13.

[4] S.Cromwell Crawford, Ram Mohan Roy, His Era and Ethics, Arnold –Heinemann, New Delhi, 1984.pp.34-82.

[5] P.K.Das, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Brahmanism, Kakwip, 24, parganas, Calcutta, 1970, pp.1-8.

His political ideas: Politically he believed that the Britishers should continue to stay in India and felt that there should be maximum liberty for the people. Liberty and authority can to together and in fact liberty was an indication of state advancement.[6]

His views on liberty: He was a lover of liberty which was not only confined to political but to social and economic institutions as well. He believed that Swaraj was no solution to our Political problems of time. He was the first to start public agitation on political questions. He condemned the Zamindars, who exploited the peasants. He protested against the attempt to impose taxes on tax – free lands. He demanded fair trade rule for Indians. He also demanded that Indians should be given higher posts in the services. Raja Ram Mohan Roy took a keen interest in international events and every where he supported the cause of liberty, democracy was necessary and nationalism.

His economic ideas: He was the person who demanded that peasants should not be exploited by the rich and demanded that Government should take steps to see the that the landlords did not arbitrarily enhance rates of payment from the cultivators. [7]Ram Mohan Roy severely condemned the oppressive practices of the Bengal Zamindars. He demanded the Government to fire the maximum rents to be paid by the peasants permanently. He demanded the abolition of the company's trading rights and the heavy import duties on the Indian goods. He also demanded Indianisation of the public services. Separation of powers, trial by jury and equality of Justice between Indians and Europeans.

[6] *V.C.Joshi (ed), Ram Mohan Roy-and the process of Modernization in India,Vikas Publishing House, Kanpur, 1975.pp.144-145.*

[7] *S.Cromwell Crawford, Ram Mohan Roy, His Era and Ethics, op.cit, pp.151-164.*

His religious ideas: As a staunch Hindu he felt that idol worship was a subsequent addition in religion and, therefore, unnatural. He believed in the worship of one Supreme God which was above everything else.[8]

In 1809 he wrote Tuhfatul Muwahidein (gift of Monotheists in Persian) . In this work strongly supported worship of one god and rejected polytheism. In 1815, he established Atmiya Sabha (Society of Friends) in Calcutta for holding weekly discussions and meditation.[9] He fiercely opposed worship of idols, rigidity of Caste and prevalence of meaningless religious rituals. In 1820, he published precepts of Jesus, in which he tried to separate the moral and philosophic message of the New Testament from its miracle stories; this believes won him the hostility of many orthodox Hindus.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Brahma Samaj: The activities of the Atmiya Sabha led to the formation of the Brahma Sabha, later known as the Brahma Samaj or the "One God Society". The main objective of Brahma Samaj was to reform Hinduism and preach monotheism or worship of one God.Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahma Samaj were pointers in reforming the Hindu Society and religion and asserted equality for Hindu religion with other religions on the basis of the philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads.

The Activities of Brahma Samaj:

1. The Brahma Samaj interpreted religion with reason and logic so much that aggressive sect, the "Sadharana Brahma Samaj" refused to accept even the Vedas as the last Word of God.It saved the Hindu religion against the onslaughts of Christianity. Simplified and modernized it and paved the way for

8 *Jamuna Nag, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sterling publishers, New Delhi, 1972.pp. 17-18.*

9. *Saumyendranath Tagore, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1973, pp.39-40.*

the emergence of other social and religious reform movements among the Hindus.

2. The Brahma Samaj led a crusade against all social evils of the Hindu Society, example Sati, Polygamy, Child Marriage, Marriages of Minor Girls, Caste System, Purdah System, Untouchability, use of intoxicant etc.[10]
3. The Brahma Samaj used all possible modern means to propagate its social and religious ideas. It took no definite stand on the doctrine of Karma and Transmigration of soul and left it to individual Brahmos to believe either way.
4. Ram Mohan Roy supported the cause of English language and Western system of education and started the English School, the Hindu College and the Vedanta College at Calcutta.
5. The Main area of the activities of the Brahmo Samaj, of course, remained confined to Bengal. But its branches were established in distant provinces like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Madras. Besides, it inspired the people in other provinces to pursue the tasks which it was pursuing itself in Bengal. The "Prarthana Samaj" at Bombay was the result of its inspiration.
6. The Leaders of Brahma Samaj also worked for the welfare of peasants, liberty of the press, social legislation, etc.,
7. The Brahma Samaj also participated in building national sentiment among the Indians. It glorified the ancient culture of India, helped in developing confidence among Indians in their own religion and, thus, participated indirectly in the resurgence of Indian Nationalism.[11]
8. Raj Ram Mohan Roy was of the opinion that men and women should be given equal social status and that the women should be given the right to have a share in ancestral property.

[10] *Jamuna Nag, Raja Ram Mohan Roy,op.cit, .pp. 77-81.*

[11] *Tarachand, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, Reprinted, 1990, Volume-2,pp.393-395.*

9. He was a great humanists as well as internationalist and believed in toleration and love for mankind. According to him religion should create feeling of follow ship and promise love. He was thus in religious field more an internationalist than a nationalist. He believes in the fundamental truth and unity of all religious.
10. Agitation against Sati System: Ram Mohan Roy fought a life long crusade against the social evils. His most prominent one was against the inhuman practice of Sati. By 1818 he vigorously set out to arouse public opinion against Sati. The barbarous custom of Sati where the Widow had to throw her living body on the pyre with corpse of her husband when he died. [12]By showing that the ancient texts did not support Sati, and try appealing to reason. Compassion and in humanity of the people. By visiting burning ghats to persuade the family of the widow of give up the idea of self – immolation. By organizing groups to keep strict check on such practices and preventing any attempt to force the widow to perform Sati.
11. By organizing a petition in support of Bentinck's efforts to ban the rite of Sati. Ram Mohan Roy efforts met with success when William Bentinck passed the anti – sati legislation in 1829.
12. To propagate the ideas of the Brahmo Samaj, Raja Ram Mohan Roy started a daily newspaper Sambad – Kaumudi.[13]
13. After the death of Ram Mohan Roy was followed by a decade of inaction and regression. Then in 1843, Debendranath Tagore (Father of Rabindranath Tagore) revitalized, the Brahma Samaj.

[12] Minni Thakur, Raja Ram Mohan Roy his social, political and economic ideas, Deep and Deep publications, New Delhi, 1987.pp. 31-52.

[13] Nalin .C.Ganguly, Builders of Modern India, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Y.M.C.A. Calcutta, 1934.pp104-127.

Influence of the Brahma Samaj

1. For about 50 years since, it was stated, Brahma Samaj played a key role of the new awakening in India.
2. It regenerated Hinduism and paved way for a modern India.
3. Its prominent members including Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Raj Narain Basu made significant contribution to the new thinking.
4. It inspired parallel movements in other parts of India like the Prathana Ssmaj and the Arya Samaj
5. Ram Mohan Roy was a champion of women's were inferior to men. He was against polygamy and the degraded status of widow. To raise the status of women he demanded that they should have the right of inheritance and property.
6. Sati system banned in India and saved the life of many women.

Conclusion:

The role of the Brahma Samaj as the ' First intellectual movement which spread the ideas of nationalism and enlightenment in modern India cannot be over emphasized. Its liberal approach to social and religious questions alike. It's educational and Social Reform activities instilled a new confidence which in turn, contributed to the growth of nationalism, a number of Brahma Samajists were later prominent in the struggle for independence. According to Miss. /Cola, ' Ram Mohan Roy stands in history as the living bridge over which India, marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future.

Thus, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a truly great reformer, who worked through out his life for social, religious intellectual and political regeneration of the Indians. The story of the Brahma Sabha gives us a glimpse of 19th century Bengal which is one of the most interesting periods of Indian history and in which Ram Mohan Roy played the role of the Pathfinder. Dwarakanath was responsible for propagating the liberal thoughts of Ram Mohan. After Ram Mohan's demise Maharshi

Debendranath revived the Samaj Shantiniketan, welcomed people from every country. Universalism was up held by the poet Rabindrabath though literature and sermons. Both Devendranath and Rabindranath were inspired by Ram Mohan and his thoughts. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's thoughts relevant to solve social evils and built nationalism among the people of India.

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