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SOCIAL REFORMS: RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY CONTRIBUTION

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Social Work, Social Reform, Social Evils and Social Welfare.</i>	In the early 19 th 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 greatest glory lay in this, that in the midst of thick, brooding darkness he saw afar the vision of New India and bravely laboured against large odds. He was not just a founder of a religion and he wanted his countrymen to accept not only the rational and scientific approach but also principles of human dignity and social equity of all men and women. His political, social, educational ideas and activities enriched the field of social work in India. He had done many social work related activities that helped in uplifting Indian society. Social work is a practice based profession that promotes social changes to social development.

Introduction

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a renowned historical person who worked tirelessly to develop India and declared that he would violate Hindu tradition. The contributions of Raja Ram Mohan Roy to modern India are Worthy, hence he is considered as the first great leader and father of modern India. To change the society, he conducted a lot of social, religious reforms and strove to improve the status



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of women in India. He attempted to propagate the monotheistic doctrine in religion. He knew that the ideal of human civilization does not lie in isolation of independence, but in the brotherhood of inter-dependence of individuals as well as nations. He was a staunch opponent of social ills like Sati, Child marriage, Caste rigidity. The eradication of sati is one of the most significant turning points in modern India's social history. Raja Ram Mohan Roy died with a disease "Meningitis" on September 27, 1833, in Bristol. The British government has named a street in Bristol as 'Raja Ram Mohan way' in his memory. He is eternal and always will be remembered in the history India for his great ideologies, religious, social, political, economic reforms, journalism, literary and published works.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Brahma Samaj

Brahmo Samaj's foundation was a concrete manifestation of Roy's key ideas which he expressed for a long time. One of the foundation's central doctrines was the belief in one God based on reason on the one hand and in conformity with the scriptures on the other.²

For the theological account of the doctrine, he utilized the Advaita Vedanta of Shankar Acharya with a different approach to comply with rational, scientific, utilitarian, and Christian ethical standpoints of the day. This theology was later called neo-Vedanta by Christian scholars. Although the organization was established to bring social and religious reform, it was much concerned with theological issues like the oneness of God and image worshipping, particularly in the first phase.³ For this purpose, Upanishads were preferred to all other sacred books for their more refined monotheistic spirit and emphasis on self-effort than personal faith. It denounced image worship just because it considered that the practice was not in conformity with the Upanishadic teachings; hence, it needed to be discarded.⁴ Later on, the organization under Roy also showed great concern for social issues, including the emancipation of women, eradicating the caste system, and propagating Western knowledge. He had already tried to safeguard women's legal rights in his Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachment on the Ancient Rights of Female in 1822. He also worked to abolish the sati (widow burning) and fully supported the anti-sati regulation passed by Bentinck's Government.⁵ Moreover, the organization aspired to bring social harmony and cohesion through religious tenets. The Brahmo Samaj embodied these principles in its trust deed⁶, which included the idea that Brahman (formless God) should be worshiped as instructed by Advaita Vedanta. So no images were kept by followers of the movement, and no rituals were allowed. The participation in the worship of God was not credited based on popular Hindu religious rites. Therefore, the follower of any religion could participate in Samaj's worshipping practices. Brahmo Samaj accommodated all faiths in its attempt to create the atmosphere of worldly brotherhood.⁷ Brahmo Samaj failed to attract the Hindu masses due to its submission to modern outlook and its syncretic tendencies, like borrowing the ethical precepts from the teachings of Jesus Christ. This fact resulted in a limited membership of the movement, which remained confined to a portion⁸ of the high caste and educated upper classes of Hindus. In 1833 the death of Roy proved to be the most significant loss in the form



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of the form of the movement's decline⁹. The efforts to revive this decline ushered the second phase of the historic movement and brought to eminence some new leaders.

RAJA RAM MOHAN Roy: Abolishing Sati Pratha

Sati was an ancient Hindu custom. This custom in which a woman burns herself either on the funeral pyre or her deceased husband or by herself after his death is now referred to sati.¹⁰ In 1811 Roy witnessed his brother's widow being burned alive on her husband's Funeral pyre. Three years later he retired and concentrated on complaining against the practice of woman dying as sati. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian to protest from against this custom. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was strictly opposed this system of sati. He advocated that this was completely against the Women's right to live in the society as a human being.¹¹ Thus he challenged the age old evil practice of sati. During those days Raja Ram Mohan Roy tried to stop and banned this custom of sati. He tries a lot to make people enlighten against sati system. Thus at last in the year 1829 Raja Ram Mohan Roy's effort full tired. Lord William Bentick, the Governor General of India passed a law in 1829 abolishing the custom of Sati. According to this law the custom of Sati become illegal and punishable as couple homicide.¹² It can be considered as turning point in social history of India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's effort behind this rightly made him able to assume the title as the father of Indian Renaissance. The abolition of Sati is one of the most significant turning point is the social History of modern India.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy' Views On Modern Education

Ram Mohan Roy was educated in traditional languages like Sanskrit and Persian. He came across English much later in life and learned the language to get better employment with the British. But a voracious reader, he devoured English literature and journals, extracting as much knowledge as he could. He realised that while traditional texts like Vedas, Upanishads and Quran provided him with much reverence for philosophy, his knowledge was lacking in scientific and rational education. He advocated the introduction of an English Education System in the country teaching scientific subjects like Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and even Botany. He paved the way to revolutionizing education system in India by establishing Hindu College in 1817 along with David Hare which later went on to become one of the best educational institutions in the country producing some of the best minds in India.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy' Views on Women Education

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a strong supporter of women education. He stressed that women education is possible only when women is free from social evils and superstitions. He crusaded against social evils like sati, polygamy, child marriage, caste system, infanticide, illiteracy etc. He demanded the property rights for women. In 1828, he set up the BrahmoSamaj a movement of reformist Bengali Brahmins to fight against social evils. The BrahmoSamaj did the great service in



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removing the popular prejudices against the education of women that were prevalent in the Hindu society.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy – Political Reformer:

With the glorification of ancient Indian culture, the Brahmo Samaj as an institution helped in developing confidence among Indians in their own religion. This confidence helped in the reconstruction of Indian nationalism. Roy also believed in the freedom of man and opposed the racial superiority of Europeans. Though he did not demand independence for India, yet he fought for the civil liberties of the people.¹³ Raja Ram Mohan Roy is called as the Father of Indian Renaissance due to his mass awakening and rational thinking. The Brahmo Samaj worked as a pioneer in revitalizing the Hindu society. Of course, the focus of the activities of the Brahmo Samaj was confined to Bengal. But it had a number of branches established in distant provinces like Punjab, Madras, Uttar Pradesh etc. He paved the way on which other Hindu social and religious reformers could tread.¹⁴

Opposition to Caste System:

Raja Ram Mohan Roy instead of the caste system believed only in single united society and worked for the cause. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade formed the “Prarthana Samaj” in 1867, advocated the marriage of the widows, worked for the education of Dalits and upliftment of the lower class. Raja Ram Mohan Roy instead of the caste system believed in single united society and worked for the cause. Justice Mahadev Gobind Ranade formed the “Prarthana Samaj” in 1867, advocated the marriage of the widows, worked for the education of Dalit’s and upliftment of the lower class.

Pioneer Of Indian Journalism

He was a staunch supporter of the principles of free expression and the right to speak one’s own. Ram Mohan Roy He took a stand in defence of the vernacular press’s right to freedom of expression. In addition, he was the publisher of the Bengali monthly “sambad kaumudi” and the Persian newspaper “Mirat UI-Akhbar,” which together translate to the “the mirror of news” (the moon of Intelligence). Back then, news pieces and stories could not be distributed until the government gave its permission to do so. According to Ram Mohan, there shouldn’t be any restrictions placed on the media, and the government also shouldn’t be able to cover up the truth simply because they don’t want it to be publicized. In the year 1830, Raja Ram Mohan Roy made the journey to England in order to petition the Imperial Government for an increase in the royalty payment made of the Mughal Emperor and to ensure that Lord Bentick’s Sati Act would not be repealed. At the year 1833, while Raja Ram Mohan Roy was visiting the United Kingdom, he contracted meningitis and passed away in Stapleton, Bristol. His passing took place on September 27th of this year. It was determined that he would be laid to rest in the Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol, which is located in the city of Bristol. Besides being a great social reformer Roy also made a valuable contribution to Bengali literature and he is regarded as the father of Bengali prose. He was the first to realize the value of the newspapers



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as an instrument for diffusing intellectual light. His earliest books on Bengali prose were Vedanta Grantha and Vedanta- Saar which were published in 1815 and 1816 respectively.¹⁵

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 else¹⁶. 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 Atrniya Sabha (Society of Friends) in Calcutta for holding weekly discussions and meditation.¹⁷ He fiercely opposed worshiped 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:

Economic Ideas

Ram Mohan's economic ideas were tinged with liberalism. He wanted the state intervention to protect the property of the individual. His article, Essay over the rights of the Hindus over Ancestral Property was a pointer in this direction . One's claim over the ancestral property was to be maintained.¹⁸Further, he advocated that the peasants should be protected by the government from the tyranny of the landlords. He was well aware of the dangerous consequences of the permanent settlement of 1793 introduced by Lord Cornwallis. So, he wanted the British authority to intervene in the affairs of the Zamindars to protect the peasants.¹⁹He advocated the right of Hindu women over property. As a liberal economic thinker he was deeply concerned with the economic strangulation of the poor in the century. That is why he had resented strongly against the exiting revenue system of the country whose first prey were the landlords.

His views on Liberty

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.²⁰ 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 also demanded that Indians should be given higher posts in the services. Raja Ram Mohan Roy took a keen interest in international events and everywhere he supported the cause of liberty, democracy was necessary and nationalism.

Champion of Nationalism

He believed that individual freedom did not simply imply the country's independence from foreign rule. If our social structure is infested with deep rooted injustice, individual freedom would become



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in fructuous even after the independence of our country. No country would deserve political self-rule if it does not grant the right to self-determination to the individual. Such a country should undertake social reform before attaining national independence. In Roy's view, this applied to his contemporary India also.

To Conclude

Rammohan-the Father of Modern India- was truly an advocate of an evolving national consciousness; he chose the path of modernizing Indian society which, he knew would gradually lead toward the establishment of rule to self- determination-the task which later had been undertaken more boldly and arduously by Bhudev, Bankim and Vivekananda.

His understanding was too clear, his love of liberty too deep for any kind of vagary. Rammohan simply sought to develop the moral conscience of the native people. Yet, as a whole, the conservative critics missed, even today, that Rammohan possessed in admirable measure the qualities of both objectivity and honesty.

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