



Raja Ram Mohan Roy – As A Morning Star of Indian Renaissance

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Introduction

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was called the morning star of Indian Renaissance.¹ He was born on 22nd May 1772 at the village of Radhanagar in the District of Burdwan, west Bengal. His family background displayed religious diversity. His father Ramkanta was a Vaishnavite and mother Tarinidevi was from a Shivaite family. This was unusual Vaishnavite did not commonly marry Shaivite at that time. Raja Ram Mohan Roy started his formal education in the village Pathshala, where he learned Bengali and some Sanskrit and Persian. He travelled far and wide and thus able to gather a lot of experience and learning.²

Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed in an ideal society, free from social inequality and oppression. He was opposed to all sorts of social malpractices and useless customs. He believed in a society based on fraternity of interdependent individuals. He first made an organized movement against one of the malignant disorders of popular Hindsuism, Sati. He was conscious about the property rights of women, which was reflected through his tracts Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance. He was well aware of the evil effects of polygamy, Kulinism and practice of selling girls in marriage. He vehemently opposed the caste system. As a skillful lawyer, he advocated for Saiva marriage, as he was against of sectarian bias in the society. He made his tireless efforts to purify Hindu religion. He founded Brahma Samaj based on the worship of one true God. He propagated Universal religion. He made his endeavor in establishing Atmiya Sabha, Unitarian committee and Brahma Samaj.



Brahmo Samaj

The Brahmo Samaj played a notable role in the Indian renaissance. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the founder of Brahmo Samaj at Calcutta in the year 1828.³ It was one of the most influential religious movements which is responsible for the making of modern India. On 20 August 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Debendranath Tagore as reformation of the prevailing Brahmonism of the time and began the Bengal Renaissance of the 19th century pioneering all religious, social and educational advance of the Hindu community in the 19th century.

Brahmo Samaj preached monotheism. It condemned idolatry. It saw no difference between man and man because it accepted the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind. It condemned ritualistic practices like animal sacrifice, offering of Prasad and so on. It also fought for the emancipation of women. Thus, many evil practices like caste system, Sati, Child Marriage, Polygamy etc. were the targets of the Brahmo Samaj. The Brahmo Samaj movement gained momentum through Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen later on. Thus for the creation of a healthy society, Brahmo Samaj was determined. This definitely created a mile stone in the cultural heritage of India.

Abolition of Sati

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.⁴In 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.⁵ 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 was full filled. 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 culpable homicide.⁶ It can be considered as a 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 also opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage and also he made his contribution to literature also.⁷ He was a prolific writer in many language. He was a great linguist and master of style. He is known as one of the creator of modern Bengali prose.⁸ The central figure in this social awakening was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who is rightly regarded as the first leader of Modern India.⁹ Raja Ram Mohan Roy was moved by deep love for his life for their social, religious, intellectual and political regeneration. Thus upper classes were selfish and often scarified social interest to their own narrow interest. He was a great personality in the modern India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy had love and respect for all kind of traditional philosophical system. In particular, he wanted his countrymen to accept the rational and scientific approach all the principles of human dignity and social equity of all men and women. He also wanted the introduction of modern capitalism and industry in the country. He was also well-acquainted with Jainism and other religious movement and sects of India. In 1809 he wrote in Persian his famous work "Gift of argument against belief in many God and for the worship of single God".

Widows Remarriage Act

Due to the efforts of Ram Mohan Roy, the British Government passed a law in 1829 abolishing the custom of sati. But there were many other customs that were unjust to women. For example, in the castes that were called high, widows were not permitted to marry again, while widowers could re-marry. A widow had to wear white clothes, cut her hair and could not be invited to attend auspicious functions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy raised his voices for the welfare of widows. He demanded that widows should be allowed to remarry again and that a law should be passed to this effect. In 1856, a law was passed to allow widowed girls to marry again.



Father of Indian Journalism

Raja Rm Mohan Roy was the 'Father of Indian Journalism'.¹⁰ He believed in the freedom of press. He edited a newspaper in Bengali named 'Samprad Kaumudi'. He was also the editor of Mirat-ul-Akbar. When restrictions were imposed on the publications of newspapers, he reacted sharply and criticized the British authorities vehemently. In his editorials, he reflected important social, political, economic, religious and other problems with which the Indians were grossly entangled. His writings were so powerful that people were deeply moved by this.

Education Reform

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was not only a great social religious reformer but he was also a great educational thinker or reformer. He believed that education was prime necessity for upliftment of Indian society. He advocated the induction of Western learning into Indian education system. So he promoted study English, Science, Western Medicine and Technology in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was deeply moved by the monotheistic flavor of Vedanta and therefore established the Vedanta College in 1825 to teach monotheistic doctrines. He made provision for teaching students in his Vedanta College by eminent Pandit. He had given his full support to the Anglicists and proved with his sound reasoning and critical analysis, that English studies were becoming popular with the thinking of men. He founded school out of his own expense for that reason. So, he was rightly called as the 'Prophet of a Scientific India', the 'Father of Modern India' and a 'Precursor of Modern Asia.'¹¹

Conclusion

It is true sense of the term, Raja Ram Mohan Roy acted as a bridge between the East and West. He was the 'Father of Indian Renaissance'. He was an intellectual of superb order and still simple and bold. His ideas and ideals inspires nationalism in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy carried on his reforms and set standards for other Indians to follow. Therefore, undoubtedly Raja Ram Mohan Roy was regarded as the morning star of Indian Renaissance.

International Conference on Multidisciplinary approaches in Social Sciences, Humanities and Sciences

Sri S.Ramasamy Naidu Memorial College, Sattur, Tamil Nadu, India

(MASHS-18)



14th December 2018

www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN:978-93-87793-61-3

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