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RAJA RAM MOHAN RAI AS A LEGEND MAN

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Raja Ram Mohan Roy is considered as the pioneer of modern Indian Renaissance for the remarkable reforms he brought in the 18th and 19th century India. Among his efforts, the abolition of the brutal and inhuman Sati Pratha was the most prominent. His efforts were also instrumental in eradicating the purdah system and child marriage. In 1828, Ram Mohan Roy formed the Brahmo Samaj, uniting the Bhramos in Calcutta, a group of people, who had no faith in idol-worship and were against the caste restrictions. The title 'Raja' was bestowed upon him by the Mughal emperor Akbar II, in 1831. Roy visited England as an ambassador of the Mughal King to ensure that Bentick's regulation banning the practice of Sati was not overturned. He died of meningitis in 1833 while residing in Bristol, England.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great social reformer and maker of modern India was born at Radhanagar in Hooghly in a famous Brahmin family. He was educated at Patna and Benaras. There he learnt English, Greek, Latin and Sanskrit. The contribution of Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a social reformer is unparalleled. The versatile genius turned his attention to reform the society in his later years. Raja Ram Mohan Roy abolished the custom of 'sati', the evil practice of burning young widows in their husband's funeral pyre. Ram Mohan Roy was opposed by the conservative Hindus and as result he founded a different religion – Brahma dharma based on the Upanishads. He founded the Brahma Samaj. In 1831 Ram Mohan left for England on behalf of the Mughal Emperor. He was given the title of 'Raja' by the Mughal monarch. But Ram Mohan Roy died in England, away from his homeland. He is forever remembered as the maker of modern India.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is a great historical figure who put laudable efforts to transform India and dared to defy the age old Hindu traditions. He undertook a lot of social reforms to change the society and worked to uplift the status of women in India. Roy fought against Sati system. He was also a great scholar who translated many books, religious and philosophical work and scriptures into Bengali and also translated Vedic scriptures into English.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an Indian socio-educational reformer who was also known as 'Maker of Modern India' and 'Father of Modern India' and 'Father of the Bengal Renaissance.' He was born on May 22, 1772 into a Bengali Hindu family.

He was the founder of the Brahmo Samaj at Kolkata in 1828. His efforts actually led to the resumption of the ethics principles of the Vedanta school of philosophy. He co-founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society. He extensively studied Christianity and other religion. This made him realize that some Hindu traditions and superstitions were required to be reformed. He came to this conclusion while working for the East India Company. Apart from this he was born into a family with religious diversity which probably controlled his thinking. Roy was against idol worship and propagated the oneness of God through Brahmo Samaj..

The title 'Raja' was given to him by the Mughal Emperor. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first educated Indian to travel to England. He went to England as an ambassador of the Mughal emperor Akbar II.

He wanted to combine the righteousness of Western and Indian culture. He was against traditional Hindu practices and echoed his voice against Sati system, polygamy, caste rigidity and child marriage. He was greatly moved by his sister-in-laws death who became Sati.

He put remarkable efforts in the education system of India. To modernize the education system, Raja Ram Mohan Roy established many English schools. He set up the Hindu collage at Calcutta in 1822. He assisted Alexander Duff to establish the General Assembly's Institution. Roy promoted and urged that science, technology, western medicine and English should be taught at Indian schools.

To politically educate people, Raja Ram Mohan Roy even published magazines in different languages including English, Hindi, Persian and Bengali. Noticeable magazines published by him were the Brahmonical Magazine, the Sambad Kaumudi and Mirat-ul-Akbar.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy died on 27 September 1833 in Bristol because of meningitis.

Though India has made a progress in some areas and left behind certain social evils but condition of women is still far behind what it should be. Reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy should be born again in India to remove all sorts of evils from the society.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on August 14, 1774 to Ramakanta Roy and Tarini Devi in Radhanagar village of Hoogly district, Bengal Presidency. His father was a wealthy Brahmin and orthodox individual, and strictly followed religious duties. At the age of 14 Ram Mohan expressed his desire to become a monk, but his mother vehemently opposed the idea and he dropped it.

Following the traditions of the time, Ram Mohan had a child marriage at age nine but his first wife died soon after the marriage. He was married for a second time at ten and had two sons from the marriage. After the death of his second wife in 1826, he married for a third time and his third wife outlived him.

Though his father Ramakanto was very orthodox but wanted his son to pursue higher education. He got Bengali and Sanskrit education from the village school. After that, Ram Mohan was sent to Patna to study Persian and Arabic in a Madrasa. Persian and Arabic were in high demand at that time as it was still the court language of the Mughal Emperors. He studied the Quran and other Islamic scriptures. Post completion of his studies in Patna, he went to Benares (Kashi) to learn Sanskrit. He mastered the language in no time and began studying scriptures, including the Vedas and Upanishads. He learnt English language at the age of 22. He read the works of philosophers like Euclid and Aristotle which helped shape his spiritual and religious conscience.

Post completion of his education, Rammohan entered the services of the East India Company as a clerk. He worked in the Collectorate of Rangpur, under Mr. John Digby. He was eventually promoted to be a Dewan, a post that referred to a native officer entrusted with the role of collecting revenues.

SOCIAL REFORMS

During the late 18th century (what was known as the Dark Age), the society in Bengal was burdened with a host of evil customs and regulations. Elaborate rituals and strict moral codes were enforced which were largely modified, and badly interpreted ancient traditions. Practices like child marriage (Gouridaan), polygamy and Sati were prevalent that affected women in the society. The most brutal among these customs was the Sati Pratha. The custom involved self-immolation of widows at their husband's funeral pyre. While the custom in its original form gave choice to the women to do so, it gradually evolved to be a mandatory custom especially for Brahmin and higher caste families. Young girls were married to much older men, in return for dowry, so that these men could have the supposed karmic benefits from their

wives' sacrifice as Sati. More often than not the women did not volunteer for such brutality and had to be forced or even drugged to comply.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was abhorred by this cruel practice and he raised his voice against it. He spoke freely and took his views to the higher ups in the East India Company. His passionate reasoning and calm perseverance filtered through the ranks and ultimately reached the Governor General Lord William Bentinck. Lord Bentinck sympathised with Roy's sentiments and intentions and amid much outcry from the orthodox religious community, the Bengal Sati Regulation or Regulation XVII, A. D. 1829 of the Bengal Code was passed. The act prohibited the practice of Sati Daha in Bengal Province, and any individual caught practicing it would face prosecution. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's name is thus etched forever as a true benefactor of women not just for helping abolish the custom of Sati, but also raising his voice against child marriage and polygamy, while demanding equal inheritance rights for women. He was also a great opponent of the rigid caste divisions of his time.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

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. His efforts to combine true to the roots theological doctrines along with modern rational lessons saw him establish the Anglo-Vedic School in 1822 followed by the Vedanta College in 1826.

RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS

Ram Mohan Roy vehemently opposed the unnecessary ceremonialism and the idolatry advocate by priests. He had studied religious scriptures of different religions and advocated the fact that Hindu Scriptures like Upanishads upheld the concept of monotheism. This began his quest for a religious revolution to introduce the doctrines of ancient Vedic scriptures true to their essence. He founded the Atmiya Sabha in 1828, and the first meeting of this new-found religion as held on August 20 that year. The Atmiya Sabha reorganised itself into the Brahma Sabha, a precursor organisation of the Brahma Samaj. The primary facets of this new movement were monotheism, independence from the scriptures and renouncing the caste system. Brahma religious practices were stripped bare of the Hindu ceremonialism and were set up following the Christian or Islamic prayer practices. With time, the Brahma Samaj became a strong progressive force to drive social reforms in Bengal, especially women education.

JOURNALISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Ram Mohan Roy was a staunch supporter of free speech and expression. He fought for the rights of vernacular press. He also brought out a newspaper in Persian called 'Miratul- Akhbar' (the Mirror of News) and a Bengali weekly called 'Sambad Kaumudi' (the Moon of Intelligence). In those days, items of news and articles had to be approved by the Government before being published. Ram Mohan protested against this control by arguing that newspapers should be free and that the truth should not be suppressed simply because the government did not like it.

DEATH

Raja Ram Mohan Roy travelled to England in 1830 to request the Imperial Government to increase the royalty, received by the Mughal Emperor and to ensure that Lord Bentinck's Sati Act would not be

overturned. During his visit to United Kingdom, Raja Ram Mohan Roy died of meningitis at Stapleton in Bristol on 27 September, 1833. He was buried at the Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol. Recently, the British government has named a street in Bristol as 'Raja Rammohan Way' in the memory of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

LEGACY

Ram Mohan viewed education as a medium to implement social reforms so he came to Calcutta in 1815 and the very next year, started an English College by putting his own savings. He wanted the students to learn the English language and scientific subjects and criticized the government's policy of opening only Sanskrit schools. According to him, Indians would lag behind if they do not get to study modern subjects like Mathematics, Geography and Latin. Government accepted this idea of Ram Mohan and also implemented it but not before his death. Ram Mohan was also the first to give importance to the development of the mother tongue. His 'Gaudiya Byakaran' in Bengali is the best of his prose works. Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra also followed the footsteps of Ram Mohan Roy.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a zealous Social reformer holding modern and progressive views. He was born in 1772, in a prosperous and orthodox Brahmin family at Hoogly in West Bengal.

He stood firmly against all sort of social bigotry, conservatism and superstitions and advocated English and western education for his countrymen. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great scholar too. He made a wide study of different religions of the world including Christianity and Islam. He also knew many languages like English, Persian, Arabic, Latin, French and Hebrew. He was also a great scholar of Bangla and translated Vedas and Upanishads into Bengali.

He was honoured the title 'Raja' by the Moghul Emperor. Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed in the fundamental unity of all religions. In 1814, he founded, 'Atmiya Samaj' and in 1828, the 'Brahma Samaj'. Through these organisations he wanted to expose the religious hypocrisies and to check the growing influence of Christianity on the Hindu society.

By far, the greatest achievement of Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a social reformer was the abolition of 'Sati' in 1829, child marriage and 'Pardha'. He was been rightly called the 'Father of Indian Nationalism'. He died on 27th September 1833, in England.

ABOUT THE RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY :

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the founder of the Brahma Sabha movement in 1828, which engendered the Brahma Samaj, an influential socio-religious reform movement.

- His influence was apparent in the fields of politics, public administration and education as well as religion. He was known for his efforts to establish the abolishment of the practice of sati, the Hindu funeral practice in which the widow was compelled to sacrifice herself in her husband's funeral pyre in some parts of Bengal.
- What is not so well known is that Roy protested against the East India Company's decision to support vernacular education and insisted that English replace Sanskrit and Persian in India.
- It was he who first introduced the word "Hinduism" into the English language in 1816. For his diverse activities and contributions to society, Raja Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as one of the most important and contentious figures in the Bengali renaissance.
- His efforts to protect Hinduism and Indian rights and his closeness with the British government earned him the title "The Father of the Indian Renaissance". The British government has named a street in memory of Ram Mohan Roy as "Raja Ram Mohan Roy".

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