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ROLE OF RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY IN SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENTS

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Abstract

By the end of the eighteenth century, the foundation of the British rule was firmly laid in India. Together with the establishment of the British political supremacy the storm of the western culture and civilization began to rage violently the country. It affected the evolution of Indian culture. The British came to the conclusion that their religion and culture we no less than any other foreign religion or culture in splendor and excellence. They sought to remedy evils of the day by social and religious reforms. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the pioneer among them and his Brahmo Samaj was the first leading religious movement. The cardinal principles of the Brahmo Samaj were the worship of one God, the Author and Preserver of the Universe and the brotherhood of man. Raja Ram Mohan Roy rejected the barriers of caste divisions, worship o idols are sacrificial ritual and he boldly stood forth as the high priest of universalism and love.

Key words: Reform, Movement, Superstitions, Pioneer, Traditions, Barriers.

Introduction

Reckoning the millennia of Indian history, one can hardly think of a greater contrast than the one that existed between eighteenth-century and twentieth-century India¹. In the 18th century, the Indian society and religion presented a gloom picture – bundle or superstitions, society grew rotten and stagnated culture¹¹. The nineteenth century was the pivotal century that saw the initiation of this process that brought about an enormous transformation in the religious, social, economic political, and cultural spheres¹¹¹. Social movements are organised efforts to change or resist the change in the social structure¹⁴. They do not emerge automatically but emerged due to the shared dissatisfaction; and the conviction that the collective action would lead to the goal. Ideology, timing and leadership have important role to play in a social movement.

Reform movements in India

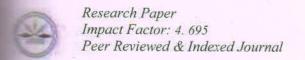
Sovereignty is the soul of society. The country fell to political subordination and that was the decline of dharma. The leadership failed to come up to the social requirements. The social order fell into disruption. Social vigour got dissipated superstition became supreme and religion received the lip service. This gave rise to chain of reform movements aims at the reconstruction of social institutions. It took the shape of socio-religious movements. In the nineteenth century Brahms Samaj, Param Hansa Mandali, Prathana Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, Muhammada Literary Society, the Religious Reform Association of the Parsis and Akali Dal of Sikhs – all these organizations made notable steps to bring about religious reforms in India. Though these religious movements were true to their basic principles and concepts yet by adopting reason and humanism they tried to make the Indian people adoptive to new needs and to the freedom movement.

H.C.E. Zacharias writes: "Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj form the starting point for all the various Reform Movements – whether in Hindu religion, society or politics – which have agitated Modern India 1889.

The credit of starting the religions and social reformation in modern India undoubtedly goes to Raja Rammohan Roy Various evils like blind-faiths, sacrificial rituals, caste divisions, idol worship etc., had greatly over-shadowed the Hindreligion. Raja Rammohan Roy was a man of liberal religions views and was friendly to all religions. He was influenced by monotheism of Islam and the Moral principles of Christianity. He believed in the fundamental truth and unity of all religions. He never criticised any religion or any form of religious worship.

Early Career of Raja Rammohan Roy

Rammohan was born in the village of Radhanagar, near Krishnagar, in the district of Hoogly, on the 22nd May, 1772. Exame of a respectable Brahman family. His great - grandfather, Krishnachandra Benerji, saw service under the Nawab Bengal and was honoured with the title of "Roy Roy", afterwards contracted into "Roy", which has since been retained as the designation of the family in place of the caste name "Benerji". Braja Benode, the third son of Krishna Chandra and the grandfather of Ram Mohan, served the Nawab Siraj-ud-Doula in a distinguished capacity; but, on account of some ill-treatment accorded to him, he quitted the employment and spent the rest of his life at home. He had five sons, of whom Ramkanta, the fifth, was the father of Ram Mohan. Rom Mohan's paternal ancestors were Vaishnavas noted for their piets and devotion. His maternal ancestors were staunch Shaktas. Very early in life Ram Mohan showed signs of conspicuous talent, and Ramkanta spared no pains to give him an excellent education. He received his early instruction in the village school, where he made some progress in Bengali. But Bengali was not of much consequence in those days. Persian as stite the Court language, and knowledge of it was indispensable. He received private tuition in Persian at home under a Mauly



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later on he was sent to Patna, then a great centre of Islamic learning, for a proper study of Arabic and Persian. There he Euclid and Aristotle in Arabic, and also made a study of the Koran and Koranic literature. He was then sent for study of skrit to Benares, where he did not take long to become well-versed in the literature, law and philosophy of his people, secially the Upanishads. While this education made him an ardent admirer and advocate of the monotheistic religion selected in the Upanishads, it shook his faith in the popular Hindu religion of the day. On his return home he fearlessly seked the meaningless ceremonialism and the priest-ridden idolatry which prevailed all round in the name of Hinduism. The led to an estrangement between him and his father, and made him leave his paternal roof. In search of truth he went out travel, which was not confined to India alone the extended to far-off Tibet. After about three years of travel Ram Mohan med to his father - when he was about twenty years old - and on his return was taken back with great kindness and section.

Rammohan Roy In Bengal

death of his father in 1803 led him to remove from Benares to Murshidabad, the old Mogul capital of Bengal. There he blished his first work, entitled *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahuddin*, or "A gift to Monotheists" – a treatise in Persian with an Arabic laborate. This work shows in a considerable measure the influence on Ram Mohan's mind and style of writing of his studies labamic scriptures at Patna. In matter, it is a deistic dissertation on the futility of all existing religious and the fatuities of gious leaders. In form, it is cast in a logical mould and abounds with logical and philosophical terms. It is an essay seeking to establish that the real root of all religious is faith in one Supreme Being, and that all the rest is mere excrescence.

mohan now entered service under the East India Company as a clerk in the Collectorate under Mr. John Digby, the elector at Rangpur. He was subsequently promoted to the post of Dewan, "the principal native officer in the collection of the enuexii." In 1972, the British Baptist shoemaker William Carey published his missionary tract An Enquiry of the ligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens. In the following year, William Carey landed in to settle. His objective was to translate, publish and distribute the Bible in Indian languages and propagate Christianity la Indian peoples. He believed that "mobile" (i.e. service classes) Brahmins and Pundits were most able to help him in endeavour, and he began gathering them. He learned the Buddhist and Jain religious works as a means to improve his lament in promotion for Christianity in the cultural context. In 1795, Carey made contact with a Sanskrit Scholar, the lattic Hariharananda Vidyabagish, who later introduced him to Ram Mohan Roy; Roy wished to learn English liii.

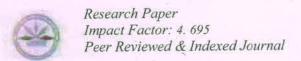
During his stay at Rangpur, Ram Mohan carried on religious controversies with the Pundits, wrote tracts in Persian, mediated protions of the Vedanta, studied the Tantras and made of a study of the Kalpa Sutras and other Jaina scriptures. Thus it was a time of strenuous preparation for his future work. After about ten years Ram Mohan retired from service with the work to finding more time for the work which lay nearest his heart. Leaving government service he went home to stay with mother awhile.

Inspiration of Raja Rammohan Roy

was one fateful event that happened during this period which left an indelible impression on Ram Mohan's mind and ared on him as a powerful impetus later in life, to the everlasting benefit of his country. Ram Mohan had an elder brother, med Jagan Mohan, who died in 1811. His wife, who was devotedly attached to him, burnt herself on his funeral fire. Ram Johan had tried to dissuade her from it, but had failed. When, however, she actually felt the flames on her person she made attempt to get up and escape as almost an act of heresy and so active get, managed to keep her pinned down to the pyre by sans of bamboo poles while, with the noise of tom-toms and other instruments, they drowned her frantic shrieks. Ram Johan, though a witness of this awful scene, failing to help her out of such a tragic end, was stricken with pity and remorse. There and then took the vow that he would never rest till the inhuman practice of Suttee was abolished.

Formation of Brahmo Samai

mmohan Roy wanted to legitimize Hindu traditions to his European acquaintances by proving that "superstitious practices that deform the Hindu religion have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its dictates!" The "superstitious practices" Ram han Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him han Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him han Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him han Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him han Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him han Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him han Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him hand satisfactor worship of Him hand satisfactor worship of Him hand Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him hand satisfactor worship of Wisham Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him hand satisfactor worship of Wisham Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him hand satisfactor worship of Him hand satisfactor worship of Wisham Roy objected included sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages. Brahmos believe that worship of Him hand satisfactor worship of Him hand satisfactors worship of H



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The cardinal principles of Brahmo Samaj were the worship of one God, the Author and Preserver of the Universe, and brotherhood of man. It inculcated respect for the religious and scriptures; but it had no faith in any scriptures as authority^{xvii}. It denounced polytheism and idol worship as sinful and opposed caste distinctions. In fact, the new theism the Brahmo Samaj differed from the older theism of India not in what it asserted, but in what it denied. In fact, the Brahmaj movement was a socio-religious reform movement. Thus, Raja Rammohan Roy rejected the barriers of divisions, worship of idols and sacrificial ritual and he boldly stood forth as high priest of universalism and love xviii.

Services of Raja Rammohan Roy

In 1817, in collaboration with David Hare, he set up the Hindu College at Calcutta. In 1822, Roy founded the Anglo-Hisschool, followed found years later by the Vedanta College, where he insisted that his teachings of monotheistic doctrines incorporated with "modern, western curriculum"; Vedanta College offered courses as a synthesis of Western and Inclearning. In 1830, he helped Alexander Duff in establishing the General Assembly's Institution, by providing him the veacated by Brahmo Samaj and getting the first batch of students. Roy supported induction of western learning into Inceducation. He advocated the study of English, Science, Western Medicine and technology. He spent his money on a collection of the studies. Roy published magazines in English, Hindi, Persian and Bengali. He published Brahmon Magazine in English in 1821. One notable magazine of his was the Sambad Kaumudi, published in 1821. In 1822, Mohan published Mirat-ul-Akbar in Persian language. Brahmonical Magazine ceased to exist after publication of few issues But Sambad Kaumudi, a news weekly, covered topics such as freedom of press, induction of Indians into high ranks service and speration of the executive and judiciary. Sambad Kaumudi became bi-weekly in January 1830 and continued 33 years. He published newspaper to register his protest against the introduction of Press Ordinance of 1823. The ordinastated that has a license from the Governor General in council would be mandatory to publish any newspaper. When English Company censored the press, Ram Mohan composed two memorials against this in 1829 and 1830 respective Being an activist, he steadily opposed social atrocities like Sati and Child Marriage**

Contribution of Brahmo Samaj towards Indian Society and Religion

The Brahmo Samaj was the result of the first creative activity of the Indians inspired by Indian Renaissance. The Brahmo Samaj was also benefited by western concepts of liberty of thought, reason and innovation in society and religion. therefore, criticized the prevalent social and religious practices of the Hindus but justified its arguments on the basis of Hindus religious texts. Its approach was also not that of reproach but of reformist zeal. It, thus, simplified and modernized Himselform religion. It led the first movement which fought the evil practices of Hindu society and religious reform movements among the Hindus. The Brahmo Samaj attempted to reform Hindu Society as well. There remained not a single evil which it sparse from its attack. All those social evils which have been decried by educated Indians and national leaders in modern time were first attacked by Raja Rammohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj. The Brahmo Samaj led a crusade against the practice Sati, polygamy, child marriage of minor girls, caste system, purdah system, untouchability and use of intoxicants. It adopted inter-caste marriages, education of women, widow remarriages etc., as practical measures for removing the social evils. succeeded in creating a general awakening against these social evils in Bengal^{xxi}. The leaders of the Brahmo Samaj worked for the welfare of the peasants, liberty of the Press, social legislation etc. Raja Rammohan Roy wanted the reverse be fixed with the cultivators in Bengal as was the case with the Zamindars and supported the cause of abolishing sati legals Thus, the Brahmo Samaj worked as a pioneer in revitalising the Hindu society, in discarding all its social evils and work in practice against them. It glorified the ancient culture of India, helped in developing confidence among Indians in the own religion and, thus, participated indirectly in the resurgence of Indian nationalism xxii

Conclusion

Brahmo Samaj helped in social and religious reforms in India. It also helped in modernizing India. It placed before Indian people the problems concerning their society and religion and also put forth the solutions thereof. Rammohan was Indian religions, social and educational reformer and humanitarian, who challenged traditional Hindu culture and indicate the lines of progress for Indian Society under British rule. Although he introduced the western concepts, he was appreciate not only in India but all over the World for his sincere efforts to build a nation with respectable values and living place everybody. He is called the "Maker of Modern India" and also as "Father of Modern India". He is also regarded as "Father of the Bengal Renaissance".



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