



A Brief Sketch on Raja Rammohun Roy

A Summary on Rammohun's Contributions

- Fighting against the stagnated religious faiths inculcating idolatry, dead habits, meaningless rituals, superstitions, miracles and the dogmas propagated by the Gurus.
- A polyglot – Acquainting with umpteen cultures while learning the languages, one after another, both oriental and occidental, continental and sub-continental, studying the scriptures in the vernacular and acquiring the essence of free thinking in the areas of religion, philosophy, science as well as the global history of civilizations.
- Upheld the importance of English education in India, yet advocated schooling in the mother tongue at the primary level.
- Leading a movement against the practice of *Sati*, the burning or burying alive of Hindu widows that culminated in the promulgation of Sati Regulation XVII A. D. 1829 of the Bengal Code.
- Voicing the rights of women on properties.
- Advocating for the Freedom of Press against the British Government's Ordinance effecting curbs on the publication of opinions freely.
- A forerunner in the field of translation - Translating the Vedanta, Upanishads as well as his own writings so as to reach out to the maximum possible readers.
- Founding the *Atmiya Sabha* – a forum for dissemination of religious truth and promoting free discussions on theological subjects.
- Constructing school-houses to teach students without any fee through the medium of English as well as the mother tongue.
- Wrote a suggestive Bengali Grammar in English (1826) as well as in Bengali (1833).
- founding the Brahma Sabha, which later turned into Brahma Samaj
- Publications – publishing relentlessly the Tracts, *Sambads*, polemical pieces and thus contributing to the development of the Bengali prose literature

A famous quote from Raja Rammohun Roy unfolds his advanced ideas

'... I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprises ... It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion ...' [Excerpted from a letter to a friend, Rammohun Roy, 18.01.1818]

Tributes to Raja Rammohun Roy on his death centenary (1833-1933) [*The Golden Book of Rammohun Roy*, Calcutta: Rammohun Library & Free Reading Room, 1997].

Rabindranath Tagore, *Inaugurator of the Modern Age in India* –

'... We in this country, however, owe a special responsibility, not only of bringing to light his varied contributions to the Modern Age, but of proving our right of kinship with him by justifying his life, by

maintaining in every realm of our national existence the high standard of truth which he set before us. Great men have been claimed by humanity by its persecution of them and wilful neglect. We evade our responsibility for those who are immeasurably superior to us by repudiating them. Rammohun suffered martyrdom in his time, and paid the price of his greatness. ...' [p. 3-4]

Pandit Sivanath Sastri, *The Story of His Life*

'... Rammohun Roy was not to be dismayed by the opposition thus set up. He soon published a tract called "The Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning of Widows considered as a religious Rite", in which he tried to meet the arguments of the 120 pandits. And one of the reasons which influenced him to undertake a voyage to England was to be able to thwart the efforts of his adversaries for the repeal of Lord William Bentinck's abolition-decree. Thus to the last, he fought for his Hindu country women.' [p. 24]

Amal Home, '*Rammohun Roy's Calcutta Houses*' in: *Supplementary Notes: The Story of His Life*

'... Rammohun Roy came from Rangpur and settled in Calcutta to begin his life-work. Before he, however, came here, a house had been built for him, according to his instructions, by his half-brother Ramtanu Roy, and "furnished in the English style". This was the house known as his "Maniktala Garden-house", and is now No. 113, A. P. C. Road, occupied by the Deputy Commissioner of Police North District, Calcutta. It stood on extensive grounds covering 15 bighas, or roughly 5 acres of land, it's the then southern boundary-extending up to Sukia Street.' [p. 44]

Ramananda Chatterjee, *Rammohun Roy and Modern India*

'... His [Rammohun Roy's] Bengali journal, the *Sambad Kaumudi*, first appeared in 1821. He is practically the founder of native journalism in India. ... Lawyers of eminence have declared that the legal writings of the Raja, such as *Brief Remarks on Ancient Female Rights*, *The Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal*, would do credit to jurists of the highest standing. ...' [Quoted from Mr William Adam, a Baptist Missionary] "Love of Freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul, ... freedom not of action merely, but of thought. ... This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him.'" [p. 102-104]

RAMMOHUN'S WORKS [Excerpted from *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Compiled and edited by Sophia Dobson Collet (1900); 2nd edition ed. By Hem Chandra Sarkar, Calcutta (1914)]

The following is the list, given in the order of time, of Rammohun's works:

- 1803 or 1804 Tuhfatul Muwahhidin, or a gift to Deists. Murshidabad, Translated into English by Moulavi Obaidullah El Obaide, Calcutta, 1884.
- 1815 Translation into Bengali of the Vedanta Sutra.
- 1816 Abridgement of the Vedant.
- 1816 Translation into English and Bengali of the Kena and Isha Upanishads.
- 1817 Translation into English and Bengali of the Katha, Munduk and Mandukya Upanishads.
- 1817 A Defence of Hindu Theism. Parts I. and II.
- 1818 A Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of, the practice of Burning Widows alive.
- 1820 A Second Conference.
- 1820 The Precepts of Jesus: the guide to peace and happiness: extracted from the Books of the New Testament ascribed to the Four Evangelists.
- 1820 An appeal to the Christian Public in defence of the Precepts of Jesus.
- 1821 A Second Appeal

- 1821 Brahminical Magazine, I, II and III.
- 1821 SambadKaumudi.
- 1822 Mirat-ul-Akhbar.
- 1822 Brief Remarks on Ancient Female Rights.
- 1822 Answers to Four Questions.
- 1823 Third and Final Appeal to the Christian Public,
- 1823 Memorial against Government Press Order of March, 14.
- 1823 Ram Dass's papers.
- 1823 Brahminical Magazine, No. IV.
- 1823 Humble Suggestions to his Countrymen who believe in One God.
- 1823 Medicine for the Sick (in Bengali).
- 1823 Letter on English Education.
- 1824 Prospects of Christianity
- 1824 Appeal for Famine-Smitten Natives in South Deccan.
- 1825 Different Modes of Worship.
- 1826 Bengali Grammar in the English Language.
- 1827 Divine Worship by means of the Gayuttri.
- 1827 Answer of an Hindu to the question: Why do you frequent a Unitarian place of worship?
- 1829 Religious Instructions founded on Sacred Authorities.
- 1830 Trust Deed of Brahmo Samaj
- 1880 Address to Lord William Bentinck on the Abolition of Suttee.
- 1830 Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning of Widows considered as a Religious Rite.
- 1830 The Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal
- 1831 Revenue System of India.
- 1831 Questions and Answers on the Judicial System of India.
- 1831 Additional Queries respecting the Condition of India.
- 1832 Remarks on Settlement in India by Europeans.

He publicly declared that he would emigrate from the British Empire if Parliament failed to pass the Reform Bill. In 1830, Rammohun Roy travelled to the United Kingdom as an ambassador of the Mughal emperor Akbar II to petition the British monarch to increase the Mughal Emperor's allowance and perquisites, additionally he wanted to ensure that Lord William Bentinck's Bengal Sati Regulation, 1829 banning the practice of Sati was not overturned. He was successful in persuading the British government to increase the stipend of the Mughal Emperor by £30,000. He also visited France. While in England, he embarked on cultural exchanges, meeting with members of Parliament and publishing books on Indian economics and law. Sophia Dobson Collet was his biographer at the time. He died at Stapleton, then a village to the northeast of Bristol (now a suburb), on 27 September 1833 of meningitis and was buried in the Arnos Vale Cemetery in southern Bristol.

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