ROLE OF RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY IN INDIAN SOCIAL REFORMATION MOVEMENT

An Observation

Dr. Surarapu Bixsham, Senior Lecturer in Political Science New Science College, Ameerpet, Hyderabad

Abstract

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is well known personality as a great Indian intellectual, he has been considered as one of the 'Maker of Modern India' he was the founder of the Brahma Samaj, one of the first Indian Socio-Religious Reform Movements. He played a major role for the Abolishing of inhuman evil practice of Sati, he was a great scholar and an independent thinker. He advocated the study of English, Science, Western Medicine and Technology, he acquired the title of Raja for his Valuable contributions to the society, from the Mughal Emperor, he tried to create combination of secularism and spirituality of Western and Eastern Ideology, throughout his life, he fought for ridding the society of the different bad practices, he tried to rediscover basic unity of the various religions. He waged vigorously against the corrupt practices of the Hindu religion, superstitions, beliefs and diabolic practices like Sati, Devadasi Caste system and inhuman customs of Hindu society and against the narrow and parochial outlook of Indian mind.

Keywords

Intellectual, Modern, Reform, Abolishing, Superstitions, Inhuman, Sati, Scholar, Secularism, Spirituality, Western, Eastern, Devadasi

Introduction

Indian Social reformative movement and thought started during late 18th century the society in India and Bengal in particular 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, like Child Marriages, Polygamy, Sati were practicing against women in the society, in the early 19th century many educated Indians began to feel that Western culture and the rising tide of Christianity posed a challenge to their age old traditions and beliefs, in their attempt to remedy the situation.

Many reformers became critical of the past and began to look for ways to rid the society of its evil practices, such as caste distinction, purdah system and custom of Sati. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one such Well-known and prominent Indian Social Reformer, he combined all possible means, including even those which were commonly believed to be incompatible, he appealed to the rational faculty of his compatriots, and often quoted from the Scriptures, lines and verses in support of the proposed reforms

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on May, 22nd 1772, in the village of Radhanagar, in the Hoogly District of Bengal Presidency, his father Ramakanto Roy, mother Tarinidevi, the darkest era in the history of India, he did his schooling in Sanskrit and Bengali languages in the village school, after that, he was sent to Madrasa in Patna, then he moved to Kashi to learn the complexity of Sanskrit and Hindu Scriptures like the Vedas and Upanishads.

Roy had mastered Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin seventeen other leading languages spoken in the World, he also studied the teachings of the Buddha Dhamma, his father was a wealthy Brahman and orthodox Personality and strictly follows religious principles, at the age of fourteen years of Raja Ram Mohan Roy was expressed his ambition to become a monk, but his mother out rightly opposed his desire, due to that he dropped it. Ram Mohan closely followed his father's path of combining profitable money lending activity with the purchase of prime estates and at the age 22,he learned the English language

With his family's long standing secular service under the Mughals explains the Roy's close familiarity with Indo-Persian culture and what has come to be seen as his great regard for the externals of Moslem civilization

Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Some of the Writings

Roy published magazines in different languages including English, Hindi, Persian and Bengali, his popular journals covered Socio-Political issues in India, the post 1814 writings, by comparison, cover a wide range of subjects, covering metaphysics, Bengali grammars, temperance, genderjustice, history, Hindu laws of inheritance and observations on the State as Society and Economy in contemporary Bengali, from Calcutta he also successfully ran three journals ,news papers like the Bengali Samvad Kaumudi, the bilingual Brahmanical magazine and the Persian Mirat ul Akhbar.

His some writings are [1] The Defense of Hindu Theism in 1817 [2]Second Appeal to the Christian Public, Brahmanical Magazine three with Bengali translation and a new Bengali news paper called Samvad Kaumudi in 1821,[3] A Persian paper called Mirat-ul-Akbar contained a tract entitled Brief Remarks on Ancient Female Rights and a book in Bengali called Answers to Four Questions in 1822 [4] Third and Final appeal to Christian public, a memorial to the King of England on the subject of liberty of the press, Ramdoss papers relating to Christian controversy, Brahmanical Magazine, No.iv, letter to Lord Arnherst on the subject of English education, a tract called' Humble Suggestions and a book in Bengali called ivine Pathyapradan or Medicine for the Sick' all in 1823 [5] A letter to Rev. H. Ware on the 'Prospects of Christianity in India' and an 'Appeal for Famine-smitten natives in Southern India' in 1824 [6] Atract on the different modes of Worship, in 1825 [7] The Divine Worship, in 1827, [8] The Universal Religion, in 1828, [9] A form of Divine worship and a collection of hymns composed by him and his friends, in 1828; 'Contemporary Conditions- Influences'

Social Conditions

At time of late 18th century, Bengal society 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 Marriages, Polygamy and Sati were prevalent against women in the society, in the early 19th century, many educated Indians began to feel that Western Culture and the Rising Tide of Christianity posed a challenge to their age old traditions and beliefs. In their attempt to remedy the situation, many reformers became critical of the past and began to look for ways to rid the society of its evils, such as Caste system or distinction, purdah system and the custom of Sati, they wanted a new society or order in keeping with the traditional values and modern development

Roy had great admiration for India's past when Indian Civilizations ruled the World along with the Babylonians, Egyptians and the Chinese. Many principles embodied by such civilizations like Monotheism, Passion for Trade, Business as huge source of income, single idea- were loved by Roy. He believed that one fault of Western Countries was that they ignored their ancient history totally, but India believed through a combination of Modern European Methods and Ancient Civilizations could put India on a huge path of modernization. He was not alone in this thought- even Rabindranath Tagore and Motilal Nehru felt the same way, many Indians were impressed by progress made by science as well as the doctrine of reason and humanism of the West.

Ram Mohan Roy influenced by different Foreign writers, they were Montesquieu, Blackstone and Bentham, he admired the Bible as much as he did the Vedanta and the Quran, many of his critics thought that two major features of Roy's Brahma Samaj, namely; opposition to idol-worship and the practice of collective prayer were borrowed from Christianity, Roy was charged of Christianising Hindustan in a surreptitious manner, thus, Roy was someone who had gone beyond narrow divisions of religious faiths, he embraced all that was the most valuable and the most inspiring in Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Socio-Religious Reformist Ideas

Roy was a prominent Indian Social and Religious reformer, he is methods of social reform were multifaceted, he included all possible ways, including even those which were commonly believed to be incompatible, he appealed to the rational personalities of his compatriots, and often quoted from the scriptures, lines and verses in support of the proposed reforms.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was against the practice of Purdah, Sati and Restrictions on Women, Child Marriages and Division of the Hindu Society in to different Castes, these Bad practices have created a division in the

society and driven a wedge among the different communities. Perhaps the Greatest Social Reform with which Raja Ram Mohan Roy's name will be permanently associated with the Abolition of Cruel practice of Sati, Roy used all the methods at his disposal to stop this inhuman practice, which forced the helpless widow to burn herself alive on the funeral pyre of her husband, he advocated the Abolition of Polygamy, and wanted women to be educated and given the Right to inherit property.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was also a prominent Religious Reformer, he said that the rationality and modernity needed to be introduced in the field of religion and that 'irrational religion' was root of different social evils in India. The socio- political progress of this Country mainly depends on the 'Successful Revolution in the religious thought and behavior of the people, his interest not only in reforming the Hindu religion and also tried to remove the discrepancies among the different religions of the World.

He undertook a serious study of corporatism between the various religions and realized in due course that true Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are not fundamentally different from each other, he hoped that the Universal Religion for human beings could be established by combining the best principles of all religions. The Concept of Universal Religion proposed not only religious tolerance, but also transcending all the sectarian barriers of separate religion, Roy thus attempted a spiritual synthesis, stressing the Unity of all religious experiences

In 1828, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was established the Brahma Samaj, this acted as forum for religious and philosophical contemplation and discussion, Roy criticism of religions antagonized the priestly classes of all religious organizations.

Roy's Reformative Struggle on Caste System and Abolition of Sati.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy's strongest objection on the Caste system was on the grounds that it fragmented society into many divisions and sub divisions, caste divisions destroyed social homogeneity and the integrated texture of society and weakened it. Caste divisions deprived the people completely of political feeling, as tease, the feeling of commonality, of solidarity, people so divided become incapable of undertaking any great task. Besides the divisive role of caste system, Roy was also critical about its discriminatory nature.

He was against the inequalities inherent in the traditional caste hierarchy, he thought it to be illogical to assess the worth of an individual on the basis of birth and not on his worth, he was in favour of inter- caste and inter-racial marriages, which he thought, could effectively break the barriers of the caste divisions.

The most brutal custom was the Sati, the custom involved in self-immolation of widow burning of the live wife over her dead at their husband's funeral pyre, idolatry and other beliefs. While the custom in its original form give 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 too 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, the greatest achievement in the field of Social Reform was the Abolition of Sati, his campaign against Sati, aroused the opposition of the orthodox Hindus who bitterly attacked him, Ram Mohan Roy realized that the practice of Sati was due to the extremely low position.

Conclusion

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was became father of Indian Social Reformer, due to the tireless efforts for the modern India both intellectually and spiritually, his contributions, writings and his ideas are an example of synthesis of ancient Indian Ideas with modern western political principles, he was not only social reformer and also father of modern Indian liberal tradition and Indian renaissance, he is the champion of women's rights, the pioneer of social and political reforms. As the father of modern India, he worked against superstitious beliefs and diabolic practices like the Sati, the Devadasi and the Caste system, in order to recreate a society which would be open enough to treat everyone as ' free and equal' he harmonized caste with modern humanity, ancient superstition with modern science, despotism with democracy, stagnant custom with conservative progress and polytheism with monotheism.

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