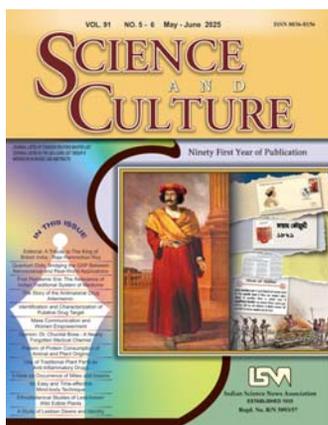


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EDITORIAL

A TRIBUTE TO THE KING OF BRITISH INDIA: RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY



Indian Renaissance was a constructive interaction and a creative synthesis of the best of both worlds i.e. East and West within the canopy of Indian tradition and culture. Raja Rammohun Roy (22 May 1772 – 27 September 1833) was the torch bearer followed by Iswar Chandra

Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Prafulla Chandra Ray, Asutosh Mookerjee, Swami Vivekananda and many others from all stages of Indian life, culture, religion, literature and finally science. During the initial stage of Indian Renaissance, Rammohun had a good proximity with the ruling British Administrators posted in Calcutta. Rammohun can be regarded as the pioneer in propagating new ideas resulting in the renaissance of India. He changed the world through his talents and innovative ideas. He has made significant contribution for the betterment of human kind specially for women during the British India period to have the identity of our own nation. Rammohun belonged to the Jewel Person during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The title “**King**” was bestowed on him because he was the “**King**” of modern India’s knowledge, thought and his ideals and activities. He was given the title of “Raja (King)” by *Mughal Emperor Akbar II (r.1806-1837)*. Raja Rammohun Roy was a prominent social reformer, intellectual and known as the “Father of Indian Renaissance”. He was the first Indian to draw the attention of whole world and he was the first person to speak of universal humanism and his activities were widely discussed at the global level. The Raja worked against

religious aberrations, against casteism, for the freedom of press, for the introduction of modern scientific education. He also spoke for the rights of farmers on land, spoke about the necessity of giving equal weightage to all and



sundry through the institution of Panchayats, which are still relevant even in 21st century. He was a man of extraordinary breadth of mind with many-sided activities. The Raja was the pioneer of English education in India and who probably did more than any other man to bring Indians and Englishmen together. He knew several languages like Bengali, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and English and also studied Christianity and Islam to understand the different religions. He was proficient in Latin, Greek and Hebrew and also having expertise in religious texts like Vedas, Upanishads and Hindu Philosophy. Rammohun was the first Hindu to go to England and explain to the British public the duty which they owed to India and the ultimate result of his mission



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and we owe this to Raja Rammohun Roy. In fact, today English is the language of India. Rammohun took initiative to establish Hindu College (later Presidency College) in Calcutta in 1817 as its co-founder. He also established several other schools and colleges like Anglo-Hindu School (1822), Vedanta College (1826), helped Rev. Alexander Duff in establishing the General Assembly's Institution (now Scottish Church College in 1830) and advocated the western teaching style and education in English, science, medicine and technology. He was also pioneer in publishing journals, magazines and books in different languages, namely Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin (A Gift to Monotheists) in Persian with an introduction in Arabic, Vedanta Grantha (1815), A Defence of Hindu Theism (1820), Brahminical Magazine in English (1821), Sambad Kaumadi in Bengali (1821), Mirat-ul-Akbar in Persian (1822) and others like Burning Widows Alive (Bengali and English-1818), History of Indian Philosophy (1829) and Universal Religion (1829).

The Raja was a multi-faceted personality being one of India's most talented philosophers, linguists, social and religious reformers. He is the pioneer for the improvement of social status of women and children and also worked for reform of the traditional caste system. Besides, playing a key role in advocating women's rights, including education, property and widow re-marriage he opposed polygamy, female servitude and sati pratha and child marriage abolition. This reflects his greatness and attitude for truly a renaissance man showing the mixing of old learnings and advocating the new and modern scientific one. He wrote "Gaudiya Vyakaran" (1833), the first comprehensive Grammar book for the Bengali language showing lucid and easy to read and standardize the language during the period of cultural and intellectual transformation. As an Indian and an educated Bengalee person, he realized the necessity of educational reforms on modern lines giving stress on the importance of moral education in character building through the study of



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Indian Philosophy and Western Science.

Rammohun started Atmiya Sabha (Society of Friends) in 1814 and later founded The Brahma Sabha/Samaj in 1828 with Debendranath Tagore in Calcutta marking the beginning of India's modern socio-religious reform movements. In 1830 he travelled to England as an ambassador of the Mughal Emperor Akbar Shah II. His mission was to ensure the Bengal Sati Regulation Act, 1829 proposed by Lord William Bentick (Governor-General of India) banning the practice of Sati was not overturned. During his visit to Bristol in September he became ill with meningitis and finally passed away on 27th September 1833.



Rabindranath Tagore said in a speech on the death anniversary of the Raja on 27th September 1917 "Rammohun came to India to show her the path of this world-progress and his was the message of world emancipation. The rays of the morning-sun strike the topmost peaks when all the surrounding plain is enveloped in darkness; so the intellectual rays lighted up his mind while the rest of the country was drowned in superstition and ignorance. He came and triumphantly announced that he had known the glorious being on the other side of the sea of darkness, and knowing Him, as he did, he could say that happiness is in the enjoyment of the infinite, not in this limited sphere of the world. Then came his message of hope about the future greatness of our land and his noble soul could perceive the germs of that elevated humanity in the narrow aspirations of contemporary Bengal. We may say that Bengal has no cause of despair because Rammohun Roy was born here and with the vision of a seer, saw our future".

Finally, it is pertinent to mention that Raja Rammohun should be remembered as one of the greatest men of modern India and focused in a befitting way following the ethos and culture of India. To mark the 250th birth anniversary, a commemorative postage stamp of Raja Rammohun was released by the India Post, Govt. of India on May 22, 2023. With this we are paying our respectful homage and tribute to Raja Rammohun Roy on his 253rd Birth Anniversary for his brilliant personality, significant contribution and his wealth of legacy as legendary Icon. □



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