



## Raja Ram Mohan Roy

**For Prelims:** Reforms by Raja Ram Mohan Roy

**For Mains:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Contributions

### Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Culture has organized an inaugural Ceremony to commemorate [Raja Ram Mohan Roy](#) on his 250<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary.

- The inaugural ceremony was organized at the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation, Salt Lake, Kolkata, and at Science City Auditorium, Kolkata.
- It is an year long celebration which will continue till next 22<sup>nd</sup> May.
- It was the 250<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the 50<sup>th</sup> foundation day of the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation.
- The Ministry of Culture has inaugurated an **Iconic Statue of Raja Ram Mohan Roy at the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation.**

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### Who Was Raja Ram Mohan Roy?

- **About:**

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the **father of Modern India's Renaissance** and a tireless social reformer who inaugurated the age of enlightenment and liberal reformist modernisation in India.

#### ▪ **Life:**

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1772 in Bengal. His early education included the **study of Persian and Arabic at Patna** where he read the Quran, the works of Sufi mystic poets and the Arabic translation of the works of Plato and Aristotle.
- In Benaras, he studied Sanskrit and read Vedas and Upnishads.
- From 1803 to 1814, he worked for East India Company as the personal diwan first of Woodforde and then of Digby.
- In 1814, he resigned from his job and moved to Calcutta in order to devote his life to religious, social and political reforms.
- In November 1830, he sailed for England to be present there to counteract the possible nullification of the Act banning Sati.
- Ram Mohan Roy was given the title of 'Raja' by the titular Mughal Emperor of Delhi, Akbar II whose grievances the former was to present before the British king.
- In his address, entitled 'Inaugurator of the Modern Age in India,' Tagore referred to Ram Mohan as 'a luminous star in the firmament of Indian history'.

#### ▪ **Ideology:**

- Ram Mohan Roy was greatly influenced by **western modern thought and stressed on rationalism and modern scientific approach.**
- Ram Mohan Roy's **immediate problematique was the religious and social degeneration** of his native Bengal.
- He believed that **religious orthodoxies have become causes of injury and detrimental to social life** and sources of trouble and bewilderment to the people, instead of tending to the amelioration of the condition of society.
  - Raja Ram Mohan Roy concluded that religious reform is both social reform and political modernisation.
  - Ram Mohan believed that each sinner must make restitution for his sins and it is to be done through self-purification and repentance and not through sacrifices and rituals.
- He believed in **social equality of all human beings** and thus was a strong opposer of the caste system.
- Ram Mohan was **attracted to Islamic monotheism.** He said that monotheism is also the **fundamental message of Vedanta.**
  - His idea of a single, unitarian god was a corrective to the polytheism of orthodox Hinduism and to Christian trinitarianism. He believed that monotheism supported one universal model for humanity.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed that unless women were freed from unhuman forms of oppression like illiteracy, child marriage, sati, purdah, Hindu society can not progress.
  - He characterised sati as the violation of every humane and social feeling and as symptomatic of the moral debasement of a race.

## **What are the Contributions?**

#### ▪ **Religious reforms:**

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy's first published work **Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin** (a gift to deists) published in 1803 exposed irrational religious beliefs and corrupt practices of the Hindus as the belief in revelations, prophets, miracles etc.
- In 1814, he founded Atmiya Sabha in Calcutta to campaign against idolatry, caste rigidities, meaningless rituals and other social ills.
- He criticized the ritualism of Christianity and rejected Christ as the incarnation of God. In **Precepts of Jesus** (1820), he tried to separate the moral and philosophical message of the New Testament, which he praised, from its miracle stories.

#### ▪ **Social reforms:**

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy conceived reformist religious associations as instruments of social and political transformation.
  - He founded the Atmiya Sabha in 1814, the Calcutta Unitarian Association in 1821, and the Brahmo Sabha in 1828 which later became the Brahmo Samaj.

- He campaigned against the caste system, untouchability, superstitions and use of intoxicants.
- He was well known for his pioneering thought and action on the emancipation of women and especially on the abolition of sati and widow remarriage.
- He attacked child marriage, illiteracy of women and the degraded state of widows and demanded the right of inheritance and property for women.
- **Educational reforms:**
  - Roy did much to disseminate the benefits of modern education to his countrymen. He supported David Hare's efforts to found the Hindu College in 1817, while Roy's English school taught mechanics and Voltaire's philosophy.
  - In 1825, he established Vedanta college where courses in both Indian learning and Western social and physical sciences were offered.
- **Economic and Political Reforms:**
  - **Civil liberties:** Roy was impressed and admired the British system of constitutional government for the civil liberties it gave to the people. He wanted to extend the benefits of that system of government to Indian people.
  - **Press freedom:** Through his writings and activities, he supported the movement for free press in India.
    - When press censorship was relaxed by Lord Hastings in 1819, Ram Mohan found three journals- The Brahmanical Magazine (1821); The Bengali weekly, Samvad Kaumudi (1821); and the Persian weekly, Mirat-ul-Akbar.
  - **Taxation reforms:** Roy condemned oppressive practices of Bengali zamindars and demanded fixation of minimum rents. He also demanded the abolition of taxes on tax-free lands.
    - He called for a reduction of export duties on Indian goods abroad and the abolition of the East India Company's trading rights.
  - **Administrative reforms:** He demanded the Indianisation of superior services and separation of the executive from judiciary. He demanded equality between Indians and Europeans.

### Civil Services Examination, Previous Year's Questions (PYQs)

**Q. In collaboration with David Hare and Alexander Duff, who of the following established Hindu College at Calcutta? (2009)**

- (a) Henry Louis Vivian Derozio
- (b) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
- (c) Keshab Chandra Sen
- (d) Raja Rammohan Roy

**Ans: (d)**

**Exp:**

- The Hindu College was the earliest institution of higher learning in Asia in terms of modern sense which was established on January 20, 1817 and the college was transformed into Presidency College in 1855, which was given the status of an independent university in 2010 as Presidency University.
- The college was set up by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Radhakanta Deb, David Hare, Justice Sir Edward Hyde East, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay and Rasamay Dutt.
- The junior section of Hindu College was renamed as Hindu School and the Mahapathsala wing was renamed as Presidency College in 1855.
- The girls were permitted to join the college in 1944 and since then the college turned into a co-educational institution. **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer**

**Q. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding Brahma Samaj? (2012)**

1. It opposed idolatry.

2. It denied the need for a priestly class for interpreting the religious texts.
3. It popularized doctrine that the Vedas are infallible.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (b)**

**Exp:**

- In August 1828, Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Sabha which was later renamed 'Brahmo Samaj' (The society of God) Objective of the Bramho Samaj was the worship and adoration of the eternal, unsearchable, immutable God.
- It opposed idol worship and stayed away from the practice of priesthood and sacrifice. **Hence, statements 1 and 2 are correct.**
- The worship was performed through prayers, meditation, and readings from the Upanishads.
- Great emphasis was laid on "promotion of charity, morality, benevolence, and strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds".
- Arya Samaj, which was founded by Dayanand Saraswati, promoted values, and practices based on the belief in the infallible authority of the Vedas. Members of the Arya Samaj believe in one God and reject the worship of idols. Brahmo Samaj did not believe in the infallibility of the Vedas. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**

**Source: PIB**

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