

Course Name- B.A.L.L.B. IIInd Sem.

Subject- History

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Topic- Brahmo Samaj Movement

The 19th century witnessed the growth of intellectual awakening in India. This awakening produced remarkable changes in religion, society, and culture of India. During this period Indians lost confidence in their culture and were dazzled by western culture, blindly accepted western dress, manners and thought. But around the same time a new reformist thought began to influence Indian life in every sphere. It worked to bring about a constructive change in Indian life and culture.

The period during which it happened was called Indian Renaissance. Indian Renaissance brought about a significant change in Indian life and culture. The Renaissance of the 19th century injected new spirit and new ideas into the mind of Indians. They now thought seriously about their progress and development. Modern Indians gladly accepted the challenge of the west and tried to adapt India Society to modern conditions and the best example of these synthesis was Ram Mohan Ray, who examined every Indian tradition and custom rationally and contributed a great deal to the process of modernisation of India.

The Indian Renaissance not only influenced our literature, education and thinking; it also had a profound impact on our religions and society. In the beginning of 19th century there was a new awakening in Bengal as a result of new thought. This awakening was confined to the English educated youth of Bengal. This group was known as “Young Bengal”. Henry Vivan Derozio was the leader of the Young Bengal Movement. But this movement did not have any permanent impact as it lacked organisational ability and a constructive programme of reform.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy :

Raja Rammohan Roy was the best representative of rational thought which was the direct result of Young Bengal Movement. He wanted to reform Hinduism in such a way that it might have a rational basis for all its principles and practices. He laid stress on the essential assimilation of three religions – Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. He founded the reformist movement in India and wanted to modernise India as early as possible. He was called the “Prophet of Modern India”.

Raja Rammohan Ray was born in 1774 in a wealthy family of Bengal. As a student he learnt Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. In 1803, he published his first book, Tohfal-ul-Mohiddin, in which he criticised idol worship. In 1815 he founded the Atmiya Sabha. He was opposed to idol worship, ritualism, blind faith and superstitions. In order to give a proper shape to his ideas, he founded Brahmo Samaj on 20th August 1828. In 1833 he died in England.

Main Principles of Brahmo Samaj :(Teachings)

Among countless feats, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's greatest achievement was that of setting up of the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. It is considered to be one of India's first socio-religious reform movements.

Brahmo Samaj believed in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind. It not only discarded meaningless rites and rituals but also forbade idol-worship. Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed in the oneness of God and preached the same.

It preached to love human beings, stop animal sacrifice and offerings. It came forward for the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence,

virtue and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religions and creeds.

Through Brahmo Samaj, Raja Ram Mohan Roy raised his voice against the caste system, polygamy, child marriage, infanticide, untouchability, seclusion of women and Purdah system.

Brahmo Samaj attacked the age-old social taboos and tried to make Indian society more secular than before. The Samaj was lesser of a religion and more of an intellectual approach.

Study of Religions

Raja Ram Mohan Roy studied Persian and Arabic along with Sanskrit, which influenced his thinking about God. He read Upanishads, Vedas and the Quran and translated a lot of the scriptures into English.

When he returned home, his parents married him off in a bid to change his outlook. But Roy continued to explore the depths of Hinduism only to highlight its hypocrisy.

Fight for women rights and the abolition of Sati Pratha

Ram Mohan Roy believed the extremely low position of Hindu women was responsible for practices like Sati Pratha. He advocated the abolition of polygamy and wanted women to be educated and given the right to inherit property.

It can be said that his most significant contribution as a social engineer was towards women's rights.

Nearly 200 years ago, when evils like -- Sati -- plagued the society, Roy played a critical role to bring about a change. He opposed the regressive practice that forced a widow to immolate herself on husband's pyre. He advocated the right of women to be remarried.

In 1830, he travelled to the UK as the Mughal Empire's envoy to ensure that Lord William Bentinck's law banning the practice of Sati was not overturned.

Contribution to the field of education

Raja Ram Mohan Roy also brought reforms in the field of education. He established The Hindu College, the City College, Vedanta College, and English Schools were established in Calcutta through his efforts. He contributed a lot for the development of Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English language and wrote books in these languages.

He supported the introduction of English education in India, which he thought was necessary to promote enlightenment and knowledge of science in the country.

Pioneer of Indian journalism

Through the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Charles Metcalfe removed all the restrictions imposed on Press in 1835 and gave freedom and autonomy to the newspapers in publication and management. Ram Mohan himself edited the Sambaed Kumauni and Miratul Akbar. Raja Ram mohan Roy passed away on September 27, 1833.
