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## **Raja Ram Mohan Roy as an Educational Reformer: An Evaluation**

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### **Abstract**

*The Maker of modern India, the founder of the greatest socio- religious reform movements, Brahma Samaj, Raja Ram Mohan Roy has played a crucial role in the abolition of social evils like the Sati system. He also advocated various changes in the Indian society by popularizing the study of English, modern medicine, technology and science. This is the reason why he was referred as “Raja” by the Mughal emperor. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an Indian religious, social, educational reformer and humanitarian, who challenged traditional Hindu culture and indicated the lines of progress for Indian societies under British rule. He, along with Dwarkanath Tagore and other prominent Bengalis of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, founded the Brahma Sabha in 1828, which engendered the Brahma Samaj, an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement during the Bengal Renaissance. His influence was visible in the field of politics, public administration, society, religion, as well as education. Raja Ram Mohan Roy may rightly be called the precursor of the modern system of education in India. His moral earnestness and energy, his boldness of imagination and firm grasp of first doctrine mark out Raja Ram Mohan Roy not mere as ‘great educational reformer but as a Nation builder’. In this paper the authors try to highlight the various educational reforms of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The authors also try to shed some light to the relevance of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in present time.*

**Key Words:** *Indian Renaissance, Education, Reform, Educational reforms, Educational Contributions.*

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**Introduction:** India is a beautiful country in South Asia. It is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest country by area, the 2<sup>nd</sup> most populous country with over 1.2 billion people and the most populous democracy in the world. Bounded by the Indian Ocean on the South, the Arabian Sea on the South-West, and the Bay of Bengal on the South-East, it shares land borders with Pakistan to the West; China Nepal and Bhutan to the North-East; and Burma and Bangladesh to the East. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The main motto of India is *Satyameva Jayate*. Many heroes, educators and great men were born in India, like Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Netaji, Vidyasagar, Ram Mohan Roy and so on. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of them. We can't think modern India without Ram Mohan Roy. He was not only a great social, religious reformer but he was also a great educational thinker or reformer. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great scholar and independent thinker and a multilingual person. He believed that education was prime necessity for up-liftmen of Indian society. He advocated the induction of Western learning into Indian education system. So he promoted study of English, Science, Western Medicine and Technology in India. He used his own money in welfare of education system in India. In Bengal Renaissance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as one of the most important figure. His efforts to protect Hinduism and Indian rights by participating in British Government earned in the title `The Father of the Bengal Renaissance`. Resurgence or Renaissance of modern Asia is one of the most significant phenomena of world history during the last two hundred years. Since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the mind and soul of Asia have definitely awakened. The intellectual Renaissance of India has been a great casual factor in the rise of modern Indian

nationalism. One of the greatest forces in the making of the renaissance in India is the Brahma Samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The Brahma Samaj has done considerable cultural, humanitarian and social work in north India during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Sadanandan, G., 2013).

#### Review of Related Literature:

1. Pal, Rajendra, has conducted a project on Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He described Raja Ram Mohan Roy has come to be called the 'Maker of Modern India' without giving up what was good and noble in the past, he laid the foundations for a great future. He also emphasized on English education, women education in his project. ([www.slideshare.net/rajesh8128763899/raja-ram-mohan-roy](http://www.slideshare.net/rajesh8128763899/raja-ram-mohan-roy)).
2. Behera, Arun K. (2012), has conducted a study of the history of freedom of the press reveals that Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an ardent supporter and patronize of freedom of press. He was a pioneer of Indian education.
3. Parwez, Nazir (2011) has conducted a study on Raja Ram Mohan Roy: Social Reform and Empowerment of Women. In his article he discussed the development and growth of the socio-religious reform movement started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy during the 18<sup>th</sup> century with special reference to women rights and their empowerment. He also highlighted the contribution of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the field of journalism which he later used as a plausible medium to reach the masses and to propagate his modern ideas for the cultural regeneration of India and modernization of the country. He thought that without education social and economic progress of his countrymen was not possible.

#### Objectives of the Study:

- I. To know the various reforms of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the field of Indian Education.
- II. To know the Relevance of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Present Time.

**Methodology of the Study:** This study was purely theoretical based. Data was collected from two major sources i.e., to study the biography of Raja Ram Mohan Roy as only the primary source of the data collection and as secondary sources, the investigators were collected data from different types books, journals, articles written by great educators about Raja Ram Mohan Roy .

**Delimitation of the Study:** The study was delimited with the educational reforms / contributions of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in India.

#### Analysis and Discussion:

- I. The Reforms of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the field of Indian Education are given below:
  1. **Synthesizer of Eastern and Western Culture:** We are more concerned here with the work of Raja Ram Mohan Roy as an educationist, and it is in this field that we find his most signal services to his country. He was one of the earliest Indians to realize that India's greatest need was a Synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures. At the same time, he understood that the Indian mind had rusted very considerably on account of its isolation and realized that contact with Western Literature and Science alone could regenerate oriental culture, correct its follies and contribute to it the essential qualities which are lacked. (Naik, J. P & Nurullah, S., 1974).
  2. **English Education:** In field of education, Ram Mohan was one of the first thinkers in India to realize the value of Western Science, and thought. He created major opinion in favor of the English education that could generate a sense of unity among the Indian educated youths. His ideas of western education helped the Government of Lord William Bentinck to introduce European learning in India. ([www.historydiscussion.net](http://www.historydiscussion.net)).
  3. **Literature:** Ram Mohan's contributions to other aspects of social and literary life were highly valuable. True it is that, Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar, Ram Mohan Bose, Rajiblochan, Carey etc. had preceded him in the field of Bengali prose literature, yet it must be admitted that Ram Mohan contributed a style and standard which facilitated the development of Bengali prose as a vehicle of stories, novels as well as polemical literature (Banerjee, J. P., 2004).
  4. **Language:** The great contribution of Ram Mohan Roy to the system of modern education was his emphasis on the study of modern Indian languages. He himself gave a great lead in the matter by writing books in Bengali on Grammar, Geography, Astronomy and Geometry and he is considered as the father of modern literary Bengali prose. His advocacy of the study and development of modern Indian languages.

5. **Women Education:** Equally able was the Raja's advocacy of the education of Women. Although the concept had already been put forward by missionaries, it was the Raja who helped to popularize it among the Hindus. He said that the women of India were highly educated and that the education of women was in keeping with ancient religious traditions and beliefs. The Brahma Samaj did great service in removing the popular prejudices against the education of women that were the prevalent in the Hindu society and the credit for this goes mostly to Ram Mohan (Naik, J. P and Nurullah, S., 1974, pp.131-132).
6. **His Other Contributions:** Ram Mohan believed education to be an implement for social reform. In 1817, in collaboration with David Hare, he set up the Hindu College at Calcutta. In 1822, Roy founded the Anglo-Hindu school, followed four years later (1826) by the Vedanta college; where he insisted that his teaching of monotheistic doctrines be incorporated with modern western curriculum.

However, Ram Mohan was the chief advocate of the modern process of education and the scientific learning. The improvement of native people was the chief motive of Raja. Therefore, he helped the British Government to promote a more liberal and enlighten system in learning. In the new system of education, he introduced the subjects of practical use like Mathematics, Philosophy, Chemistry and Anatomy with other useful sciences. As well as he studied Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic languages. Beside these, he studied English, Greek and Hebrew. He wrote books in different languages like Hindu, Bengali, Persian, English and other languages which he has learn throughout his life. He translated ancient Indian works on religion and philosophy into Bengal.

## **II. Relevance of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Present Time:**

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian who founded a reformist movement in India. He wanted to modernize India as early as possible; therefore, he was called the 'representative of the modern age'. In fact, Raja Ram Mohan Roy played a significant role in the progress and development of social and religious movements. He was a great reformer, politician, editor, theologian and a literary person. He played a prominent role in the modernization of India.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a learned and educated person, so he made development of education and literature the aim of his life. Hence he opened schools and colleges at several places, Vedanta College, the English School and City College of Calcutta were the results of his efforts. All these educational institution so really contributed towards the modernization of India.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy made the newspapers and his books, a medium to propagate his ideals. He also made a tremendous contribution in the development of Bengal. Urdu, Persian, Ariabic, Sanskrit and English language and literature and wrote books in all these languages.
- He made his newspapers 'Sainvad Kaumudi' and 'Miratul Akhbari' vehicles to carry his thoughts to the people. He was also in favour of making all education and literature free from any restrictions.
- True it is that, the credit of in initiating Bengali prose literature is not only Rammohan's due, Carey and few others had preceded Ram Mohan. Yet it must be admitted that he had initiated a style, standard and momentum which helped the growth of story, novel and essay forms rapidly.
- Roy believed education to be an implement for social reform. Without proper education we can't reform our society. Education is an instrument for social change. Roy believed that modern education was an important vehicle to carry social reforms and enlighten people about their rights.
- He insisted that his teaching of monotheistic doctrines be incorporated with "modern, western curriculum". He supported induction of western learning into Indian education.
- He also set up the Vedanta College, offering courses as a synthesis of Western and Indian learning. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great believer in the potency of western education, science and mathematics and propagated their adoption throughout India. He believed that if these disciplines were good for the British, then they were good for Indians too. Despite receiving widespread criticism and allegations of being 'unpatriotic', he was responsible for bringing about a cultural and educational shift in India through his reforms and ideals. He

believed that Indians should learn the good things from the west and infuse it with traditional knowledge to produce unique, potent results.

- He was a scholar and a great educationist who had detailed knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, English, Arabic, Latin and Greek. He supported English as a medium of teaching in India as he believed that teaching through English language was superior to traditional Indian education system.
- Another great contribution of Raja Ram Mohan to modern education was his emphasis on the study of modern Indian languages. (Naik, J. P. & Nurullah, S. 1974). He himself gave the lead in this direction by writing books in Sengali on Grammar, Geography, Astronomy and Geometry. Equally was the Raja's advocacy of the education of women. His Brahma Samaj did a great service in removing the prejudices against the education of women that were prevalent in the then Hindu society.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy may rightly be called the precursor of the modern system of education in India. His moral earnestness and untiring energy, his boldness of imagination and firm grasp of first principles mark out Raja Ram Mohan Roy not merely as a great educational reformer but as a nation builder. (Hampton, H.V., 1947) It is for these and other valuable services that Raja is rightly called as "the maker of modern India".
- He not only brought to the notice of the people the problems pertaining to religion and society but also suggested the constructive method of solving these problems and roused' them from their lethargy.
- Roy's ideas on the empowerment of women were still praiseworthy.
- Roy's advocacy of religious universalism is of great relevance even today as a social and religious counterpart of political secularism.
- He was equally and strongly against such other social evils as child-marriage, casteism, polygamy and exploitation of women. He was appalled to see the miserable condition of Hindu widows many of whom were young ladies (Upadhyay, 2008).

**Conclusion:** From the above discussions, he was not only a social, political, economical, religious reformer but also a great 'educational thinker or reformer'. His contribution particularly in the field of education is very praiseworthy and notable. His ideas of reforms in education still very much significant. Ram Mohan Roy came with his scientific temper, broad outlook, championship of freedom, liberal and fundamental reforms and harbinger of equality and humanism. Now he is no more in the world but his remarkable spot in the field of education till remembering every Indians. Gradually, a current of reformation spread in India and one after the other, various movements emerged in India. Hence Raja Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as the innovator of modern India. Really, both Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Brahma Samaj played a significant role in the making of the modern India. R. N. Tagore called him 'Bharat Pathik'. As well as Bipin Chandra Pal commented a century later that the priceless value of the Raja's efforts was his struggle against medievalism, for which he is recognized and honoured as 'the Father of the Renaissance'. He was the Synthesizer between the Eastern and Western culture. The Synthesist Centrists led by Debendra Nath Tagore, Vidyasagar and the R. N. Tagore. (Banerjee, J.P., 2004).

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