CHAPTER IV

THE BRAHMO SAMAJ MOVEMENT.

In the history of India, the period of nineteenth century occupies a very important place, for it was during this period that Modern India was born and brought up under the rejuvenating influence of the West. Before that, in the eighteenth century, the ancient Indian culture had fallen into a decadent rut, with the result that there was "a general cessation of free intellectual activity, a slumber of the scientific and the critical mind, as well as the creative intuition; a rut was formed at the ideational level; there was a petrifaction of the mind and a cumbersome repetition of ill-understood fragments of past knowledge; old authority and rule became rigidly despotic, losing their real sense and spirit."

Within a few years of the advent of the nineteenth century, all this, however, began to undergo a change for the better. Under the impact of liberal and rational thought of the West, the death-knell of the old medievalistic order, characterised by sheer orthodoxy and blind faith, was rung; and the dawn of a new era, characterised by the searching spirit of enquiry and reason, was heralded. An unprecedented awakening in the socio-religious life of the country was witnessed, bringing in its wake new thoughts, new institutions and new visions.

PRECURSOR OF THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE

The Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century was the outcome of this general awakening, which characterised the socie-

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1 - Sri Aurobindo - The Renaissance in India; p.5.
religious life of the country towards the beginning of the century; it manifested itself through a number of indigenous movements, emerging in quick succession. Of all these movements, the Brahmno Samaj movement was the pioneer one. Imbued with the new liberal and rational spirit, it was destined to be that 'power-leaven' which ultimately transformed the entire social and religious life of the land, and thus paved the way for its regeneration on progressive lines. To put it in the words of H.C.E. Zacharias, "Raja Ram Mohun Roy and his Brahma Samaj form the starting point for all the reform-movements - whether in Hindu religion, Society or Politics - which have agitated India during the past hundred years and which have led to her wonderful renaissance in these our own days."  

THE ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT

The founder-leader of the movement was Raja Ram Mohun Roy - one of the most outstanding personalities of modern India. His keen and searching interest in religious affairs led him to found, in 1815, a Society of Friends, called 'Atmiya Sabha', for the purpose of discussing and thrashing out religious truths, and this constituted the genesis of the later Brahma Samaj movement. The discussions of the Sabha, which were animated by a rational and liberal spirit, were not confined to Hinduism alone, but included Christianity and Islam also. The free and frank views expressed by it under the leadership of Ram Mohun Roy, who openly advocated monotheism and unequivocally condemned idolatry, provoked wide-spread opposition from orthodox quarters, yet it forged ahead with its work without retracing a step from its original stand.

1 - The Renascent India, p.42.
A more formal beginning of the movement was, however, made on 20th August, 1828, when he started a purely Theistic Service in the northern part of Calcutta. With great zeal he started working for the new venture and, within two years of its inception, collected funds enough to build a chapel for it in the central part of the city. The chapel was built in due course of time, and was formally consecrated as 'Brahmo Samaj' on January 23, 1830.

FOUNDER OF THE MOVEMENT - RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

'The Father of Modern India' is the appellation given to Raja Ram Mohun Roy by the general consensus of opinion. This varily signifies the signal role he played in building up a new India, free from the perversions and prejudices of the medieval era. He was the first Indian who took up the gigantic task of reforming the socio-religious life of the country on modern lines. Rightly did Rabindra Nath Tagore describe him as "the great path-maker of this country who has removed ponderous obstacles that impeded our progress at every step and initiated us into the present era of world-wide co-operation of humanity."

Ram Mohun Roy was born in an orthodox family of Bengal. His father, Ram Kant Roy, was a zamindar in the Burdwan district. Being a devout Hindu, he tried to train his son according to the requirements of his own religion. Ram Mohun Roy showed a keen religious disposition right from the early years of his life. At the tender age of fifteen he was inclined to renounce the world and proposed to lead an ascetic life. His mother, however, dissuaded him from the idea by her affection-ate entreaties.

1 - The Father of Modern India, (Commemoration Vol., Part II); p.2.
Notwithstanding the orthodox influence of his family, Ram Mohun Roy was destined to be a great iconoclast. He refused to accept religious ideas without subjecting them to searching thought. He had been deeply influenced by Mohammedan learning and culture, while he was prosecuting his studies at Patna, which was then the well-known centre of Mohammedan theology and religion. His monotheistic philosophy and revolt against idolatry, which outraged his contemporaries were the most outstanding outcome of this influence.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy had an indomitable thirst for religious truths, and this led him to study, with great assiduity, the philosophy and scriptures of various religions, with the result that he not only became well-versed with the indigenous religions of the land namely, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Jainism, but also acquired a considerable mastery of Christianity. Such a wide knowledge of comparative religion turned him a synthesist to the core. His zeal for reform grew out of his profound faith in the Unity of God and the Brotherhood of Man. To give this ideology a concrete form and to propagate it far and wide, he started the Brahmo Samaj movement.

Though Religion was the first concern of Raja's life, yet his vision was remarkably all-inclusive. In fact, the versatility of his personality was astounding. Almost in every sphere - in social reform, politics, journalism, education, literature and law - he was an outstanding figure, with the supreme distinction that he broke the ground where others had not traced a furrow. His religious reforms apart, his crusade against such social evils as Sati, Child-marriage and polygamy, his advocacy for the spread of Western learning and education, his efforts to preserve the freedom of the Press, his
enthusiastic defence of the rights of women and his full-blooded love for political liberty bear a clear testimony to his multi-sided genius, as a thinker and reformer.

To conclude the estimate of his personality in a most cogent way, it would be in the fitness of things to quote his biographer, the late Miss Sophia Dobson Collet, who, though an English woman, seemed to have understood the meaning of his life so pretty well, "Ram Mohun stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between ... polytheism and ... Theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonising in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and an inevitable enlightenment."¹

AIMS AND NATURE

The Brahmo Samaj was first started as a Church having distinct spiritual aims and religious principles which may be summarised as under:

i) To promote love of God.

ii) To purge the Hindu religion of its contemporary superstitions and dogmas by restoring it to its ancient purity as manifested in the Vedas.

iii) To promote the universal worship of One Supreme Creator, the common Father of Mankind, based on the principles of unitarian worship.

¹ Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy; p.17.
iv) To reform Hinduism on rational principles, discarding idolatory and polytheism.

v) To strengthen the bonds of union between the followers of all religions.

From the above, it can easily be inferred that the nature of the Brahma Samaj movement was essentially non-sectarian. It was wedded to the basic principle of 'Universalism' which constituted the ruling ideal of its founder. In fact, it was Ram Mohun Roy's grand idea of universal worship realised. It was in the nature of a universal Church - a church not local or denominational, but wide as the universe and co-extensive with the human race in which all distinctions of creed and colour melt into one absolute brotherhood. "It is not a church of Jesus or of Mohammed; but is emphatically God's church. It is not a church of Hindus or Christians; it is the church of all mankind. It is not a church of Bengal, nor of India; it is the church of the world."

Although the Brahma Samaj movement thus started its career as a religious body, having the above religions principles and aims, but later it assumed a distinct social character. Its founder-leader, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, had a passion for social service. His favourite saying was - 'The highest worship of God is the service to Man'. Under the influence of his versatile personality, the movement, therefore, became a tool of social reconstruction, following plans of reform based on the modern liberal thought in the various fields, namely, law, matrimony, education and the like.

SUBSEQUENT GROWTH

As already said, the Brahmo Samaj was formally started in 1828 by Ram Mohan Roy. Despite the fierce opposition he had to face in the beginning from the orthodox Hindus of Bengal, more particularly of Calcutta, the movement knew no waning under the vigorous leadership of its founder. The death of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, in 1833, however, put the movement in a precarious position for some time. And then its leadership fortunately fell into the hands of Dwarika Nath Tagore, who infused new life into it. The movement soon entered into a new phase of propagandistic activities. Its new leader went about visiting different parts of the country and establishing new Samajas. He also succeeded in creating a small band of preachers who carried the message of the movement to the various parts of the country.

In Keshub Chunder Sen, who joined the movement in 1857, Devendra Nath Tagore found a very helpful ally. Under their joint leadership, the movement entered a new career of unprecedented activity. Through his intense enthusiasm, he soon gathered a band of followers around him who, like him, became missionaries in the cause of the Brahmo Samaj ideology. "The spirit in which they entered upon their work was truly apostolic. They had literally nothing to depend upon. They took no thought for the morrow, and carried on their work in the face of great privations."¹

Keshub Chunder Sen soon started a fortnightly journal which soon became a powerful organ of the Samaj. In 1864, he visited Madras and Bombay and aroused considerable interest there in the cause he

¹ Shastri, S.N. - The Brahmo Samaj, Religious Principles and Brief History; p.32.
represented. This resulted in the establishment of the Ved Samaj of Madras and of the Prathana Samaj of Bombay, the former was later transformed into the Southern India Brahma Samaj, which exists even today.

Though at first Devendra Nath was very much impressed by the work of Keshub Chunder Sen and his younger party, but later he became disgusted with their ultra-radical views and reforms, for example, inter-caste marriage, abandoning of the sacred thread and widow remarriage. Hence, he ultimately dismissed Keshub Chunder and his followers from all offices of the Samaj. Keshub Chunder Sen boldly took up the challenge, resulting in the Great Schism of 1865, bifurcating the Samaj into two separate bodies namely, (1) the Adi Brahma Samaj, representing the old body and led by Devendra Nath Tagore, and (ii) the Brahma Samaj of India, newly founded and led by Keshub Chunder Sen. "The Adi Brahma Samaj stuck to the traditions of old Hinduism and gave itself out as a reforming body of Hindus whereas the Brahma Samaj of India professed broad and catholic views and began to cultivate special communion with the spirit of Christ and Christianity."

The Adi Brahma Samaj of Devendra Nath Tagore, representing the conservative school of thought, rapidly lost its influence, whereas the Brahma Samaj of India of Keshub Chunder Sen, representing the progressive school of thought, flourished by leaps and bounds. Keshub Chunder Sen visited England in 1870, and on his return from there he undertook the reform work on a more comprehensive scale by establishing the Indian Reform Association.

The Brahma Samaj of India did very well for some years, but its progress slowed down from the year 1876. This was due to the

1 - Ibid; p. 34.
emergence of internal dissensions in the Samaj, occasioned by the desire of a large number of young men to introduce constitutional mode of church government, for they did not like the idea of man-worship which Keshub Chunder Sen claimed for himself by asserting that he was the representative of God. Differences ultimately came to a head, and the constitutional party organised a new society to which they named as the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj of India. It started its own journals and built up its own Mandir which was consecrated in 1880. Besides propagating the Brahmo religious doctrines, the Samaj devoted itself to valuable social welfare-work by starting schools, boarding houses, religious services, Sunday Schools and Workmen institutes.

This is a brief history of the Brahmo Samaj movement during the 19th century. Ere long, however, the movement lost its original push and vigour, and in the 20th century it increasingly became an spent force. This was partly due to the want of powerful and dynamic leadership and partly due to the emergence of new reform movements, namely, the Arya Samaj, the Ram Krishna Mission and the Theosophy, in the later part of the 19th century. The movement, nonetheless, exists even to-day. The Sadharana Brahmo Samaj has its head-quarters at the Cornwallis Street, Calcutta, with a separate publicity branch called the Brahmo Mission which has its own press through which it carries on its propagandistic activities.
THE ROLE OF THE MOVEMENT IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

The Brahmo Samaj movement was the first indigenous movement which evinced interest in the educational problems of the country. Before the advent of this movement, the British were trying to decide almost entirely by themselves the educational policy to be followed in respect of the Indian territory under their administrative control. Any indigenous thought on the subject of education, which they might have accepted or rejected, was conspicuous by its absence. The Brahmo Samaj movement, as the first expression of the Indian viewpoint on the subject, was, therefore, significant. Educational issues figured quite prominently in the socio-religious discussions of the Atmiya Sabha which was the parent body of the movement. The movement has, therefore, been rightly called as the forerunner of educational renaissance in the country.

THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL SCENE

When the Brahmo Samaj movement started, that is, in the earlier part of the 19th century, the educational scene of the country was in a blurred and chaotic condition. Two sets of institutions—the indigenous institutions and the institutions run by the missionaries—were ploughing their own lonely furrow. There was hardly any uniformity, coordination or central control worth the name. The whole system—if we can call it a system at all—was in a state of drift, getting only such casual attention from private Indian enterprise and missionaries which suited their own ends and resources.

The attitude of the East India Company, which held large parts of the country under its sway, had also not crystallised into a firm
and clear line of action in the field of education. Although it had casually established the Calcutta Madarssah and the Sanskrit College towards the later part of the 18th century, yet it had persistently declined to accept any responsibility for the education of the natives of the land.

The only silver lining in the cloud was the Charter Act of 1813, which had, for the first time, made the Company responsible — however inadequately — for the education of the Indian people living in their territory. Clause 43 of the Act, through which the British Parliament admitted that education in India was a State responsibility and had a claim on Public Revenues, can rightly be looked upon as a landmark in the history of Indian education, for it marked the beginning of a new era in the domain of education — the era of state-controlled education. The exact words of the Act, setting forth this are, "A sum of not less than a lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among inhabitants of British territories in India."¹

It is, however, remarkable that although the educational responsibility of the Company had thus been fixed up by the Charter Act of 1813, yet nothing was actually done for many years to implement the above educational clause of the Act. On the other hand, the clause was subjected to a long-drawn controversy, as it was not clear from its wordings whether its aim was to spread Western education among the natives or to preserve and promote their Oriental learning. The controversy soon divided the officials of the Company into two clear-cut camps,

namely, the Anglicists and the Orientalists — the former upholding Western education and the latter Oriental learning.

It was at this controversial juncture in the history of Indian education that the Brahma Samaj movement, under the leadership of Ram Mohan Roy, gave its attention to the educational conditions and needs of the country. As an indigenous movement, professing to work for the reform and upliftment of the Indian people, it could not keep itself aloof from the educational controversies of the day. The leaders of the movement were sufficiently aware of the vital role which a reformed and a new system of education was destined to play in the total reconstruction of the country, and hence they gave ample thought to it in all their socio-religious deliberations and plans of reform.

THE EDUCATIONAL IDEOLOGY OF RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

As an ardent social reformer, Ram Mohun Roy was pained to see the general decadence which the contemporary Indian society suffered from in his time in almost all the spheres — in law, in social customs, in religion, in morals and in literature. His searching thought soon revealed to him that the root cause of all this was the ignorance of the Indian people, which blurred their vision and made them stick to the archaic traditions and institutions, without any rational thinking on their part. To his mind, therefore, intellectual awakening, to be unleashed by switching over to the rational and liberal thought, based on individual reason and judgment, was the prime necessity of the day. For this, he thought, a sound system of education was indispensable.

It was this belief which led Raja Ram Mohun Roy to advocate the introduction of Western education, that is, the study of English language and Western sciences, in the country. Although himself a scholar of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, and well-versed in Indian thought
and philosophy, he took full heed of the Western learning and culture, and tried to study it very intensively. For this, he studied not only English but also Greek, Latin and Hebrew. This shows that he gave his verdict in favour of the Western learning on the strength of his comparative study and knowledge of the two systems and not because he was over-whelmed by the outward glamour of the Western culture. He did so because, "he was anxious to modernise education and take it out of the grip of old scholasticism"¹, or more broadly speaking - he was anxious to bring India into the full current of modern thought and civilization, without which, he believed, she could never be a progressive and prosperous nation. "In education he saw ready to hand a weapon which could be used to fight against the abuses and corruption which disfigured Indian social life, and, as an inevitable result of the spread of modern knowledge, he foresaw the dawn of a brighter future for his unhappy country."²

**HIS EFFORTS TO SPREAD WESTERN EDUCATION**

Raja Ram Mohun Roy did not only boldly pronounce his educational ideology based on an unerring faith in the tremendous potentialities of the study of English language and Western Sciences in building up a modern India, but was also the first to take upon himself the task of starting such educational institutions which could give his ideology a concrete shape, to the extent his personal influence and resources permitted. The success of his efforts in this direction may, to a very great extent, be attributed to the fact that there were many others, namely, Raja Radha Kant Deb, Babu Baidya Nath Mukerji, Gopi Mohan,

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1 - Nehru, J.L. - Discovery of India; p.271.

2 - Hampton, H.V.- Biographical Studies in Modern Indian Education, p.54.
Buddi Nath Roy and others, who, like him, advocated the starting of English schools. In fact, the bulk of the native elite of the day was in favour of imparting English education to the Indian youth. It was no distortion of facts when the Raja said, "I may be fully justified in saying that two-thirds of the native population of Bengal would be exceedingly glad to see their children educated in English learning."¹

FOUNDOING OF THE HINDU COLLEGE

The Hindu College - also known by various other names, -the 'Vidyalaya, 'Anglo-Indian College', 'Maha Pathshala' and 'Native Hindu College, and later transformed into the Presidency College - was the first educational institution founded on the initiative of the Indians themselves to impart Western education to their children. Raja Ram Mohun Roy played a leading role in putting the idea into a concrete form. The real story behind the establishment of the College is best revealed from the following extract of the letter written by Sir Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, dated the 18th of May, 1816, addressed to his friend, Mr. J. Harrington, a brother-judge in England:--

"An interesting and curious scene has lately been exhibited here which shows that all things pass under change in due season. About the beginning of May, a Brahmin of Calcutta (Ram Mohun Roy), whom I knew, and who is well known for his intelligence and active interference among the principal native inhabitants, and also intimate with many of our own gentlemen of distinction, called upon me and informed me that many of the leading Hindus were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of their children in a liberal manner as practised by Europeans of condition; and desired that I would lend them my aid towards it, by having a meeting held under my sanction. After his

departure, I communicated to the Governor-General what had passed, who laid my communication before the Supreme Council, all the members of which approved of the course I had taken, and signified, through his Lordship, that they saw no objection to my permitting the parties to meet at my house on the 14th of May, 1816, on which fifty and upwards of the most respectable Hindu inhabitants of rank or wealth attended, including also the principal Pandits; when a sum of about half-a-lac of rupees was subscribed, and many more subscriptions were promised.†

The following significant conclusions can easily be drawn from the above-quoted extract:—

(i) The establishment of such an institution was desired by the elite of Bengal.

(ii) Ram Mohun Roy was the first to come forward to approach the official circle for their help and cooperation in the establishment of the institution.

(iii) Though the co-religionists of the Raja were opposed to him in religious matters, yet they saw eye to eye with him so far as the teaching of English and Western sciences was concerned.

It is, however, a sad commentary on human nature to point out that the same persons, who had accepted the Raja as their leader and representative in putting the demand for the establishment of such a College before the official circle, could not later stand the idea of associating him with the college in any way, so far so that they could not accept any subscription from him for this purpose, for they regarded him as a 'hectic' and 'more of a Mussalman than a Hindu'. As far

†—Ibid, p.43.
the Raja, he met this attitude of his co-religionists with a broad-mindedness which was characteristic of him, for he was more interested in the establishment of the College than in the association of his name with it. Hence he voluntarily withdrew from the venture and the College was founded early in 1817.

The Hindu College was the first English seminary in Bengal, nay, in India. It set the ball of Western education rolling and thus opened a new chapter in the history of education in the country. The institution was purely a secular one, free from all religious dogma and bias. Its sole emphasis was on rational and critical thought. Its free and revolutionary spirit was represented by the young Eurasian Professor, H.V.Derozio, under whose leadership the Hindu youth tended to break away completely from the traditional socio-religious beliefs and habits of their own community. A nihilist and free-lancer to the core, Derozio fired the young students of the College with a passion for truth and beauty; he encouraged them to think and act freely, without any fear or inhibition. The best students of the College gathered round him and in the name of individual freedom, indulged into all manner of excesses—wine-drinking, beef-eating and immoral sexual life. This exuberance of the young students of the college started a new movement, known as the 'Young Bengal' movement. Though this aroused a storm of protest from the orthodox Hindu sections, which almost compelled Derozio to resign from the Hindu College, the fact, however, remains that the College became the spearhead of a new approach to life and social problems characterised by free and rational thought.

THE 'ENGLISH SCHOOL' AND THE 'ANGLO-INDIAN SCHOOL'

The boycott of Raja Ram Mohun Roy from the Hindu College did not, however, discourage him in the least. He decided to work in the
educational field single-handed, depending mostly upon his own personal resources.

In 1817, he established a private English school of his own in Calcutta with the object of imparting free English education to Hindu boys. It was the first private educational institution of its type in the country started by an Indian. The entire expenses of this school were borne by the Raja himself.

Five years later, that is, in 1822, Raja Ram Mohun Roy started another educational institution in the town near Cornwallis Square, which he named as the 'Anglo-Indian School'. Its objects were to provide gratuitous instruction to the children of poor but respectable Hindus. As regards the work and nature of the school, this is revealed from the following extract of its report, written by Mr. William Adam, who was one of the visitors of the school in 1827:—

"Two teachers are employed, one at a salary of £8.150/- per month and the other at a salary of £8.70/- per month, and from 60 to 80 Hindu boys are instructed in the English language. The doctrines of Christianity are not inculcated, but the duties of morality are carefully enjoined, and the facts belonging to the history of Christianity are taught to those pupils who are capable of understanding general history."¹

From the above extract, the following inferences may be drawn:—

(i) Though instruction in English constituted an important part of the curriculum of the school, as a large number of students studied it, yet it was not a compulsory subject.

(ii) Religious instruction was also imparted in it, though it did not mean teaching of Christian Scriptures; only Christian morality was sought to be fostered amongst the students.

¹ - Ibid; p.330.
Mr. William was considerably impressed by the work of the school, and hence he wanted to make it a public institution; but the Raja did not agree to the proposal and himself maintained it till his departure for England in 1830.

THE LETTER TO LORD AMHERST ON ENGLISH EDUCATION

The letter which Raja Ram Mohun Roy wrote to Lord Amherst, the then Governor General, on December 11, 1823, is invariably one of the most significant documents of the history of Indian education. The letter was in the nature of a vigorous protest against the decision taken by the Council of Education in 1823, in favour of Oriental learning against the Western. He was, in fact, indignantly surprised at the decision, for it had come in utter disregard of the general consensus of indigenous opinion, which was explicitly in favour of Western education. Hence, in his letter to the Governor General, he wrote, "--- the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning, educated in Europe, and providing a College furnished with necessary books, implements and other apparatus."  

From this it is evident that the issue had been finally decided in favour of Oriental learning and that the official bureaucracy was not in a mood to reconsider the matter. The argument put

forward by the President of the Committee was simply a lame excuse, for the elite of Bengal, including many Hindu Pandits who had met the Chief Justice, had clearly expressed their opinion in favour of English education. It was wrongly stated by the President that the opinion held by Raja Ram Mohun Roy was hostile to that of his other co-religionists. This might have been true as far as his religious beliefs were concerned, but as regards education, there was a general consensus of opinion in favour of Western education and learning.

Why was the Government so adamant about its educational policy? The answer to this question is not far to seek. The East India Company, as a ruling power in the country, was out to win the confidence of the people, and hence it wanted to avoid any risk of suspicion on the part of the native population about its proselytising intentions. This was also the reason why the Company had severed all its connections with the educational efforts of the missionaries since the acquisition of administrative powers by it in 1765. The officials of the Company thought that to the Indian mind English education was very closely related to Christianity and hence any endeavour to give a fillip to it might arouse the religious sentiments of the people, endangering their administrative and commercial interests in the country.

COOPERATION WITH THE MISSIONARIES

In missionaries Raja Ram Mohun Roy discerned a potential and promising agency for the spread of Western arts and sciences in the country. He did not seem to harbour any apprehension regarding the proselytising intentions of the missionaries, for he did not share the belief that the study of English language and literature would invariably lead to voluntary conversion. He, on the contrary, believed that the roots of indigenous religion and culture were deep enough to
stand any such unconscious and voluntary conversion of the people. Confidently enough, he, therefore, asserted that his association with the educational efforts of the missionaries would only do good to the country, without endangering its interests in any way.

Not casually but as a matter of policy, therefore, did Raja Ram Mohun Roy whole-heartedly cooperate with the missionaries trying to spread Western education among the Indian people; nay, he, in fact, encouraged them to start schools and colleges in India in as good a number as they could possibly do.

It was under the influence of Raja Ram Mohun Roy that Rev. James Bryce, the first Chaplain of the Church of Scotland, presented a petition to the General Assembly in Scotland, drawing its attention to India as a field for missionary educational efforts. Raja Ram Mohun Roy, who used to attend the services regularly at St. Andrews Church, immediately supported this petition in a separate communication wherein he wrote, "if the prayer of the memorial is complied with, there is a fair and reasonable prospect of this measure proving conducive to the diffusion of religious education in India."

The petition, supported by the Raja, had the desired effect; it was in response to this petition that the Church of Scotland sent over to India, in 1830, the well-remembered missionary, the Rev. Alexander Duff, the pioneer of Christian educational missions to this country. On his arrival in Calcutta, he received a most cordial welcome from the Raja, and felt encouraged by his approval of the scheme of religious and secular education which he sought to experiment within the country.

Duff was ready to start his educational venture without losing any time, but he was faced with some real difficulties. Firstly, where

1 - Ibid; p.46.
and how to get a hall or suite of rooms for the purpose, for, due to caste prejudices, the native people were not inclined to let out any of their houses to an European. Secondly, how to secure some students from among the children of the higher classes. And lastly, if students were found, how to persuade them to take lessons in Bible which was an inseparable part of the scheme of missionary education.

To overcome all these difficulties, Raja Ram Mohun Roy came to his rescue. He at once offered him the old Brahma Samaj building at the Chitpore Road. For students, he requested some of his friends, who were not so conservative, to send their sons to the new school, to which they conceded. As regards the difficulty of imparting religious instruction, he was personally present in the opening ceremony of the school (13th July, 1830) to remove the prejudice of its students against reading the Bible. He exhorted them not to get away from the school because Bible was taught there. He convincingly argued with them thus, "Christians, like Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson, have studied the Hindu Shastras, and you know that he has not become a Hindu. I myself have read all the Koran myself again and again, and has that made me a Mussalman? Nay, I have studied the whole Bible, and you know I am not a Christian. Why then do you fear to read it? Read it and judge for yourselves." 1

This satisfied the students and the work of the school commenced. For the whole of the next month he visited the school daily at ten for the Bible lesson, with a view to encouraging the students personally by his sympathetic and assuring guidance.

The above instance is a concrete example of the ready and enthusiastic support which missionary educational enterprise received at the hands of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. This was certainly not liked by

1 - Ibid; p.47.
his conservative co-religionists who entertained serious apprehensions about the proselytising intentions of the missionaries, but this did not deter him from his policy of cooperation with and encouragement to the missionaries, inspired as he was with the yearning to see Western education introduced in the country as early as possible. He knew that the Government was not going to do anything of this sort, and, as regards the Indian people, they lacked initiative as well as resources to start such schools in sufficiently large numbers. To the missionary enterprise, therefore, he looked with hope for the spread of Western education in the country, at least in the immediate future.

EFFORTS FOR POPULAR EDUCATION

Like a true democrat, filled with an intense humanistic fervour, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, instead of confining himself to the education of the higher classes, made laudable efforts for educating the lower strata of society. He was, in fact, the first to think of the education of the masses. Education, as an effective and real tool of national regeneration, could not leave the bulk of the population out of its fold, he believed. In other words, it could ill afford to neglect the masses who, as a matter of fact, stood in need of knowledge and enlightenment most.

The practical steps which Raja Ram Mohun Roy took with a view to educating the masses were two-fold. Firstly, he laid great emphasis on the improvement and popularisation of the language of the masses, that is, vernaculars. He was a great lover of vernaculars and knew that it was only through books written in vernaculars that new knowledge and ideas could reach the masses. He himself gave the lead in the field by writing books in Bengali on Grammar, Geography, Astronomy and Geometry. From this point of view, he is rightly called as the
'Father of Modern Literary Bengali Prose.'

Secondly, he harnessed the agency of journalism for mass-education. He was an ardent advocate of the freedom of Press and fought against such official ordinances which sought to impose restrictions upon it. He himself started a number of Bengali and Persian papers and through them tried to communicate useful knowledge to his countrymen. He did not use them only for political discussions but also looked upon them as powerful instruments of popular education, by dealing in them with subjects of historical, literary and scientific interest. He was practically the founder of native journalism in India. His Bengali journal, the 'Sambad Kaumudi', and the Persian newspaper, 'Miraat-ul-Akhbar' were very popular organs of mass education in his day, and it was through them that attempt was made, for the first time, to educate and enlighten the Indian people with new ideas and knowledge of the modern age.

OTHER EFFORTS TO SPREAD ENGLISH EDUCATION

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The efforts of Raja/Mohun Roy to spread English education by founding new educational institutions and by helping others in founding them apart, he tried to achieve his objective indirectly by advocating certain measures which were bound to have the desired educational results. While giving his evidence before the Parliament on the eve of the passing of the Charter Act of 1833, he, therefore, made the following significant recommendations:

1) English should take the place of Persian as Court language.

He hoped that this measure would give an incentive to the learning of English by the native population. The recommendation was not accepted by the Government then, but a few years later - in 1844 - his recommend-
-ation was taken up seriously by the new Governor General of India, Lord Hardinge, who made English the Court language of the country.

(ii) Higher posts, carrying trust and responsibility, should be open to Indians. This recommendation was accepted by the Parliament, and the Section 87 of the New Charter contained the provision that no Indian by reason of his colour, caste or creed should be debarred from holding any place, office or employment under the Company.

Both the above educational recommendations of the Raja had a tremendous significance, so far as the spread of English education was concerned, for they, on the one hand, actuated the native people to study English language and literature and, on the other, necessitated a change in the educational policy of the Company in favour of Western education. As foreseen by him, the popularity of English, increased by leaps and bounds, as a result of the implementations of these measures, and there appeared a wide-spread demand for the study of English language and Western arts and sciences.

AN APPRAISAL OF RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY'S WORK AND INFLUENCE

The vehemence with which Raja Ram Mohun Roy advocated the adoption of the Western system of education led some of his conservative contemporaries to criticise him by alleging that he aimed at the 'Westernisation' and 'denationalisation' of the country, estranging the native youth from the past traditions and culture of the land. These critics even went to the extent of saying that he looked forward to the day when Christianity would be universally accepted in India.

A little dispassionate thought would, however, reveal that such a criticism hits the Raja below the belt. No doubt, he opposed the opening of the Sanskrit College and pleaded for the establishment
of new schools and colleges, designed to impart Western education, but it would be unfair to construe from this that he had a disdain for the native culture or that he was unpatriotic. Far from it, he loved his country, and yearned for its progress most passionately; no doubt, he believed that this was possible only by bringing to the people of the country the enlightenment of the West. He was perhaps the first to realise that Indian culture had grown decadent, and that to cure it of its infirmities Western learning was badly required. "That he turned to the West for inspiration is no reflection on his patriotism, rather it shows the strength of his devotion to truth and the breadth of vision which entitle him to be called the 'Prophet of Indian Renais-
sance.'" 1

Besides, it should not be forgotten that Raja Ram Mohun Roy himself was a great scholar of classical literatures - Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic - and he appreciated full well their cultural and historical value; in fact he founded a Vedanta College of his own for the higher study of Sanskrit and Hindu scriptures, and also supported the Government policy of granting stipends to Pandits. Further, he realised the importance of vernaculars and did his best to popularise them. Lastly, though he advocated the study of Western sciences, he believed that a sound system of education should also be moral, nay, even religious, of course, without being sectarian; he was certainly not happy at the conduct of many of those students of the Hindu College who, in the name of secularism and rational independence, broke away completely from their own cultural moorings and plunged themselves most desperately into all sorts of excesses for the sake of physical and sensuous pleasures.

1 Hampton, H.V. - Op.Cit; p.58.
The fact is that neither did he believe that national regeneration could be divorced from the ancient culture of the land, nor did he think that Western education could be taught as a system of national education. All that he wanted was that the country should not remain cut off from the current of modern progressive thought represented by the West, for, he believed that if it did so, it could not keep pace with other progressive nations of the world.

All this is enough to prove the futility of the allegations levelled against Raja Ram Mohun Roy by his critics. The truth is that the Raja neither looked down upon the culture of the land, nor did he advocate its replacement by the Western one; his aim was only to purge it of its impurities and perversions by bringing it in contact with the rational and liberal thought of the West. His only obsession was the welfare and progress of the country. He did not hesitate to turn to the Western thought and learning for the achievement of this aim, for he believed that without it the country could not advance on modern lines.

Inspired by such a broad-minded motive of national good, Raja Ram Mohun Roy struggled ceaselessly to introduce Western learning in India through the medium of English language. His whole hearted support to it lent a sharp edge to the controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists, and it would not perhaps be improper to say that the victory of the former in the long run was to a very great extent the victory of the viewpoint of the Raja, for it was he who, among the Indians, was the stoutest opponent of the official policy of promoting Oriental learning. Credit for the introduction of English education in India is usually given to Macaulay, who, by his Minute of 1835, had finally decided the controversy in favour of the Anglicists; but considering the whole matter more deeply, one is sure to realise
that, "he was not the prime mover, that his intention was late and the forces which he represented would probably have been successful without his singularly lackless and blundering championship. For, more important than that 'master of superlatives' was Raja Ram Mohun Roy, whose ancestors, career and aspirations won for him friends among Hindu reformers and Missionaries alike, and entitled him to unite these bodies against the common enemy."¹

As to his educational influence, Raja Ram Mohun Roy may truly be called the precursor of the modern system of education in India, which, starting from his own times, continues to hold the educational field down to this day. This is undoubtedly a clear testimony to the strength of his educational ideology which, conceived from the viewpoint of the future course of educational developments in the country, was inspired by a vision which was almost prophetic. "That the Anglicist school of education for India triumphed over the Orientalists; that in 1878 English became, in place of Persian, the official language of India; that the great Scottish Presbyterians, John Wilson and Alexander Duff, came to India in 1829–1830 and they were able to lay the foundation of the system of education which India has continued to this day; all this, in a pre-eminent degree, is due to the initiative, or at least, zealous support of Raja Ram Mohun Roy."²

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1 - Mayhew, A - The Education of India; p.13.

2 - Zacharias, H.C.E. - Renaiscent India; p.23.