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RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY
From the oil painting in Bristol Museum.

The Manager

'The Servant of India'

Budhwar Path, Poona City

Rammohun Roy and Modern India

ALL earnest attempts at reform, whether religious, social, political, or of any other description, are based on faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice and humanity, which is synonymous with a belief in the moral government of the Universe. This is an essential element in religious belief. One would, therefore, expect to find Raja Rammohun Roy, the first all-round reformer in modern India, "above all and beneath all a religious personality. The many and far-reaching ramifications of his prolific energy were forth-puttings of one purpose. The root of his life was religion. He would never have been able to go so far or to move his countrymen so mightily as he did but for the driving power of an intense theistic passion." As in his life so in his writings, religion occupies the foremost place. His writings on religious subjects are the most important and most voluminous. But their very extent and variety are apt to puzzle those who may strive to find out the exact nature of his religious faith. The late Babu Rajnarain Bose had it from his father, a disciple of the Raja, that the latter before his departure to England

had foretold that after his death various sects would claim him as belonging to their own particular ranks, but he declared that he did not belong to any particular sect. What the Raja foresaw has actually taken place. "It has been said that Rammohun Roy delighted to pass for a believer in the Vedanta with the Hindus, for a Christian among the adherents of that creed, and for a disciple of the Koran with the champions of Islamism.* The truth is that his eclecticism equalled his sincerity."† When his eclecticism is spoken of, it should not be understood in its ordinary sense. He believed in the organic unity of all faiths and had a religion of his own. The organic unity of all religions is born of the kinship of all souls. It would be out of place here to enter into a discussion of the question of his religious belief.‡ Suffice it to say that he believed in pure theism, as his *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin* on the one hand and the

*His habit, in his religious controversies with various sects, of taking his stand not merely upon pure reason but mainly upon their scriptures led some people to think that he was all things to all men. This, of course, is a mistake. His controversial method was meant to convince the followers of different faiths that even their scriptures, which they professed implicitly to follow, enjoined the worship of the one true God.

†*The Contemporary Evolution of Religious Thought*, by Count Goblet d'Alviella, p. 233.

‡For an exhaustive discussion of the subject see the Raja's biography in Bengali, by Babu Nagendranath Chatterjee, which ought to be translated into English.

Trust-Deed of the Brahmō Samaj on the other, in addition to many of his other works, prove conclusively. He did not reject any truth to be found in any scriptures or in the teachings of any prophet or saint ; he revered and accepted truth from all quarters : but at the same time he did not accept any book or teacher as infallible. It should not, however, be forgotten that though he was thus cosmopolitan in his acceptance of truth, there are reasons to think that he believed in what may be called national or racial manifestations or developments of universal theism. His partiality (in no narrow sense) for the ethical portion of Christ's teachings is evident. But it would be wrong to suppose for that reason that he was exclusively or even principally a follower of Jesus. In making this statement we do not solely or chiefly rely on his prose writings in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English or Bengali. His hymns in Bengali, too, in our opinion, afford a correct idea of the faith that lay enshrined in the deepest recesses of his heart. For, poetry springs from a deeper source in the soul than anything that is merely didactic, controversial, doctrinal or philosophical. And from the Raja's Bengali devotional poetry, one cannot but take him to have been a Hindu Theist or a theistic Vedantist.

It is sometimes asked whether Rammohun Roy intended that the society for the worship of one God that he founded should have a social counterpart in

a religious community separate from all existing ones, such as the Brahma Samaj has now become. The question is difficult to answer. But from the little study and thought that we have been able to devote to the subject, it seems to us that at the time when he established the Brahma Samaj, he meant it to be simply a meeting-ground for people of all sects who wished to unite for divine worship, "a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatsoever." Art and philosophy, though each is essentially one all the world over, have yet found various though fitting garb among different peoples according to racial, climatic and other causes. It seems to us, that similarly, the Raja may have thought that Theism, though at bottom one all over the world, has yet found various expression among different races ; and though abstract truth is thinkable, yet as it finds actual manifestation in some concrete shape, it is the part of wisdom to allow the abstract universal theism in all countries and among all races to keep its native shape and colour, in which

it is embodied, freed, of course, from all that is base and impure, with a broad spirit of toleration for other shapes and colours: or in other words, he may have believed that Theism is one, and Hindu Theism, Semitic Theism, &c., are different forms of the same universal faith; and that the future unity of the human race in religion is not to be realised by all mankind following the creed of this or that sect, but by each nation or race giving up all such erroneous and superstitious beliefs and pernicious customs and lifeless rituals as clash with pure Theism, but in every thing else keeping all that is racy of the soil, all that distinctively belongs to the religious genius of that nation or race, in a spirit of discriminating reverence for its own past and of respect and toleration for others.

Professor Monier Williams speaks of him as the first really earnest investigator in the science of comparative theology, which the world has produced.

His insistence on the acceptance of monotheism and the discardment of polytheism and idolatry shows the instinct of the true nation-builder. For the worship of One God is the strongest and most elevating unifying force, and without unity there can be no nation-building. Walter Bagebot says in his *Physics and Politics* :—

“Those kinds of morals and that kind of religion which tend to make the firmest and most effectual character are sure to pre-

vail, all else being the same; and creeds or systems that con-
 duct to a soft limp mind tend to perish, except some hard
 extrinsic force keep them alive.....Strong beliefs win strong
 men, and then make them stronger. Such is no doubt one cause
 why Monotheism tends to prevail over Polytheism; it produces
 a higher, steadier character, calmed and concentrated by a great
 single object; it is not confused by competing rites, or distracted
 by miscellaneous deities. Polytheism is religion *in commission*,
 and it is weak accordingly. But it will be said the Jews, who
 were monotheist, were conquered by the Romans, who were
 polytheist. Yes, it must be answered, because the Romans had
 other gifts; they had a capacity for politics, a habit of discipline,
 and of these the Jews had not the least. The religious
 advantage was an advantage, but it was counter-weighted."

Social customs and practices have been and are
 in all countries more or less connected with the
 religious beliefs of the people. It is, therefore, only
 natural that Rammohun Roy's programme of religious
 reform should lead on to and embrace social reform.
 In all countries, and specially in India, social reform
 consists chiefly in doing away with the disabilities or
 sufferings incident to difference of sex or the accident
 of birth. Or, in other words, social reformers have
 chiefly to fight with the spirit of caste and its evils and
 the subjection of women to the selfish interests and
 pleasures or supposed interests of the male sex.
 Rammohun Roy's chief claim to the gratitude of
 Hindu womanhood is the courageous and devoted
 part that he played in the movement for the abolition
 of *suttee*. He may or may not have been the central
 figure in that movement, but it must be admitted by

all that but for his exertions that inhuman custom would not have been put down by law so soon as it was.

But to prevent the murder of widows was only to create another problem, namely, the amelioration of their condition. It is even now a question as to how we can best better their lot. Many solutions of the problem have been proposed and attempted ; their re-marriage, giving them such training as to enable them to lead honourable, useful and independent lives, so changing the Hindu law of inheritance as to make the means of living of Hindu widows less precarious, &c. His "Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females, according to the Hindu Law of inheritance," was intended to attain the last object. That the condition of helpless widows deeply touched his heart appears also from No. VI. of the *Sambad Kaumudi*, which contained "an appeal to the rich Hindus of Calcutta to constitute a society for the relief of destitute widows upon the principles of the Civil and Military Widows' Fund, established by order of Government." That he was earnestly in favour of the education of women and did not hold the prevalent low opinion of the character of women, is quite clear from many passages in his writings, such, for instance, as the following, taken from his *Second Conference on the Practice of Burning Widow Alive* :—

Opponent. The reason you have now assigned for burning widows alive is indeed your true motive, as we are well aware; but the faults which you have imputed to women are not planted in their constitution by nature; it would be, therefore, grossly criminal to condemn that sex to death merely from precaution. By ascribing to them all sorts of improper conduct, you have indeed successfully persuaded the Hindu community to look down upon them as contemptible and mischievous creatures, whence they have been subjected to constant miseries. I have, therefore, to offer a few remarks on this head.

Women are in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy; consequently the male part of the community, taking advantage of their corporeal weakness, have denied to them those excellent merits that they are entitled to by nature, and afterwards they are apt to say that women are naturally incapable of acquiring those merits. But if we give the subject consideration, we may easily ascertain whether or not your accusation against them is consistent with justice. As to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority. On the contrary, Lilavati, Bhanumati, the wife of the prince of Karnat, and that of Kalidasa, are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Sastras: moreover in the Vrihadaranyaka Upanishad of the Yajur Veda it is clearly stated that Yajnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Maitreyi, who was able to follow and completely attain it!

Secondly. You charge them with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised: for we constantly perceive, in a country where the name of death makes the male shudder, that the female, from her firmness of mind, offers to burn with

the corpse of her deceased husband; and yet you accuse those women of deficiency in point of resolution.

Thirdly. With regard to their trustworthiness, let us look minutely into the conduct of both sexes, and we may be enabled to ascertain which of them is the most frequently guilty of betraying friends. If we enumerate such women in each village or town as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed by women, I presume that the number of the deceived women would be found ten times greater than that of the betrayed men. Men are, in general, able to read and write, and manage public affairs, by which means they easily promulgate such faults as women occasionally commit, but never consider as criminal the misconduct of men towards women. One fault they have, it must be acknowledged; which is, by considering others equally void of duplicity as themselves, to give their confidence too readily, from which they suffer much misery, even so far that some of them are misled to suffer themselves to be burnt to death.

In the fourth place, with respect to their subjection to the passions, this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes; for one man may marry two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards; while a woman, who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all worldly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic.

Fifthly. The accusation of their want of virtuous knowledge is an injustice. Observe what pain, what slighting, what contempt, and what afflictions their virtue enables them to support! How many Kulin Brahmans are there who marry ten or fifteen wives for the sake of money, that never see the greater number of them after the day of marriage, and visit others only three or four times in the course of their life. Still amongst those women, most, even without seeing or receiving any support from their husbands, living dependent on their fathers or brothers, and suffering much distress, continue to preserve their virtue; and when Brahmans, or those of other tribes, bring their wives to

live with them, what misery do the women not suffer? At marriage the wife is recognized as half of her husband, but in after-conduct they are treated worse than inferior animals. For the woman is employed to do the work of a slave in the house, such as, in her turn, to clean the place very early in the morning, whether cold or wet, to scour the dishes, to wash the floor, to cook night and day, to prepare and serve food for her husband, father, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brothers-in-law, and friends and connections! (for amongst Hindus more than in other tribes relations long reside together, and on this account quarrels are more common amongst brothers respecting their worldly affairs.) If in the preparation or serving up of the victuals they commit the smallest fault, what insult do they not receive from their husband, their mother-in-law, and the younger brothers of their husband? After all the male part of the family have satisfied themselves, the women content themselves with what may be left, whether sufficient in quantity or not. Where Brahmans or Kayasthas are not wealthy, their women are obliged to attend to their cows, and to prepare the cow-dung for firing. In the afternoon they fetch water from the river or tank, and at night perform the office of menial servants in making the beds. In case of any fault or omission in the performance of those labours they receive injurious treatment. Should the husband acquire wealth, he indulges in criminal amours to her perfect knowledge and almost under her eyes, and does not see her perhaps once a month. As long as the husband is poor, she suffers every kind of trouble, and when he becomes rich, she is altogether heart-broken. All this pain and affliction their wirtue alone enables them to support. Where a husband takes two or three wives to live with him, they are subjected to mental miseries and constant quarrels. Even this distressed situation they virtuously endure. Sometimes it happens that the husband, from a preference for one of his wives, behaves cruelly to another. Amongst the lower classes, and those of the better class who have not associated with good company, the wife, on the slightest fault, or even on bare suspicion of her misconduct, is chastised as a thief.

Respect to virtue and their reputation generally makes them forgive even this treatment. If unable to bear such cruel usage, a wife leaves her husband's house to live separately from him, then the influence of the husband with the magisterial authority is generally sufficient to place her again in his hands; when, in revenge for her quitting him, he seizes every pretext to torment her in various ways, and sometimes even puts her privately to death. These are facts occurring every day, and not to be denied. What I lament is, that, seeing the women thus dependent and exposed to every misery, you feel for them no compassion, that might exempt them from being tied down and burnt to death.

It is true that even with his unbounded enthusiasm in woman's cause and his indefatigable energy he could not take any steps for educating girls, widowed or unmarried; but it may be safely said that had he lived to return home from England and work here for a few years more, his contact with the comparatively enlightened womanhood of the West would certainly have borne fruit in the establishment of educational institutions for Indian girls and women. That Miss Mary Carpenter came out to India to labour for the good of Indian women is due mainly to her contact with the Raja. Regarding the re-marriage of child-widows, it is believed by some that he published a book advocating its introduction; but no such production has been discovered among his works. His biographer, Babu Nagendranath Chatterji, says:—"We have heard that Rammohun Roy used to express a desire to his friends that the re-marriage of child-widows should become prevalent. When he

went to England, a rumour spread everywhere that on coming back home he would introduce the custom of the re-marriage of widows."

It will appear from a study of his "Brief remarks regarding the ancient rights of females" that he was opposed to polygamy, kulinism and the practical selling of girls in marriage. He showed from the Shastras that second marriages were authorised only under certain circumstances, and observed :

"Had a Magistrate or other public officer been authorized by the rulers of the empire to receive applications for his sanction to a second marriage during the life of a first wife, and to grant his consent only on such accusations as the foregoing being substantiated, the above Law might have been rendered effectual, and the distress of the female sex in Bengal, and the number of suicides, would have been necessarily very much reduced."

We have no indication in his works of his views, on child-marriage. Perhaps in his days in Bengal, though such marriages must have been customary, their consummation was postponed to a maturer age than now, thus minimizing the evil to some extent, as is still the case in some provinces of India. But with regard to this item, too, of the social reform programme, one can only speculate as to what he would have done had he lived to come back from England. For, a man, who had such innate chivalry in his nature that he would never take his seat if any woman of what rank so ever remained standing in his presence, could not have failed to observe the evil effects on women of such a custom,

at any rate after coming in contact with the comparatively free and healthy womanhood of the West.

That Rammohun Roy had not failed to observe the evil effects of caste will appear from the extract from one of his letters printed below.

"I agree with you that in point of vices the Hindus are not worse than the generality of Christians in Europe and America; but I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise.....It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort."

No. VIII of his *Sambad Kaumudi*, too, prints the plea of a philanthropist [probably himself], who observing the misery caused by prejudices of caste, urges the Hindus not to debar themselves thereby from mechanical pursuits, but to cultivate "such arts as would tend to their comfort, happiness and independence." By crossing the ocean, dining with Europeans, and in other ways, the Raja, to a great extent, broke through the unreasonable and injurious restrictions imposed by caste. Why he did not or could not do so entirely, is not known to a certainty. But from his conduct in other matters, we should hesitate to ascribe to him any motives of cowardice.

or self-interest. He published with a Bengali translation the first chapter of a Sanskrit work against caste, named *Bajrasuchi*, by Mrityunjayacharya.

Among the causes of the political subjection of India, he mentions caste in the following passage taken from *The Brahmanical Magazine* :—

“We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries, and the cause of such degradation has been our excess in civilization and abstinence from the slaughter even of animals; as well as our division into castes, which has been the source of want of unity among us.”

While civilization produces culture, refinement and sociability, its excess enervates and makes men too mild.

In recent years various means have been suggested for bringing about the fusion of castes and sub-castes and sects by facilitating inter-marriage among them. The means proposed by Rammohun Roy was the adoption of the *Saiva* form of marriage prescribed in the following *sloka* of the Mahanirvana Tantra :

वयोजाति विचारोऽत्र शैवीवाङ्मे न विद्यते ।

असपिण्डा भर्तुः स्त्रीनामुपहच्छन्नुशासनात् ॥

“There is no discrimination of age and caste or race in the Saiva marriage.. As enjoined by Siva, one should marry a woman who has no husband and who is not *sapinda*, that is, who is not within the prohibited degrees of marriage.”

Rammohun contended that orthodox Hindus ought to consider *Saiva* marriages as valid as *Vaidik* marriages. Had his views prevailed, widow-

marriage, inter-caste and inter-racial marriage, and post-puberty marriage would all have been considered valid according to Hindu usage.

In most things Raja Rammohun Roy was in advance of his age, and rose above the influence of his surroundings. He was the pioneer in many reform movements. But in the matter of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, his views and practice differed from those of most reformers of the present day. He was an occasional and moderate drinker, and quoted some Shastras in favour of the practice. The text he quoted from the Kularnava Tantra in support of his opinion authorises drinking *paishtiki* (rice beer?) up to a maximum limit of five cups each not exceeding two ounces. It also says that wine is to be drunk after proper purificatory rites, only for the clear understanding of a *mantra* and the confirmation of the Knowledge of Brahma, not for sensual pleasure or to such an extent as would result in inebriation and error. If the physiological effects of even moderate doses of alcohol had been known in his days as they now are, he would certainly have been a teetotaller. There is also another matter in which he was not in advance of his age. In his "Brief remarks regarding the ancient rights of females," he says that of the three modes of conduct left to the widows of a polygamous man to pursue, the second is "to walk in the paths of unrighteousness

for their maintenance and independence"; and this he, of course, condemns, and thereby shows himself to be, as we otherwise also know him to have been, an advocate of social purity. Yet it would appear that he found nothing objectionable in entertaining his guests with the nautch and music of dancing girls in his residence. For we find in Fanny Parkes' "Wanderings of a Pilgrim," Vol. I, Chap. IV (Residence in Calcutta, May 1823), the following passage :—

"The other evening we went to a party given by Rammohun Roy, a rich Bengali baboo: the grounds, which are extensive, were well illuminated, and excellent fire-works displayed. In various rooms of the house nách girls were dancing and singing."

I am against entertainments by professional dancing women. But I cannot forget that for the fulness of life there should be joy, that professional music and dancing are not necessarily gross forms of pleasure, that whatever the shortcomings of the professional musicians and danceresses a century ago, they had kept alive two ancient arts, and that in the days of Raja Rammohun Roy there was probably no other way of entertaining guests with music and dance except with their help. Music had fallen into disrepute. Professional male musicians were generally no better in character than the dancing women. Few Bengali ladies had at that time the musical accomplishments which many of them have now; and no Bengali lady in those days sang or performed

even within the limited mixed circle of their male and female relatives and friends. Raja Rammohun Roy may also have felt that it was better that women who were beyond the pale of society should have some means of earning their living other than ministering to the carnal desires of men.

It is well known that Rammohun Roy himself founded and helped others in founding schools. He took a prominent part in the great educational controversy between the "Orientalists" and the "Anglicists" and sided with the latter. But for his opposition the clamour of the former for the exclusive pursuit of Oriental studies would most probably have prevailed. His *Letter on English Education* to Lord Amherst is a remarkably convincing production.*

* One passage in this letter possesses a special interest of its own. It runs thus :

"Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following which are the themes suggested by the Vedanta,—in what manner is the soul absorbed in the Deity? What relations does it bear to the Divine Essence? Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe, that all visible things have no real existence, that as father, brother, &c., have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better."

The missionaries advanced in the *Sarrachar Darpan*, the last objection, which Rammohun assailed in his *Brahmanical Magazine*. He further established a Vedanta College. This seeming inconsistency is explained by Miss Collett as follows ;—
"The teachings of the Vedanta lend themselves to a remarkable

"It was owing, perhaps, to this agitation," remarks Babu Jogendra Chunder Ghose on this letter, "that the foundation-stone of the building intended for the Sanskrit College was laid in the name of the Hindu College (February, 1824), and the Hindu

diversity of theological interpretation. They are appealed to equally by dualistic and non-dualistic schools of thought. They contain passages which breathe a lofty and ethical Theism; in other places they seem to countenance a Pantheism that is simply Acosmism—the denial of all finite existence;.....According as the Vedanta is taught with or without a proper selective adjustment of its widely various contents, its value as a subject of instruction may be set high or low. In the ordinary Hindu schools it was taught in false perspective, with a discrimination exercised if at all in favour of what was trivial, incorrect, polytheistic. Rammohun therefore opposed with all his might the suggestion that the British Government should perpetuate or encourage this kind of Vedantic instruction. At the same time he saw in the Vedanta rightly handled and "rightly divided" a means for leading his countrymen but of their prevailing superstition and idolatry into a pure and elevated Theism. Their devotion to the Vedantic scriptures was the lever by which Rammohun hoped to lift them into a simpler and nobler faith. Therefore he founded the Vedanta College; and therefore also he controverted the missionaries' wholesale disparagement of the Vedanta. If the missionaries had succeeded in discrediting the Vedanta, they would in Rammohun's eyes have broken down the bridge which enabled men to pass from Hindu Polytheism to Hindu Theism. He thus combated both the conservative Christian who advocated indiscriminate rejection and the conservative Hindu who advocated the indiscriminate retention of Vedantic teaching; and he provided for a discriminating instruction in the ancient system which should have the approval of liberal Hindus and liberal Christians."

College was located there together with the Sanskrit College. For the direct and indirect beneficial results of Western education we are indebted to Raja Rammohun Roy as much as to Lord Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck, David Hare, &c.

Raja Rammohun Roy wrote text-books in Bengali on Grammar, Geography, Astronomy, and Geometry. He is the father of modern Bengali literary prose. He taught his people the use of marks of punctuation.

There was in his nature a deep vein of genuine poetry, too; as his Bengali hymns show. He was the first to write theistic hymns in Bengali. Pandit Ramagati Nyayaratna, a well-known Hindu historian of the Bengali language and literature, truly observes that

"they appear to possess the power of melting even stony hearts, of making the most irreligious devoted to God and of making hearts sunk in worldliness detached from the world. They are prized by

theists and idolaters alike. A few of them are in Sanskrit. We believe an English translation of Rammohun's hymns by Babu Mohanimohan Chatterjee, M.A., has been published by the Adi Brahma Samaj of Calcutta.

His Bengali journal, the *Sambad Karmudi*, first appeared in 1821. He is the founder of native journalism in India. The *Sambad Karmudi* was not exclusively or chiefly a political publication. It, as well as his Persian newspaper, *Mirat-ul-Akhdar* of

Mirror of Intelligence, had an educational purpose, too. Besides politics, subjects of a historical, literary and scientific character were treated of therein.

Lawyers of eminence have declared that the legal writings of the Raja, such as his "Brief Remarks on Ancient Female Rights," "The Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal," would do credit to jurists of the highest standing.

To the public Rammohun Roy is best known as a religious and social reformer. To many he is also known as a literateur and educationist. But he is not so well known as a political reformer and agitator. A brief account of his politics may not therefore be out of place here.

Mr. William Adam, a Baptist Missionary, whose association with Raja Rammohun Roy led him to adopt Unitarian opinions, bears the following testimony to his love of liberty :—

"He would be free or not be at all.....Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul,—freedom not of action merely, but of thought.....This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him."

It was this love of liberty that was the source of all his political opinions and the mainspring of all his political activity. It made him take interest in and deeply sympathise with all political movements all

over the world that had for their object the advancement of popular freedom. Some instances may here be given of Rammohun's cosmopolitan sympathies in the region of politics.

"When the intelligence reached India that the people of Naples after extorting a constitution from their despotic king were crushed back into servitude by the Austrian troops, in obedience to the joint mandate of the crowned heads of Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sardinia, and Naples, Rammohun felt it keenly."

In a letter to Mr. Buckingham, dated August 11, 1821, he wrote:—

"I am afraid I must be under the necessity of denying myself the pleasure of your society this evening; more especially as my mind is depressed by the late news from Europe..... From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy.

"Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful."

"These noble words," says Miss Collett, "reveal how profoundly Rammohun felt with the Late Russel Lowell that "In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim"; and that

"Wherever wrong is done
To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath the all-beholding Sun,
That wrong is also done to us."

Rammohun's Persian weekly *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*

contained an article on Ireland, the causes of its distress and discontent. In this, he dwelt on the evils of absenteeism and the injustice of maintaining Protestant clergymen out of revenues wrung from the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Ireland. He said:—

(How admirable is the observation of Saadi) on whom be mercy! Do not say that these rapacious ministers are the well-wishers of his Majesty;

For in proportion as they augment the revenue of the

State, they diminish his popularity; O statesman, apply the revenue of the king towards the comfort of the people; then during their lives they will be loyal to him.

When the news of the establishment of constitutional Government in Spain reached India, he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall. Some months before his departure for England, news reached Calcutta of the latest French Revolution, and so great was his enthusiasm that, we are told, "he could think and talk of nothing else!" He viewed it as a triumph of liberty and rejoiced accordingly. On his voyage to England he landed at the Cape for only an hour or two. Returning on board he met with a nasty accident. The gangway ladder had not been properly secured, and he got a serious fall, from which he was lame for eighteen months afterwards and indeed never finally recovered. But no bodily suffering could repress his mental ardour. Two French frigates, under the revolutionary flag, the glorious tri-

colour, were lying in Table Bay; and lame as he was, he would insist on visiting them. The sight of these colours seemed to kindle his enthusiasm, and to render him insensible to pain. During the days of the Reform Bill agitation in England, he considered the struggle between the reformers and anti-reformers as a struggle between liberty and oppression throughout the world: between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong. He publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated, he would renounce his connection with England. His Persian weekly, the *Mirat*, did not, however, favourably consider the national aspirations of Greece. Muhammadan sympathy with the Turks may have been to some extent responsible for this attitude to Greece.

The attitude of Rammohun Roy towards Mussalman rule, society, character, and culture was entirely unprejudiced and fraternal. He wore in public the dress worn in Muhammadan courts. In his "Judicial system of India," to the question,

Q. What is your opinion of the judicial character and conduct of the Hindu and Muhammadan lawyers attached to the courts?

He replied:—

A. Among the Muhammadan lawyers I have met with some honest men. The Hindu lawyers are in general not well spoken of, and they do not enjoy much of the confidence of the public,

In the "Condition of India," he writes:

I have observed with respect to distant cousins, sprung from the same family, and living in the same district, when one branch of the family had been converted to Mussulmanism, that those of the Muhammadan branch living in a freer manner, were distinguished by greater bodily activity and capacity for exertion, than those of the other branch which had adhered to the Hindoo simple mode of life.

Again :—

8. Q. *What is the state of industry among them?*

A. The Mohammedans are more active and capable of exertion than the Hindus, but the latter are also generally patient of labour, and diligent in their employments, and those of the Upper Province not inferior to the Mohammedans themselves in industry.

9. Q. *What capability of improvement do they possess?*

A. They have the same capability of improvement as any other civilized people.

10. Q. *What degree of intelligence exists among the native inhabitants?*

A. The country having been so long under subjection to the arbitrary military government of the Mahomedan rulers, which showed little respect for Hindu learning, it has very much decayed and indeed almost disappeared, except among the Brahmans in some parts of the Dakhan (Deccan), and of the Eastern side of India, more distant from the chief seat of Mohammedan government. The Mussulmans, as well as the more respectable classes of Hindus chiefly, cultivated Persian literature, a great number of the former and a few of the latter also extending their studies likewise to Arabic. This practice has partially continued to the present time, and among those who enjoy this species of learning, as well as among those who cultivate Sanscrit literature, many well-informed and enlightened persons may be found, though from their ignorance of European literature, they are not naturally much esteemed by such Europeans as are not well versed in Arabic or Sanscrit.

His opinion of Muhammadan rule is found thus expressed in his "Appeal to the King in Council against the Press Regulation":—

Your Majesty is aware, that under their former Muhammadan Rulers, the natives of this country enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussulmans, being eligible to the highest offices in the state, entrusted with the command of armies and the government of provinces and often chosen as advisers to their Prince, without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth. They used to receive free grants of land exempted from any payments of revenue, and besides the highest salaries allowed under the Government, they enjoyed free of charge, large tracts of country attached to certain offices of trust and dignity, while natives of learning and talent were rewarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument. Although under the British Rule, the natives of India, have entirely lost this political consequence, your Majesty's faithful subjects were consoled by the more secure enjoyment of those civil and religious rights which had been so often violated by the rapacity and intolerance of the Mussalmans; and notwithstanding the loss of political rank and power, they considered themselves much happier in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty than were their ancestors; but if these rights that remain are allowed to be unceremoniously invaded, the most valuable of them being placed at the mercy of one or two individuals, the basis on which they have founded their hopes of comfort and happiness under the British Power, will be destroyed.

Again:—

Notwithstanding the despotic power of the Mogul Princes who formerly ruled over this country, and that their conduct was often cruel and arbitrary, yet the wise and virtuous among them, always employed two intelligencers at the residence of their Nawabs or Lord Lieutenants, *Akhbar-novees*, or news-writer who published an account of whatever happened, and a *Khoofea*-

nawees), or confidential correspondent, who sent a private and particular account of every occurrence worthy of notice; and although these Lord Lieutenants were often particular friends or near relations to the Prince, he did not trust entirely to themselves for a faithful and impartial report of their administration, and degraded them when they appeared to deserve it, either for their own faults or for their negligence in not checking the delinquencies of their subordinate officers; which shews that even the Mogul Princes, although their form of Government admitted of nothing better, were convinced, that in a country so rich and so replete with temptations, a restraint of some kind was absolutely necessary, to prevent the abuses that are so liable to flow from the possession of power.

We now pass on to the Raja's Indian political opinions. Our politics are sure to be tinged by our attitude towards British rule in India. It is therefore necessary to know what the Raja thought of British rule in India in his day. In his autobiography he writes :—

".....I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindoostan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British Power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty, my father recalled me, and restored me to his favour; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants;....."

He concluded his "Final Appeal to the Christian Public"

by offering up thanks to the supreme Disposer of the events of this universe, for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long-continued tyranny of its former Rulers, and placed it under the government of the English nation, who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects, among those nations to which their influence extends." 3110

But, as has been noted above, Ram Mohun gave to Mahammadan rule also its due meed of praise by mentioning in what respects it was superior to British rule.

Some of the contents of the earlier numbers of the *Sambad Karmudi* may be given here:

No. I.—An appeal to the Government for the establishment of a school for the gratuitous instruction of the poor but respectable Hindus.

No. II.—Humble address to the Government soliciting the extension of trial by jury to Mofussil Zilla and Provincial Courts of Judicature.

No. III.—An appeal to the Government to relieve the Hindu community from the inconvenience consequent upon there being only one Ghaut for the burning of dead bodies whereas an immense space of ground has been granted for the burial of Christians.

Appeal to Government for the prevention of the exportation of the greatest part of the produce of rice from Bengal to foreign ports.

Appeal to Government to enable the middle class of native subjects to avail themselves of the treatment of European physicians.

Appeal to the Calcutta Magistrates to resort to rigorous measures for relieving the Hindu inhabitants of Calcutta from the serious grievances of Christian

gentlemen driving their buggies amongst them and cutting and lashing them with whips, without distinction of sex or age, while they quietly assembled in immense numbers to see the images of their deities pass in the Chitpore Road, when many of them through terror and consternation caused by the lashing inflicted on the spectators fell down into drains, while others were trampled under foot by the crowd.

Raja Rammohun Roy believed that a free Press is one of the best safeguards of liberty. This conviction found expression in his petitions against the Press Regulation (1) to the Supreme Court and (2) to the King in Council. The Press ordinance prescribed that thenceforth no one should publish a newspaper or other periodical without having obtained a license from the Governor-General in Council, signed by the Chief Secretary. The memorial submitted to the Supreme Court "may be regarded as the Areopagica of Indian History. Alike in diction and in argument, it forms a noble landmark in the progress of English culture in the East."

This Memorial proving fruitless, Rammohun and his co-adjutors appealed to the King in council. Says Miss Collett :

"The appeal is one of the noblest pieces of English to which Rammohun put his hand. Its stately periods and not less stately thought recall the eloquence of the great orators of a century ago. In a language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British History."

This Memorial, too, proved unavailing. The Privy Council declined to comply with the petition.

A new Jury Act came into operation in the beginning of 1827. On August 18th, 1828, Rammohun wrote to Mr. J. Crawford and entrusted to him petitions against the Act for presentation to both Houses of Parliament, signed by Hindus and Mohammedans. He thus concisely stated the grounds of grievance :—

"In his famous Jury Bill, Mr. Wynn, the late President of the Board of Control, has by introducing religious distinctions into the judicial system of this country, not only afforded just grounds for dissatisfaction among the Natives in general, but has excited much alarm in the breast of every one conversant with political principles. Any Natives, either Hindu or Mohammedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians, either European or Native, while Christians, including Native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Mussulman juror, however high he may stand in the estimation of society. This Bill also denies both to Hindus and Mohamedans the honor of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Mussulmans. This is the sum total of Mr. Wynn's late Jury Bill, of which we bitterly complain."

Rammohun went on to suggest a possibility "which is by no means so remote now as when he wrote" :—

"Supposing that 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirement of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust

and oppressive measures, serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy.

"In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection, I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge.

The letter quoted above is remarkable for the far-sighted glance into the future which it reveals. Here in germ is to be found the national aspiration which is now breaking forth into demands for a greater measure of self-government than the people at present enjoy. Rammohun's English biographer observes that—

"The prospect of an educated India, of an India approximating to European standards of culture, seems to have never been long absent from Rammohun's mind; and he did, however vaguely, claim in advance for his countrymen the political rights which progress in civilization inevitably involves. Here again Rammohun stands forth as the tribune and prophet of New India."

The Select Committee of the House of Commons which was appointed in February, 1831, and reappointed in June to consider the renewal of the Company's Charter invited him to appear before it. Rammohun declined this request but tendered his evidence in the form of successive "Communications to the Board of Control." The first of these dealt with Revenue. The Raja appears here as the champion of the rack-rented ryot. While the Zemindars or landholders had been greatly benefited by the Permanent Settlement of 1793, while their wealth and the wealth of the community had generally increased, the poor cultivator was no better off. The remedy he asked for was in the first place the prohibition of any further rise in rent, and secondly—rents being now so exorbitantly high as to leave the ryot in a state of extreme misery,—a reduction in the revenue demanded from the Zemindar so as to ensure a reduction in the ryot's rent. The decrease in revenue he would meet by increasing taxes upon luxuries or by employing, as Collectors low-salaried Indians instead of high-salaried Europeans. It may here be incidentally observed that more than three-quarters of a century ago, when education was in a backward condition, Raja Rammohun Roy considered Indians fit for the duties of Collectors. He also considered them well qualified to discharge all judicial duties.

He approved of the settlement in India of a few model landlords from England, but was careful to stipulate that they should not be drawn from the lower classes. This is not the place to criticize the Raja's views on this subject ; but it seems open to grave doubt whether a European landed aristocracy for India would have been on the whole beneficial to the people of this country. He concluded with an earnest appeal "to any and every authority to devise some mode of alleviating the present miseries of the agricultural peasantry of India."

It admits of no doubt that the condition of the proprietors of land has improved under the system of permanent assessment. But the Government seems at present to believe that that system has resulted in loss of revenue to the State. It is, therefore, important to quote the Raja's opinion on this subject.

"The amount of assessment fixed on the lands of these provinces at the time of the Permanent Settlement (1793), was as high as had ever been assessed, and in many instances higher than had ever before been realized by the exertions of any government, Mohamedan or British. Therefore the Government sacrificed nothing in concluding that settlement. If it had not been formed, the landholders (*Zemindars*) would always have taken care to prevent the revenue from increasing by not bringing the waste lands into cultivation, and by collusive arrangements to elude further demands; while the state of the cultivators would not have been at all better than it is now. However, if the Government had taken the whole estates of the country into its own hands, as in the ceded and conquered provinces and

the Madras Presidency, then, by allowing the landholders only ten per cent. on the rents (*Malikānah*), and securing all the rest to the Government, it might no doubt have increased the revenue for a short time. But the whole of the landholders in the country would then have been reduced to the same wretched condition as they are at present in the ceded and conquered Provinces of the Bengal Presidency or rather annihilated, as in many parts of the Madras territory; and the whole population reduced to the same level of poverty. At the same time, the temporary increase of revenue to Government under its own immediate management would also have soon fallen off, through the misconduct and negligence of the revenue officers, as shown by innumerable instances in which the estates were kept *khas*, i.e., under the immediate management of Government."

"Besides, Government appropriates to itself an enormous duty on the transit and exportation of the produce of the soil, which has, since the period of the Perpetual Settlement, increased to a great amount from the exertions of the proprietors in extending and improving cultivation, under the assurance that no demand of an increase of revenue would be made upon them on account of the progressive productiveness of their estates."

The Raja contrasts the effects of the permanent and periodical systems of assessment in two statements.

"By a comparative view of the revenue of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, from the period of the Perpetual Settlement, it appears that, in the thirty-five years, from 1792-93 to 1827-28, there was a total increase on the whole amount of the Revenue of above 100 per cent. (101·71), and that this increase has been steady and progressive up to the present time;....."

"By a comparative view of the revenue of the old British territory in Madras, it appears that during the same period of thirty-five years (i.e., from 1793 to 1828) there was an increase of only about 40 per cent., (40·15) on the total amount of the whole revenue. That the increase during the first 17 years was $43 \frac{2}{100}$

per cent.; that in the next 8 years the increase was only about $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; and that in the last 18 years there has been a decrease of 2.15 per cent."

In an appendix he urged the Imperial utility of the policy of fixing a maximum rent to be paid by each cultivator, "that their rents already raised to a ruinous extent, might not be subject to further increase." His advocacy of this policy is so statesmanlike that no apology is needed for quoting his views on the subject. To recognise the indefeasible rights of the ryots in the soil would make them loyal to the power that secured them and

"ready to rise in defence of it, as a militia or in any other shape that might be required; so as to secure the British rule in a foreign and remote empire, alike from internal intrigue and from external aggression, without the necessity of keeping on foot an immense standing army at an enormous cost. This consideration is of great importance in respect to the natives of the upper and western provinces, who are distinguished by their superior bravery, and form the greater part of the British Indian army. If this race of men, who are by no means deficient in feelings of personal honor and regard for family respectability, were assured that their rights in the soil were indefeasible so long as the British power should endure, they would from gratitude and self-interest at all time be ready to devote their lives and property in its defence.

"The saving that might be effected by this liberal and generous policy, through the substituting of a militia force for a great part of the present standing army, would be much greater than any gain that could be realized by any system of increasing land revenue that human ingenuity could devise. How applicable to this case is the following line of the Persian sage (Saadi) :—

*Ba rayat sulh kun Wa'a jang i khaam ai man nishin
Z'anki shahinshah i adil ra rayat lashkar ast.*

"Be on friendly terms with thy subjects, and rest easy about the warfare of thine enemies; for to an upright prince his people is an army."

While on the subject of Land Settlement we may say that in 1828, by Regulation III of that year, the revenue collector in each district was authorised to dispossess the holders of tax-free lands by his own authority, without reference to any judicial courts, if the collector should be of opinion, after such enquiry as might satisfy himself that the title of the proprietor was not valid. It was therein enacted that "such decision of the Collector shall have the force and effect of a decree"; also, that "it shall not be necessary for him to transmit his proceedings to the Board of Revenue," but "the party dispossessed might appeal," and by art. 3., whether an appeal be filed or not, "that it shall and may be lawful for the Collector immediately to carry into effect his decision by attaching and assessing the lands." This regulation produced great alarm and distrust amongst the natives of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, many of whom petitioned against the principle of one party, who lays claim to the land, dispossessing an actual possessor at his own discretion. This agitation was led, though unsuccessfully, by Rammohun Roy. Reg. III of 1828 is still in force.

Among the principal measures advocated in the

Raja's *Questions and Answers on the Judicial System of India* were the substitution of English for Persian as the official language of the courts of law: the appointment of native assessors in the civil courts; trial by jury, of which the Panchayet system was the indigenous parallel; separation of the offices of judge and revenue commissioners; separation of the offices of judge and magistrate; codification of the criminal law and also of the law of India; and consultation with the local magnates before enacting laws. The last reform proposed contains the germs of representative legislative bodies.

Students of Indian economics are familiar with the fact that every year nearly 45 crores of rupees of India's capital is drained off to foreign parts without any hope of return. This drain of wealth did not escape the eyes of Raja Rammohun Roy. In his "Revenue System of India" he says that as a large sum of money is now annually drawn from India by Europeans retiring from it with the fortunes realized there, a system which would encourage Europeans of capital to become permanent settlers with their families, would necessarily greatly improve the resources of the country. He prepared several tables to prove this drain. The following two paragraphs are appended to these tables:—

"By the evidence of Messrs. Lloyd and Melville (the former the Accountant-General, and the latter the Auditor-General of

the East India Company), recorded in the Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, 23rd February, 1830, it appears that the proportion of the Indian revenues expended in England on the territorial account amounts, on an average, to £3,000,000 annually. It includes the expenses at the Board of Control and India House, pay, absentee allowances and pensions to Civil and Military officers in Europe for services in India, with interest of money realized there, &c., &c., besides £453,588 for territorial stores consigned to India.

"In a letter of the Court of Directors to the Government of Bengal, dated the 20th of June, 1810, and quoted in the work "On Colonial Policy as applicable to the Government of India," by a very able servant of the company, holding a responsible situation in Bengal, the Directors state that "it is no extravagant assertion to advance, that the annual remittances to London on account of individuals, have been at the rate of nearly £2,000,000 per annum for a series of years past." (p. 70.) From these and other authentic documents the author calculates the amount of capital, or the aggregate of tribute, public and private, so withdrawn from India from 1765 to 1820, at £100,000,000. (p. 65.)

It has already been incidentally shown that Raja Rammohun Roy was in favour of the settlement in India of European capitalists under certain conditions. Among the advantages likely in his opinion to arise from such settlement was the improvement of the condition of the native inhabitants by European landlords showing them superior methods of cultivation. That this was not altogether a vain expectation appears from some observations in Mr. N. G. Mukerji's *Hand-book of Indian Agriculture*. Says Mr. Mukerji:

"Indeed, Indian agriculture has been actually vastly improved by our contact with the West. European planters have

been the means of introducing important innovations. In the most out-of-the way places of India we find European planters carrying on agricultural experiments and improvements imperceptibly and noiselessly."

This naturally leads one to a consideration of the Raja's *Remarks on Settlement in India by Europeans*. It is a paper of rare personal and national importance. But as it raises problems of great magnitude, we refrain from dealing with it here. Suffice it to say that this his final literary deliverance holds up to the people of India the prospect of India having English as its *lingua franca*, India socially and in other respects westernized to some extent, India possibly independent and India the Enlightener of Asia.

Progressive political views imply confidence in the capacity of a people for continuous improvement. Raja Rammohun Roy believed that the people of India "have the same capability of improvement as any other civilized people." He did not believe that Asiatics were naturally an inferior race. In the course of one of his numerous religious controversies "A Christian" having indulged in a tirade about persons being "degraded by Asiatic effeminacy," the Raja reminded him that almost all the ancient prophets and patriarchs venerated by Christians, nay, even Jesus Christ himself, were Asiatics. The actual words used by the Raja are quoted below:—

Before "A Christian" indulged in a tirade about persons being "degraded by Asiatic effeminacy" he should have recol-

lected that almost all the ancient prophets and patriarchs venerated by Christians, nay even Jesus Christ himself, a Divine Incarnation and the founder of the Christian Faith, were ASIATICS, so that if a Christian thinks it degrading to be born or to reside in *Asia*, he directly reflects upon them.

Rammohun Roy also said :

If by the "Ray of Intelligence" for which the *Christian* says we are indebted to the English, he means the introduction of useful mechanical arts, I am ready to express my assent and also my gratitude ; but with respect to *Science, Literature, or Religion*, I do not acknowledge that we are placed under any obligation, for by a reference to history it may be proved that the World was indebted to *our ancestors* for the first dawn of knowledge, which sprang up in the East, and thanks to the Goddess of Wisdom, we have still a philosophical and copious language of our own, which distinguishes us from other nations who cannot express scientific or abstract ideas without borrowing the language of foreigners.

On a perusal of the foregoing pages it will be found that with the exception of the agitation that has been going on for sometime past for the industrial regeneration of the country, Rammohun Roy laid the foundation of all the principal modern movements for the elevation of our people. Probably, as India is mainly an agricultural country and as in his days the pressure on land had not become abnormal owing to the indigenous industries not having disappeared then to the extent to which they have now declined, the industrial problem did not then press for solution with the same urgency as now. Nevertheless we find that the bearing of the system of caste on

industrial prosperity did not escape the keen eyes of Rammohun: as No. VIII of his *Sambad Kanumudi* printed the "plea of a philanthropist, who observing the misery caused by prejudices of caste, urges the Hindus not to debar themselves thereby from mechanical pursuits, but to cultivate such arts as would tend to their comfort, happiness and independence."

We conclude this introduction with the following estimate of his personality by his biographer, the late Miss Sophia Dobson Collett, who, though an English woman and a trinitarian Christian, seems on the whole to have understood the meaning of his life pretty accurately:—

"Rammohun 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 immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vague, Theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and of inevitable enlightenment."

"He embodies the new spirit which arises from the compulsory mixture of races and faiths and civilizations,—he embodies its freedom of enquiry, its thirst for science, its large human sympathy, its pure and sifted ethics, along with its reverent but not uncritical regard for the past, and prudent, even timid, disinclination towards revolt. But in the life of Rammohun we see

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what we hope yet to have shown us in the progress of India, that the secret of the whole movement is religious. Amid all his wanderings Rammohun was saved by his faith. * * * He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock; in a soil watered by new influences, and in an atmosphere charged with unwonted forcing power, but still a true scion of the old stock. The Rajah was no merely occidentalized oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. Just as little was he, if we may use the term without offence, a spiritual Eurasian. If we follow the right line of his development we shall find that he leads the way from the orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture, towards a civilization which is neither Western nor Eastern, but something vastly larger and nobler than both. He preserves continuity throughout, by virtue of his religion, which again supplied the motive force of his progressive movement. The power that connected and retrained, as well as widened and impelled, was religion.

"Rammohun thus presents a most instructive and inspiring study for the New India of which he is the type and pioneer. He offers to the new democracy of the West a scarcely less valuable index of what our greatest Eastern dependency may yet become under the imperial sway of the British commonalty. There can be little doubt that, whatever future the destinies may have in store for India, that future will be largely shaped by the life and work of Rammohun Roy. And not the future of India alone. We stand on the eve of an unprecedented intermingling of East and West. The European and Asiatic streams of human development, which have often tinged each other before, are now approaching a confluence which bids fair to form the one ocean-river of the collective progress of mankind. In the presence of that greater Eastern question,—with its infinite ramifications, industrial, political, moral and religious,—the international problems of the passing hour, even the gravest of them, seem dwarfed into parochial pettiness. The nearing dawn of

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these unmeasured possibilities only throws into clearer prominence the figure of the man whose life-story we have told. He was, if not the prophetic type, at least the precursive hint, of the change that is to come."

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY.

Raja Rammuhan Roy, the founder of the Brahma Samaj or the Theistic Church of India, was born at Radhanagar, Bengal, in May 1772, of an ancient and honourable Brahman family. His father gave him a good education ; he learnt Persian at home, Arabic at Patna (where he studied Euclid, Aristotle and the Koran), and Sanskrit at Benares. Although a devout idolater in boyhood, he early began to doubt and at fifteen left home to study Buddhism in Tibet, where his criticisms on Lama-worship gave much offence. After some years' travel he returned, but, his anti-idolatrous sentiments obliging him to leave home, he lived at Benares until his father's death in 1803. After this, he spent about ten years in the East India Company's service latterly as Dewan or head officer in the collection of Revenues. During this period he first began to assemble his friends together for evening discussions on the absurdities of idolatry, and he also issued his first work, *Tuhfatul-Muwahhidin* ("A gift to Monotheists"). This treatise was in Persian, with an Arabic preface, and was a bold protest against superstition and priestcraft. These proceedings brought on him much hostility,

and in 1814 he retired to Calcutta for greater safety. Here he soon established a Friendly Society (Atmiya Sabha), which met weekly to read the Hindu Scriptures and to chant Monotheistic hymns. In 1816 he translated the Vedanta into Bengali and Hindustani, following this by a series of translations from the Upanishads into Bengali, Hindustani and English, with introductions and comments of his own. These works he published at his own cost and disseminated widely among his countrymen. His writings excited much opposition and gave rise to numerous controversies, in which his ability, tact and learning rendered him fully a match for his antagonists. But the deadliest blow he inflicted upon Hindu superstition was his effective agitation against the rite of Suttee, the burning of living widows on the piles of their deceased husbands.

In 1811 he had been a horrified witness of this sacrifice in his elder brother's family, and he had vowed never to rest until he had uprooted this custom. He exposed the hollow pretences of its advocates in elaborate pamphlets both in Bengali and English, and pressed the matter in every possible way, till at last the tide of public feeling turned, and on December 4, 1829, Lord William Bentinck issued a regulation abolishing Suttee throughout all the territories subject to Fort William. Rammohun was an active politician and philanthropist. He built

school-houses and established schools in which useful knowledge was gratuitously taught through the medium both of the English and the native languages. He wrote a suggestive Bengali Grammar, of which he published one version in English (1826) and one in Bengali (1833). He wrote valuable pamphlets on Hindu law and made strenuous exertions for the freedom of the native Press; he also established (1822) and mainly conducted two native newspapers, the *Sambad Kaumudi* in Bengali, and the *Miratal-Akhbar* in Persian and made them the means of diffusing much useful political information. Becoming interested in Christianity he learned Hebrew and Greek in order to read the Bible in the original languages, and in 1820 he issued a selection from the four Gospels entitled—the *Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and happiness*. This was attacked by the Baptist Missionaries of Serampur, and a long controversy ensued in which he published three remarkable Appeals to the Christian Public in defence of the "Precepts of Jesus." He also wrote other theological tracts (sometimes under assumed names) in which he attacked both Hindu and Christian orthodoxy with a strong hand. But his personal relations with orthodox Christians were never unfriendly, and he rendered valuable assistance to Dr. Duff in the latter's educational schemes. He also warmly befriended a Unitarian Christian Mission

which was started in Calcutta (1824) by Mr. William Adam, formerly a Baptist Missionary, who, in attempting to convert Rammohun to trinitarianism was himself converted to the opposite view. This Unitarian Mission, though not a theological success, attracted considerable sympathy among the Hindu Monotheists, whose Atmiya Sabha had then become extinct. At last Rammohun felt able to re-embodiment his cherished ideal, and on August 20, 1828, he opened the first Brahma Association (Brahma Sabha) at a hired house. A suitable church-building was then erected and placed in the hands of trustees, with a small endowment and a remarkable trust-deed by which the building was set apart "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the universe." The new church was formally opened on the 11th Magh (January 23), 1830, from which day the Brahma Samaj dates its existence. Having now succeeded in his chief projects, Rammohun resolved to visit England, and the King of Delhi appointed him envoy thither on special business, and gave him the title of Raja. He arrived in England on April 8, 1831, and was received with universal cordiality and respect. He watched with special anxiety the parliamentary discussions on the renewal of the East India Company's charter and gave much valuable evidence before the Board of Control on the condition

of India. This he republished with additional suggestions ("Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India") and also reissued his important "Essay on the Right of Hindus over Ancestral Property." He visited France, and wished to visit America, but died unexpectedly of brain-fever at Bristol, September 27, 1833.—*The Encyclopædia Britannica.*
