

RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

By NALIN C. GANGULY



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RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

*From a portrait by R. A. Briggs, R.A., in the Bristol Museum. By courtesy of
The Modern Review, Calcutta.*

Dedication

TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF

MY FATHER,

BHUDHAR C. GANGULY

BHARATI, VIDYARATNA

AND OF

MY TEACHER,

J. N. FARQUHAR, M.A., D.LITT., D.D.

PREFACE

THESE pages present only a brief sketch of the life of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the greatest Indian reformer of modern times. It is not possible, within the scope of this series, to give a full account of his many-sided activity or of his 'virile and versatile personality.' An attempt has been made to offer a critical estimate of his ideals and philosophy in general, as well as of the policy that he stood for in his own day; but controversial matters have been avoided as far as possible. In the spelling of Indian names, diacritical marks have been omitted for the sake of simplicity.

The manuscript was completed early in 1928, but along with the author it has passed through many vicissitudes before publication. The thanks of the author are due to Miss G. Stevens, of Bristol, the late Mr. D. N. Pal, Messrs. Ramananda Chatterjee, Sudhir Lal Banerjee, Amal Home, Alin C. Ganguly, Pratul C. Shome, Dr. Kalidas Nag, and Dr. H. Bolton, of the Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol, for kind assistance in various ways.

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APPENDIX A

THE TRIAL OF COLONEL BRERETON

*Extract from Dr. Bolton's letter of 10th July, 1928,
to the present author, with enclosure*

THE picture of the *Trial of Colonel Brereton*, by Miss Rolinda Sharpless, which is preserved in the Bristol Art Gallery and here reproduced shows Ram Mohun as a visitor at its last session, in the Merchants' Hall, Bristol. Among local notabilities, mentioned in the note on the picture, are 'Miss Castle and her brother, Mr. Hare, the under-sheriff, and C. B. Hare. Raja Ram Mohun Roy is seated between two chairs in the left-hand corner; to his right is Mrs. Rowlands, to his left is the Duchess of Roxburghe with her son, and just behind is standing Mr. Castle, the brother of Miss Castle.'

Colonel Brereton was tried by court martial for his negligence in handling the troops at his disposal during the Bristol riots in 1831. The prosecution began on the 9th January, 1832, but after four sittings was suddenly brought to a close by the suicide of the defendant.

APPENDIX B

TOWARDS A LEAGUE OF NATIONS

ONE of the boldest pronouncements of those times on the subject of Internationalism was made by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, in his letter to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, before his visit to Paris. He had been required to procure the necessary passport, which seemed to him a sign of uncalled-for suspicion, unworthy of civilized nations; and his attention was drawn to the fact that all the Asiatic nations, except China, were then free from it. In this connection, the Raja in his letter enunciated with clearness a principle which was much in advance of the general opinion of his age:

It is now generally admitted that not only religion, but unbiassed common-sense, as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research, lead to the conclusion that all mankind is one great family, of which the numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches. Hence enlightened men in all countries must feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner, by removing as far as possible all impediments to it, in order to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race.¹

Further, the Raja felt keenly the need of an instrument for securing and guaranteeing political peace in the world. On this vital problem, which affects the whole future of civilization, he thought in terms of all

¹ *Modern Review*, October 1928, p. 468.

Appendix

branches of the human race and their 'reciprocal advantage and enjoyment.' He hoped that religion would bring peace to mankind, and hated any recourse to arms for the settlement of international disputes. Being a man of peace, not simply on spiritual but also on rational grounds, he suggested the formation of a central organization or congress of all nations, where international differences might be smoothly and amicably arbitrated. The Editor of the *Modern Review* has remarked that the Raja thus anticipated in some measure, however small, the ideal of a League of Nations.¹ This is indicated in the following prophetic sentences of the Raja's:

But on general grounds, I beg to observe that it appears to me the ends of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political difference between two countries to a congress composed of an equal number from the parliaments of each; the decision of the majority to be acquiesced in by both nations; the chairman to be chosen by each nation alternately for one year, and the place of meeting to be one year within the limits of one country, and next within those of the other. . . . By such a congress, all matters of difference, whether political or commercial, affecting the natives of any two civilized countries with constitutional governments, might be settled justly and amicably, to the satisfaction of both; and profound peace and friendly feelings might be preserved between them from generation to generation.²

¹ *Modern Review*, October 1928, p. 486.

² *Ibid.*, p. 468.

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