

RAJARSHI

RAM MOHAN ROY



MANILAL C. PAREKH.

MAKERS OF NEW HINDUSTAN SERIES

PUBLISHED

BRAHMARSHI KESHUB CHUNDER SEN

BY

MANILAL C. PAREKH, B.A.

RAJARSHI RAM MOHAN ROY



BY

MANILAL C. PAREKH, B.A.,

Author of "Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen"
and Joint-author with R. M. Gray
of "Mahatma Gandhi."



ORIENTAL CHRIST HOUSE,

Rajkot, Kathiawad,



Board Rs. 2.]

[Cloth Rs. 3.

1927.

**Printed by C. S. Deole at the Bombay Vaibhav Press, Servants
of India Society's Home, Sandhurst Road, Girgaon, Bombay**

AND

**Published by Manilal C. Perekh, B. A.,
Bajkot, Kathiawad.**



RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

To
The New Hindustan
with
All its sons and daughters
of whatever faith,
Vedic, Moslem or Christian,
this life of
Rajarshi Ram Mohan,
its first father and
as one in whom all these faiths
have united as in none else,
is lovingly inscribed.

PREFACE



Ever since the great Hindu Scripture—*Bhagwada Gita*—came to be written, or since long before that, it has been the general experience of the Hindu Race that whenever a most critical time comes in the history of a nation or people, God Almighty provides a MAN. Men of this type are variously described as Heroes, Great Men, Prophets, or Incarnations. Whether the appearance of such men be a fact of universal history or not, it holds true to a large extent in regard to the history of the Indo-Aryan or the Hindu Civilization. This is because it is based on spiritual verities, and it is also due to the same cause that while most of the ancient civilizations have passed away, this has maintained its existence, power and influence in spite of all the vicissitudes it has undergone during ages. But this is not all. There has been a development in the inner life of this Race, because owing to the same spiritual bias it has always welcomed light, whatever source it might come from. Thus not only crises have been overcome successfully in its long history, but usually they have been the means of carrying the nation on its onward march to its destiny chosen for it by Providence.

Such a crisis presented itself to the people of India about a century and half back. The condition of the country then was as bad as it could be in every phase of life. Both the Hindus and Moslems were in a decadent state, and a new power was rising which was alien in the full sense of the term, alien in customs, manners, civilization, culture, religion, in fact in everything. It came from far, crossing the oceans—the black waters—

which had stood so long for all that was forbidding. The conquest of a sub-continent like Hindustan by a mere handful of people who came not as settlers but as mere traders from so great a distance is the truest index of its degraded and fallen condition at that time. This alien power brought with it what was nothing less than a new world, even the modern world. By the time we are speaking of the West had definitely entered a new sphere of existence, *viz.*, that of religious, social and political liberty and of the developments of Physical Science. The great problem for India and the whole of the East was how to take these in order to come out of medieval twilight, if not darkness, into the modern world. This was not all. There was danger on the other side as well. India lay between the Scylla of blind and bigoted conservatism which would have nothing to do with whatever might come from the West, and the Charibdis of spurious imitation of and cultural conquest by the West. This involved thorough-going religious and social reform as well as nation-building in every phase of it. It was the work of a pioneer in the largest and best sense of the term. To the great good fortune of this land it did find a man of this type in Raja Ram Mohan Roy who has been justly and almost universally recognized as the Father of Modern India. The entire New Hindustan that we know to-day and much more was in his mind a hundred years ago and with a prophetic vision he foretold all that we see to-day. It was of such a New India that he laid the foundation, deep and strong, in those early days. For the beginnings of our social reform, political agitation, educational work and journalistic activity we have to go back to him. But his

chief work was in the domain of religion where he rendered services of abiding worth not only to his own race but to the whole of Humanity.

As a religious reformer of Hinduism his position is unique among his countrymen, and though he was a thorough-going iconoclast all his life, to-day all schools of thought vie with one another in doing honour to him. His is the one name which stands above the clouds of controversy and sectarian prejudices and already he is recognised as a great *Acharya*. His many Bengali writings and English translations of the Upanishads, etc., show him to be not only a very eminent Sanskrit scholar but a man filled with burning zeal for the reform of many abuses that had crept in among his people. His spiritual descent he traces to Vyas, Yagnavalkya, Manu and Shankaracharya, and indeed he is a worthy successor of theirs. He is also related to such teachers as Kabir, Nanak and Dadu, and perhaps he belongs more to these than to the former, for though he is not an eclectic as such, there is a strong eclectic strain in him. Whatever it be, Raja Ram Mohan will find an abiding place in the heart of the Hindu Race as a great teacher and sage, an *Acharya* and a *Rishi*. He is the *Rajarshi* of our times. He has breathed forth the great *Mantra* of *Ekmewadwityam*, one without a Second, and has preached the spiritual worship of the Spirit-God alone with an insistence and enthusiasm almost unrivalled in our times, and so long as idolatry, polytheism and religious abuses remain, the spirit of Ram Mohan will continue to work. Although he established the Brahma Samaj and it came to be the premier religious movement of New Hindustan, it does not

represent the whole of him and as in the case of his great successor, Keshub Chunder Sen, he belongs at least as much to the generality of Hindus as to the Brahmas.

But it is not the Hindus alone who may claim him as their own. The Mohammedans may well be proud of the fact that this great Hindu religious reformer drew his first inspiration for Monotheism and iconoclastic zeal from the Koran: that he was not only always well disposed towards Mohammedans and the Moslem faith but his knowledge of Islam was so deep that he was known by many among them as a "*jabardast moulvie*", i.e. a great religious teacher: that some of his ideas regarding social life such as the evils of caste-system, the necessity of giving woman a share in inheritance and probably his hatred against the evil custom of Suttee were drawn from his acquaintance with Islam: and that he intended writing a Life of Mohammad for whom he cherished much reverence. Even his style of living was to a certain extent influenced by that prevailing among high-class Moslems. In all probability much of the social aspect of his religion, which is a new thing in comparison with a great deal of medieval and even earlier Hinduism, was due to his knowledge of this faith. Perhaps no other Hindu of his eminence either before or since his time has been able to harmonize the spirit of both Hinduism and Islam in his life and work to the same extent as he and therein lies his uniqueness.

This does not exhaust the international and inter-religious significance of his life and work. Perhaps his knowledge of and love for Islam was only a preparation for his understanding of Unitarian Christianity and

profound reverence for Christ Jesus. It was in the "Precepts of Jesus" that he found the pearl of great price that he was seeking all his life and he lost no time in revealing it to all, Christians and non-Christians alike. In Unitarianism he found almost the last word in Religion, and as such he did all in his power to preach it to his countrymen and to protect it against those who, he thought, were mistaken in their Christian belief. He wished for its final success and prevalence all over Europe and America. It was no wonder the Unitarians in his own time came to look upon him as one of their great teachers and they have done so ever since. Even the orthodox Christians have since come to regard him as one led by the Spirit of Christ and the feeling has grown among them that the missionaries and Church authorities of his time were too bigoted to understand him aright. It was only in the normal atmosphere of England that he came to see orthodox Christianity at its best and appreciate it more and more and was appreciated in return by the people there. The Christians in this land are bound to be most grateful to God for the life and work of Ram Mohan Roy. Those who look beneath the surface know that there are two movements simultaneously going on, the Hindu-Christian movement and the Christian-Hindu movement, and both these are ultimately to combine in the Hindu Church of Christ, the only Church of Christ possible in Hindustan. Of this Hindu Church our Rajarshi is the first father, followed in the wise economy of Divine Providence by another, *viz.*, Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen, and it is only to the extent that the Christians, *i.e.*, the Hindu disciples of Christ, are spiritual successors of these two, albeit.

going further than they in their appreciation of and love for both Hinduism and Christianity, that they instead of being poor pale copies of other people will be themselves in the truest sense of the term and will have a great deal to contribute not only to the life of Hindustan but even to that of the world. Providence has been preparing this land for a great destiny for the last five thousand years and both Ram Mohan and Keshub are the legitimate successors of all the great teachers and sages who came before them and as such they not only sum up the past to a certain extent in their lives but point to a new future in the new world into which we are ushered. It is through them that the New Hindustan of which they are the two chief makers is organically related to the best in the world and consequently the Hindu Culture which is so largely spiritual will enter into the life of the rest of the world and the best outside will enter into the inner life of Hindustan to the permanent enrichment of the whole of Humanity.

Thus at the opening of this New Era or *Yuga* stands the royal figure of Ram Mohan athwart the skies of New Hindustan. It is indeed a figure of large dimensions. Few men since his time have been so deep and broad at the same time. Stately in physical appearance, he is more so in his mental and moral build. His manifold writings, both in Bengali and in English, present a massive front and reveal a personality remarkable for high and earnest thinking and moral passion of a high order: his whole personality is glowing with the light of deep religious conviction and fervour. The two most prominent features of his character are his love of Truth and love of Liberty. The first appears in his "researches

after truth" which led him to study religion after religion in a way but few have done and which has earned him from eminent scholars of both the East and the West the title of "the first really earnest investigator in the science of comparative theology." His was the truest *Satyagraha*. His love of liberty has not only been unsurpassed but it has not been even equalled since his time in India. This was not merely an intellectual belief with him but a moral passion. It had become concrete in his deep love for his country and behind it there was throbbing a big heart which felt deeply the woes of the Suttee, the widow and the womankind, the Indian agriculturists and Irish peasants, in fact all suppressed and depressed people of whatever race and country. In addition to these two loves of his, there is heroism of a high kind in him and he never flinched from what he considered to be his duty to his country or to the cause of Truth. More than once he put his life in danger while working on behalf of the Suttee, and almost ever since his early youth to the very end of his life he suffered petty persecutions of all sorts from his own people and serious antagonism from orthodox people among both Hindus and Christians. Added to all these qualities of head and heart, hand and spirit, there is even a strain of poetry in him and he is said to have written a few fine hymns. Thus altogether he is a figure great and remarkable in many ways, and if the outlines thereof become clearer to ever so little an extent by this book, the author will find himself amply justified in his undertaking such a task. The book is by no means an exhaustive biography. There is already in existence an excellent book written by Miss Collett and to

it the present writer is indebted not a little. The present work is, however, more of the nature of *Memorabilia* like its predecessor "Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen" and he may well pray and hope that the spirit of both the *Rajarshi* and the *Brahmarshi* will speak to us through these books of things of which we always stand in need.

Oriental Christ House,
Rajkot.
20th February 1927.

} MANILAL C. PAREKH



CONTENTS

Chapter.	Pages.
I. Birth and early Education	1
II. His first Publication	4
III. In the School of Practical Life and of Western Civilization	12
IV. Hindu Protestantism	15
V. The Publication of the "Precepts of Jesus"	40
VI. Controversy with Christian Mission- aries	47
VII. Unitarian Christianity	67
VIII. Hindu-Christian Controversy	74
IX. Unitarian and Trinitarian Controversy .	86
X. Unitarian Propaganda	95
XI. Public Activities	105
XII. Establishment of the Brahma Sabha	120
XIII. Visit to Europe	141
XIV. Religious Sympathies and Affinities	166
XV. The End	175



SHORT INDEX

- Adam Rev. 67-8, 70-2, 98-9, 112-4
 121-8.
 Arya Samaj 22.
 Atmiya Sabha 37.
 Brahma Samaj or Sabha 16, 22, 79.
 81, 85, 103, 113, 120-145.
 Brahmaisim 103.
 Bentinck, Lord William 109-13,
 Buddhism 41,
 Carey, William 27, 47-8, 67-8.
 Christ Jesus 33-8, 40, 44-5, 50-67.
 Christianity 33-4, 40-87, 103.
 Christian Missions 22, 47, 78-80,
 159-162.
 Christian Missionaries 80, 101,
 160-62.
 Collett Miss 70, 183-185.
 David Hare 37.
 Dharma Sabha 113.
 Duff, Dr. 100.
 East India Company 13, 150.
 French Revolution 11, 146.
 Gandhi, Mahatma 56.
 Heber, Bishop 128.
 Hindus 22-3, 31-3, 41, 55, 76-80.
 Hinduism 23-6, 33-4, 41, 64, 74-9,
 103.
 Hindu Theism 81.
 Hindu Unitarianism 126-7.
 Jainism 41.
 Judaism 41.
 Kabir 30, 41, 83.
 Kali 20.
 Koran 2, 40.
 Krishna 31, 103,
 Keshub 13, 16, 34, 56, 64, 79, 92,
 103.
 Madhwa, Acharya 34.
 Marshman, Rev. Dr. 47, 68, 86.
 Max Muller 145.
 Miller, Dr. 100.
 Middleton, Bishop 68-70.
 Mohammad 40, 90, 123.
 Mohammedanism 30, 41, 53-40, 60,
 74.
 Nanak 30, 41, 83.
 Napoleon Bonaparte 12.
 Ramkrishna Paramhansa 34.
 Ramanuja 34.
 Ram Mohun Roy.
 I
 Birth and family 1: Education and
 Moslem influence 2: conflict,
 travel and Hindu influence 3.
 II
 First Publication; Protest against
 idolatry in all religions 5: Ration-
 alism and Deism 6-11.
 III.
 Practical Life; Service in E. I.
 Company 12: Knowledge of West-
 ern civilization 13: Retirement 14.
 IV
 Religious Reform; spread of Mono-
 theism 15: Vedant Sutra translated
 16: Progress in religious views 17;
 Upanishad translated 19: Idola-
 try condemned 20: Social condi-
 tion of Hindus condemned 23:
 controversy with Shanker Shastri
 26: Principles of spiritual worship
 formulated 27: evils of idolatry
 described 31: First mention of
 Christ 33: Mundak and Kena
 Upnishads translated 36: Atmiya
 Sabha established 37: Work and
 influence 38-39.

V

Precepts of Jesus; acquaintance with Christianity 40: Publication of the precepts 42-46.

VI

Christian controversy; Missionaries' attack 47: Reply 50 and Second reply 58-66.

VII

Unitarianism; Rev. Adam's conversion 67: Bishop Middleton's suggestion 68; Spread of Unitarianism 70-73.

VIII:

Controversy with Missionaries; Proselytism 74: Turn due to this in Ram Mohan's activities 81: Higher Hinduism defined 82-85.

IX:

Final reply to the Missionaries on behalf of Unitarianism; Atone-ment 88: Trinity 90-93.

X

Unitarianism; correspondence on Christian Mission work 95: Co-operation with Scotch Presbyterians 99; Tyler controversy 102-104.

XI

Public work; Protest against Press-Ordinance 105: English education 107: Agitation against Sutteeism 109: Political work 114-119.

XII:

The Brahma Samaj; Personal religious position defined 120: Various influences thereupon 123: Differences with Unitarianism 124: Failure of Unitarianism 125: Hindu Unitarian Association 126. Establishment of the Brahma Sabha 129: Its Vedic Basis 133: Its ministry 135: Its Trust-Deed 137: Its providential character 142-145.

XIII

Visit to England; its importance and pioneering character; work in England 146: meeting with Roscoe 147: welcome in London 148: varied friendships 149: evidence before Select Committee 150: Paper on Revenue System 151: on European Settlement in India 154: India's future prophesied 158: Christian Missions 159-165.

XIV

Religious sympathies and affinities; connection with Unitarians 166: Oriental Christianity 167: Roman Catholicism 169: Increasing sympathy with Orthodox Christianity 171-174.

XV

The end; sudden illness 175: The funeral 176: Press notices and estimates of his personality 177: Miss Collett's estimate 183-5.

Ranade, Mahadev Govind 92.
Reform Bill 147.

Roscoe, William 146-147.

Shankaracharya 12, 28, 30, 34.

Shankar Shastri 26, 30, 31.

Suttee 25, 109-113.

Tagore Devendranath 37, 79.

Tagore Dwarkanath 37, 70.

Tagore Ravindranath 37.

Theosophical Society 18.

Tyler. Dr. 102

Unitarian Christianity 34, 63-99.

Unitarian Committee 70-71.

Unitarian Mission 71, 79, 95, 99, 124.

Upanishadas 19, 25, 36.

Vedant Sutra 15, 19, 34.

Vedas 18-19, 22, 26-37, 82-83.

Vivekanand 34.

Vyas 19, 30.

Wilson, Dr. 100.

Yagnavalkya 36.

Yates, Rev. 67, 98.

BRAHMARSHI KESHUB CHUNDER SEN

BY

MANILAL C. PAREKH

Price Rs. 2.

If this is not a deft psychological portraiture of this great Brahma Samajist, if in fact this is not a spiritual biography of his, I must confess I do not know what would be.....Mr. Parekh has rendered a great service to students both of psychology and of Indian religious movements.

Servant of India.

We strongly commend this book to all Christians, Indian and European, for personal study and circulation especially among non-Christian Indian friends.

National Christian Review.

This important and profoundly interesting book.....

Light of the East.

The book...is timely as it is able.....It is abounding with thought-provoking sentences.....It must be regarded as a valuable contribution of abiding worth.....

Dnyanodaya.

This comprehensive and exceedingly interesting biography which has made its appearance opportunely....

Guardian.

It is an interesting study and we recommend the book to the present generation of the Hindus.

Bombay Chronicle.

A long-needed book which will be of permanent value in the history of social reform in this country.

Indian Daily Mail.

To be had at :—

ORIENTAL CHRIST HOUSE,

RAJKOT, KATHIAWAD.

BOMBAY TRACT & BOOK SOCIETY,

KALBADEVI ROAD, BOMBAY.
