

RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

HIS LIFE, WRITINGS & SPEECHES

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

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PREFACE

“**R**am Mohun stands in history as the 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 Ram Mohun we see 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 Ram Mohun 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 atmos-

phere charged with unwonted forcing power, but still a true scion of the old stock.

“Ram Mohun 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 Ram Mohun 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 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.”

In these words Miss Collett, summed up the character and achievements of Ram Mohun Roy whose life and writings are presented in these pages.

So far as we know this is the first attempt to collect under one cover the voluminous writings of Ram Mohun Roy, which are astonishing in their variety and scope. They deal with religion, social reform, politics, education, law and administration—to the discussion of which he brought a mind trained in the best cultures of the East and West.

In this volume we have his trenchant criticisms of Suttee, with the historic petitions to the House of Commons and to the then Governor-General, followed by an essay on "The Rights of Women." Ram Mohun's Memorials on the "Freedom of the Press" have been rightly compared to Milton's *Areopagitica*. The document on "English Education in India" was the basis of Macaulay's historic minute. Mention must also be made of Ram Mohun's evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, embodied in the papers on "The Judicial and Revenue Systems of India," and on "The Indian Peasantry." Nothing can exceed the lucidity and value of his presentation. The evidence embraces some of the most important questions relating to the administration of India, such as the reform of Courts, the jurisdiction of the country's courts over Europeans, the Jury System, the separation of the executive and judicial offices, the codification of laws, the advisability of consulting the people in matters of legislation, the establishment of a native militia, the larger employment of natives, the age and education of civil servants, the amelioration of the condition of the

tenantry and the framing of laws for their protection, and lastly, the permanent settlement; it is needless to say that every word of it deserves to be carefully read and considered by us in the light of present day problems. Then we have papers on "The Prospects of Christianity in India" which every missionary will do well to read, "Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property," "Settlement in India by Europeans" and the splendid protest against "Regulation III of 1828"—all of which are discussed with profound knowledge of law and procedure and inspired by strong conviction.

The volume opens with a lengthy biographical sketch recounting the story of his life and achievements and in particular the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj of which he was the founder. It ends with his own modest auto-biography which he wrote at the request of an English friend.

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
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