Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the forerunner of modern India. He is considered the father of the Indian National Movement. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is also known for his Hindu revivalist nature. He was a liberal thinker, he inspired Indians to take good things from western civilization and other religions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt that the main reason for the political downfall of the Hindus was their religious and social downfall. He was the first person who took Indians out of their dark past and gave them the light and knowledge of the modern age. He was such a great hero who was eager to rebuild India. Due to the social work done by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, he is called the messenger of New India. He started the social revolution in India, he got the inspiration to start this revolution from the increasing selfishness, bigotry, conservatism in the Indian society, which had tied the Indian society in shackles. He was of the opinion that if religious and social reforms are not done in the society, then political reforms have no importance, so he gave priority to social and religious reforms before political reforms. He adopted a philosophical, ethical and intellectual approach towards religion and presented the demand for religious reforms on this basis. He accepted religion as the basis of society. Any kind of orthodoxy was something outside his imagination of religion. He was a strong supporter of nationalism and his life was imbued with the latest ideas of his time. He broke the traditional and orthodox Hindu ideas and took the help of laws for this. Through his efforts, sati system was declared illegal in 1829. Raja Ram Mohan Roy opposed the blind imitation of ancient traditions. He considered idol worship to be the root cause of all the evils of Hindu society, so he decided to oppose idol worship. He emphasized the pride of women caste and opposed the practice of multiple wives. Along with opposing child marriage, he insisted on widow remarriage and talked about giving half the share to the son and one fourth to the daughter in the property of the widowed woman of her husband. Raja Ram Mohan Roy emphasized on the development of women’s education so that through education the awakened woman could regain her ancient glory. He supported universal religion and had full faith in religious tolerance. He emphasized on human welfare and his approach to religion was intellectual and rational.

Keywords: Forerunner, Liberal, Intellectual, Rational, Ancient, Philosophical, Nationalism.
Introduction:
Raja Ram Mohan Roy is called the messenger of New India. He was the first person who took Indians out of their dark past and gave them the light and knowledge of the modern age. He is considered the father of the Indian National Movement. He was a true nationalist and propagated national feeling among the people. He was the first Indian who expressed anger with the British government regarding the rights of the people of his country. He initiated social revolution in India. He opposed the evils of the time, he thought that the main reason for the political downfall of Hindus is their religious and social downfall. He was of the opinion that without social and religious reforms political reforms have no importance. That's why he gave priority to social and religious reforms before political reforms. If our society is not well, there is no religious tolerance in it, then political reforms cannot be imagined in such a situation. The fame of Raja Ram Mohan Roy spread in India mainly due to the social work done by him and he became the hero of the people. The social reforms in which Raja Ram Mohan Roy played a remarkable role are described as follows:

Emphasis on Hindu revival
Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt that the Hindu society was deviating from its ancient glorious past and was falling into the clutches of selfishness and conservatism. In the 19th century many evils had come in the Hindu society. There is no place for these evils in Hinduism as propounded by Vedas and Upanishads. The priestly class has considered these evils as helpful in protecting their interests, so deliberately the priestly class and the elite support these evils. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was of the opinion that the upliftment of Hinduism in the Indian society is possible only when these evil practices are abandoned. This was the reason that he denied the prevalent evils in Hinduism such as idol worship, sati system, child marriage, mixing with people of other culture, etc. Raja Ram Mohan Roy emphasized on making Sati illegal and remarriage of widows. He inspired Indians to take good things from western civilization and other religions.

Opposing blind imitation of ancient traditions
Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt that one of the main reasons for the decline of Indian society was the blind imitation of ancient traditions by Indians. He was of the view that traditionalism is dangerous as a general tendency because many rational acts are sanctified by taking advantage of fanaticism in traditions. Indian life was suffering from social injustice because of this traditionalist. Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered social evils responsible for the intellectual, moral, social and political degeneration of the society. He was of the opinion that the traditions of the past have to be given a pure form, all our present will be happy and happy future will be new. So we should adopt innovation to improve our ancient traditions.

Opposition to idol worship
Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered idol worship to be the root cause of all the evils of Hindu society, so he decided to oppose idol worship. Despite Rai's parents having complete faith in idol worship, Rai opposed idol worship. He was of the view that idol worship had struck at the very roots of Hindu society by creating innumerable divisions. He opposed idol worship on the basis of references from Vedas Upanishads. Instead of idol worship, he has supported pure worship. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, after a thorough and detailed study, came
to the conclusion that idol worship was not a fundamental part of Hinduism, rather it was practiced later. On these grounds, Raja Ram Mohan Roy opposed idol worship.

**Emphasis on the upliftment of women**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt that the condition of women in the contemporary society was very pathetic. That’s why he took the initiative to improve the condition of women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy has emphasized on the pride of the female race. Based on the history of ancient Vedic society and various religious texts, he proved that in the past Hindu women had a respectable position in the society and any religious and social work was considered incomplete without them. He objected to the fact that women are intellectually, mentally and morally inferior as compared to men.

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy opposed polygamy. He opposed this practice because many wealthy Hindus, like Muslims, kept many wives, keeping in mind that after the death of their husbands, their life became hellish.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy opposed child marriage because after the death of her husband at a young age, she had to live the life of a child widow, so she opposed child marriage.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy encouraged widows to prove their right over their husband’s property. He tried to prove that according to Hindu religion, a widow should get half the share of her husband’s property as that of a son and a fourth of that of a daughter.
- Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed that the reason for the plight of the female caste was their illiteracy. His idea was that women in the Indian society should be able to wake up through education and achieve their ancient glory, so they tried to emphasize the development of women’s education.

**Protest against caste discrimination**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered the caste system to be a stigma of the Hindu society and strongly opposed it. He was of the view that Hindu society has been divided into innumerable fragments due to caste discrimination. He expressed the idea that the superiority or inferiority of any person should be decided by his qualities and deeds and not on the basis of birth. The Aryans had divided the Indian society on the basis of Karma, later caste was decided on the basis of birth. This division had a very disastrous result for the society. Some people became superior and other classes were considered inferior. Due to this, people of low caste started converting religion, as a greeting, the feeling of patriotism was damaged. Raja Ram Mohan Roy emphasized on inter-caste marriages to remove caste discrimination.

**Importance of studying Indian philosophy and culture**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy made a deep study of ancient Indian religious texts. This was the reason that he had full faith in Indian philosophy and culture and understood its importance. He established the Vedanta College in 1825 for the propagation of Indian philosophy and culture. He had translated several Upanishads into English and Bengali. He wished to translate the entire Vedantic literature into the languages of the country. Raja Ram
Mohan Roy used to respect different religions, cultures and beliefs of the world, he had full faith that the whole earth is one family. He emphasized on religious tolerance and secularism in India.

**Adopting the good elements of western culture**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a practical thinker, he was always ready to accept the good things of any person and nation. When Raja Ram Mohan Roy went to England, he saw that the people of Europe are not fanatics, they have a scientific outlook. Raja Ram Mohan Roy wanted social development of Indians before political and economic development. He believed that without social modernization no nation could make its political and economic development. Therefore, he appealed to the Indian society to adopt all those things from the western culture, which were found lacking in the Indian society.

**Propaganda of humanism**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a prominent humanist thinker who considered mankind as one family and different nations and castes as its branches. It was his heartfelt desire that man be left free to build a society based on tolerance, sympathy and intelligence. The meaning of his humanism was to make the human soul experience freedom by staying away from the bondage of hypocrisy and rituals. Raja Ram Mohan Roy wanted that God should make religion such that it destroys the discrimination and hatred between human and human and inspires the unity and peace of mankind.

**Emphasis on the promotion of education**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy saw education as an instrument for the progress of western countries. He considered education useful for the end of the evils prevailing in the Indian society. The basic objective of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's ideology was to take the Indian society out of darkness to the modern era so that India could join the ranks of developed and prosperous nations of the world. He was of the opinion that the Indian society is going towards degradation due to wasteful customs and traditions. All these evils can be got rid of only if education is spread in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an admirer and supporter of the then British education system because it included contemporary subjects. He was of the view that if the government sincerely wanted to improve the condition of Indian society, it would have to provide liberal education which included mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and other useful social sciences.

**Medium of instruction in English**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy had suggested to keep English as the medium of education in his education policy and ideas. The idea of education was that due to the Mughal rule, the medium of education was Persian and articles were not published in Persian in such excellent literature as it was in English medium. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was of the opinion that by making English language the medium of national education, Indians would come closer to the British, where the government would benefit from it, the economic and social condition of India would also improve.
Emphasis on conscious journalism

Raja Ram Mohan Roy knew very well that for any movement or revolution, the first task is to prepare the public. He considered the newspaper as the best means to awaken the masses for the social and religious reform movement. That's why he also started newspapers in Bengali and Persian languages. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is also called the father of national journalism in India, he understood the importance of freedom of the press. Through his journalism, he used to write about various problems of the country. Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered effort as the best means for national renaissance and emphasized on its development.

Religious Thoughts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a religious thinker. His family environment was very religious. He was an ardent nationalist and his life was imbued with the latest ideas of his time. He did a comparative study of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and all religions before presenting any kind of religious point of view and then presented his point of view. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's entire thinking was around his religious thoughts only, so it becomes necessary to study his religious thoughts. The study of the religious ideas of Raja Ram Mohan Roy is as follows-

Belief in one God and supporter of universal religion

Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed in one God. His monotheism combined the essence of ancient Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. He believed in only one God. He was very religious minded and had full faith in the purity of religion. Raja Ram Mohan Roy did not hesitate to accept the good principles of all religions. He was not in favor of blindly following any one religion, he was a symbol of equality of all religions. He was of the view that there is only one God for the entire human race, so there is also a universal supernatural moral law available to all. Raja Ram Mohan Roy tried throughout his life for the development of universal religion. He was of the view that such a universal religion would put an end to the differences between people.

Belief in ancient religious texts and Upanishads

Raja Ram Mohan Roy made a deep study of the ancient Hindu Upanishads and the Quran. According to the Quran, God is one but has different names. Raja Ram Mohan Roy supported monotheism on the basis of study of Vedas, Upanishads. Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered everything human and creatures as a part of Brahma which has no shape and is formless.

Opposition to idol worship

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was strongly opposed to idol worship. Studying the Quran led him to believe in idol worship. He opposed idol worship on the basis of references in the Vedas, Upanishads. Raja Ram Mohan Roy supported pure worship in place of idol worship. Raja Ram Mohan Roy after his deep study came to the conclusion that idol worship is not a fundamental part of Hinduism. The Hindu practice of idol worship has
done more damage to the fabric of society than all other practices combined. This was the reason that Raja Ram Mohan Roy had lost faith in idol worship and supported pure worship. This was the reason that Raja Ram Mohan Roy had lost faith in idol worship and supported pure worship.

**Faith in religious tolerance**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy had full faith in religious toleration. The belief in one God not only made him tolerant of all religions, but out of it also arose the idea of a world religion. Raja Ram Mohan Roy respected all religions in his religious views, he considered conversion to be against the policy of religious tolerance. He was very tolerant of showing religious differences. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first person who did a comparative study and research of religious science, he always tried to end religious discrimination and disparity. He opposed the tradition of bitter criticism of other religions by the supporters of one religion and stressed the need to adopt the rational principles inherent in all religions.

**Strongly opposed Hindu orthodoxy**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy made a deep study of Hindu religious texts and came to the conclusion from the experience of study that Hinduism is moving away from its ancient glory towards conservatism which was the main reason for its downfall. In Hinduism, the caste bonds became very tight, there was a lot of discrimination on the basis of caste. There were many social evils like Sati system, child marriage, idol worship etc. in the Hindu society, which had separate respect with religion. These social evils destroyed the real structure of the Hindu society. Due to the conservatism of Hinduism and the rituals existing in it, he had lost faith in the religion. Raja Ram Mohan Roy adopted a philosophical, ethical and intellectual approach to religion and sought religious reforms on this basis.

**Emphasis on religious reforms**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy in his religious views emphasized on religious reforms in the Hindu society. He believed that the main reason for the socio-economic and political decline of Hindu society was the conservatism that had come in Hinduism. He emphasized that efforts should be made to remove the evils that have come in the Hindu society. This was the reason why he opposed idol worship after a deep study of ancient religious texts. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was of the view that religion and society are closely related and both affect each other. If the form of religion gets distorted then the form of society will also get distorted. He considered the practice of Sati against Hinduism, so he opposed it. He was of the view that every reform done in the field of religion presents the way for social reform. Religion and society cannot be separated from each other. He wanted to awaken the public against religious evils so that he could put pressure on the government for religious reforms.
Emphasis on adopting intellectual and logical approach towards religion

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a pragmatic thinker, he did not accept anything until it was intellectually and logically correct. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was of the view that religion originated in ancient times to protect social relations, whose purpose was to regulate and balance property rights and human conduct. There is a deep connection between religion and society and both influence each other. Raja Ram Mohan Roy emphasized the need for reforms because of his intellectual and economic outlook. He was of the view that if Hindus were to improve their political and social status, it was necessary for them to make some changes in their religious views.

Emphasis on human welfare

The basic objective behind the demand for religious reforms by Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the welfare of man. He was of the opinion that religious activities should also be helpful in human welfare. The spirit of human love existed in his religion. He was of the opinion that one who serves mankind serves God only. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a true humanist, he wanted to create a society based on kindness, sympathy, cooperation, love, tolerance and fraternity. He considered the worship of humanity as the supreme religion. On the basis of his humanistic approach, he opposed such evil practices and traditions which were not protectors of human interests.

Establishment of Atmiya Sabha and Brahma Samaj

Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Atmiya Sabha through which he emphasized on re-popularizing Hinduism. In the Atmiya Sabha, a symposium of scholars interested in the philosophy of religion was held. People of different religions were called in this assembly and their views were taken on various subjects, there was an open discussion in this assembly on every problem that came in the religion.

Brahma Samaj was the first attempt in the reform movements of the 19th century. It was a society of supporters of one God of all religions and the entire human race, in which there was no discrimination on the basis of race, caste, religion. In this, the worship of one God was emphasized and any idol and rituals were prohibited for worship. The basic belief of Brahma Samaj was that God is formless, he is the creator and protector of this world. The most important feature of the Brahma Samaj was its sympathetic and liberal approach towards all religions. In the Brahma Samaj, a new stream of modernism, liberalism and prudence flowed in India.

In conclusion, we can say that Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first thinker of modern India, who made a practical effort to remove the evils in the then Indian society. Where he contributed to Hindu revival by opposing idol worship and Sati-practice, he tried to restore women to their ancient glory. He had full faith in man's conscience and intelligence. He termed caste discrimination as contrary to Indian culture and said that caste should be determined on the basis of merit rather than on the basis of birth. He emphasized on the promotion of education to remove the evils in the Indian society. He used English as the medium of
instruction and thought that we should be ready to accept the good qualities of western culture. As a conscious journalist, he introduced the public to Indian problems. Raja Ram Mohan Roy respected all religions, his approach to religion was intellectual and logical. He had full faith in religious toleration. He opposed Hindu conservatism and stressed on religious reforms. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a supporter of universal religion, he did not hesitate to accept the good principles of all religions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy wanted to make social and religious reforms, the main feeling behind him was the welfare of man. Religion and spirituality were the basis of his entire thinking. Due to the social work done by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, we also call him the father of social renaissance in India.

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