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in agreement with it.

INVOCATION

It is not the function of our soul to gain God, to utilise him for any special material purpose. All that we can ever aspire to is to become more and more one with God.

- Rabindranath Tagore

* * * * *

Only those of tranquil minds, and none else, can attain abiding joy by realizing within their souls the Being who manifests one essence in a multiplicity of forms.

- Upanishad

* * * * *

Nothing bears true existence except God. The existence of whatever things that appear to us, relies on the existence of God.

- Rammohun Roy

Editorial

We celebrate the birthdays of two outstanding personalities of Bengal, namely Rabindranath Tagore and Rammohun Roy, in the month of May. They were born in Bengal almost a century apart, but their dreams and ideas resonated as they were not limited either by time or the geographical boundaries of their existence. While Rammohun paved the way to a universal religion of man, founded on the Fatherhood of the Omnipresent Supreme Being and the fraternity of mankind, Tagore, a true disciple of the former, took his ideas further by propagating a consciousness of the spiritual and cultural affinity between the different peoples that inhabit the earth. Both sought to discover spirituality amidst our mundane and materialistic existence and hoped that this awakening would make the world a better place for humanity. Both were intensely humanitarian in their approach. Both believed in a true education system that would not only strengthen our minds through knowledge, but also endow us with humane and rational qualities.

However, as we celebrate their birthdays, we need to ponder how far have we been truly influenced by their ideals. A famous poet of Bengal laments that while we have confined Tagore within the boundaries of celebrations to mark his birth and death anniversaries yet we fail to imbibe the true significance of his thoughts and ideals in our life. Rajarshi Rammohun is not even remembered by the nation excepting a few, although it owes him the ushering in of India into the modern world! Not only he is ignored, it is a shame that often he faces severe criticism when his contributions are misinterpreted in the light of misdirected ideologies. This, I believe, hardly affects their greatness, but it only shows how confined and restricted we have become in our thoughts and actions if we cannot appreciate their contributions, even if we cannot emulate them.

Today, in a war-ridden world, where intense sectarian ideologies have left the civilisation ruined and its human fabric in tatters, it is time for us not only to remember them but also try to spread their lofty ideals along with the teachings of other great leaders of the world through the ages. This will lead mankind forward through the troubled times and will be able to restore peace and harmony to a disturbed world order. We hope that the youth of today and those of the future, who are suffering through the follies of their elders, will rediscover that the world is one and fairness is not won by wars or suppression, but through constant endeavors through patience, tolerance, compassion and justice. Hate breeds hatred but freedom strengthens the path to more freedom of the mind and soul.

We conclude the article ‘Raja Rammohun Roy – The Torch Bearer’ translated from the Bengali article penned by Uma Bhattacharya. The last part of ‘The History of Kerala Brahmo Samaj’ is presented by Alok Chand Athayan.

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Raja Rammohun Roy: The Torchbearer of Modern India

(Part – 3)

Uma Bhattacharyya

(Translated from a Bengali article)

Social Reform and Women's Emancipation:

Rammohun was deeply affected by the insensitive, dehumanised practices of the comatosed social mores of his times. He realized that the women were facing the brunt of a male dominated, ritualistic and exploitative society. Adherence to the caste and the 'Kulin' systems, polygamy of men, early marriage of the girl child, exacting of the dowry, the unbearable hardship of the widow or the practice of 'Suttee' i.e., burning of the widow alive on the pyre of her dead husband were the inhuman practices that moved him deeply. In spite of his best of efforts in 1810 he could not prevent his sister-in-law Alokamanjari, the wife of his elder brother, from being burnt at the pyre of her husband. Being deeply heart, Rammohun took a vow to work for removing this curse from society. He tried to prove that the Hindu Shastras had given greater preference to widowhood than the act of Suttee. He found the erudite Sanskrit scholar Mrityunjoy Tarkalankar in his side, who stated that "Mounting on the pyre of the dead husband is not essential as per the

religious texts. Between leading a pious life and burning at the pyre, the former is more acceptable than the latter. By not committing Suttee, a widow does not commit any sin".

In spite of this clarification the practice of Suttee continued unabated because a widow came in the way of her relatives in usurping her husband's property. Hence the motivation behind this heinous practice was greed. Rammohun along with his friends of the Atmiya Sabha became involved in a lifelong battle to end this dreadful practice. In order to awaken social consciousness Rammohun published three books:

1. 'Sahamaraner Pakshe Prabartak O Nibartak Sangbad' (Argument For and Against the Practice of Suttee) first in November 1818,
2. 'Sahamaraner Pakshe Prabartak O Nibartak Sangbad' (Argument For and Against the Practice of Suttee) second part in November 1819, and
3. 'Sahamaran Bishoy' (Practice of Suttee) in 1829.

In 1819 they submitted a petition for the abolition of this barbarous practice to Lord Hastings, which was turned down because there were not enough signatories to back the appeal. Therefore, Rammohun took this movement to the

Bentinck. On 4th December 1829 Lord Bentinck declared Suttee as unlawful. The conservatives appealed to the Privy Council for revoking this Suttee Bill. The members of the Privy Council were convinced by the learned and rational

BENGAL REGULATION XVII of 1829 [c].

Passed on the 4th December, 1829.

A Regulation for declaring the practice of Sati or of Burning or Burying alive the Widows of Hindus, illegal, and punishable by the Criminal Courts.[c]

1. The practice of sati or of burning or burying alive the widows of **Preamble.** Hindus, is revolting to the feelings of human nature; it is nowhere enjoined by the religion of the Hindus as an imperative duty; on the contrary, a life of purity and retirement on the part of the widow is more especially and preferably inculcated, and by a vast majority of that people throughout India the practice is not kept up nor observed: in some extensive districts it does not exist; in those in which it has been most frequent it is notorious that, in many instances acts of atrocity have been perpetrated, which have been shocking to the Hindus themselves, and in their eyes unlawful and wicked.

The measures hitherto adopted to discourage and prevent such acts have failed of success, and the Governor General in Council is deeply impressed with the conviction that the abuses in question cannot be effectually put an end to without abolishing the practice altogether.

Actuated by these considerations, the Governor General in Council, without intending to depart from one of the first and most important principles of the system of British government in India, that all classes of the people be secure in the observance of their religious usages, so long as that system can be adhered to without violation of the paramount dictates of justice and humanity, has deemed it right to establish the following rules, which are hereby enacted to be in force from the time of their promulgation throughout the territories immediately subject to the Presidency of Fort William.

2. The practice of sati or burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus is hereby declared illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts. **Sati declared illegal and punishable. Zamindárs,**

3. *First.*—All zamindárs, taluqdárs or other proprietors of land, whether

[c] Portion repealed by the Repealing Act, 1874 (XVI of 1874), is omitted.

[c] Ben. Reg. XVII of 1829 has been declared, by notification under the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874 (XIV of 1874), to be in force in the Chief Commissionership of Assam (except the North Lushai Hills)—see Appendix, p. 724.

people in different parts of his own country as well as to the sympathisers abroad. Rammohun appealed to the British Parliament. Finally, he managed to secure a large number of signatures in his appeal that was submitted to Lord

debate of Rammohun and the appeal of the conservatives was rejected on 11th July 1833. Rammohun's endeavours in saving the hapless women from being burnt alive paved the way to their empowerment in future.

The Hindu Shastras initially approved of inheritance rights to women, which were later denied to them. Rammohun directed his efforts at reclaiming these denied rights for the women. He worked for securing equal rights for women, the exploited half of the society.

Political Reforms:

On 14th March 1823 Governor General John Adam issued a directive restricting the freedom of press by declaring that no publications can be made without the prior permission of the government. Rammohun dissented against this by submitting a letter of protest to the King-in-Council on 31st March 1823. He remarked that “never in the world there had been any rebellion instigated by the free press. On the contrary, whenever this freedom had been suppressed, it had often led to revolt. There were many instances of this in the world.”

In 1826, Lord Amherst passed an unequal and discriminatory law prohibiting the Hindu and Muslim Juries from being appointed in Judicial proceedings against any native or British Christian. Rammohun collected the signatures of 128 Hindu and 116 Muslim persons to send a letter to the Parliament in England protesting against this unjust law.

Rammohun was the first to bring it to the notice of his countrymen how the resources of the Indian people were being

appropriated by the East India Company. He used his pen to expose this exploitation of the ordinary citizens of India by the British Legal and Revenue Administration.

Internationalism:

A strong believer in Internationalism, Rammohun was vocal against the aggression of Imperial Powers in the European countries. When the Austria recovered Naples, Rammohun was pleased to state that “I consider the cause of 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.” When the Spanish colonies of South America were freed from the exploitations of Spain in 1823, he was overjoyed. He was very happy to learn about the July revolution in France in 1830.

Journey to England and Death:

The Mughal Emperor Akbar, the Second, conferred the title of Raja to Rammohun Roy in 1829. He appointed Rammohun as his ambassador to England to press for an increase in his allowances. He reached the shores of England on April 1st, 1831. The deliberations on the Suttee Bill were taking place in the Privy Council. Rammohun’s intervention helped in establishing the Suttee Abolition law. He also succeeded in completing the duties entrusted on him by the Mughal

Emperor. The Parliament of England honoured him with all the respects due to an ambassador. He was introduced to many British intellectuals of his time. While on his voyage to England he was so overjoyed to see a French ship that while trying to salute the flag of the French revolution, he accidentally met with a leg injury. However, this could not deter him from travelling in Europe. He visited France where he was given the honours of a visiting royalty.

He was the one to speak of universal humanism. It is a matter of great wonder that he was the first person to dream of uniting the world through an international organisation like the League of Nations, that was founded nearly ninety years later in 1919. He was a visionary, who was much ahead of his times.

On 27th September 1833, Rammohun breathed his last at Bristol after a brief illness. He composed a devotional song just a few days before he passed away. The song ran thus:

কী স্বদেশে কী বিদেশে, যথায় তথায় থাকি
তোমার রচনামধ্যে তোমায় দেখিয়া থাকি
দেশভেদে কালভেদে রচনার সীমায়
প্রতিক্ষণে সাক্ষ্য দেয় তোমার মহিমায়
তোমার প্রভাব দেখি না থাকি একাকী ।

(Whether I am in my own country or travelling abroad,

I witness you in your creation;
Irrespective of time and place,
you are ever present in your glory;
This assures me that I am not alone.)

After his death, Rammohun was buried in a quiet and secluded spot. But ten years later when Dwarkanath Tagore was visiting England, he secured a place in the Arnos Vale cemetery of Bristol where he built a mausoleum for his mentor's final resting place. This is still a very sacred and honoured destination for the Indian travellers to England.

Conclusion:

Rammohun possessed sharp intellect and rational mind that made him an erudite, humanitarian person whose constant quest for truth made him a philosopher, a powerful author, an educationist and social reformer whose love for his country made him an uncompromising warrior. His self-confidence, indefatigable energy, strength of personality, wisdom and vision made it possible for him to tread the difficult path he chose. Rammohun was the first great to shine the light of modern knowledge on the darkness and ignorance of his contemporary India. He was the lamp of universal humanism, who used rationality and humanitarian qualities to strike at the very root of the superstitious religious practices of his time. He inspired his countrymen to wake up into a modern, rational world, urging them to

find the right path in the light of their awakened intellect and conscience.

Rabindranath has called him ‘Bharath Pathik’ or the ‘Indian Wayfarer’ or the ‘Indian Pilgrim’ in the true sense. According to Tagore “Although the Mughal Emperor has bestowed the title of ‘Rajah’ yet the Lord of Lords has truly made him a King. His throne has been established among his countrymen.”

Rammohun’s outstanding lessons on life, his exceptional love for his motherland, his appeals to universal humanism kindled a flame that still lights our path amidst the political, economic, social and factional turmoil of our times. He is still the lamp that can show us the path today.

[Author: Dr. Uma Bhattacharyya, Retired Professor, IISER]

The Kerala Brahmosamaj

Part - 2

Alok Chand Ayathan

In Kerala, Dr. Gopalan established the first Branch of Brahmo Samaj at Calicut, (known as The Calicut Brahmosamaj, Malabar) in the year 1898. Later on he established Brahmo Samajes at Alathur, Thalassery, Palakkad and also at Alappuzha. The Alappuzha Brahmo Samaj was established in the year 1924. Out of all these Brahmo Samajes only the Calicut and the Alappuzha Brahmo Samajes have survived but without any activities. There were many followers for the Brahmo Samaj during those times and the movement had made a strong impact on society. It had made revolutionary changes in the social and cultural sects of Kerala. Dr. Ayathan Gopalan is one of the Renaissance leader of Kerala reformation movement.

The founder of the Brahmo Samaj in Kerala was Karat Govinda Menon, who was later on entitled as "Brahmananda Swami" as a honor by Dr. Gopalan for writing a series of hymns called "Brahmasankeerthanam" which were meant to be sung during the Brahmo prayer meetings. He was later on widely known by this name as Brahmananda Swami Sivayogi,

Another leader of the Brahmo Samaj in Kerala was V. Kunjikannan Gurikkal. He was later on known as Vaghbhatananda

guru. He initially started his social activities with the Brahmo Samaj and Dr. Gopalan was his mentor, who taught him the faith and principles of the Brahmo Samaj.

Other followers of the Brahmo Samaj during those times include Sadhu Sivaprasad, Brahnavadi P.Kunjiraman, Brahmavradhan, Aryabadan, G.Subharao, Kallingal Madathil Rarichan Moopan etc. The title "Brahnavadi" was given by Dr. Gopalan to P. Kunjiraman for his untiring services rendered to the Kerala Brahmo Samaj.

The participation of women as part of the Kerala Brahmo Samaj is also a milestone in the great history of Kerala Brahmo Samaj. Their contribution for Brahmo Samaj is worth more than anything while comparing to the social status of women who had in the society during those times. Women faced more harassment and lacked freedom in society. They even faced rigorous atrocities, were denied of education or high social status, and suffered from caste and racial discriminations. Malicious practices and superstitious beliefs were at its peak.

Among the vast number of women Brahmos, three women activists were very famous in Kerala. They were; 1)

Kallat Kousallya Gopalan (wife of Dr. Ayathan Gopalan), 2) Dr. Mandhakini Bai (wife of Ayathan Devadath) and 3) Dr. Ayathan Janaki Ammal.

1) Kousallya Gopalan: was the wife of Dr. Ayathan Gopalan and was the backbone behind the reform activities of Dr. Gopalan and the Calicut Brahmo Samaj. Their wedding was the first Brahmo wedding conducted at Madras Brahmo Samaj under the priestship of Shri. R.G. Bhandarkar. Many Brahmo leaders from all across India attended the function. She was the brain behind the Sugunavardhini movement and together with Dr. Gopalan she founded the Sugunavardhini movement in the year 1899; in order to attract children and women towards the Brahmo Samaj and impart its faith and principles to them. Sugunavardhini movement also fostered human values in children, drew them to social activities, protected the rights of women, and provided free education to women and girls and also to the marginalised sections of society, such as the Harijan (Dalit) communities in Kerala, that were poorly treated by the higher castes,

2) Dr. Mandhakini Bai was the backbone of the reform activities of Alappuzha Brahmo Samaj, and was the first female who got medical education in their family. She was from a wealthy Ezhava family of Alappuzha named

"Alummootil" and was the daughter of the wealthy Landlord of Alappuzha Alummootil Cochoomani Channar. This Channar was a follower of Sri Naraya Guru and was later on influenced by the faith of Brahmo Samaj and worked with it. The Alappuzha Brahmo Samaj mandir and the vast premises had been donated by this Landlord. Later on she was married to Dr. Gopalan's third son Ayathan Devadath. It was the first inter-caste as well as the first Brahmo wedding to be conducted at Alappuzha Brahmo Samaj. She later on worked with Calicut Brahmo Samaj and was a strict Brahmo till her death. She was also into the freedom movement during those times.

3) Dr. Ayathan Janaki Ammal was the first Female Doctor of Malabar, Kerala, (first Malayali Lady Doctor) and sister to Dr. Gopalan. She was also an ardent Brahmo and worked along with her brother Dr. Gopalan and helped him in his reform activities.

Dr. Mandhakini Bai, Dr. Ayathan Janaki Ammal and Dr. Gopalan conducted free medical camps as part of the Brahmo Samaj activities and helped many poor families.

The three pillars of the Kerala Brahmo Samaj were the above female figures who dedicated their entire life on to the great cause of Brahmo Samaj in Kerala. And they still remain in the hearts of the people of that part of the country.

Dr. Gopalan's first son Dr. Chandramohan Ayathan got married to the Princess of Pitapura Venkitarathnabai who was also an ardent Brahmo and the daughter of Dewan of Pitapura Koka Venkitasubbarao who was a staunch Brahmo of Hyderabad Brahmo Samaj. His daughter Ayathan Saroja Bai got married to Mangalore Brahmo Samaj worker Srinivas of Nireswalya. His entire family was dedicated for the cause of Brahmo Samaj. Their teachings, vision

and the great social activities still echoes in the hearts of the people and he was recognised all over south India. They still remain and will continue to remain in the hearts of people throughout centuries till the world exist.

(Author: Alok Chand Athayan is a member of Calicut Brahmo Samaj)

Brahmo Samaj

Jaisthotsab at Sadharan Brahmo Samaj

On 16 May 2026, Jaisthotsab was inaugurated at the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The festival commenced with a prayer offered by Shri Amit Das.

A special musical programme was organised to pay tribute to four eminent Bengali poets and composers—Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Rajanikanta Sen, and Dwijendralal Roy. Members of the **Brahmasangeet Shiksha Kendra** rendered the songs conducted by Shri Koushik De.

On **17th May (2nd Jaistha)**, the **148th Foundation Day** of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was observed with due solemnity and reverence. The programme began with kirtan, which filled the Samaj Mandir with devotion.

Acharya was Shri Sanjib Mukhopadhyay, Kirtan and hymns were conducted by Shri Kaushik De.

On 18th May 2026,

To commemorate the birth anniversary of Debendranath Tagore, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj organized a lecture meeting on “মহর্ষির পরিবার - শিক্ষা সংস্কার ও সৃষ্টির বৌদ্ধিক উত্তরাধিকার”. The speaker was Shri Pitam Sengupta.

Letter to The Editor:

Dear Editor, Indian Messenger

Hinduism in the truest form is the epitome of tolerance and is enriched with the finest philosophy. Unfortunately, over the last 1000 years, interested and self-centred persons, included hundreds of rituals and achar as a part of this great religion. From Raja Rammohan, Vidyasagar, Ramkrishna Paramhanshadeb, Swami Vivekanada and others with genuine knowledge of Hindu ethics protested only to be heckled, scorned and ridiculed by the fanatics. The problem is not with religion per se. All religion, in its entirety, preaches peace, love and wisdom. But all religions have been, if I may say so, corrupted viciously by a bunch of fanatics who unleash terror in the name of religion. This is unfortunately true for most religions. Terror by one religion cannot be the reason for counter terror by another fanatic group. Terrorists have no religion and are anti human by nature and have to be dealt firmly with maximum punishment. Lastly, let me echo John Lennon's words, "Give peace a chance". We are becoming, all over the world, be it any religion, caste, creed, colour etc very racist, intolerant, violent and that does not help the growth and development of human race.

Ranjan Bhattacharya,
Suren Tagore Road, Kolkata - 700019

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Dear Friend,

We are updating our member records and intend to include verified email IDs and mobile numbers for each member to facilitate faster and more frequent communication.

Many members have already submitted the updated forms. Those who have not received the form or have been unable to submit it, are requested to kindly update the details below and send us the completed form through any of the following methods:

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or
- b) Send a scanned copy of the filled-up form through e-mail at brahmosamaj.sadharan@gmail.com

We look forward for your continuing co-operation and support.

Yours truly,

Secretary

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