

April 2026

The Indian Messenger

Founded in 1883

Reg. No. RNI 5097/57

The
Indian Messenger

ORGAN OF THE SADHARAN BRAHMO SAMAJ

Mainly Devoted to Religious, Social, Moral and Educational Topics

Vol. 144

KOLKATA, April 7 & 21, 2026

Nos. 7 to 8

Published by:
Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Kolkata
Phone: 2241-2280
Email: brahmosamaj.sadharan@gmail.com
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Online Edition of The Indian Messenger:
im.thesadharanbrahmosamaj.org

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Printed & Published By:
Sri Biswajit Roy on behalf of Sadharan
Brahmo Samaj; 211, Bidhan Sarani,
Kolkata - 700006

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INVOCATION

You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance.

- Kahill Gibran

* * * * *

It is not the length of life, but the depth.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

* * * * *

Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.

- Aristotle

Editorial

India is slated to go to polls in four states at the very end of this month. So, this is going to be a very challenging month for our democracy as it will put to test our ability to exercise our discretion effectively and responsibly as free citizens. The responsibility of protecting our egalitarian polity lies on us, the citizens of this nation. We cannot shelve our obligations and ease our conscience by putting the blame squarely on our elected representatives when we feel that our democratic ideals are not protected. Our Maker has entrusted each one of us with a free spirit, an analytical mind, and an active conscience. It is therefore, our bounden duty to cultivate our mind and morality, and not bow down to temptations or forget to act when the situation so demands.

There is no doubt that the world has become too crowded, threatening to tip the balance of peaceful cohabitation of mankind and other living species on earth. The struggle to grab every element of sustenance for our own benefit has made the world an unkind and unsympathetic place for the weaker to survive. The laws made by the powerful therefore subverts the very basis of natural justice. When we are expected to be guided by ethics and morality, we are turning to the dangerous ploys of grabbing power and wealth. Unless we are directly affected we turn a blind eye to the suffering of the underprivileged. As a consequence, there is chaos all around the world, which is being torn asunder by meaningless violence and endless war. Precious human lives are lost and priceless natural resources are destroyed. This havoc has become the new normal, so that people hardly feel outraged anymore!

Our country is no exception. When countless co-citizens get disenfranchised, some of us remain mute spectators while another section actively participate in the heinous act of depriving their countrymen of their legitimate right to vote, the most precious gift that has been given to us by our Constitution. There was a time in colonial India, when the common masses rose to challenge oppression through non-violent movements. Today, in a free nation, we have lost the zeal to protest against injustice. What is even worse, people do not hesitate to make fun of and ridicule serious situations! We feel that it is the duty of the politicians to set things right and blame them when they fail to do so. We forget that it is the atmosphere nurtured by all of us that lends them the support to act as they do. Where is our collected conscience to resist the unfair acts or give rise to a situation where the offenders will hesitate to act wrongfully? We too take the easier way out and do not choose to follow the difficult path charted out by our sense of justice or moral guidelines. Unless we strive to correct this atmosphere of deception and greed, we will not be able to live in a just and fair world.

This issue contains an article on The Kerala Brahmo Samaj by Alok Chand Ayathan and a life sketch of Raja Rammohun Roy by Uma Bhattacharya along with an article by Sanjoy Chanda entitled ‘Rammohun’s Influence on Rabindranath’. A poem penned by V.P. Vaidyalingam praying to end all wars is published in this issue.

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A Pity Called War

By

P V Vaidialingam

Tension brews from shore to shore,
The drums of war beat loud once more.
Greed and ego, hands blood-stained,
Across the earth, fear is unchained.
In sacred halls where peace once grew,
Now weapons shine with deadly hue.
Hegemons preach with blinded pride,
While millions suffer, cry, and hide.
The earth is scorched by human will,
Its breath grows faint, its heart stands
still.

Yet, still we race to arms and fire,
Fuelled by hate, by vain desire.
What have we learned from blood and
flame?
That war brings death, and never fame.
In India's past, a whisper rose,
Where dharma stood against its foes.
Where saints and sages walked the land,
With folded palms and outstretched
hand.

Not swords, but silence, turned the tide,
Not wrath, but truth, the tyrant defied.
Can such a voice, once calm and still,
Now rise again, by force of will?
Vedanta speaks: All life is one,
No East, no West beneath the sun.
No flags divide, no borders bind,
Just one vast soul, in humankind.
Let 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' be our
creed,

A world not torn by hate or greed.
If only hearts would choose to hear,
And let truth and love triumph over fear.
So, let us pray and act with grace,
That peace may find a dwelling place.
Though the dark clouds around us may
choose to stay,
The light within us can guide our way.

[Poet: Mr. V. P. Vaidyalingam is a retired civil servant who has served the Indian Railways.]

Raja Rammohun Roy: The Torchbearer of Modern India

(Part – 2)

Uma Bhattacharyya

(Translated from a Bengali article)

Religious Reforms:

Rammohun wanted to propagate this spiritual awakening in him to the fellow citizens of all faiths and creeds who populated the world. This new concept, named ‘Brahmo Dharma’, had a universal appeal because it was based on the basic truth enshrined in all the religions of the world. According to him, all faiths are founded on the universal truth that all men are equal and therefore there is no conflict between the core beliefs of different religions. He tried to spread this universal religion to his fellow world citizens.

This concept was, at the same time, an attempt to present the Vedantic Philosophy in a new light. The customs practiced by the Hindus prevalent in Rammohun’s time departed greatly from true Hindu faith. The religion had transformed itself over centuries into meaningless rituals and dead habits that produced insurmountable gulf between people. The leaders and proponents of Hinduism had succeeded in misinterpreting the religious beliefs, subverting truth by superstitions, that established perpetual suppression and

caste exploitation of the underprivileged by the upper castes and higher echelons of the contemporary society. This was a gross violation of human dignity and departure from truth. Rammohun realized that it was necessary to reform the existing religious practices as a society thrives on ethics, spirituality and true religious fervor.

The proponents of the existing religious dispensation were against this religious reform proposed by Rammohun. He was maligned by his opponents and had to suffer social condemnation. Even his life was under threat.

In 1819 Rammohun founded the ‘Atmiya Sabha’ in his own premises. The enlightened members of the society who supported him met at his residence to hold erudite discussions on the Indian Philosophy or ‘Darshan’. Among his friends were Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, Kalinath Roychodhury, Prasanna Kumar Thakur, Rajkrishna Singha, Mathuranath Mallick and other egalitarian men of his time. The Atmiya Sabha was the organisation for discussing the belief system of the ‘Brahmo Dharma’ and planning many courses of social

upliftment. Rammohun's music teacher, Kali Mirza, who was an exponent of classical music, joined Atmiya Sabha, to sing the prayer songs. He was a composer of 'Tappa' music and a scholar of Sanskrit, Urdu and Farsi. Rammohun, the enthusiast of music, had realized that the truth of Brahmo Dharma could be propagated more effectively through devotional songs. He therefore composed hymns dedicated to the Eternal, Supreme Being, which founded the genre of 'Brahmo-sangeet'. He composed about 32 prayer songs. From the eighteenth till the middle of the nineteenth century, the songs written in vernacular were meant for entertainment and therefore were in depraved taste. They reflected the low, utterly materialistic lifestyle of the rich and their lackeys. The spiritual appeal of the Brahma Sangeet and richness of its music attracted the intellectuals of his time. These songs composed in the Bengali language enriched the culture. What was pioneered by Rammohun, found its fruition in the songs composed by the members of the Tagore family and others who subscribed to his thoughts. These songs inspire the people with its spiritual fervor even today.

In 1828 this Atmiya Sabha became known as the Brahmo Samaj. The aim of the Brahmo Samaj was to unite all the religions of the world through the concept of universalism and spirituality enshrined in the Vedantic traditions of

ancient India. The Brahmo Samaj attempted to honour every faith, try to abolish caste distinctions, work for gender equality and bring about emancipation of the weaker, unlettered millions, especially the women, by educating them. Thus, Rammohun succeeded in bringing about equality in society.

Rammohun's Efforts in Promoting Knowledge:

Rammohun translated the Upanishadas and other philosophical texts from Sanskrit to Bengali. These were beyond the reach of the common people as only the Brahmins, who were well versed in Sanskrit were allowed to study them. He wanted everyone to read the texts by themselves so that they could use their own intellect and rationality to guide them and not led astray by the existing ritualistic practices and superstitious beliefs thrust upon the ignorant masses. Not only in Bengali, he translated the texts in Hindi so that he could reveal their spirit to the entire subcontinent. By doing this he was the first to inspire the ideal of a nationhood in a country already divided along many fault lines. He prepared the English translation of the Indian philosophical studies in order to inspire the world through its spiritual content. He wanted to unite the human race by accepting the Fatherhood of God and paving the way to a universal fraternity. The translations were published in 1815.

Rammohun translated Kenopnishada and Ishoponishad in 1819. In 1927 he rendered Mrityunjayarcharya written Sankrit text 'Bajrasuchi' in Bengali. Bajrasuchi is the sacred text of Mahayana Buddhism. He used this book to strike at the very root of casteism. Rammohun, the believer in Universal religion of Man, started spreading his knowledge and beliefs far and wide.

When the Christian Missionaries refused to print his books in the Baptist press, Rammohun started his own Unitarian Press. No impediment could deviate him from his chosen path.

enriching the Bengali language. At the time, the language was confined to poems and lyrical compositions. In order to lead the masses to rationalism by freeing their minds of restrictive and superstitious beliefs, he needed to educate them in the vernacular language. His efforts at refining it as a medium of operative communication, paved the way to the improvement of Bengali as language of prose. He composed a book on Bengali grammar and helped in popularizing of the language. Rammohun is known as the father of Bengali Prose.



Contribution to Bengali Literature and Journalism:

While trying to propagate his Monotheistic thoughts Rammohun got engaged in debates with the conservative Brahmin pundits. In order to communicate his ideas through rational expositions Rammohun paved the way to

In order to make his co-citizens knowledgeable he started editing a Bengali periodical 'Sangbad Koumudi' from 4th December 1821. This magazine encouraged the readers to acquire knowledge through reading of books and journals, as well as promoted meaningful deliberations amongst them. In 1821 he

published a bi-lingual periodical 'Brahman Sebadhi' which had articles written in Bengali and English in alternate pages.

On 22nd April, 1822, Rammohun brought out the magazine Mirat-ul-Akhbar, in Farsi.

Promotion of English Education:

As he acquired proficiency in English, Rammohun came to know about Western Philosophical thoughts, literature and Scientific advancements. He soon realized that the Western world had made great strides in the fields of science and medicine, as well as in political and philosophical thoughts. Lack of



understanding of the English language amongst the native population was at the root of keeping them in darkness regarding this great progress. He therefore was keen to introduce English education, along with science and other advanced subjects of the Western world. David Hare was his collaborator in this grand effort that ultimately led to the foundation of the Hindu College (later came to be known as The Presidency College) in 1817, although Rammohun

had to withdraw from active participation and had to lend his covert support. The conservative members of the elite society of Calcutta were against Rammohun's active participation in the foundation of the Hindu College because of his controversial ideas. Rammohun did not hesitate to withdraw his active involvement, when he realized that he would come in the way of realizing his dream of propagating western education to the younger generation. This was a proof of his selfless dedication to the cause. In 1822 he established the Anglo-Hindu School for imparting English education to the boys of Bengal. In addition, he founded the Vedanta College in 1825 where English and Science were taught in besides Vedas and Upanishad. This was instrumental in promoting scientific and rational learning on one hand and resisting the aggression of Christian proselytization on the other. It must be borne in mind that it was a time when the Christian missionaries were trying to convert the educated young generation of Bengal into Christianity in order to swell the number of Christians.

At the beginning of their domination, the British had no intention of reforming the existing education system of the natives. In 1781, the English helped in establishing Madrasas in Calcutta. When the British planned to establish the Sanskrit College in 1823, in order to promote Sanskrit learning, Rammohun

opposed the move. He believed that there were enough local schools or Tolls, in Bengal that imparted learning in Sanskrit and vernacular. Therefore, there was no need to start a college for Sanskrit education. He advocated for educational institutions that would help in spreading advanced modern education. Initially he was not successful in his endeavour. But after his demise, his ideas were partially met when the Education Policy for India drafted by Macaulay was announced in 1835.

‘The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of

European literature and science among the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.’

In this was the bridge between the Orient and the Occident was built through the initiatives of Rammohun, and fresh air was breathed into a semi-comatose nation.

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

Rammohun Roy's Influence on Rabindranath Tagore

Sanjoy Chanda

In a questionnaire from Mainstream magazine Rabindranath was asked to name his hero or heroine in life. His answer was: 'Rammohun Roy'. That clearly demonstrate the respect and admiration he held for this great man.

Ofcourse, Rabindranath was influenced by Rammohun Roy. In fact, it would be surprising if Rammohun's personality had not touched him. His grandfather Dwarkanath was a friend and, one may even say, a disciple of Rammohun. He was associated with all social reform activities of Rammohun and even in the founding of the Brahmo Samaj. Dwarkanath's son Debendranath had met Rammohun as a child. He was only 13 years old when the latter left for England. But Rammohun's personality had left an indelible mark on the child's impressionable mind. Later on, when Debendranath was searching for truth, seeking answers for the many questions that arose in his mind, Rammohun's influence, which had so far remained dormant in his mind, started to assert itself and brought him in touch with the Brahmo Samaj. Rammohun had re-discovered the Upanishads which had been neglected and forgotten for several centuries, translated many of them with the purpose of giving them publicity and had established Brahmo Samaj based on

'Ouponishadic' doctrines for worship of the one and only Param Brahma. Debendranath compiled the "Brahmo Dharma" in the language of the Upanishads. Rabindranath and his siblings were brought up on a steady diet of slokas from the Upanishads. Rabindranath's personality, his spiritual thoughts and his philosophy were shaped by Brahmo Dharma and the slokas of the Upanishads which he had inherited through his father from Rammohun Roy. The message that he spread through his songs, his essays, through his lectures was the message of the Upanishads, the message of Brahmo Dharma, the message that Rammohun wanted to spread through the establishment of Brahmo Samaj.

However, Rammohun's influence on Rabindranath is most prominent in the area of Universal Humanism. About Rammohun Roy Dr. Brajendranath Seal had said: "he aimed at the reconciliation of the good of the individual with the good of the greatest number." It is interesting to note that Dr. Seal had in 1924 in his lecture on the occasion of Rammohun's death anniversary at Bangalore used the term "the Religion of Man" which was the title of a series of lectures delivered by Rabindranath in 1930. An admirer of Rousseau and the

revolutionaries of France, Rammohun wanted freedom for mankind in all spheres of life. The situation in India was not favourable to agitate for political freedom, so he concentrated on social and religious reforms to free the society from malpractices. His vision was not confined to caste, creed, race or even nation, but embraced all mankind. He kept in touch with freedom struggles all over the world, even those in Central and South America – he rejoiced when they succeeded, was heartbroken when they suffered set-backs. In 1932, in a letter written to the French Foreign Minister, Rammohun had stated: “All mankind is one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches.” Rabindranath, in his presidential address at the Rammohun Roy Centenary Meeting in February, 1933 stated: “He knew that the ideal human civilization does not lie in the isolation of independence, but in the brotherhood of inter-dependence of individuals as well as of nations in all spheres of thought and activity”.

Rabindranath shared with Rammohun the same belief.

In a conversation with Albert Einstein, Rabindranath had stated: “Matter is composed of protons and electrons, with

gaps between them; but matter may seem to be solid. Similarly, humanity is composed of individuals. Yet they have their inter-connection of human relationship, which gives living solidarity to man’s world. The entire universe is linked up with us in a similar manner, it is a human universe.”

Rabindranath started his Brahmacharjashram in Shantiniketan with the idea that the children would be able to grow up in the midst of nature, their mental development would not be cramped by any artificial wall around them. When the time came to expand this institution, Kabiguru named it Vishwabharati – a meeting place for the entire world where people of this country could interact and learn from people of other countries.

Thus, Rabindranath gave concrete shape to Rammohun’s statement “Brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God.” Srimati Sarojini Naidu had called Tagore “the great successor of Rammohun Roy, the next international ambassador of India’s culture and genius.” So, it is not only that Rammohun had great influence on Rabindranath, Rabindranath was his worthy successor in spreading India’s rich heritage to the outside world.

The Kerala Brahmosamaj

Alok Chand Ayathan

The Kerala Brahmosamaj was formed in the year 1893 by Rao Sahib Dr. Ayathan Gopalan. He was initiated into the Brahmo Samaj in 1884 while he was a student of Madras Medical College. He had started his reform activities since his childhood. During his college days he read about the social reformations initiated by Raja Ram Mohun Roy and was greatly influenced by the faith and principles of the Brahmo Samaj. He joined the Madras Brahmo Samaj which was functioning successfully during his college days and was the main centre of reform activities of South India.

He also travelled to various Brahmosamajes all over India and met with great personalities like Kesub Chandra Sen, Devendranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore, N.G.Chandavarkar, Justice Rande, R.G.Bhandarkar and many more and came to know more about the Brahmo principles and its faith.

His first travel was to the birth place of Raja Ram Mohun Roy the father of Modern India as well as the pioneer in Brahmosamaj movement and reform activities, at Calcutta Brahmosamaj and later on he was nominated as the lifetime executive member of Sadaran Brahmosamaj, and was having great connections with Calcutta

Brahmosamaj, Prathanasamaj, Hyderabad Brahmosamaj, Bangalore Brahmosamaj, Mangalore Brahmosamaj and Madras Brahmosamajes till his death,

His relationship with Prarthana samaj and the brotherly affection with

N.G.Chandawarkar and his wife Lady Chandawarkar made them to visit Calicut Brahmosamaj and stayed at the residence of Dr. Ayathan Gopalan at Calicut.

Dr. Gopalan by then had been known widely all over Kerala as a Social reformer and the propagandist of Brahmosamaj as well as the founder of Sugunavardhini movement in Kerala.

While he was in conversation with N.G.Chandawarkar and Lady Chandawarkar he told the worst situation of caste and racial discrimination that prevailed during those times and the lacking of education among girls and the down-trodden sections such as the Harijan and Dalit community,

Hearing Dr. Gopalan's ideology and enthusiasm for education and the need to give education to girls and Harijan people, Lady Chandawarkar immediately agreed to donate a fund towards the construction of the school. Later on the school was named as the "Lady Chandawarkar Elementary school"

which had been running successfully till the death of Dr.Gopalan's son Ayathan Devadath(1906-1988) who was the last manager after Dr.Gopalan who managed the school who worked to fulfill his father's dreams to give education to girls and backward communities and made the school one of the best in that part of the country.

After the death of Dr.Ayathan Gopalan the school had been taken care and managed by his son Ayathan Devadath,The school gained

appreciation from all walks of life and was the first school which provided free education to Dalit and Harijan communities as well as for Girls, in that part of the Country, After the death of Ayathan Devadath(1906-1988) it was forced to shut down due to the fall in student strength and the uprising of new schools in the town.

(Author: Alok Chand Athayan is a member of Calcut Brahmo samaj)

Brahmo Samaj

Krishnanagar Utsab

The Krishnanagar Brahmo Samaj in Aminbazar, Krishnanagar was established in 1847. The Samaj was built by the donation of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore who used to visit the Samaj regularly. The advent of Brahmoism to this historic won in Nadia district attracted a large number of young people who were greatly influenced by the message of reforms by the Brahmo Samaj.

Like every year the annual pilgrimage to this historic place on 22 nd March 2026. A group of dedicated Brahmos travelled by a hired bus to the Utsab from Kolkata. The minister Sri Amit Das in his service highlighted on the history of this Brahmo Samaj and influence of the Brahmo Samaj in shaping the history of Bengal. He also stressed the importance of the message of Universalism and equality among all fellow were the hallmarks of Brahmosim that find its relevance even today. The hymns were performed by Tania Poddar and Sukla Sengupta. The congregation was treated with lunch after the service. The congregation was treated to lunch after the service.

Borshosesh

On the evening of the Bengali year 1432 end on 14th April 2026, a prayer and a musical programme was organised at the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj to bid farewell to the Bengali year 1432. The event commenced with a prayer led by Smt. Dipanwita Ganguly. The following participated in the musical programme: Shri Pradip Datta, Smt. Kabita Mukhopadhyay, Smt. Nilakshi Mukhopadhyay and Sri Saikat Sekhereswar Roy

Noboborsho

On 15th April 2026 (1st Baisakh 1433) at the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj prayer hall morning prayer conducted by Sri Amit Das. In the New Year's worship, that Acharya invoked o the goodness of mankind for the betterment of the lives people and an end to bloodshed and war. Let everyone unite in the spirit of brotherhood and universalism and unity.

Brahmosangeet were rendered by Mukul Academy under the direction of Sri Debasish Raychaudhuri. The participants were: Prakash Kumar Das, Gopal Mukhopadhyay, Sunirmal Bhowmick, Ila Ghosh, Krishna Das, Swagata Chakraborty and Debasish Raychudhuri and Rohini Raychaudhuri. The musical accompanists were Anjan Bandyopadhyay on tabla and Debasish Halder on Esraj.

UUA delegation visits Sadharan Brahmo Samaj

A delegation from UUA visited the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj on Friday 6th March 2026. The team comprised of Unitarian members led by Reverend Morgan McLean, Unitarian Universalist Association Director of Global Connections, USA, Reverend Mahesh Upadhyaya, Social Justice Advocate, Ahmedabad and Juban Lamar, Researcher/ Lens based artist, Meghalaya.

It was a very fruitful meeting with the members of the congregation. Debashish Raychaudhuri, Subrata K Datta, Biswajit Roy, Amit Das were the representatives of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The culmination of the meet was a joint prayer service where Rev. Morgan led the congregation through a prayer and hymns were sung by Debasish Raychaudhuri. A brief discussion was held between the UUA team and representatives of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj on strengthening ties between the two organizations and working together towards our shared objectives of promoting universalism.

Prior to coming to the Samaj, the UUA team also visited the Raja Rammohun Roy Memorial Museum and had an interactive session with the students and faculty of Rammohan College.

Acknowledgement For the month of March, 2026 Donation

DN/GL No.	Donor's Name	Occasion	Purpose	Amount (₹)
DN/a - 086	Sanghamitra Datta & Mahendra Kumar	For Sraddha of their father Ashok Kumar Moulik Ex Seceretary Giridih Brahmo Samaj	Mahila Bhaban Fund	2,000/-
GL - 1344	Morgan Melean (U.U.A)		General Fund	500/-
			Library Fund	5,000/-