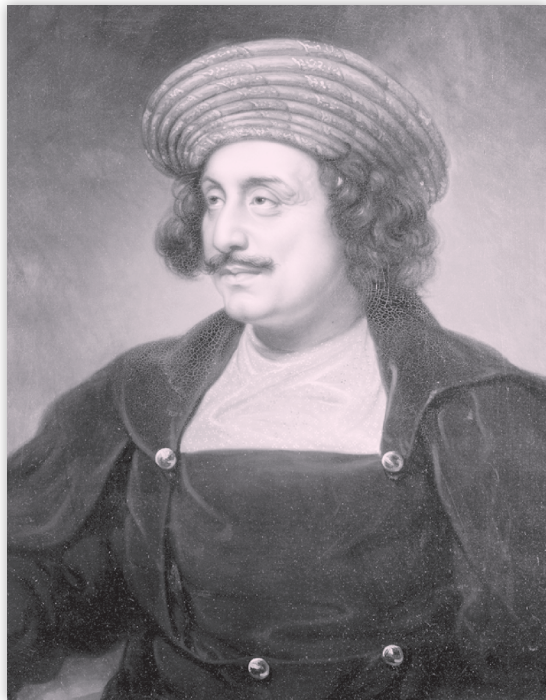


# 12

The number '12' is rendered in a large, bold, serif font. The interior of the '1' contains a black and white photograph of a person, possibly a woman, in a historical or religious setting. The interior of the '2' contains a black and white photograph of a group of people, possibly a crowd or a religious assembly, in a historical setting. The entire graphic is set against a light pink background.

## SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENTS

## RAM MOHAN ROY (1774-1833)



- Born in village **Radha Nagar** (Hooghly district, Bengal) in **1774**, in a Brahmin Family.
- His great grandfather was the first recipient of the title of '**Ray Rayen**', which added surname 'Roy' to his name.
- A learned scholar obtained the knowledge of:
  - ❑ **Tantrism** from his Sanskrit teacher at **Radha Nagar**.
  - ❑ **Sanskrit** literature and **Hindu philosophy** at **Varanasi**.
  - ❑ **Koran** and **Persian** and **Arabic** literature at **Patna**.
  - ❑ **Greek** and **Hebrew** to study the Bible in original.
  - ❑ Other languages like **Latin**, **French** etc.
- Well-acquainted with **Jainism** and other religious movements and sects of India.

- Impression of different culture on Roy.
  - ❑ Profoundly impressed by **Islam**.
  - ❑ By philosophy of the **Mutazilah** and is fond of reciting the verses of **Hafiz** and **Jalaluddin Rumi**.
  - ❑ **Doctrines of reason and humanism of West**.
- **Roy at the age of 16 left his home** in search of Truth.
- Travelled northern India and the Himalayas during his wanderings, studied the **Buddhist and Lamaist doctrines**.
- **Entered the service of the company in 1803**.
- In 1805 became **Diwan to Digby**, with whom he stayed till 1814.
- **Digby became his friend and taught him English**. In 1814, on Digby's return to England, he came to settle down in Calcutta.

### Roy's Works

- **Persian Treatise *Tuhfat ul Muwahhidin*** (Gift to Monotheisms) in 1803, in which arguments against belief in many gods and for the worship of a single god.
- '**Manazaratul Adyan**', also in Persian: discussions on various religions.
- '**Precepts of Jesus**' in 1820 – in which, tried to separate the moral and philosophic message of the New Testament from its miracles.
- In 1822, published tract on '**Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of females** according to the Hindu law of Inheritance.
- **Translations in Bengali**: - of **Vedanta, Kena, Isa, Katha, Mandukya and Mandaka Upanishads**. Aim of translations - a resuscitation of the pure religion of the Hindus.

- Translated Vedanta Sutras into English between 1816 and 1819.
- One of the most striking events, which proved to be a turning point in his life, was the performance of sati by his elder brother's wife in 1811.

### His Social ideas

- against undignified position of women.
- favoured right of inheritance and property to women.
- remarriage of widows and prohibition of polygamous marriages.
- Opposed kulinism, child marriage and infanticide.
- Crusade against 'Sati' began in 1818:
  - Roused public opinion;
  - Showed it inhuman by citing examples from the oldest sacred books of Hindu religious;
  - Visited burning Ghats at Calcutta to try to persuade the relatives of the widows to give up their plan of self-immolation.
  - Organized groups of like-minded people to keep a strict check on such performances.
- Achievement: Lord William Bentinck passed the Regulation no XVII on Dec 4, 1829, declaring the practice 'Sati' illegal and punishable as a criminal offence.
- Reactions: Orthodox Hindus petitioned to parliament to withhold its approval of Bentinck's action. Roy organized a counter-petition of enlightened Hindus in favor of Bentinck action.
- To remove all discrimination of caste and race, proposed the adoption of Saiva form of marriage prescribed in the Mahanirvana Tantra.

### Religious Ideas

- Stood for the reform of Hinduism:
  - Opposed idolatry, polytheism, prevalence of meaningless religious rituals.
  - With the help of Vedic texts and Upanishads, showed that although ritual was permissible, it was not obligatory.
  - Condemned priestly class and criticized superstitious beliefs.
- Advocated monotheism:
  - Published Bengali translation of the Vedas and of five of the principal Upanishads to prove his point.
  - Wrote a series of facts and pamphlets in defense of monotheism.
- Man is in essence divine:
  - Took this great principle from Hinduism that '*Atma vai Brahma*'.
  - Man's life is a discipline through which he can rise from depth of the sub-human to the heights of the super-human.
  - Man can be in true relationship with the Supreme Being by following the three-fold formula of study (*Sravana*), reflection (*Manana*) and meditation (*nidhiyasana*).
- Roy did not confine his application of rational approach to Indian religious and traditions alone.
  - He admired the teachings of Jesus Christ but, refused to accept the dogmas of the divinity of Jesus Christ, of the trinity, of the angels and the miracles.
  - He repudiated the exclusiveness of Islam, which divided humanity into two categories: