

# Brahmo Samaj

## [UPSC Notes]

### What is Brahmo Samaj?

Brahmo Samaj is one of the most powerful socio-religious movements in India. It was launched in Bengal in 1828. Brahmo Samaj played an important role in stamping out the dowry and caste systems, aiming to encourage women's empowerment. With its success in achieving its objectives, it became a pioneer contributor to Bengal Renaissance.

### Brahmo Samaj Overview

The brief idea of Brahmo Samaj is as under-

Highlights	Details
Founder of Brahmo Samaj	Raja Ram Mohan Roy
Place of Origin	Calcutta, Bengal
Date of Origin	20 August 1828
Theology of Brahmo Samaj	Monotheism
Divisions of Brahmo Samaj	Adi Brahmo Samaj and Sadharan Brahmo Samaj

### Brahmo Samaj Founder

Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Sabha (later named Brahmo Samaj) in 1828. He was an Indian reformer known as the Father of modern India.

He founded the Atmiya Sabha and the Unitarian Community. His main goal was to fight the social evils and spread educational and social reforms in the country. Roy became the trendsetter in the Indian press and Bengali prose and contributed to education in India. Apart from his contribution to Brahmo Samaj, his major contributions to society that gave him the title of Father of modern India. These are-

- **In 1817**- In collaboration with David Hare, Raja Ram Mohan Roy established the Hindu College at Calcutta, India.
- **From 1822-1826** - Raja Ram Mohan Roy started the Vedanta College and Anglo-Hindu School that insisted on the teachings of monotheistic doctrines. He wanted to incorporate the doctrine of monotheism with a western and modern curriculum.
- **In 1830** - He provided the venue to Rev. Alexander Duff to establish Scottish Church College (known as General Assembly's Institution at that time).
- He founded three popular journals- The Persian weekly, Mirat-ul-Akbar, The Bengali weekly, Samvad Kaumudi (1821), and The Brahmanical Magazine (1821).

He got the title of Raja from Akbar II (titular Mughal Emperor of Delhi). He was also referred to as a luminous star in the sky of Indian History by Tagore.

The concept of Brahmo Samaj was not restricted to Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Brahmo Samaj was later joined by other famous reformers, and these were-

## Brahmo Samaj and Debendranath Tagore

Debendranath Tagore (Father of Rabindranath Tagore) was a leader of Tattvabodhini Sabha, established in 1839. He joined Brahmo Samaj in 1842 and gave a defined structure to the Brahmo Samaj by the informal union of the two. With his contribution to the Brahma Samaj, the introduction of new strengths caused its growth. Later, many independent thinkers supported the Brahmo Samaj, like Ashwini Kumar Datta, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Derozians, and other Rammohan followers.

Tagore made its contribution by fighting against the Christian missionaries, abolishing polygamy, working for women's education, and widow remarriage.

## Brahmo Samaj and Keshab Chandra Sen

Along with Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen joined Brahmo Samaj in 1858. With his introduction to the Brahmo Samaj, there was a burst of vitality, and Brahmo Samaj spread out of Bengal in Punjab, Madras, United Provinces, Bombay, and other cities (this was known as the Adi Brahmo Samaj).

Because of this, people of the society opposed the child marriage of a 13-year-old girl with a minor Hindu Maharaja of Cooch-Bihar, which resulted in their separation in the late 1870s. Along with this, Keshab Chandra Sen was also accused of authoritarianism. Later in 1878, the Adi Brahmo Samaj was changed to Sadharan Brahmo Samaj (founded by Umeshchandra Dutta, Sib Chandra Deb, and Ananda Mohan Bose). To instill the Brahmo beliefs, Dayal Singh College was established in Lahore in 1910 by Dayal Singh Trust.

## Objectives of Brahmo Samaj

The major objectives of Brahmo Samaj are as follows-

- Opposition to idolatry.
- Abolishing practice of sati.
- Stopping child marriage and polygamy.
- Raising voice against the degraded states of widows.
- Propagation of western and modern thoughts in society.
- It aims at purifying the concept of Hinduism and preaching monotheism.
- Focusing on meditation, prayers, and reading of the scriptures.

## Principles of Brahmo Samaj

Brahmo Samaj focused on reforming the Hindu Society by fighting against the religious and social evils that were a part of one's daily life. The principles of Brahmo Samaj are-

- **Totalitarianism-** Totalitarianism was one of the major evils in society, which is why Brahmo Samaj was completely against all forms of Totalitarianism. It fought against the irrational practice of discrimination against people based on color, caste, religion, creed, and race since this practice separated people into the lower and upper classes.
- **God-** The Hindus at that time believed in rebirth, avatars, idol-worship, reincarnation, and polytheism. It worked against the existing idea of an Infinite Singularity and considered the idea as undefinable, limitless, imperceivable, and indivisible.

- **Superstition-** Superstitions and dogmas prevailed in society, and Brahma Samaj condemned them. Also, the women were forced to burn alive because of the superstitions of Sati. This practice of Sati became the primary reason for the foundation of Brahma Samaj. This also created a wave of opposition against the inconsiderableness of priests, Unscientific rituals, and places of worship.
- **Scripture-** There was a belief that the prophets, scriptures, and mediators existed between the human soul and Brahmans. But, Brahma Samaj doesn't believe in the idea of a mediator and also condemns the doctrine of Karma and rebirth, depending on personal preference.
- **Knowledge-** It believes that one of the major reasons for the existence of social and religious beliefs is illiteracy. So, it embraces the truth, free will, and knowledge. Brahma Samaj also opposes the idea of forcing religious beliefs and sectarianism.
- **Liberation-** People believed in the concept of Mukthi, but Brahma Samaj doesn't follow such thinking but believes that the soul is immortal and poised to become a part of Brahman. The concept of heaven and hell was also not supported by the Brahma Samaj.
- **Love-** According to the Brahma Samaj, all the creations must be respected and treated equally, but it doesn't want its followers to worship anyone.

## Divisions of Brahma Samaj

Brahma Samaj was divided into two, and these were-

- **Adi Brahma Samaj-** This category of Brahma Samaj was developed from "Brahmoism" and became the first movement organized in British India. This worked against the wrong idea of the caste system that differentiated the people based on their caste. It started educating secular India to eradicate the old norms of the society. The Adi Brahma Samaj was started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Prasanna Coomar Tagore, and Debendranath Tagore.
- **Sadharan Brahma Samaj-** The Brahma Samaj has Schism in its context, which led to the formation of Sadharan Brahma Samaj. The existence of Sadharan Brahma Samaj came into being in a public meeting at the Town Hall, Calcutta. The head of the affairs for Sadharan Brahma Samaj was Anand Mohan. This religious movement of Sadharan Brahma Samaj was headed by Ananda Mohan Bose, Sib Nath Shastri, and Umesh Chandra Dutta.

## Significance of Brahma Samaj

Brahma Samaj created a revolution against the prevailing evils in Indian society. The significance of Brahma Samaj is as under

- Brahma Samaj successfully denounced the practice of idol worship and polytheistic religion.
- It contributed to social change by fighting against many superstitions and dogmas.
- It repudiated the beliefs in divine incarnation.
- It made a remarkable impact on the caste system.
- Brahma Samaj spread the awareness that morality and a rational mind are more important and hold the ultimate power than any book.
- Because of Brahma Samaj, society started to raise its voice against child marriage.

Though Brahma Samaj had changed a lot of norms prevailing in the society, it could not explain the transformation theories of the soul and the concept of Karma. Also, a few people disagreed with the Doctrine of God in Conscience. Because of the conflict of thoughts, this samaj broke in 1878.