1. **Question: Discuss Raja Ram Mohan Roy as the initiator of social reform movement in India in pre-independent period. (2015)**

**Or**

**Write a short essay on Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s views on social reform. (2015)**

**Or**

**Explain Raja Ram Mohan Roy as social reformer.**

**Answer**

**Introduction**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a zealous Social reformer holding modern and progressive views. He was the father of Indian renaissance movement was born in 1772, in a prosperous and orthodox Brahmin family at Hoogly in West Bengal. He stood firmly against all sort of social bigotry- conservatism and superstitions and advocated English and western education for his countrymen. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great scholar too. He made a wide study of different religions of the world including Christianity and Islam. In 1814, he founded, **'Atmiya Samaj'** and in 1828, the **'Brahma Samaj'.** His contributions as social reformer are explained as follows;

1. **Abolition of Sati:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy raised his voice against the Sati system. In the funeral pyre of the deceased husband, his wife was mercilessly thrown if she did not enter into the flame voluntarily. She was termed as Sati.. Ram Mohan protested it vehemently. His efforts bore fruits and this practice was stopped by an Act passed in 1829 during Lord William Bentinck. Thus, a long prevailing ugly practice of the Hindus was uprooted.
2. **Opposed discrimination against women:** In 1822, he had published “Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females according to the Hindu law of Inheritance.” In this pamphlet, on the authority of the ancient Smriti writers, he opposed all discriminations and evil practices against women. He opposed polygamy and came out in support of the inheritance of property by daughters. He was also a relentless crusader against child marriage and the rigidity of the caste system, which he described as undemocratic and inhuman.  He stood for the freedom of widows to remarry and equal rights of men and women.
3. **Women Education:**  Equally able was the Raja`s advocacy of the education of Women. Although the concept had already been put forward by missionaries, it was the Raja who helped to popularize it among the Hindus. The Brahma Samaj did great service in removing the popular prejudices against the education of women that were the prevalent in the Hindu society and the credit for this goes mostly to Ram Mohan.
4. **Champion of Women Liberty:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy advocated the liberty of Women. He was determined to give women her proper place in the society. Besides abolishing Sati, he advocated in favor of widow remarriage. He also told that like the sons, daughters have also their right over parental property. He also influenced the British government to bring necessary modification in the existing law. He raised voice against child-marriage and polygamy. He was the advocate of women education. Thus, he advocated women’s liberty out and out and awakened them.
5. **Voice against idolatry:** Ram Mohan raised his voice against idolatry. In his book Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin’ he championed the cause of Monotheism. He criticized idol-worship by the Hindus. He also opposed the principle of Trinitariasm’ (God, Son Jesus and the holy spirit) of the Christianity. He rejected polytheism, idol-worship and rituals of different religions. He advocated monotheism or unity among gods. He also advised people to be guided by the conscience. He inspired men to cultivate rationality.
6. **Opposition to Caste System:** The caste system was a very ugly practice prevailing in Indian society right from the later Vedic age. Indian society was fragmented by the name of different castes. The higher castes like Brahmins and Kshatriyas looked down upon the Sudras, Chandalas and other aboriginals. Ram Mohan opposed this ugly system of the Indian society. To him everybody was a son or daughter of the God. So, there is no difference among men.
7. **Advocate of Western Education:** He very well realized the importance of English language. He could visualize the need of a scientific, rational and progressive education for the Indians. During his time, when controversy was going on between the orient lists and occident lists, he sided with the latter and advocated in favor of the introduction of the English system of education. He established English school in 1816 and Vedanta College in 1825.
8. **Father of Indian Journalism:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the ‘Father of Indian Journalism’. He believed in the freedom of press. He edited a newspaper in Bengali named ‘Sampled Kaumudi’. He was also the editor of Mirat- ul-Akbar. When restrictions were imposed on the publications of newspapers, he reacted sharply and criticized the British authorities vehemently. In his editorials, he reflected important social, political, economic, religious and other problems with which the Indians were grossly entangled.
9. **Economic Ideas:** Ram Mohan’s economic ideas were tinged with liberalism. He wanted the state intervention to protect the property of the individual. He advocated that the peasants should be protected by the government from the tyranny of the landlords. He was well aware of the dangerous consequences of the permanent settlement of 1793 introduced by Lord Cornwallis. So, he wanted the British authority to intervene in the affairs of the Zamindars to protect the peasants. He had resented strongly against the existing revenue system of the country whose first prey was the landlords.
10. **The synthesizer of religion and morality:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a noble soul. He brought a perfect blending between religion and morality. According to him a man must possess virtues like merry, morality, forgiveness and so on. These qualities will purify his soul. By cultivating these noble qualities a man can acquire divine knowledge and devote for the welfare of the society at large. Thus, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was undoubtedly a synthesizer of religion and morality which aimed at the welfare of the society at large.
11. **Love for Liberty and Constitutionalism:** Liberty and constitutionalism were the two important aspects upon which Raja Ram Mohan emphasized. He preferred a constitutional form of Government for every nation. Despotism or autocracy, he hated from the core of his heart. He told that a constitutional government could only give guarantee of Individual freedom.

**Conclusion:**   
  
Thus, Ram Mohan started his crusade against dogmatism and evils that engulfed the then Indian society. He consistently endeavored to free the Indian society from the clutches of immorality, untouchability and impurity and to make it healthy in every aspect. Of course Prof Sumit Sarkar and Rajat Ray do not appreciate much, because, the Raja failed to check the oppressive middle class.