

The Blue Plaque

Ram Mohun Roy

Nick Rennison

Born in Bengal in 1772, the son of a devout and wealthy Brahmin family, Ram Mohun Roy was one of the first people to attempt a synthesis between the religious ideas of India and those of the West.

Alienated from his family because of his unorthodox religious views, he worked for many years as an assistant to an English official in the British East India Company before retiring to devote time to propagating his own ideas about religion and society. He translated many of the Hindu holy scripts into English and, in 1820, published a book called *The Precepts of Jesus*, in which, although unconvinced by the claims to deity, he acknowledged Jesus as a valuable moral teacher.

In the early 1820s Roy campaigned against British censorship of the Indian press and established two colleges aimed at combining the best in both Western and Indian education. He became a prominent advocate of a more rationalist Hinduism and, in 1828, founded a society called the Brahmo Samaj to promote his ideas and what he called 'the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe'. He was also an early campaigner against the caste system and against the practice of suttee, in which a widow burned herself on the pyre of her late husband.

Roy came to England in 1830 as the unofficial ambassador of an Indian prince and lived in the house in Bedford Square which is now marked by a blue plaque. In 1833 he was staying with friends near Bristol when he was taken ill and died there on September 27th. He was buried in the city's Arncliffe cemetery where his ornate tomb can still be seen.



bbclearningenglish.com

© British Broadcasting Corporation 2005