Q 3)Evaluate Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s contribution to political and religious and civil rights.

Ans:Raja Ram Mohan Roy is considered as the ‘’Father of Indian Renaissance.’’He was the creator of the mental climate which contributed to the birth of the Indian Renaissance. He was the pioneer of religious and social reforms. He was the first advocate of the introduction of Western education in modern India. Moreover, he was the founder of Constitutional Agitation in India and the first to speak to the government about the rights and priviledges of the people. He was the first to condemn religious and social malpractices such as idol worship, sati, enforced widowhood,girl infanticide etc. According to B.Majumdar,’’He is the father of the modern political movement.’’

*Roy’s political ideas are to be found in his writings such as*

1. *Petitions against the Press Regulations to the Supreme Court and to the King-in-Council(1823).*
2. *A tract on Religious Toleration(1823).*
3. *A Letter to Lord Amherst on English Education(1823).*
4. *Rights of Hindus over ancestral property according to law of Bengal(1830).*
5. *Remarks on Settlement in India by Europeans(1831).*
6. *An Exposition of the Revenue and Judicial System of India.*

***Religious rights:***

Ram Mohan raised his voice against idolatry. In his book Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin’(a gift to deists ,1803- a short treatise,first published work)he championed the cause of Monotheism. He criticized idol-worship by the Hindus. 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. To all he appealed to observe the principle of unity of God. Further, he formed ‘Atmiya Sabha’ in 1815 to carry on discussions among scholars on religion and philosophy. Through this, he raised his voice against religious and social malpractices.

He had learned holy scriptures from various faiths and argued that Hindu Scriptures such as the Upanishads supported the concept of monotheism. This sparked his search for a religious revolution to bring the teachings of ancient Vedic scriptures back to their original form.

The core principles of this emerging movement were monotheism, freedom from the scriptures, and rejection of the caste system. Brahmo worship practices were stripped of Hindu ceremonialism and developed in accordance with Christian or Islamic prayer practices. With time, the Brahma Samaj emerged as a powerful progressive force driving social reforms in Bengal, especially women's education.

For a logical interpretation of Hinduism,Roy undertook the study and analysis of major religions of the world such as Christianity,Islam,Buddhism, Jainism etc ,apart from Indian philosophy. He was of the view that we should not have faith in the Indian tradition without reason,nor follow the West blindly. Instead, we should decide the proper course judiciously after examining both the traditions thoroughly.

***Brahmo Samaj: India's first Reform Movement***

Another major contribution of Raja Ram Mohan Roy was when he founded Brahmo Samaj on 20th August, 1828 in Calcutta as a reformist movement. It was the first reform movement in India with the main aim to reform the Indian community and introduce the true teachings of Vedas, Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures to the common man. Many prominent leaders like Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chander Sen were active members of the Samaj in the 1840s.

The movement played a significant role in modernising Indian society by challenging the oppressive caste system, dowry system and by introducing educational reforms to educate the masses. As one of the most progressive reformists movements in India, Brahma Samaj supported women empowerment by advocating against child marriages, polygamy practice of Sati and treatment of widows in India. The Samaj also challenged polytheism and idolatry in the Hindu religion while preaching monotheism. They also took inspiration from other religions and prohibited criticism of other religious teachings.

***Political rights:***

***Champion of Nationalism*** :

Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed in the political freedom of man. In 1821 he had written to J.S. Buckingham, the editor of the ‘Calcutta Journal’ that he believed in the freedom of European and Asiatic countries. He advised Indians to have self-freedom in thought and action.

He showed a bright example by condemning the Jury Act of 1827 which had introduced religious discrimination in the law courts. According to this Act a Hindu or a Mohammedan could be tried either by a European or a native Christian but not vice versa. Ram Mohan protested against it. Thus, his nationalism was blatant. He definitely fought for the legitimate rights of the Indians and championed the cause of Indian nationalism. Further, Ram Mohan Roy himself proceeded to London to plead a case on behalf of Akbar , the Mughal Emperor. This reflected his nationalism.

***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. Thus, he advocated individual liberty and constitutionalism. This clearly project that Ram Mohan was a champion of human liberty.

In the political field, Roy was a supporter of the impersonal authority of law and opposed all kinds of arbitrary and despotic power. He was convinced that the existence of constitutional government is the best guarantee of human freedom. He supported peaceful and constitutional methods for achieving political goals. He insisted on the use of constitutional means as when required to safeguard the rights. He preferred the gradual improvements of the condition of this country because, to him, such improvements were more lasting and profound.

***ROY'S POLITICAL LIBERALISM:***

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the most outstanding personalities of the 19th century, as a pioneer of modernity, and a visionary of Liberal Democracy. It became the dominant ideology of the first phase of religious and social reform in' India. Liberalism, in brief, stands for the value and dignity of the individual personality; the central position of Man in the historical development; and the faith that people are the ultimate source of all power. Roy advocated liberal principles in all walks of life. In the religious field Roy stood for tolerance, a non- communal approach to all problems and secularism. He valued the freedom of the individual to follow the dictates of his conscience and even to defy the commands of the priestly class.

***Civil Rights:***

He was the first to create an awareness for civil rights amongst the Indians. He was grateful to the Britishers because they made available to Indians all those civil rights which were enjoyed by the Queen’s subjects in England.Like Locke,Grotious and Paine,he accepted the theory of natural rights. These civil rights included right to life,right to liberty,right to have opinions,right to property,freedom of expression etc and he also believed in the moral rights of the individual. He gave the greatest importance to freedom of opinion and expression.To him it included the freedom of creativity of mind and intellect,as well as the freedom of expressing one’s opinions and thoughts through different media. According to him,freedom of expression was equally useful to the rulers and the ruled.

Roy stood for a free press and was one of the earliest champions of the press. He was described by Nehru as a founder of the Indian press. The notion of freedom of press was to ultimately establish in India the rule of law. But ,he was not in favour of absolute freedom of press,instead he wanted reasonable restrictions on it. He believed that those who try to incite in the minds of the Indians against the British nation should be punished. Freedom of the press was good for the government as it becomes acquainted with the views and wishes of the people concerning the measures adopted by it. It is also good for the governed because it promotes mental improvement. Thus according to B.B.Majumdar,the Raja’s views on the freedom of the press are regarded ‘as the Areopagitica of Indian History.’

He also advocated for girl’s property of rights and women’s education. He was the founder of the women’s liberation movement in this country. The main reason for the backwardness of Hindu women in all respects was their exclusion from property rights. He also demanded that men and women should have equal status and rights in society.

***Conclusion:***

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is hailed as "the Father of Modern India". He attempted to combine the western and eastern philosophy. His writings and ideas are an example of a synthesis of ancient Indian ideas with modern Western Political Principles. According to Roy, another factor responsible for the deteriorating political and social milieu was the social decadence of the Indian society. He wanted to build a new Indian society where principles of tolerance, sympathy, reason, liberty, equality and fraternity would be honoured. A multi-faceted personality, Roy carried on a relentless crusade against all kinds of injustices, exploitative practices and superstitions.