



Religious education and the contributions of Rani Rasmani: A study

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Abstract

Rani Rasmani (1793-1861) was a prominent Indian queen and religious leader of 19th century Bengal. The main objectives of this study were to study the contributions of her to Religious Education and to study the relevance of her Religious Education in present society. The researcher has used Historical research method, also, documentary analysis were used. Besides, the researcher has used two sources namely, the primary and secondary sources. The findings of the study were she was a devout follower of Lord Rama, Krishna and her religious education continue to influence and inspire student in various aspects of life. Her religious education highlights the richness and diversity of her spiritual pursuits; she embraced diverse spiritual traditions, promoting inclusivity and harmony.

Keywords: Rani Rasmani, religious education

Introduction

Rani Rasmani was a liberal thinker and spiritual woman. She helped the poor and the helpless, and her munificence in the cause of education and public health and construction of roads, ghats and drainage channels (Samanta, 2018) [10]. Her House at Janbazar was venue of traditional Durga Puja, Jagaddhatri Puja, Annapurna Puja, Rath Yatra, Sanna Yatra, Ras Utsav, another festival celebration. That festival is Ranima's famous swing festival.

She held high the idealism of Hinduism grew spiritually and philanthropic work were notable aspects behind a great soul for which people started calling her 'Rani' or 'Lokmata'. She was perhaps inspired by the Shyama Sangeet songs of Ramprasad Sen who lived in the 18th century and saw the Tantrik goddess with a devotional eye (Pattanaik, 2021) [7]. She defined religion as realization and stressed the need for religious Education. Her life was a combination of ethics, religion and moral. She was great supporter of Indian culture and was against the British educational system in India. She emphasized religious education.

Education was defined as the training of the spiritual and religion was established as related to the other interests, science and morality. She believed that the foundation of all religious of the world was directly or indirectly based on Vedanta. She had great faith in the Vedas and Upanishads. She propagated Vedanta all over the world and it opens to all irrespective of country, race, religion, rich, poor and politics. She was never against the Muslims and other religions. Her presentation of Hinduism was its modern outlook. Universal conception frees religion from the hold superstitions, dogmatism, conflicts, ethnic confrontations and intolerance. It makes spirituality the highest and noblest pursuit- the pursuit of supreme emancipation, supreme knowledge, and supreme bliss. "Religious education appears as important dimension/component of education with important effects on the moral health of the nation, and as a factor of influence of human wellbeing" (Niculescu & Norel, 2013) [5].

Statement of the problem

The present study is entitled as "Religious Education and the Contributions of Rani Rasmani: A Study."

Operational definitions of key terms

The researcher has highlighted the necessity to define some concepts operationally. These are:

▪ Rani Rasmani

She was born on 24 September, 1793AD, in the village Kona of Halisahar, in the District of North twenty four Parganas, West Bengal, India. She was a great visionary and religious reformer, philanthropist, and social reformer in the nineteenth century.

▪ Religious Education

Religious education is the education that can be obtained from a religion. By reading various religious books, performing various religious rituals etc.; here the researcher has highlighted Rani Rasmani's personal role towards religion and the religious education that can be obtained from her life philosophy.

Research questions

1. What were the contributions of Rani Rasmani to Religious Education?
2. What is the relevance of Rani Rasmani's Religious Education in present society?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To Study the Contributions of Rani Rasmani to Religious Education.
2. To study the relevance of Rani Rasmani's Religious Education.

Delimitations of the study

The study was delimited to Rani Rasmani's contributions to religious education.

Research methodology

The study that is being conducted is on “Religious Education and the Contributions of Rani Rasmani: A Study” a qualitative analysis. It is the Historical Research.

Sources of data

In the present study a documentary analysis has been taken by the primary sources and secondary sources. The researcher has used Stone Inscriptions, various Govt. Documents etc. as secondary sources. The researcher has used research papers, magazines, newspapers etc. as secondary sources.

Criticism of data

The researcher has used two types of historical criticism, namely external and internal criticism. External criticism is used at establishing the authenticity or genuineness of the data. Most of the works of Rani Rasmani were examined critically.

Data analysis and interpretation

Here data analysis and interpretation is done according to objective.

1. To Study the Contributions of Rani Rasmani to Religious Education.

Rani Rashmoni was born into a devout Vaishnavite family. She received traditional religious education in Vaishnavism, listening sacred texts like the Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, Ramayana, Mahabharat and Chaitanya Charitamrita; she was deeply influenced by the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534), and reformer from Bengal. Her religious education was characterized by the following nature: Inclusive, Devotional, Scriptural, Experiential, Ritualistic, Social and Cultural. She practiced spiritual disciplines like meditation, self-control, and detachment. She built several temples dedicated to Lord Krishna, including the famous Dakshineswar Kali Temple in Kolkata. “The reason behind the building of the temple lies in quite famous folklore which entails that Rani when Rashmoni was traveling to Varanasi on pilgrimage, Goddess Kali appeared in her dream and commanded her to build a temple there on the bank of the Ganges and arrange for daily *Anna Bhogh* or rice offering” (Sengupta, 2021) ^[11]. She appointed Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa as the priest of the temple. “Dakshineswar Temple was not only dynamic in nature but also proved the dynamism of the Rani. The Kali temple is a symbol of national unity being standing on the land once owned by Muslims and Christians both” (Roy, 2018) ^[8].

She accepts that the meaning of our self cannot be found in its separateness from God and others. She engaged in devotional practices like chanting and worshiping Lord Rama (other known Raghunathjeu), Lord Shiva, and Goddess Kali. She followed traditional rituals and customs, such as temple worship, festivals, and sacred ceremonies. Her religious education emphasized the importance of serving humanity and promoting social justice. She never thought about religion and caste, which had no sense of the difference between upper caste and lower caste. Her religion would not be complete without making a mention of her humanistic beliefs.

2. To Study the Relevance of Rani Rasmani’s Religious Education in Present Society.

The temples she built, like Dakshineswar Kali Temple, not only Mother Bhavatarini but Also she founded Radha Krishna Temple and twelve Shiva Mandirs. She brought Shakta, Vaishnava, Shaivism in one arena and established a great meeting place of religion. It is remain important cultural and spiritual centres, preserving tradition and promoting spiritual growth. The temple was the beginning of Sri Ramakrishna Thakur's groundbreaking practice, “Yat Mat Tat Patha”. Swami Vivekananda emerged from the topography. He established Bharatdharma at the court of the world. Her religious educations continue to hold relevance in present day in several ways. Her strong faith and devotion inspire people to explore their own spirituality and connection with the divine. As a woman, her religious education and practices also explored feminine spirituality and the role of women in spirituality. Her inclusive approach to spirituality promotes interfaith understanding and harmony. Her legacy preserves the cultural and religious heritage of Bengal, promoting understanding and appreciation of Vaishnavism and its traditions.

Findings and conclusion

Her religious education played a significant role in shaping her life and legacy as a spiritual leader and social reformer. Her life highlighted the significance of devotion and love for the divine and exposure to her teachings can foster spiritual growth, self-reflection, and a deeper connection with one's own beliefs. Her religious education may have incorporated elements from other traditions, reflecting the syncretised nature of Bengali spirituality. Her religious education serves as a model for holistic learning, integrating spiritual growth, cultural preservation, and social responsibility. According to Kothari Commission (1964), the central and state government should adopt measures to introduce education in moral, social and spiritual values in all institutions under their direct control oil lines recommended by the university education commission on religious and moral instruction. Her life and teachings continue to inspire individuals to embrace their own spiritual journeys, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

Educational implications of the study

According to Kochhar (1987) ^[4], "One of the most glaring defects of modern Indian education is the absence in it, of the accent on the moral and religious values. The minds of the students are never illumined with the sane utterances of the prophets of religion." Her religious education, students can gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their culture, and the world around them. Learning about her inclusive approach to spirituality can encourage teachers to facilitate interfaith discussions and promote understanding among students. By exploring her religious education, teachers can enhance their own spiritual growth, cultural understanding, and teaching practices, ultimately benefiting their students and communities.

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