Chapter – I

INTRODUCTION
1.0. Introduction

After the battle of Plessey (1757) and Buxar (1762), when the rule of British was established in India, the overall picture of India was in a degraded and decaying condition. Social, political, economic, cultural and educational conditions were in a state of decline, degeneration and stagnation. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, “Her life was dried up and it showed all those dead and forgotten customs, superstitions and prejudices all the ignorance and fear, all feuds, all bitterness and separateness, all unreasonable remoteness from the wide world.” (Bose, 1976).

At the end of 18th century and in the beginning of 19th century, India in general and Bengal in particular was undergoing through stagnation and denegation, both socially and educationally. The debasement of society was mostly due to religious fanaticism. Like the mechanical observances of rituals, torture of the priests and their misinterpretation of Hindu Shastras. Taking the advantage of the ignorance of the common mass, the Brahmans used to indulge them in the performance of mechanical rites and ceremonies. Out of which, horrible fearful rite of Sati was mostly prevalent in the then Bengal. As the people were not aware of the true meaning of their scripture and texts, they used to follow blindly the false sayings of the priests class. People failed to judge anything based on reason and rationality. Their personal integrity was in a degraded condition. People’s less maturity, perplexed condition and mechanical adherence debased their nature as well as the entire society.

So, under such a dismal tradition, an urgent need was felt for pulling out the men from medieval classicism and for dispersing the light of knowledge. High standard of rational thinking, sense of nationality, deep patriotic feeling and a new awakening were required at that time. That new awakening was termed as Renaissance, which was not possible without being acquainted with the western culture, values and ideals through the medium of English. That new awakening evolved Bengal with the reformation of language, social reconstruction, political aspiration, and educational movement.

One of the most remarkable personalities of the 19th century Bengal with whom all those changes came into being was none other than Raja Rammohan Roy. In May
1772, in an ancient and honourable Brahmin family, Raja Rammohan Roy was born at Radhanagar, Bengal. He got a good education under parental roof. At home he learnt Persian, he studied Arabic at Patna and at Benares he acquired the knowledge of Sanskrit. A personal conflict took place between Raja Rammohan Roy and his father on the ground of his disbelief of the validity of idolatry. Because of that conflict, Raja Rammohan Roy left home and went to Tibet where he spent 2/3 years. He after that returned home and again went to Benares to study ancient classical language Sanskrit. He was at Benares up to his father’s death (i.e. up to 1803). In his service life, he was associated with John Digby and improved his command over the language English. In early part of his life he wrote a tract entitled Tuhfat ul- Muwahhidin, where he attacked idolatry. After he settled down at Calcutta, he started his multifarious reformatory activities in the sphere of both society and education. In 1815, he founded Atmiya Sabha and later became the founder of Brahmo Samaj. Being well versed in a number of languages, Raja Rammohan Roy wrote tracts and pamphlets in Bengali, Hindustani and English to make his people conscious of immediate happenings. He translated Vedanta and Upanishads into Bengali, Hindi and English to make his natives well acquainted with the true meanings of their Shastras. Raja Rammohan Roy, as a nationalist reformer, humanist and pioneer of the introduction of new and enlightened ideas and ideals of the West, boldly attacked prevalent social and educational absurdities and opened an avenue for the opportunities to his countrymen. His objective was twofold: - to eradicate all sorts of social prejudices, superstitions and to ameliorate the intellectual condition of his countrymen. Thus, a man for all times, Raja Rammohan Roy, as a father of Bengal Renaissance took the challenge of eradicating all sorts of social malpractices and educational stagnation and transformed his challenge ultimately into reality.

In the field of education also, Raja Rammohan Roy put his tireless efforts for securing freedom of the press, development of Bengali language and for the diffusion of useful knowledge of Science among his countrymen. He wanted to synthesise the eastern spirituality with western modernity. He with his farsighted vision and intellect influenced the then official policy to give directions in the favour of western knowledge. At that time, when Sanskrit was considered as one of the routed languages in India, Raja Rammohan Roy fearlessly expressed his doubt regarding the utility of that language. He rather encouraged his countrymen to become well versed in the
language English, so that they could study western culture and values and could infuse that knowledge into their own culture. He rendered his valuable help towards others who showed their zeal and efforts for the spread of western knowledge and also he himself established schools and colleges for rendering modern, liberal western education. Through his liberal views, it was possible for Raja Rammohan Roy to bring an ancient civilization to the threshold of modernity. He made immense contributions for uplifting the condition of society and education and by those contributions brought a new awareness, a new consciousness among his countrymen, conducive for the reformation and regeneration of the social and educational conditions.

1.1. Operational Definitions of Terms

1.1.1. Social

Social means relating to people or society in general. Under the present research study, the researcher studied the reason of calling Raja Rammohan Roy as a social reformer, his contributions towards the society, in relation to the people of the society. This study also attempts to establish the social activities of Raja Rammohan Roy in upholding the cause of social reform and in advocating the rights of women.

1.1.2. Educational

Educational means giving people useful knowledge. It is something relating to education and comprises educational achievements. The researcher studied the immense contributions of Raja Rammohan Roy in establishing institutions related to education, writing memorials for the freedom of the press, promoting native journalism, developing Bengali language and literature, helping missionaries and last but not the least in influencing Company’s educational policy towards western Science and literature.

1.1.3. Contributions

Contributions mean the part played by a person in bringing about a result or helping something to advance. In this study, the general contributions and help provided to the society by Raja Rammohan Roy through different social activities and educational
efforts had been studied by the researcher. The researcher here examined the impacts of Raja Rammohan Roy’s multifaceted social and educational activities in terms of his contributions.

1.1.4. Raja Rammohan Roy

He was a nationalist reformer, born in 1772, on 22nd May, in the village Radhanagar, in the district Hooghly. He worked tirelessly for the rational analysis of religion, fought single hand against many prevalent social evils and practices and brought a sense of awakening in the minds of his fellow countrymen by western ideals through the medium of English. All his social and educational philosophies are still significant today.

1.1.5. Pathfinder

Pathfinder refers to a person who makes or finds a way through previously unexplored areas or fields of knowledge. The present research study attempted to explore how Raja Rammohan Roy had been considered as a pathfinder through his social and educational contributions which led to severe revolt and change at that time. Raja Rammohan Roy had realized that the social and intellectual progress of India could be achieved by rousing his contemporaries from their dogmatic slumber, by inspiring them with new visions of life and by illuminating their minds with the new knowledge of the West.

1.2. Review of the Related Literature

The review of the related literature enables the researcher to delimit and define his problem and to state the objectives clearly and concisely. It prevents the researcher from making unintentional duplication of well-established findings. In course of study the researcher went through the survey of Research in Education to find out whether any research work, any thesis or dissertation had been done on Raja Rammohan Roy or not. The researcher has found the work mostly done in the field of education and Renaissance in the early nineteenth century and its impact on Indian society. The works found are as follows:
Deopurkar, R.T, 1964, Ph.D, Education, studied the path of evolution of the Philosophy of Indian education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His study, ‘The Evolution of the Philosophy of Education in Modern India’, was based on the educational contribution of Raja Rammohan Roy, and others. It revealed that Idealism formed the main stream in Indian educational philosophy whose goal was self-realization. Pragmatism, on the other hand was a philosophy of modern Science and democracy, The seeds of universalism were found implanted in the Vedas, the international schools in India relied heavily upon them. They stood for an illustration of synthesis of religion and Science.

Namita Devi, 1966, Ph.D Education. Calcutta University, aimed at observing the educational progress of Bengal in the nineteenth Century along with examining the role of Rammohan, Devendranath and Kesab Chandra in social, religious and educational Renaissance at that time. The study reflected that religion is the greater part of the content of ‘Bengal Renaissance’. The educational progress of Bengal of that time is reflected in the activities of missionaries, the Government officials and the people of Bengal.

Verma, K.K, 1969, PhD, Education, conducted a study on Development of educational philosophy in modern India from Raja Rammohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi. Where, he sought to establish the basic assumption that the educational philosophy in modern India with all its idealistic trends exhibited a great cultural continuity and reflected that the educational Renaissance in modern India started from Raja Rammohan Roy's time and through his well-directed efforts. The study also found that from Roy to Gandhi, Indian educational philosophy represented a synthetic spirit to build a comprehensive system of education reconciling the East and West with strong sociological base rich in metaphysics and having universal significance. With the framework of social self-realisation and spiritual self-realisation, the theories of education admitted that Raja Rammohan Roy and his successor's approach were intellectualistic.

Kulkarni, S. N, 1976, PhD. Education, aimed at tracing how the philosophy of education in India evolved since 1800 to 1966 in his study “The Evolution of a Philosophy of Education in Modern India 1800-1966” and found that at the dawn of
nineteenth century India presented a dismal picture socially, intellectually and politically. It was such a time galaxies of great men were born in India and they took upon themselves the noble task of lifting up the society. The first of such great sons of India was Rammohan Roy. The study also reflected that it was Raja Rammohan Roy who first conceived, propounded and put into practice such a philosophy of education based on the age old tenet of selective synthesis and assimilation. The chief objective of Raja Rammohan Roy in providing modern education to our people was to lift up Indian Society from the grips of superstition. Western knowledge, he hoped would begin an age of progressive outlook and scientific reasoning in India. He actually inaugurated a new system of education through his Hindu College, Calcutta in 1816 long before Lord Macaulay dreamt of coming to India. The study concluded that national successor of Raja Rammohan Roy treads that path and tried to awaken his countrymen to think manifold problems through the instrument of progressive education.

Mukhopadhyay, G.C.1983, PhD. Arts, Calcutta University focused attention on the 19th century Renaissance in Bengal and its influence on Indian education through his study, ‘The 19th Century Renaissance in Bengal and its Influence on Indian Education’ and observed that the 19th century was a crucial period in Indian history. In that period, the Renaissance began in Bengal and spread all over the country. It was very closely interlinked with the activities of the Christian missionaries and the introduction of English education. That further resulted into a long succession of personalities like Raja Rammohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Keshabchandra Sen, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekanand, appearing in succession to lead and give shape and content to the Renaissance. Along with the galaxy of outstanding personalities, a new middle class, the intelligentsia, emerged. The pioneers of the Renaissance regarded education as the most powerful means of spreading modern thought. Education, according to the leaders of Renaissance, should be planned on a broad base of western rationalism and Science. The study also found that the Renaissance movement resulted in the establishment of institutions like the Hindu College, followed by a large number of institutions both in and outside Calcutta-such as the Calcutta School Book Society.
Ayyar, C. 1984, Ph.D. History., Jadavpur University in his study, ‘The New Education and Intellectual Pursuits in Bengal from 1817 to 1857’ aimed to discuss the spread of the New Education in Bengal during the 40 years between the foundation of Hindu College in 1817 to the establishment of Calcutta University in 1857, and the intellectual pursuits that emerged largely in response to it. The work discussed the foundation and growth of the Calcutta School Book Society (1817), the Calcutta School Society (1818), and the Hindu College between 1857, the life and works of David Hare, Raja Rammohan Roy, the Christian missionaries in the spread of higher education; women's education; the educational policy of the British Government from 1813 till 1857;

Awasthi, KK, 1985, Ph.D. Education, aimed at a critical evaluation of the indigenous efforts for the spread of education during the period 1834 to 1947. The author in his study, ‘A Critical Appraisal of Indigenous Efforts for Development of Education during the Period 1834 to 1947’ observed that in ancient times education was imparted in the gurukuls. When the Europeans came to India, Christian missionaries accompanied them and they laid the foundation of a modern system of education in India. The study also reflected that the Indian religious reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy and others also played an important role in giving shape to the Indian system of education.

Jyotsna Kamat (2002) undertook the overwhelming task of doing research on the system of education and concluded that Raja Rammohan Ray supported the English education system and it became fashionable for good students to learn English. The essence of his teaching was that only by a critical synthesis of the cultures of the East (as in India) and West (as in Europe) could India go forward.

Melanie P Kumar (2003) remarked that dissatisfied with the system of education and the rote method of teaching English, Raja Rammohan Ray, a man for all times formed an association of English and Hindu scholars. He also invested his own money in the starting of a school where he introduced subjects like Science, Mathematics, Political Science and English. Roy felt that an understanding of those "Modern" subjects would give Indians a better understanding in the world of the day. Not only that but also Roy succeeded in starting a revolution for women's education and women's right to property.
Introduction

Rao P.S. Prakasa (2006) surveyed that Raja Rammohan Roy was a supporter of western system of education. He believed that through the study of that the Indians could learn about scientific development of the West. Thus the history of English in India commenced with Raja Rammohan Roy's campaign for introducing scientific education in India through English medium. Raja Rammohan Roy held the view that one should neither have blind faith in one's past nor should one imitate the western culture and civilization blindly. He advised his countrymen that they should acquire and store all that was best in both East and West.

Andrea Major (2007) observed *Sati*, the burning of a Hindu widow on her husband's funeral pyres, has always been a sensational issue and a highly controversial act. Always exceptional and effecting only a tiny minority of Hindu widows, it has remained close to the surface of social and political life and has played a disproportionately prominent role within Indian history and culture. The importance given to that rite in western' accounts of India since the fifteenth century, as well as the significance of its 'ethos', if not its actual practice, within Indian culture, has meant that *Sati* has remained in the public eye for several centuries and has taken on a variety of different meanings at different times, and for different observers. That anthology explores some of those multiple meanings of *Sati* by bringing together a wide range of both Indian and European historical sources on *Sati*, spanning many hundreds of years.

C.A. Bayly (2007) studied that Raja Rammohan Roy learnt several European languages and by 1815, had become spokesman for a religious tendency in Hinduism. He rejected "idol worship" and asserted that true Hinduism was monotheistic and little concerned with issues of caste. He founded the *Atmiya Sabha* (Friendly Society) and later the *Brahmo Samaj* (Society for the Supreme Being). His opposition to the burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, *Sati*, a relatively uncommon but ideologically charged practice, earned him the enmity of the neo-orthodox in Bengal. His insistence that modern Hinduism was a corrupt form of a pure and monotheistic ancient religion caused his mother to disown him and his relations to try to disinherit him. But the crusade against corrupt practices, especially widow-burning, led him to publish numerous pamphlets in English, Bengali and Sanskrit and to found the subcontinent's earliest Indian-run newspapers.
Gitanjali (2010) reviewed that the spirit of reform encompassed almost the whole of India beginning with the efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy in Bengal, to the formation of *Brahmo Samaj* in 1828. The Raja Rammohan Roy supported western education, including learning of English and the knowledge of Science and Philosophy. He, along with David Hare, a missionary, founded schools to impart English education to Indian-children. He developed the Hindu College which finally developed into the Presidency College in Calcutta. Raja Rammohan Roy did not want the Indians to imitate the West. He based his teachings on the philosophy of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* and tried to bring about a synthesis of the *Vedic* religion and the Christian humanism. Raja Rammohan Roy focused the attention of the British Government to such demands as appointing Indians to higher posts. He protested against restrictions on the freedom of the press. His social reforms made him the "first modern man" in India.

Reena Patel (2013) reviewed women’s property right in her book “*Hindu Women’s Property Rights in Rural India: Law, Labour and Culture in Action*”. He reflected the fact that *Hindu* women in India have independent right of ownership to property under the law of succession. However during the last five decades of its operation not many women have exercised their rights under the enactment. It also depicted the construction of *Hindu* women’s claim to independent land ownership within law in India.

### 1.3. Need of the Study

Review of the related literature reveals that most of the researchers of Raja Rammohan Roy have devoted themselves in finding out the evolution and development of educational philosophy in 19th century at the background of dismal social, educational conditions and examining the role of Raja Rammohan Roy in that regard. However the role of Raja Rammohan Roy was not so limited. In the field of education too, his role was not confined to the proposal of Hindu College or the establishment of Anglo Hindu School. It was extended far beyond that. So, it was necessary to give emphasis on his other various educational activities in the field of modern or new learning.

Raja Rammohan Roy was a symbol more of the times ahead of him than of the times he belonged to. He was the first producer as well as the first product of the composite
culture of India, which was a fact to be recognized today. His thoughts, his activities, his contributions in social, educational field were beyond the comprehension of an average man. The role of Raja Rammohan Roy as a social reformer was not so significantly emphasized by most of the researchers. However, the activity for which the name of Raja Rammohan Roy would be remembered all the time was the eradication of social rite, *Sati* through his innumerable tracts and writings in Bengali, Hindustani and English. Raja Rammohan Roy’s writings were to shape 19th century elite consciousness in decisive ways, with particular consequences for women and for the historiography of women in modern India. He first championed the cause of women emancipation through his tracts.

Today the present generation is conscious about women empowerment, which would never, been possible if burning of widows was not abolished. His movement against burning of widows with the help of Lord William Bentinck not only gave a proof of his proficiency and rational outlook, but also showed his humanitarian approach. Today’s concept of value education would not have been possible without humanitarianism. Now when at the backdrop of the present outworn social usages, unity is urgently called for, when it has become imperative to make people faithful to the religion of others and when it has become necessary to arouse consciousness on the part of the people, one should not forget that that emancipation of one’s manhood had been made possible by the indomitable personality and by the untiring efforts of the great unifier, Raja Rammohan Roy. His vision was that the entire human society was a big family. Today one is conscious about two contributions of education in developing good human relations: - Education for national integration and Education for international understanding which arises from that notion of Raja Rammohan Roy that every one of us are the member of world human society. So from that perspective of national integration and international understanding, this study is significant. His *Brahmo Samaj* was the meeting place of people from all religions and castes. He propagated universal religion. That concept is significant even today when one talks about equalization and eradication of caste system.

India today is an English-speaking country in the same way as it once was Persian and Sanskrit speaking country. The beginning of educational enthusiasm in India may be traced to Raja Rammohan Roy as the pioneer. He could pertinently be called the first of
the moderns. When most Indians lived in a frog in the well existence, he acquainted himself with the great intellectual forces at work. He promulgated his ideas of enlightenment, his concepts of liberty and equality along with the method of enquiry. It was he who first realised the importance of modern scientific education for the real emancipation of Indians. Still today the society is deep buried under the heaps of injustice, corruption and lack of values. The root cause of all sorts of superstitions and dogmatism in the country is inadequate socialisation, which is the result of deviation from social norms and the latter is due to lack of proper education.

One needs to be progressive and rational in their look which would help them to eradicate social evils. Raja Rammohan Roy was the first to realise that to uplift the then human mind, knowledge of Science is required. So, he protested against filling the minds of the Indians with the grammatical niceties of Sanskrit language. His initiative for the establishment of several renowned institutions of even today proved his uncompromising courage and his thoughts for India’s emancipation.

In Raja Rammohan Roy’s efforts to interpret the East to the West and the West to the East, he had great successors- Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhiji and Jawhararlal Nehru. So, Raja Rammohan Roy was rightly said as the father of modern India. He was the man who truly realized the significance of the modern age. Many of today’s problems can be solved if we can really understand the essence and significance of his activities.

In the context of moral degradation, social oppression and educational backwardness (especially for women) covering the Indian society even after so many years of Indian independence, there has again arisen the need of propagating Raja Rammohan Roy’s ideas for reconstructing the Indian society. The flame of rationality, humanism, nationality lit by him has to be kept burning.

So, on the basis of the above significance of Raja Rammohan Roy’s contributions to the Indian society and particularly to Bengal’s social and educational field, the researcher felt the need to search and find out the relevance of his contributions in the present day, and for that, the very work was undertaken.
1.4. Statement of the Problem

The researcher on the basis of the review of related literature and the need for the study derived to state the problem as ‘Social and Educational Contributions of Raja Rammohan Roy: A Pathfinder’.

1.5. Research Questions

- What was the historical perspective of Raja Rammohan Roy’s life span?
- What was the role of Raja Rammohan Roy in Bengal Renaissance?
- What were the different dimensions of social philosophies of Raja Rammohan Roy?
- What made Raja Rammohan Roy a social reformer?
- What was unique about Raja Rammohan Roy’s educational philosophy?
- Why Raja Rammohan Roy is called a pathfinder?
- Does Raja Rammohan Roy’s social and educational contribution have any relevance today?

1.6. Conclusion

In the subsequent chapters the effort of the researcher is to make an in depth study of the available primary and secondary sources relevant to Raja Rammohan Roy and his times. Collected historical evidences have been critically analysed to make an unbiased and impartial assessment of Raja Rammohan Roy and his contributions towards society and education.
References


“Rammohan never attempted to make his reforms more palatable by toning down his rejection of what was wrong. He would have no playing with words, no shifting of responsibility.”

Max Muller