Chapter – VIII

PRESENT DAY RELEVANCE
8.0. Introduction

Raja Rammohan Roy is recognized as a man of many distinguished features, who heralded the Renaissance in Bengal in the 19th century. He was a man of unusual intellectual ability. His thoughts and fields of activities were beyond the comprehension of an average man. His comprehensive and untiring efforts for social and educational reforms still amaze us. He endeavoured his efforts against social oppressions, like, Sati, casteism and polygamy. He fought for restoring the freedom of the press and for the introduction of modern, liberal, scientific education. Those were all relevant even those days. Although we are well acquainted with the rational movement of the West, still we are not able to get rid of our conservatism. So, it becomes necessary to discuss and focus his activities in the context of the present day to find the relevance of his rationality, modernity and humanism. This chapter has shown one by one the significance of his many folded works and activities in the present day.

8.1. Female Infanticide and Female Foeticide: New Version of Sati

Raja Rammohan Roy fought against one of the malignant disorders of popular Hinduism, Sati, burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their dead husbands. With the help of Lord William Bentinck, that cruel barbarous rite was declared illegal. But before that, Raja Rammohan Roy, through his tracts and pamphlets advanced many arguments for and against Sati. He distributed them free of cost before his countrymen and all he did in order to bring a consciousness among his countrymen, because he believed that mere enactment of law was not enough. He, for that, made true Shastric interpretations of the Hindus and showed that the rite of Sati had not been enjoined in Hindu Shastras.

Keeping in view the growing corruption of our present society, it can easily be said that still today we lack the consciousness which was sought for since from Raja Rammohan Roy’s time. In cruelty, nothing can be compared with bride burning. Though legislation had banned dowry, but still it exists. This shameful practice is taking of lives of women in everyday, ignoring the rules, regulations and legislations. So, instead of legislation, we, today needs social awareness, to eradicate the evils of the society. Certain mental
attitudes do not change by legislation. We claim that we belong to a more enlightened society than what was there two centuries ago, but the fact is this certain mental makeup have not been changed yet. Amongst the most educated families of today, the birth of a girl child is considered as a matter of subdued pleasure. The treatment of a boy and girl in a family differs, day to day interaction differs, and plan for education also differs. The existence of general imbalance between the sexes in our society is very much prevalent. Nowadays, this general imbalance begins even before birth as because of unscrupulous medical practitioners, who, with the help of technology help to identify a female foetus and destroy it. The cruel rite of Sati has taken new version in our present society. Female infanticide and female foeticide, gender based oppression of women in India.

A deliberate and intentional act of killing a female child within one year of its birth by a deliberate neglect to feed the infant is known as female infanticide. This is the most brutal and destructive manifestation of the anti female bias. This is an extreme form of gender discrimination. (In general the sex ratio imbalance worldwide, with a decreasing number of females for every 1000 males may be an indicator of the growing increase of female infanticide.)

In India, one of the major reasons for female infanticide is dowry. Along with this, the reason of poverty, ignorance and superstitions are merged with. Thus it can be said that the reasons for Sati which were there in 19th century Bengal, are still continuing today, only the mode has been changed.

“During 2001-2011, the share of children to total population has declined and the decline was sharper for female children than male children in the age group 0-6 years”, said the study “Children in India 2012-A Statistical Appraisal” conducted by the Central Statistical Organization. According to this report, female child population in the age group of 0-6 years was 78.83 million in 2001, which declined to 75.84 million in 2011. According to Indian Census 2011 the sex ratio in India slumped from 976 girls per 1000 boys in 1961, 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011 (the lowest since independence).

As per the report of India Today, New Delhi, April 1, 2011, on Census data, India’s 1.21 billion strong populations has still to shake off its bias against the girl child.
Like female infanticide, another heinous evil propelling in the society is female foeticide. It is based on the sex determination, which leads to an irresistible conclusion that the practice of eliminating female foetus by prenatal diagnostic techniques is widely prevalent. Female feticide began in the early 1990s as a result of the availability of ultrasound techniques in India capable of determining the sex of an unborn child. Social organizations, activists, thinkers’ media and people’s representatives have viewed female foeticide as nothing but a case of murder.

According to the Children in India 2012: A Statistical Appraisal, which was a study released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programmed Implementation, it was revealed that at least three million girls were missing in 2011 as a result of selective abortions and female foeticide. In 2011 the Indian National Crimes Record Bureau declared that the police had received almost 1,00,000 cases of cruelty to women by their husband or relatives, and more often than not those cases were related to them carrying female foetuses.

So time has come when it is utmost important to take concrete measures to combat the growing horror of female infanticide and female foeticide in India. A new culture is required in Indian education system that can change the notion about women, so that the next generation can be escaped of this mindset of its parents. We today are technologically modernised, but still much degraded in terms of human values. We need to be progressive. Women should be made conscious about their rights which can be secured by true education and economic solvency.

8.2. On Women’s Property Rights

After the enactment of law against Sati, Raja Rammohan Roy did not stop. He had furnished reference to the rights of women as acknowledged by different scriptures and for that, he wrote a separate essay. Through that essay, with his irrefutable arguments, he wanted to make it clear to his countrymen that in order to remove women misery, they should be made economically independent and for that reason, women should be entitled to property rights. With the passage of time, this issue has been given due importance.
As per Women’s Right to Properties Act, 1937, the widow of a deceased coparcener of a Mithakshara undivided family will have the same interest which her husband had while he was alive. With the passing of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, the position of widows and daughters came to be improved.

Hindu Succession Act 1956: Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act has been amended by the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, and according to which, in a joint Hindu family governed by the Mithakshara law, the daughter of a coparcener shall by birth become a coparcener in her own right in the same manner as the son.

Thus, under the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, the daughters are entitled to equal inheritance rights along with other male siblings, which was not available to them prior to the amendment.

8.3. On Caste System

Out of many reasons which proved as an obstruction to national development, caste system deserved to be mentioned. In India that system proved as a great deterrent. To Raja Rammohan Roy, caste system was the source of unity among us. He, with a Bengali translation, published the first chapter of a Sanskrit work against the caste system, which was named as “Vajrasuchi.” The original work belonged to Sanskrit scholar, Mrityunjayacharyya. He translated every major argument which that eminent Sanskrit scholar provided for refuting the support of the caste system. He was also in support of inter caste marriage and Saiva marriage as there was no discrimination of age and caste or race. Raja Rammohan Roy held the view that the entire human society was a big family and for accelerating the national development, caste system had to be eradicated. He believed that caste system could not do any good to man. Today the present generation is conscious about equalization of educational opportunities, education for all, removal of untoucheability etc. All those rest on what Raja Rammohan Roy advocated before a decade. Since the inception of our constitution, in various articles, Raja Rammohan Roy’s philosophy on caste system is held.
Article 15 of Indian Constitution, as enacted in 1950, prohibited any discrimination based on caste. Article 17 of Indian Constitution declared any practice of untouchability as illegal. In 1955, India enacted the Untouchability (Offences) Act (renamed in 1976, as the Protection of Civil Rights Act). It extended the reach of law, from intent to mandatory enforcement. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, similar to the Hate Crime Laws in the United States, was passed in India in 1989. But the caste system is yet to be completely eradicated from the mindset of all people.

8.4. Present Picture of Brahmo Samaj

The outcome of the efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy for integrating people of different religious communities and castes was his Brahmo Samaj. He furnished his outline in the ‘Trust Deed’ and the same bind the Brahmo Samaj even now. On 23rd January, 1830, the Adi Brahmo Premises were publicly inaugurated. In 1866, Keshub Chunder Sen organized the more radical “Brahmo Samaj of India”. But, that group was divided because of a certain reason and a third group, “Sadhaan Brahmo Samaj” was formed in 1878. Sadharan Brahmo Samaj arranged publications of his writings.

*Brahmo Samaj* today denounces polytheism, reject the caste system, reject the dowry system and focus on its abolition. Today’s *Brahmo Samaj* also held women emancipation as its one of the principles. Other areas where it has focussed today are remarriage of widows, reformation of educational system, opposition to the burning of widows, *Sati*, spread of universal knowledge, and opposition to corrupting influences etc. The principles are at par with what Raja Rammohan Roy instilled at the time of its foundation.

In the position of women, the effects of social reforms carried out by the *Sadharan Beahmo Samaj* are no less significant. At the tender age of 14, rarely the marriage of the girls in the *Brahmo* community takes place. The girls in the said community are allowed to choose their own husbands. Between boys and girls, there is no difference in access to right to education. As a result, a lot of girls had received higher education in the *Brahmo* community and some of them have even obtained highest University
degree. At the prayer hall, the equal status was provided to the women with men to pray. The first woman Brahmo preacher, appointed by Brahmo Samaj at Barishal, West Bengal, in 1881 was Manorama Mazumdar. Here women also took part as the members of the executive committee. There was a lot of emphasis on female education during the era of Keshub Chunder Sen and the Brahmo Samaj of India.

Raja Rammohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj as a tool for propagating monotheism and as an organization which is based on the principle that service to man is service to God. Brahmo Social Service Organization arranges for hearse van which is under 24 hour service. This organization can also arrange ambulance on request. This organization is situated in Kolkata.

On 28th August, 2006, at the Brahmo Sammilan Samaj, the Governor of West Bengal, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, formally released the book ‘Brahmo Samaj- From Fountain Head to Confluence’. This book is an anthology covering 600 plus page. For the upliftment of the position of women in our society, the zeal and fervour which were shown by Raja Rammohan Roy was mentioned by Mr. Gandhi and he expressed his shame that still the country is under the dark clouds of domestic violence against the women.

8.5. On Scientific Education

Because of the scientific revolution, human lifestyle has changed dramatically in the present centuries. Science fiction has been converted to reality. The notions of jet and supersonic air travel, cellular phones, lunar and planetary spacecrafts, computer controlled automation, television, nuclear power, electronic mail all those have appeared as Science fiction but now those are reality. Those changes though have not been confined to West, but the wind of change has definitely blown from that direction. In his times, Raja Rammohan Roy was very much concerned of the fact that India should not lose out on the new knowledge coming from the West. That’s why he opposed to traditional Sanskrit system of education, and advocated for English speaking schools and colleges. In those days, in his historic letter to Lord Amherst, he urged for a more liberal and enlightened system of education embracing Mathematics,
Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences. So, it is clear that if Raja Rammohan Roy would have come to the present day, he would have been surprised at the growing popularity of English language.

Raja Rammohan Roy, as a pioneer of modern education, always had used the term scientific temper, use of reason and freedom of thoughts. That attitude is very relevant today as in our daily life, Science and technology are growing at a rapid and tremendous pace. The isolation of the East from the West, which was there in Raja Rammohan Roy’s times, is no more as in present day there is rapid explosion of information through cellular phones, fax, electronic mails, and the websites.

8.6. On English Language

Raja Rammohan Roy was always in favour of instilling in the minds of his countrymen modern Western ideas. He advocated a foreign language, English to keep in touch with the Western thought to rouse his countrymen against blind faith and superstition. Through that philosophy, Raja Rammohan Roy is alive still today. Today English is considered as a language for communication & Education, which is much needed in the world of Globalisation & Internet. The general reaction to western education in those days was negative. The educated classes because of orthodoxy and conservatism had to be convinced to accept western education. But today we are getting an opposite picture. To get on in this world, today, education in an English medium school is essential.

In 1983 the Indian state of West Bengal had abolished the teaching of English at the primary level from public schools. The abolition of English was looked upon as a lowering of educational standards in a world where more than 750 million people speak English, three quarters of communication modes use the language and half of technical and scientific journals are written in it. Thus that decision produced English shy students who would belong to a lost generation.

The Left Front Government was forced to backtrack on its English teaching policy in the late 1990’s. First, a commission was set up in 1998, which recommended the teaching of English from an earlier stage, and the Government reintroduced English
from grade 3 in 1999. The Government decided in favor of reinstating English from grade 1 itself and that was implemented in the 2004-05 academic year. Today in the era of globalization the main communication language has become English. From using internet to higher study, English has become the only option.

8.7. Freedom for the Press

A contemporary issue which erupts into a debate now and then, in which Raja Rammohan Roy was personally involved, is the freedom of the press or more generally, freedom of the media. Raja Rammohan Roy was the father of native journalism. With his own efforts he started two newspapers, *Sambad Kaumudi* and *Mirat-Ul-Akbar* to air several contemporary social, political, educational, religious issues to arouse a national consciousness among the Indians, both *Hindus* and *Muslims*. He held newspaper as a mouthpiece of the local and distant news. So, when freedom or liberty of the press was curbed, he wrote two Memorials, as a protest, urging for freedom of the press. In those Memorials, he advanced arguments against the control of the press. On that issue, there were no favourable developments during his life time, but after his death, control of newspapers ended. As the media expanded their scope, those issues continue to acquire wide connotations. In Raja Rammohan Roy’s times there was print media, which are still today, of course, but are being overtaken by the electronic media, by TV and internet.

Another issue on this matter is that literally, though the freedom restored, but practically, the press till today is not free absolutely in true sense of terms. As per the record of ‘*The Economic Times*’, 1st May, 2014:- Press freedom in India has deteriorated due to increased interference by media owners. An NGO, established in 1941 that has been ranking countries worldwide since 1980, ranked India at a dismal 78th position in an annual report. So, still today, we need the arguments which were advanced by Raja Rammohan Roy in favour of freedom of press.

The Indian Constitution, while not mentioning the word "press", provides for "the right to freedom of speech and expression" (Article 19(1) a).
8.8. Hindu College

Raja Rammohan Roy was always in favour of a liberal and enlightened system of education. In founding the Hindu College, Raja Rammohan Roy was a co-adjudicator of David Hare. Actually the proposal for founding an institute for liberal education was raised in Raja Rammohan Roy’s Atmiya Sabha, which was later materialised into’ Hindu College. With the proposed college he later renounced his connection when the orthodox circles of our society objected his association. Such a self-sacrifice was possible only for such a great man, because Raja Rammohan Roy valued education of his countrymen more than the empty flourish of his name as the committee man. That’s why it is rightly called that he was the prime mover in the establishment of the Hindu College.

Initially established as the Mahapathshala wing of Hindu College, it was renamed Presidency College, i.e. the college of the Bengal Presidency in 1855. In 2010, it was upgraded to the status of a full university by the Presidency University Act, 2010 passed in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. The Governor of West Bengal, Shri M.K. Narayanan, gave his consent to the bill on 7 July 2010.

A number of prestigious institutions were started under the aegis of Presidency College, the oldest educational institutions of the country. Although now independent, The ‘Hindu School’ Initially the Pathshala wing of the Hindu College was the college’s school when it was established. From the middle of the nineteenth century, the Hare School has been located inside the premises of the college and has been traditionally associated with it. In the early 19th and 20th centuries, its students used to complete their higher education in that college.

Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in 1931 founded The Indian Statistical Institute in the Statistical Laboratory of this college. In the 19th century, the main building comprising of Maths, English History, Geography, Bengali and Philosophy Departments was built. The Science building was built in 1913. The new building comprising Economics, Political Science and Sociology departments and the Derozio Hall was built in 1956. The newest building was built in 1990 conducting the post graduate classes.
8.9. Scottish Church College

In the field of Indian education, the entry of the Christian missionaries was very much encouraged and supported by Raja Rammohan Roy for the cause of western education and it has been proved later that the missionary association speeded up the spread of western education. Today we find many missionary schools which give the proof that missionary zeal has really accelerated the cause of English education. Raja Rammohan Roy, not only supported the missionary activities in the field of education, but also extended his valuable help to one of the earlier representatives of the Christian Education Mission, Dr. Alexander Duff. Raja Rammohan Roy secured a house and also the first batch of students for Alexander Duff to start General Assembly Institution, which was converted to Scottish Church College in 1830. Acknowledging that willing help, Rev. W.S.Urqhurt, a former Principal of the Scottish Church College, at the Rammohan Centenary Celebrations spoke: - “I represent a college which at the time of its foundation owed much to the assistance and encouragement of Raja Rammohan Roy. As is well known, it was he who provided Dr. Alexander Duff with the room in Chitpore Road, where his college was first started. (Tagore, 1975, pp 53).

Scottish Church College is the oldest continuously running liberal Arts and Science College in India. University Grants Commission rated the college as college with Potential for Excellence. The college is better known for its academic standards and intellectual milieu.

The College is now owned and administered by the Church of North India (CNI) through the diocese of Calcutta. It is affiliated to the University of Calcutta but enjoys autonomous status for its Faculty of Post Graduate Studies. It offers Honours course in 15 subjects in the under-graduate stream and post-graduate course in two subjects. The Department of Teacher Education of the college prepares women students for the Bachelor of Education degree.

In promoting gender equality, this college has played a pioneering role as it emphasizes over women education. To facilitate and promote the cause of co-education, this institution remained the only institution of its kind in the city. Half of the present roll strength of the college is the female students.
The campus of the college contains the main building, millennium building, Department of Teacher Education. It has M.L. Bhaumik auditorium for various cultural programmes and activities. Under the University of Calcutta, the college is also running the ‘National Service Scheme Programme’.

This college has provided throughout the years numerous noted personalities, like, Swami Vivekananda, Subhas Chandra Bose, etc.

8.10. Tribute to Raja Rammohan Roy

Raja Rammohan Roy is still remembered through various educational institutions, roads, museums which were established as a tribute to the legend. Those can be witnessed as:

8.10.1. Libraries Named after Raja Rammohan Roy

- Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation: It is a central autonomous organization established and fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. This organization functions as a promotional agency, an advisory and consultancy organization, a funding body for public library development in India. The Foundation works in close association and active cooperation with different State Governments and Union Territory Administrations through a machinery called State Library Planning Committee (SLPC/SLC) set up in each State at the instance of the Foundation. It is situated in Salt lake City, in a five storied building.

- Rammohan library: It is situated at Building No-267, Sukiya Street, Garpar, Raja Rammohan Roy Sarani, Kolkata -700009. It is a Public Services Library and having a rare collection of books on the legend.

- Raja Rammohan Roy Memorial Museum: It is on 85A, Raja Rammohan Roy Sarani, The memorabilia in the museum consists of photographs, sketches, paintings and excerpts from the writings of Raja Rammohan Roy and others reproduced, wherever possible, in facsimile. Also it has period furniture and
diorama representations designed to recreate the times. Together they not only give us the glimpses of the various facets of one of the greatest personalities of the modern age, but at the same time take us back into a period in history when India was at crossroads, and Raja Rammohan Roy heralded the coming of the modern age. It was opened in 2009.

8.10.2. The Following Schools and Colleges were Named after Raja Rammohan Roy

- **Ram Mohan College:** Renowned College situated at 102/1, Raja Rammohan Sarani, Near Rama Street PS, Kolkata, West Bengal 700009. It offers undergraduate and post graduate courses. It is affiliated to Calcutta University. Its origin was City College, Kolkata, one of the oldest first grade colleges in West Bengal. It has also a Science building.

- **Raja Rammohan Roy Mahavidyalaya:** This College is situated at his birth place Radhanagore, Nagulpara - 712406, Hooghly, West Bengal. From the very beginning the college aimed at spreading both curricular and co-curricular education to the common lot of locality.

- **Raja Rammohan Roy College of Education:** this college is situated at No. 48, 24th Cross Main Road, Bangalore 560016. This college is affiliated to Bangalore University. The college offers courses in Education.

- **Raja Ram Mohan Roy Institute of Vocational Studies:** this institute is at Sector 27-D (Adjoining Radhaswami Satsang), Chandigarh.

- **Raja Ram Mohan Roy Public School:** It is situated near Madhuban Chowk, Pocket-C-8, Rohini Sector-8, Delhi – 110085.

- **Raja Ram Mohan Roy Academy Cambridge School:** this is situated in P.O. Clement Town, Clement Town Dehradun - 248002 Uttarakhand.
On 16th May, 1890, at the decision of the Executive Committee of the *Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya* was founded. From 1910-1936 the wife of Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, Lady Abala Bose was the secretary of the school. This school can boast as one of the premier educational institutions for girls in Calcutta still now.

8.10.3. Following Roads are Dedicated to the Name of Raja Rammohan Roy

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy Road, Bengaluru, Raja Ram Mohan Roy Road (Charni Road) Mumbai.
- Raja Rammohan Roy Sarani was earlier named as Amherst Street after Lord William Amherst. But it was renamed as Rammohan Sarani after Raja Rammohan Roy.

8.11. Stamp in his Name Issued by Government of India

Government of India has issued stamp in the name of the great reformer, Raja Rammohan Roy in 27th September 1964.

8.12. Statues of Raja Rammohan Roy were Constructed and Situated in Various Places of the World

The statue of Raja Rammohan Roy is situated in College Green, Bristol, UK. His tomb is in UK. The tomb was built in 1843, located in the Arnos Vale Cemetery on the outskirts of Bristol. It was built by Dwarakanath Tagore in 1843, 10 years after Raja Rammohan Roy’s death due to meningitis in Bristol on September 27, 1833. In September 2006 representatives from the Indian High Commission came to Bristol to mark the anniversary of Raja Rammohan Roy’s death. During the ceremony Hindu, Muslim and Sikh women sang Sanskrit prayers of thanks.

At the 175th death anniversary of Raja Rammohan Roy, to mark the completion of the restoration work on the tomb of Raja Rammohan Roy, which is located prominently in the Arnos Vale cemetery in the South western English city, Mr. Shiv Shankar
Mukherjee, India’s High Commissioner, cut a ribbon. Aditya K. Poddar, a Singapore-based Bengali businessman, financed the restoration after being approached by the Kolkata mayor, who saw the state of the tomb in 2006.

The Honourable Mayor of West Bengal unveiled a bust of Raja Rammohan Roy on 24th January 2008 at the Brahmo Sammilan Samaj.

A previously unknown ivory portrait bust of Indian social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy was unveiled by an art historian at the Arnos Vale Cemetery here at a commemoration event to mark his 180th death anniversary.

The statue of Raja Rammohan Roy still adores. Bangalore city and Raja Rammohan Library of Kolkata also has a statue.

8.13. Conclusion

The many qualities of Raja Rammohan Roy for which he is known in the pages of history are as relevant today as they were then. His views on scientific education, social reform, rationalism and freedom of expression are all relevant today.

In the context of present day, to the society and to the education, contributions, thinking and activities of Raja Rammohan Roy are still significant. The institutions, roads library and museum which were established after his death in keeping alive his memory is highly appreciable. The activities and contributions of Raja Rammohan Roy still find an important place in the lives of people and also in the society at large. Raja Rammohan Roy will still be adored and honoured and long cherished for many years to come.
References

Library

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School & Colleges

- Ram Mohan College
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“Rammohun was the first to complete a connected life-current between the East and the West.”

Max Muller