

## Education and the Contributions of Raja Rammohan Roy

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### Abstract:

*Raja Rammohan Roy is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of modern education in India. His intellectual vision, reformist zeal, and commitment to rationalism played a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape of nineteenth-century India. At a time when traditional education was dominated by religious orthodoxy and limited curricular scope, Roy advocated for modern scientific education, rational inquiry, and the use of English as a medium for accessing global knowledge. His contributions extended beyond theoretical ideas and included the establishment of educational institutions, advocacy for curriculum reform, and promotion of women's education and social equality. This article examines the educational philosophy of Raja Rammohan Roy and analyzes his contributions to the modernization of Indian education. The paper explores his views on educational aims, curriculum, language policy, women's education, and social reform through education. It also evaluates his long-term impact on Indian educational development and his relevance in contemporary educational discourse. By analyzing historical sources and educational scholarship, the article highlights how Roy's vision laid the foundation for modern, liberal, and inclusive education in India.*

**Keywords:** *Raja Rammohan Roy, Modern Education in India, Educational Reform, Women's Education, Social Reform, Educational Philosophy.*

### 1. Introduction:

The nineteenth century was a period of profound transformation in Indian society, particularly in the fields of social reform, intellectual awakening, and educational development. One of the most influential figures in initiating these transformations was Raja Rammohan Roy. Often described as the "Father of Modern India," Roy played a pivotal role in promoting rationalism, humanism, and progressive education.

During Roy's time, education in India was largely dominated by traditional institutions such as pathshalas, makhtabs, and madrasas. These institutions primarily focused on religious instruction and classical languages like Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian. While these forms of education had cultural value, they did not adequately equip students with the knowledge required to engage with modern science, technology, and global intellectual developments.

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Rammohan Roy recognized this limitation and advocated for educational reforms that would introduce modern scientific and secular knowledge into Indian society. He believed that education should promote rational thinking, social progress, and intellectual freedom. His advocacy for modern education played a significant role in influencing British educational policies in India.

This article examines the educational philosophy and contributions of Raja Rammohan Roy and evaluates his enduring legacy in the development of modern education in India.

## **2. Historical Background of Education in India During Roy's Time:**

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Indian education was largely traditional and religious in orientation. The curriculum in most institutions was centered around religious scriptures, grammar, philosophy, and classical literature.

Although these subjects had intellectual significance, they lacked practical relevance in the emerging modern world. Scientific knowledge, mathematics, geography, and modern philosophy were largely absent from the curriculum.

The British colonial administration initially supported traditional education through institutions like Sanskrit colleges and madrasas. However, progressive Indian reformers such as Rammohan Roy strongly criticized this approach. Roy argued that the resources allocated to traditional education would be better utilized in promoting modern scientific learning.

His famous 1823 letter to the British authorities emphasized the need for introducing Western scientific education rather than merely supporting traditional Sanskrit education. This intervention marked a significant turning point in the debate on educational policy in India.

## **3. Educational Philosophy of Raja Rammohan Roy:**

### **3.1 Aim of Education:**

Rammohan Roy believed that the primary aim of education was the intellectual and moral development of individuals. According to him, education should cultivate rational thinking and promote social progress.

He viewed education as a powerful instrument for eliminating superstition, social injustice, and ignorance. For Roy, education was not merely about acquiring knowledge but about developing enlightened individuals capable of contributing to society.

### **3.2 Emphasis on Rationalism:**

One of the central elements of Roy's educational philosophy was rationalism. He believed that knowledge should be based on reason and scientific inquiry rather than blind faith.

Roy strongly opposed superstition and religious dogmatism. Through education, he sought to encourage critical thinking and intellectual independence.

### **3.3 Secular and Universal Education:**

Rammohan Roy advocated for secular education that transcended religious boundaries. He believed that education should be inclusive and accessible to people of all communities.

His approach emphasized universal values such as human dignity, equality, and freedom.

#### **4. Raja Rammohan Roy and Modern Education in India:**

One of Roy's greatest contributions was his advocacy for modern Western education in India. He strongly believed that Western science and philosophy could play a transformative role in Indian society.

Roy argued that subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, anatomy, and modern philosophy should be included in the educational curriculum.

His efforts influenced British policymakers to introduce modern education in India, which eventually led to significant educational reforms.

#### **5. Contribution to Educational Institutions:**

Rammohan Roy was not only a thinker but also an active participant in establishing educational institutions.

He played a significant role in the establishment of the Hindu College in Kolkata in 1817. This institution later became one of the most prominent centers of modern education in India.

The college introduced Western scientific and literary education to Indian students and became a major intellectual hub during the Bengal Renaissance.

Roy also supported the establishment of the Anglo-Hindu School in 1822, where modern subjects were taught alongside traditional studies.

#### **6. Advocacy for English Education:**

Rammohan Roy strongly supported the introduction of English as a medium of instruction in Indian education. He believed that English education would provide Indian students access to modern scientific knowledge and global intellectual developments.

His views influenced British educational policies, including later reforms such as Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education in 1835, which promoted English education in India.

Roy argued that learning English would help Indians engage with the modern world and improve their social and economic opportunities.

#### **7. Promotion of Women's Education:**

Another significant aspect of Rammohan Roy's contribution to education was his advocacy for women's education.

During the early nineteenth century, women's education in India was severely neglected due to social and cultural restrictions. Roy believed that education was essential for the empowerment and development of women.

He strongly opposed practices such as sati and child marriage, arguing that education could help eliminate these social evils.

Roy's progressive views laid the foundation for later reformers who worked toward expanding educational opportunities for women in India.

#### **8. Education as a Tool for Social Reform:**

For Rammohan Roy, education was closely linked with social reform. He believed that many social evils in Indian society were the result of ignorance and lack of education.

Through education, he sought to promote values such as equality, rationality, and social justice.

His reform movements were institutionalized through the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj in 1828, which promoted religious reform, social equality, and educational advancement.

The Brahmo Samaj played a crucial role in spreading progressive ideas and encouraging modern education among Indians.

### **9. Influence on Educational Policy:**

Rammohan Roy's advocacy had a lasting influence on the development of educational policy in India.

His arguments in favor of modern scientific education helped shape the debate between Orientalists and Anglicists regarding the direction of Indian education.

Eventually, the British government adopted policies that supported Western education, which significantly transformed the Indian educational system.

Roy's ideas contributed to the emergence of modern universities and educational institutions in India.

### **10. Critical Evaluation of Roy's Contributions:**

While Rammohan Roy's contributions to education were groundbreaking, scholars have also identified certain limitations.

Some critics argue that his emphasis on English education may have contributed to the marginalization of indigenous languages and traditional knowledge systems.

However, it is important to understand Roy's perspective within the historical context of colonial India. His primary objective was to empower Indians with modern knowledge that could help them compete in a rapidly changing world.

Overall, his contributions played a transformative role in shaping modern Indian education.

### **11. Relevance in Contemporary Education:**

The educational ideas of Rammohan Roy remain highly relevant in contemporary educational discourse.

His emphasis on rational thinking, scientific education, gender equality, and social reform continues to resonate with modern educational goals.

In today's knowledge-based society, Roy's vision of education as a tool for intellectual freedom and social progress remains profoundly significant.

### **12. Conclusion:**

Raja Rammohan Roy stands as one of the most influential figures in the history of Indian education. His visionary ideas and reformist efforts played a critical role in introducing modern education to India.

By advocating for scientific learning, rational inquiry, women's education, and social equality, Roy helped lay the foundation for a modern and progressive educational system.

His contributions went beyond institutional reforms and extended to shaping the intellectual and cultural transformation of Indian society.

Even today, Roy's educational philosophy continues to inspire educators, policymakers, and scholars. His legacy serves as a reminder that education is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge but a powerful instrument for social transformation and human development.

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