

Introduction to Modern Indian Political Thought
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Lecture – 03
Raja Rammohan Roy: Modern Education

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RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY
(22 May 1772 - 27 Sept 1833)

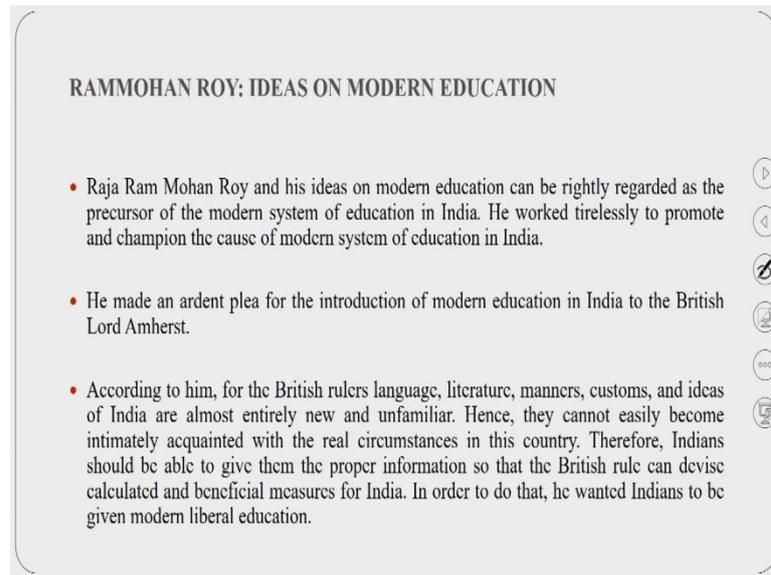
KEY THEMES

- Religious reforms
- Modern education
- Freedom of press

A portrait of Raja Rammohan Roy, an Indian reformer and philosopher. He is depicted from the waist up, wearing a red dhoti and a yellow shawl draped over his left shoulder. He has a white turban and a white beard. He is standing in front of a classical building with columns. The portrait is framed by a white border with a decorative corner.

Hello! everyone. In this lecture, we will be continuing the discussion about the thoughts and ideas of one of the eminent modern Indian political thinkers, Raja Rammohan Roy. In the previous lecture, we have discussed his ideas on religious reforms. And today, we will discuss about his ideas on Modern Education. In the following lecture, we are going to discuss his ideas on freedom of press, political and civil rights. And then, we will conclude his thought in the larger context of modern Indian political thinking - what was his contribution, what was his legacy, and what kind of ideas, he championed and articulated, which continues to resonate in our contemporary times. So, in the next lecture, we are going to discuss some of those thoughts. Today, we are going to discuss Raja Rammohan Roy's ideas on Modern Education.

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RAMMOHAN ROY: IDEAS ON MODERN EDUCATION

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his ideas on modern education can be rightly regarded as the precursor of the modern system of education in India. He worked tirelessly to promote and champion the cause of modern system of education in India.
- He made an ardent plea for the introduction of modern education in India to the British Lord Amherst.
- According to him, for the British rulers language, literature, manners, customs, and ideas of India are almost entirely new and unfamiliar. Hence, they cannot easily become intimately acquainted with the real circumstances in this country. Therefore, Indians should be able to give them the proper information so that the British rule can devise calculated and beneficial measures for India. In order to do that, he wanted Indians to be given modern liberal education.

Now, when it comes to modern education or modern liberal education, there are different kinds of understanding about the evolution or the starting of modern liberal education in India. And especially its rise in the context of colonial dominance, as I was discussing in my previous lecture, not just in the physical material world, but also, in the realm of thought and ideas or in the intellectual world as well. The colonial domination was so powerful and overwhelming that it was very hard for any other perspective or counter ideas about education, polity, society, about different kind of religions and their worth was very hard to articulate, express and assert.

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Now, in such a context, Raja Rammohan Roy was articulating his thoughts on religion, his thoughts on modern education, and also some of his ideas on freedom of press, political and civil rights, that we are going to discuss in the next lecture. So, what is the significance of modern education or modern liberal education in modern Indian political thought? As many of us are aware, that these ideas whether it be on nation, nationalism, polity, state, individual, fundamental rights of individual, the form of government, republicanism, and secularism, all these vocabulary and the idioms that we use in our modern political discourse and polity, is somewhat connected with this kind of historical shift in terms of the system of education that we have had in modern India. And Raja

Rammohan Roy, in that sense, is a kind of remarkable contribution in terms of supporting and promoting modern liberal education in modern India.

One of the examples, which I can give on the contribution of modern education, is the possibility of imagining India as a nation. So, as we are aware that we have multiple languages, there is plurality of race, caste, religion, communities, and then, how these all communities come together to think about India, to communicate with each other, using one language, and that one language is English for a very long time. So, in different provinces, the consciousness as many writers like Dennis Dalton and others have argued that very possibility of communicating between and among different provinces having their own language and dialects and discussing about some common issues like political, political freedom from the British rule, social reforms, political reforms, and religious reforms, were possible, because of their familiarity with the English. So, English becomes the link language for many of the nationalist thinkers and that we have to give credit to this modern liberal education. In a similar way different vocabulary and idioms that we use in our political discussion and debate is rooted in this modern liberal education. So, many people have also studied Indian nationalism in a sense, where they can learn and able to access modern English education.

And from there began, the first phase, if you look at the history of nationalist movement, from the early 1885 to 1905 or so. The moderates, basically, the moderate phase of Indian national congress was by and large guided by these emerging middle class. In India, having access to modern English liberal education. And then, they were theorizing, arguing, contesting within the administrative set up that was provided by the British and articulating their thoughts.

So, the point here, is modern liberal education did play a very significant role in the very formation of the idea of nation, nationalism, the way Indian thinkers and political activists, communicate with each other and it continue to remain a very valuable language in terms of official and administrative communication. So, in that context, we have to think about the way, Raja Rammohan Roy was articulating his thoughts and supporting the modern liberal education.

So, to begin with, Raja Rammohan Roy and his ideas on modern education can be rightly, regarded as the precursor of modern system of education in India. What we see

here, is the university system, the different branches of learning and knowledge that we have, the kind of certification, so you have to pass some exam and that passing of exam will certify you for certain degree. So, the modern system of education that we have, we can trace it in the ideas of Raja Rammohan Roy, among others in modern India. And he worked tirelessly, to promote and champion this cause of modern system of education. So, unlike many of his contemporary, he was fully convinced about the value and also, the use of modern liberal education in India.

Now, what you also find in Raja Rammohan Roy is his interaction with the colonial administrators or secretary general or governor general, and his constant plea to them to promote and start modern education in India. And that reflected in one of his letters to British educationist Lord Amherst, where he ardently argued for the modern liberal education in India.

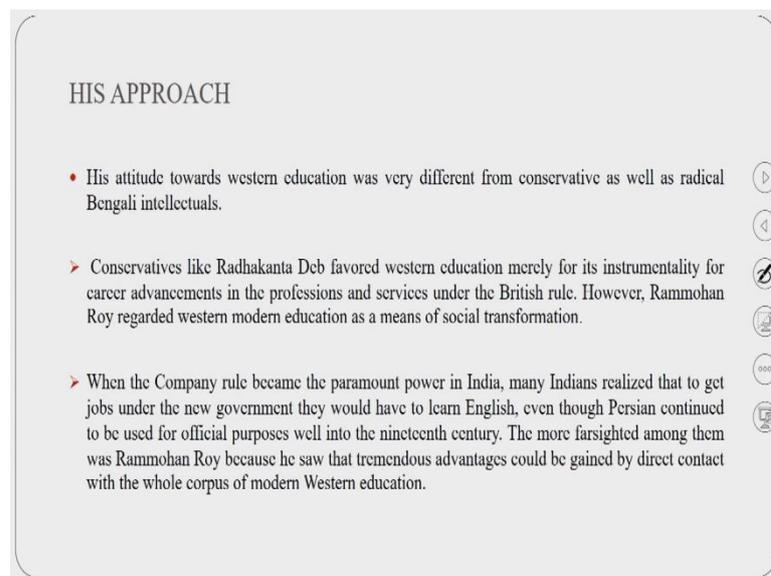
Now, for him, and that was the time, when Indians were responding and trying to articulate the British impositions of various kind. And many of them were convinced that the British rule is for something good, that something good is going to happen out of the British rule. And they believed in the fairness or the promises of justice made by the colonial administrators, and their system of governance, their protection of rights. And they believed that whatever was there in their native country that is in Britain. So, whatever the rights or obligation that is there for the British citizen in their native country will be extended to the Indians or the colonial subject as well. So, Raja Rammohan Roy was in a sense situated in such kind of discourse, where people were aware or convinced about the just, justness or fairness of the British and wanted it to be extended into the colonized society as well.

So, according to Roy, for the British rulers language, literature, manners, customs, and ideas of India, which is almost entirely new or unfamiliar, therefore, they cannot easily become intimately acquainted with the real circumstances in this country. So, despite of their intentions to be a just ruler, to protect the rights of the individual or the community, because of their unfamiliarity or the completely strange language, manners, customs or ideas that was there in India. Raja Rammohan Roy believed that because of their lack of firsthand or familiarity with these literatures, language, manners, customs and ideas, they cannot really grasp or comprehend the real circumstances that were present in India. So, he believed that Indians should be able to give them the proper information, so that, the

British rule can revise, calculate and enact beneficial measures for India. Now, in order to do that, he wanted Indians to be given modern liberal education.

So, he is very clear about the role and significance of modern liberal education in India, and he believed that the Britishers despite of their intention to revise policy for the betterment or improvement of Indian society or Indian people, they cannot do it, because they are not familiar with the Indian situation, and that information can be provided by an educated section of Indian population, when they are provided with the modern liberal education. So, one thing that becomes clear then is the belief in the just nature of the British rule and Raja Rammohan Roy, also believed that the colonial rule was something, which can liberate, which can truly empower the Indian masses, and it was good for the country. And to do that, he wanted liberal modern liberal education for Indian subject.

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HIS APPROACH

- His attitude towards western education was very different from conservative as well as radical Bengali intellectuals.
- Conservatives like Radhakanta Deb favored western education merely for its instrumentality for career advancements in the professions and services under the British rule. However, Rammohan Roy regarded western modern education as a means of social transformation.
- When the Company rule became the paramount power in India, many Indians realized that to get jobs under the new government they would have to learn English, even though Persian continued to be used for official purposes well into the nineteenth century. The more farsighted among them was Rammohan Roy because he saw that tremendous advantages could be gained by direct contact with the whole corpus of modern Western education.

His approach to modern western education was very different from his conservative as well as radical Bengali intellectuals of that time. Now, as we are aware that the Indians were also very apprehensive about modern liberal education in India. So, many of us are familiar with the kind of debates that was happening during the time when Britishers began modern education. Before that, when Raja Rammohan Roy was thinking and articulating about the usefulness or appropriateness of modern liberal education vis a vis classical Sanskrit learning or personal learning, now, because of the Christian

missionaries taking a significant role in educating the masses, and then also fulfilling their objective of religious conversion.

Now, many Indians or natives thought that in the grab of this modern English, not just in language, but the system of education, they were actually promoting Christianity, and that is why, they were very apprehensive of this whole English system or modern system of education. And for a very long time, they were not convinced by the colonial administrators and scholars, who were actually, promoting the modern system of education.

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It took a long time, for the Indians citizen or common people to understand the value or get convinced about the significance of modern liberal education. There was all kind of debates that was happening. On the one hand, you have conservatives like Radhakanta Deb and many radicals also, which wanted to completely imbibe or imitate modern liberal values or western education at the cost of anything that is related to India because of their belief in the stagnant or kind of otherworldly, approach in Indian system of education. So, you have two kinds of opinions and Raja Rammohan Roy, was actually trying to articulate his thought and his support for modern education in such a situation.

So, conservatives like Radhakanta Deb wanted western education, but that western education for them was a kind of instrument or a tool for career advancement in their professions or service under the British rule. So, they had to learn modern education, English language, because they wanted to get into the service of the British rule, and they used this modern education merely, as the instrument or tool. Whereas, Raja Rammohan Roy regarded this western modern education, not just as a tool for career advancement or getting into the services of British rule, but also, as a means for social transformations, so that is a very significant understanding of the role of modern education for Raja Rammohan Ray.

Now, historically if we look in, when the company rule became the paramount power after the decline of Mughals and there was competition between Marathas and other provincial rulers in south, and also in west India, gradually, it becomes clear that the

British acquired the supremacy or paramount power in India. Now, many Indians realized that to get job under this new British rule, they would have to learn English, even though the Persian continued to be used for official purposes well into the 19th century.

So, when the British came, they did not disallow the use of classical languages, such as Persian or Sanskrit. And Persian, remained as the language of court or the language of administration for a very long time, as late as 19th century or early 20th century, but the section of Indian population believed that to get the job under this new rule, they had to learn English. So, they had the very instrumental understanding of this new system of education.

Now, the more farsighted among them such as Raja Rammohan Roy, he saw the tremendous advantage that could be gained from the direct contact with the whole corpus of modern Western education. So, for them, English education or modern liberal education was not just to get a job, but also to reform the society, to think about a better politics or that could lead to the empowerment of community and cultivation of the mind, so that is something, very crucial for reformers or thinkers like Raja Rammohan Roy, who is very different from many of his conservative and the radical friends.

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- He welcomed the effort of British people to establish a new school in Calcutta for the promotion of modern education.
- He wanted that Britishers should employ English gentlemen of talent and with liberal education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences because they according to Roy had attained a degree of perfection in those fields.
- He raised his voices against the archaic education policy of the company: The East India Company, in its initial years were cautious to temper with the indigenous system of education. They wanted to leave the traditional bases of Indian society undamaged as far as possible. Therefore they had decided, as early as in the 1770s, to sponsor Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit studies in India. Rammohan Roy strongly opposed the efforts by the government to establish Sanskrit schools under Hindu pundits/priests.

Now, therefore, when the Britishers began to take the responsibility of providing education to the Indian people, Raja Rammohan Roy wholeheartedly, supported such

promotions of new school, new system of education in Calcutta, and later on, in the rest of the India.

He wanted the Britishers to employ English gentlemen of talent with liberal education to instruct the natives of India in mathematics, philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other useful sciences, because they, according to Roy, had attained a degree of perfection in those fields. So, Raja Rammohan Roy wanted this responsibility to be fulfilled by those instructors, who have already acquired a degree of perfection in the respective fields of modern system of knowledge, be it mathematics, philosophy, anatomy or chemistry.

So, for Raja Rammohan Roy here again, this point we will discuss in few minutes, where you see the use of the education, it is not just to speculate and contemplate about other worldly issues like the existence of soul, relationship of individuals to his soul, life after death, another kind of similar issue, which is widely prevalent in many of the Indian system of education. In contrast to that, Roy wanted to promote modern scientific liberal education because of their practical values, practical necessity and not just because of the usefulness of speculative and contemplative thinking. So, that was his approach towards education where he wanted the Britishers to employ those who already have some degree of perfection in such fields.

There was tussle between the officials of the company as well which becomes more explicit in 1830s, when they seriously, began to think about the medium or the system of education they will promote in India, in 1830s, especially, after Lord Macaulay, Woods Despatch and other things. Certainly in 1830s, that issue becomes much more explicit, and much more emotionally intense in terms of having sharper views which differs from each other.

For the company in their beginning or the initial years, they were very cautious to tamper with the indigenous system of education. Britishers on their part were also very cautious, when it comes to tampering with the indigenous system of education in India that was in existence at that point of time. Now, they wanted to leave the traditional base of Indian society undamaged as far as possible. So, as many of the scholars have argued that the colonial rule in India was not really for the betterment or improvement of the native citizens, it was actually, for the maximum extraction of economic resources in terms of revenues.

But, remember, when British established their supremacy or paramountcy, the question that was available in the thinking or in the horizon of expectation to the natives or native thinkers and intellectuals including Raja Rammohan Ray and many others, they accepted the British rule. And they thought, they believed in the fair and just nature of the British rule. Whatever, we may now think about the economic extractions, and you know the pathetic condition of Indians that is largely due to the colonial system of exploitative economic extraction, that understanding came much later after the publication of Dadabhai Naoroji's *Un-british Rule in India* and the drain of resources theory.

But, in this historical situation, when Raja Rammohan Roy was articulating about modern education, religious reforms, such questions were not available to them. They accepted the British rule, they believed in the intention that was expressed by the British officials, and then, they thought of reforming the Indian society, empowering the society within this given situation. And Britishers were also then were very cautious, not to tamper, not to damage the existing indigenous system of education in India.

So, they had decided, as early as in 1770s, to sponsor Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit studies and not modern liberal education. So, in the modern universities and departments, it began with the classical studies like Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic. Raja Rammohan Roy was strongly, opposed to such efforts by the government to establish Sanskrit schools under the Hindu pundits and priests, and there are valid reasons for such objections. So, remember, within the colonial debates about modern system of education in India, there was also this kind of apprehension, whether to start modern liberal education or to continue with the existing system of education that was prevalent in India, and Raja Rammohan Roy was arguing in such contexts.

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REASONS FOR OPPOSING ESTABLISHMENT OF SANSKRIT SCHOOLS:

- They impart only traditional knowledge and therefore people can not expect to learn any practical knowledge for the society. They can learn only those things that are already commonly taught in all parts of India.
- The Sanskrit language is so difficult that almost a life time is necessary for its perfect acquisition. For Rammohan Roy this can not make any contribution towards establishing a modern liberal society. According to him, no improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume a dozen of years of the most valuable period of their lives in acquiring the knowledge of Sanskrit Grammar and language.
- No essential benefit can be derived by the students by learning the themes taught there for it cannot improve their mind after they have learned those themes.

Now, why did he oppose the Sanskrit schools and that is a very crucial question for us to understand. And that is the also the reason, why Raja Rammohan Roy is a kind of break from the pre-colonial or why he is considered as the first modern Indian political thinker.

So, he believed that if the government continues with the traditional knowledge and promotes such knowledge through the establishment of many new Sanskrit schools. The people cannot expect to learn any practical or pragmatic knowledge about society, about economy, about polity, out of such archaic system of knowledge that we have had. And they can only learn those things which are commonly taught in many parts of India.

Raja Rammohan Roy was of the opinion that the conditions or the degenerated conditions that we have discussed in previous lecture (Refer Time: 24:48) like ignorance, illiteracy, superstitions or many evil practices, such as sati or widowhood, polygamy (Refer Time: 25:00) idol worship. Such practices are prevalent because of this archaic otherworldly approach in the traditional system of knowledge promoted by the Hindu pundits or priestly class in India, which will not really help in the practical life of Indian people. So, that is why, he was very opposed to the promotion of Sanskrit schools by the Britishers.

There were other challenges for such opposition, also. The other was like the Sanskrit language is so difficult and there is a vast corpus of texts. So, in terms of political thought, if we say, we have Dharma Shastra, Niti Shastra, Arthashastra, there are so

many treatises written on the main text, also. So, you have many *bhasyas* and *tikas* over a range of Vedic or post-Vedic texts, Upanishads and other epics. Raja Rammohan Roy believed that this language is so difficult that almost a lifetime is necessary for its perfect acquisition.

And for Raja Rammohan Roy, this cannot make any contribution towards establishing a modern liberal society. The role of education is also, to transform the society, to remove or abolish some of the evil practices that are widely prevalent to degenerate conditions of individual and the community. So, the role of education is to empower the individual, cultivate his or her mind, it should be the basis of firm morality and ethics. And that is why, he believed that the Sanskrit system of education that was prevalent at that time, could not really help in the establishment of modern liberal society in India.

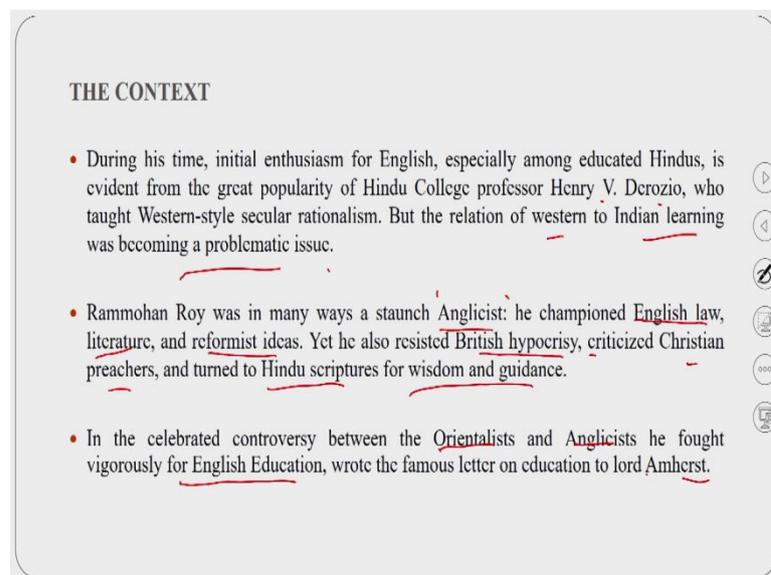
Now, according to him, no improvement can be expected from inducing the young men to consume a dozen of years of their life, the most valuable periods, in acquiring the knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and language. That is again something, we have to be very cautious that does not mean he does not want natives to learn Sanskrit or learn ancient texts.

The previous lecture, where we have discussed about the religious reforms, where we have to understand that he was against the evil practices that was widely prevalent, and not against or opposed to the sacred religious Hindu texts, as such. And, he wanted people to read such texts, to learn from such texts, and derive their messages or understanding or ethics, or morality from such texts, and he therefore, wanted it to be translated into many vernacular languages. So, here again, when we say, why did he support modern education, that does not mean he was actually opposed to Sanskrit or Sanskrit learning or ancient learning.

But, to create a liberal society, which is based on scientific, rational approach towards self, society, community, polity, require modern system of education, rather than archaic model of education system that was widely prevalent during that time. And that is why, he, therefore wanted the British or colonial government, because of their intention or just intention, to promote modern, scientific, liberal education among the natives, that can be achieved only through modern liberal education in the opinion of Raja Rammohan Roy.

So, as I was saying that in this system of education, most of the issues and the questions were otherworldly, speculative and contemplative in nature. It does not have very minimum application in the practical life of the people. So, therefore, he was opposed to such system of system of education. And other problem of this system of education that was prevalent during that time was emphasis on the memory or what is called you learn, memorize the text, the formula, the mantras. But, you do not know the meaning or understand the meaning and the larger message that is contained in such formula or such mantras. So, therefore, it also does not help in the cultivation or improvement of the minds of the people. So, that is why, he was very opposed to government initiatives to establish Sanskrit schools in India.

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THE CONTEXT

- During his time, initial enthusiasm for English, especially among educated Hindus, is evident from the great popularity of Hindu College professor Henry V. Derozio, who taught Western-style secular rationalism. But the relation of western to Indian learning was becoming a problematic issue.
- Rammohan Roy was in many ways a staunch Anglicist: he championed English law, literature, and reformist ideas. Yet he also resisted British hypocrisy, criticized Christian preachers, and turned to Hindu scriptures for wisdom and guidance.
- In the celebrated controversy between the Orientalists and Anglicists he fought vigorously for English Education, wrote the famous letter on education to lord Amherst.

Now, if you look at the context in which Raja Rammohan Roy is operating in his time, the initial enthusiasm for English, especially among the educated Hindus, is evident from the great popularity of Hindu College, Professor Henry V. Derozio. He was a great educationist working or promoting Western-style secular rationalism. And his popularity, reflects the popular or enthusiasm of educated Hindus to learn modern liberal education or English education. So, there was a large section of people, already willing to learn modern education and the popularity of Derozio is reflection of such enthusiasm.

But, the relation of Western to Indian learning was becoming a problematic issue. As I was saying, that the apprehension for modern education among the Indians, among the

natives because this education was also simultaneously promoting religious conversion or promoting Western-style. And that was not very conducive in terms of promoting modern liberal education among the Indians, because many of them believed that by learning modern education, they forego or they forget, or they cut themselves off from their own Indian traditions. And there is a kind of tussle between the modern Western education and the Indian system of education.

And one of the debates among many of the modern Indian thinkers is between tradition and the modernity. So, colonial administration, colonial system of education, which promoted modernity, which established many system of modern education, modern system of governance, how far that were different from the Indian ancient traditional system of education, governance, polity, etc. So, that kind of debate was also there and it was becoming a problematic issue by the time Raja Rammohan Roy was articulating about modern liberal education in India.

Now, there was a kind of divide between those who were promoting western liberal education, they were called Anglicist and Raja Rammohan Roy was in many ways one such person, who strongly, supported modern English education. And there was the other which was the orientalist supporting the values, wisdom, contained in Indian tradition or oriental tradition.

So, Raja Rammohan Roy himself being the staunch Anglicist, championed English law, literature, and reformist ideas, yet, and that is the uniqueness of Raja Rammohan Roy, he was saying that when he was championing the modern liberal education, that support was not something which can be interpreted as opposition to Indian system of education or Indian tradition of thinking and thought. So, a kind of cautious approach is needed now to know his understanding of modern liberal education. So, he wanted English law, literature, and reformist ideas to be taught and imparted to the natives. Yet he was also resisting, the British hypocrisy and Christian preachers, and turned time and again, to Hindu scriptures for wisdom and guidance.

So, in Raja Rammohan Roy, there is a kind of simultaneous movement to and from Indian intellectual ancient tradition of thinking and thought to modern system of western education. Especially, when we will discuss, his ideas on freedom of press, and how he is

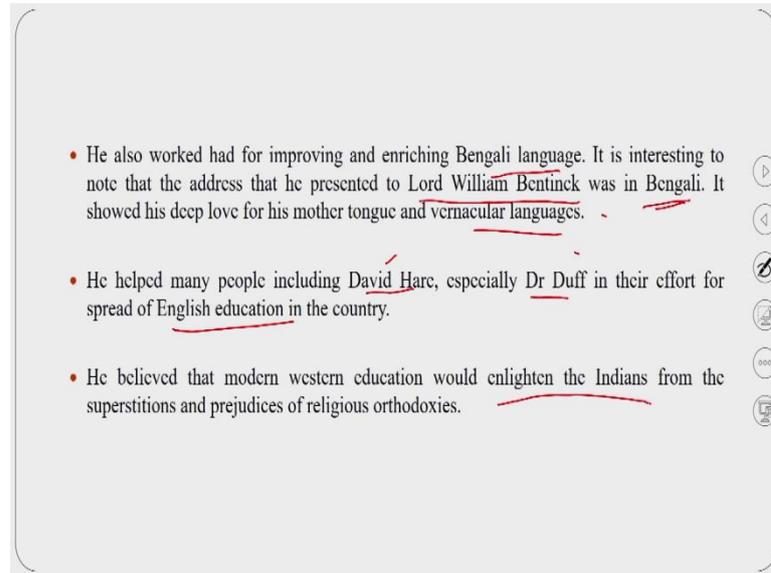
using the British principles and philosophy, or European thought to counter some of the denials that was being practiced by the colonial administrators in India.

So, he was very critical of hypocrisy and many practices followed by the Christian missionaries in India, and he turned to the Hindu scriptures for wisdom and guidance. So, there is a kind of to and from movement from Indian intellectual tradition to modern Western system of education. So, what one can understand from this kind of movement in thought, in idea, is a kind of very rational approach to accepting or denying, or promoting certain things.

So, Raja Rammohan Roy wanted to promote modern liberal education, because he wanted to create and promote a liberal society in India, free from superstitions, free from idol worship or free from other evil practices that was degenerating, that was suffocating for the cultivation of a sound, scientific, moral mind in India. So, he was very clear, but at the same time, he was also aware of this hypocrisy in the British administration or among the many Christian missionary as well. So, he in that sense acknowledged and recognized the value or the wisdom contained in Indian scriptures as well.

There was a controversy between the Orientalists and the Anglicists. He fought vigorously, for English education and wrote the famous letter to the educationist Lord Amherst, which was the ardent or decisive support in Raja Rammohan Roy for the promotion of modern liberal education. And that also, reflect his pragmatic approach to modern system of education that India should aspire for.

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- He also worked hard for improving and enriching Bengali language. It is interesting to note that the address that he presented to Lord William Bentinck was in Bengali. It showed his deep love for his mother tongue and vernacular languages.
- He helped many people including David Hare, especially Dr Duff in their effort for spread of English education in the country.
- He believed that modern western education would enlighten the Indians from the superstitions and prejudices of religious orthodoxies.

He also worked for improving and enriching Bengali language. It is interesting to note that the address that he presented to Lord William Bentinck was written in Bengali. It showed his deep love for his mother tongue and also for the vernacular languages in India. So, despite of his support to modern liberal education on the one hand, he was also someone who wanted to standardize or promote mother tongue or the vernacular languages in India on the other. And the reason, for such promotion was to make education accessible to the large section of Indian society.

And for a very long time, there was a kind of denial of access to the large section of society, because education the way it was imparted, especially, the higher learning was limited to a very small section of Indian society contained in a particular language Sanskrit, and their imparting was denied to the large section of society. So, he wanted such religious texts in Sanskrit to be translated into the vernacular languages, and therefore, the message that was contained, he wanted it to be accessible to the large section of society as well.

And he therefore, wrote number of texts in his mother tongue, Bengali. He was also in cooperation with many other contemporary figures in Bengal, helping establishing many modern institutions of learning. So, especially, like David Hare, and Dr Duff, and their approaches to promote English education in the country. As many of you are familiar, when the British started modern English education, no native parents would send their

children to learn English because they feared that it will ultimately, also promote religious conversion and that apprehension prevented them from sending their children to such English schools. So, Raja Rammohan Roy actually helped in establishing such system of education in India, especially in the efforts of David Hare and Dr Duff.

So, he believed that modern Western education would enlighten the Indians from superstitions and prejudices of religious orthodoxy. So, here again, one can think of his discomfort with the system of education that was being imparted in his time by religious orthodoxy. So, he, in my mind, did not have so much problem with the texts or scriptures that was available in Indian tradition, but the way it was imparted and the kind of teaching that was done, he had a serious problem with that which contained a lot of superstitious beliefs and prejudices. And therefore, it could not, in the opinion of Raja Rammohan Roy, help in enlightening the Indian minds. And therefore, he wanted Western education to be promoted by the British.

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• He argued that Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in darkness:

“ As the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy, with other useful science [s] which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus”

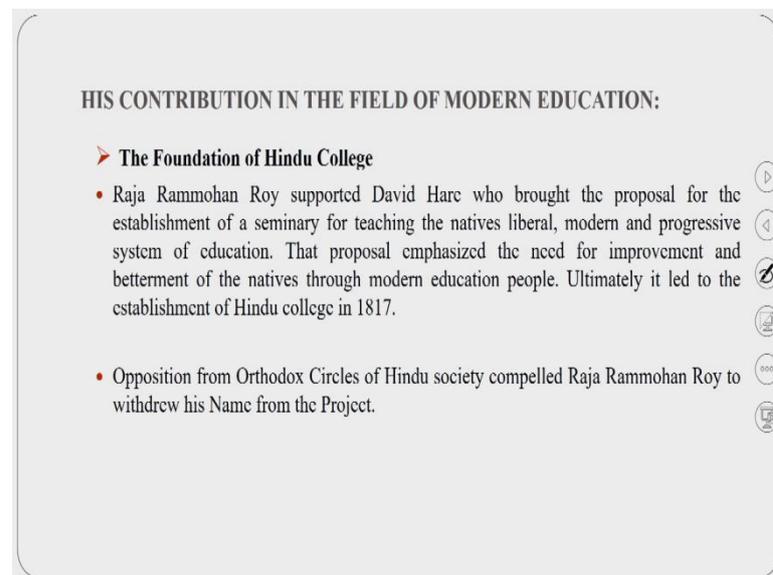
-R.R Roy
(Letter on education to Lord Amherst)

So, this is one quotation, which can help us to understand, why he argued that the Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep country in the darkness. So, the role of education, for Raja Rammohan Roy was to bring enlightenment, to bring rationality, to bring scientific approach towards self, society, politics, and so on. So, he find that promotion of Sanskrit learning could not really, help in enlightening such superstitious or prejudices in mind of the natives that was perpetuated by those who were

already, in the position of power or in the superior position of hierarchy in the Indian system. And just to quote this statement, which is from a letter he wrote to Lord Amherst, supporting the modern western education. He said that “as the improvement of the native population is the object of the government. He believed in such object, which is improvement of the native population. It will consequently, promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing, a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus”.

So, in this letter, he makes it very clear, that the objective of improvement of native population could only be achieved, when the government uses its expenditure to promote modern system of education or liberal system of education and which is imparting the knowledge of mathematics, chemistry, anatomy, philosophy, and other branches of useful sciences. And not any kind of contemplative, speculative thinking and thought that was widely prevalent. And therefore, he wanted to create universities, colleges with necessary books, instruments and so on and he wanted government to focus on them.

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HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF MODERN EDUCATION:

➤ **The Foundation of Hindu College**

- Raja Rammohan Roy supported David Hare who brought the proposal for the establishment of a seminary for teaching the natives liberal, modern and progressive system of education. That proposal emphasized the need for improvement and betterment of the natives through modern education people. Ultimately it led to the establishment of Hindu college in 1817.
- Opposition from Orthodox Circles of Hindu society compelled Raja Rammohan Roy to withdraw his Name from the Project.

Now, what you also find, in Raja Rammohan Roy is his contribution in terms of establishing some pre-eminent system or pre-eminent institutions of modern education. So, to begin with the foundation of Hindu college. Now, this is also, in a sense

interesting to know that many institutions of modern education in India are named after a religion, after a caste, after a community, and that is still prevalent in many parts of the country. For instance, Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University and so on.

So, religion and religious idioms remain somewhat there, even when their objective was to promote a modern system of education, but that was not really something, which we have to take into account here, in a very prejudiced or narrow sense of the term. Their approach even when naming such colleges as Hindu college or Muslim college was to impart liberal education in that community or in the larger section of society.

Raja Rammohan Roy's contribution to the foundation of Hindu college was immense. David Hare and many others brought the proposal for the establishment of a seminary for teaching the natives - liberal, modern, and progressive system of education. This proposal emphasized the need for improvement and betterment of natives through modern education. Ultimately, this college was established in 1817, and there was a lot of opposition to the establishment of such colleges from the orthodoxy, especially, from the Hindu society.

Now, it made a kind of tricky situation for Raja Rammohan Roy, where he wholeheartedly supported such establishments. And yet he withdrew his name from this project, because he did not want to get unnecessarily into the arguments with the orthodoxy of the Hindu society, but his contribution in the foundation of Hindu college is very widely known.

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➤ Establishment of Anglo-Hindu School:

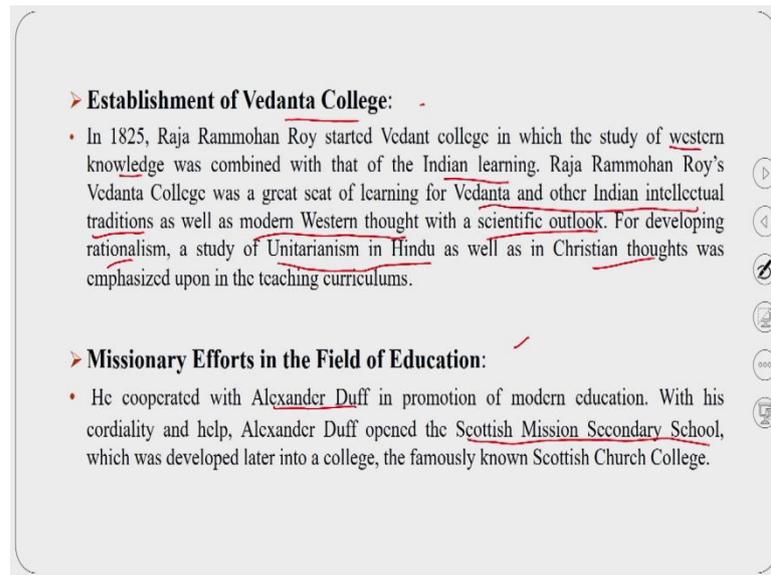
- In 1816, he founded an English school. Though he withdrew his name from the project of Hindu College to avoid unnecessary clashes or altercations, but in reality he did not stop his educational exertions and in 1822 for free instruction of Hindu boys, he reconstructed the earlier English school from his own expenses. Since then that school came to be known as Anglo Hindu School.
- For the cultivation of the vernacular dialects/language of Bengal, few educated native youths of Calcutta formed a native literary society at Raja Rammohan Roy's Anglo Hindu School, Calcutta. That was intended to raise the intellectual character of the natives and to improve the language thoroughly. The name of the society was Sarvattawwa Dipika Sabha, also known as the society for the diffusion of all branches of knowledge.

Similarly, in the establishment of Anglo-Hindu school, he again promoted the idea of modern liberal education for the natives. In 1816, he founded an English school. And from the project of Hindu college, though he withdrew his name but that was to avoid the unnecessary classes and altercations with the orthodoxy. But in reality, he did not stop his educational exertions. And in 1822, for free instruction of Hindu boys, he reconstructed the earlier English school that he had formed in 1860, from his own expenses. This school came to be known as the Anglo Hindu School.

He also supported the native mother tongue or vernacular language. And for that purpose, few educated native youths of Calcutta form a native literary society in this school, the Anglo Hindu School of Calcutta. That was intended, to raise the intellectual character of the natives and improve the language thoroughly. The name of the society was called *Sarvattawwa Dipika Sabha*, which was also known as the society for the diffusion of all branches of knowledge.

So, in this Anglo Hindu School, the approach of Raja Rammohan Roy was not just to promote liberal education, but also to allow the space for the promotion or cultivation of vernacular languages such as Bengali. And there were few youths, who actually formed a literary society, to promote their language, and also to increase the intellectual character of the natives. So, this Society had a very significant role in the promotion of modern Bengali language as well.

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➤ **Establishment of Vedanta College:**

- In 1825, Raja Rammohan Roy started Vedanta college in which the study of western knowledge was combined with that of the Indian learning. Raja Rammohan Roy's Vedanta College was a great seat of learning for Vedanta and other Indian intellectual traditions as well as modern Western thought with a scientific outlook. For developing rationalism, a study of Unitarianism in Hindu as well as in Christian thoughts was emphasized upon in the teaching curriculums.

➤ **Missionary Efforts in the Field of Education:**

- He cooperated with Alexander Duff in promotion of modern education. With his cordiality and help, Alexander Duff opened the Scottish Mission Secondary School, which was developed later into a college, the famously known Scottish Church College.

Similarly, in the establishment of Vedanta College, Raja Rammohan Roy played a very significant role. In 1825, he started this school in which there was a kind of combination of western knowledge with Indian learning. That means, for Raja Rammohan Roy, Vedanta College was a great seat of learning for Vedanta and other Indian intellectual tradition as well as modern western thought with a scientific outlook.

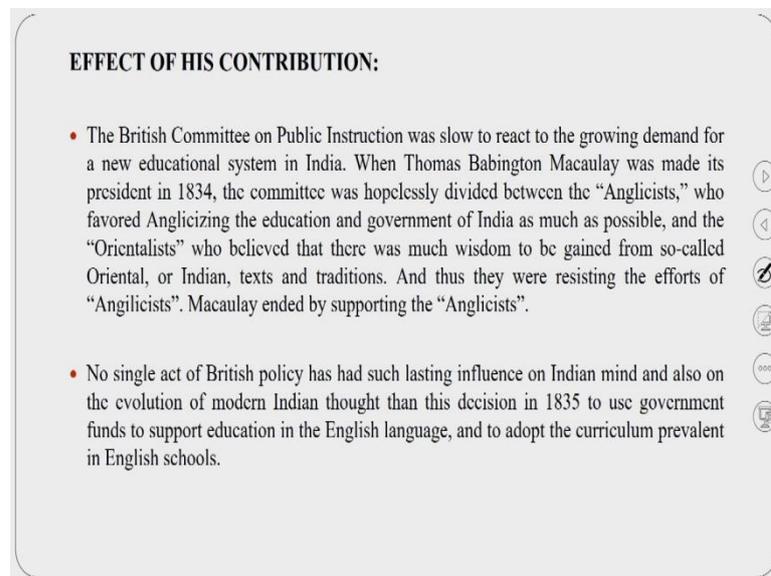
So, there was a kind of churning that was going on in his mind when he was promoting modern liberal scientific Western education. He was not denying or objecting to the promotion of Indian, Vedanta philosophy in particular. So, one has to be really very cautious, when it comes to conclude easily that Raja Rammohan Roy, while supporting the modern education, actually, objecting to the Indian system of education. That is not the fair or the complete or the correct interpretation of his ideas on modern Western education.

In this Vedanta college, he combined both traditions. And through these colleges and institution, he was also promoting his ideas on religion like Unitarianism, monotheism and so on. So, for developing rationalism, a study of Unitarianism in Hinduism, that is one similar supreme-being, which is not just in Hinduism, but also in Christianity. He emphasized such ideals through these college and institutions as well.

Other part was he also supported the missionaries efforts to impart education among the natives. So, there were many Christian missionaries actually, working in different

vernacular languages, printing texts in such languages, and through that trying to promote modern liberal education. And Raja Rammohan Roy cooperated with and supported such efforts by the Christian missionaries. Especially, the works done by Alexander Duff and by the Scottish Mission Secondary School that he established. Duff received a lot of help and contribution from Raja Rammohan Roy in the establishment of this Scottish Mission Secondary School, which is now famously known as Scottish Church College.

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EFFECT OF HIS CONTRIBUTION:

- The British Committee on Public Instruction was slow to react to the growing demand for a new educational system in India. When Thomas Babington Macaulay was made its president in 1834, the committee was hopelessly divided between the “Anglicists,” who favored Anglicizing the education and government of India as much as possible, and the “Orientalists” who believed that there was much wisdom to be gained from so-called Oriental, or Indian, texts and traditions. And thus they were resisting the efforts of “Anglicists”. Macaulay ended by supporting the “Anglicists”.
- No single act of British policy has had such lasting influence on Indian mind and also on the evolution of modern Indian thought than this decision in 1835 to use government funds to support education in the English language, and to adopt the curriculum prevalent in English schools.

Raja Rammohan Roy did promote such efforts by the Christian missionaries as well. Besides, himself spending his own money or resources in the establishment of some institutions which imparted modern liberal education along with the Vedantic philosophy or Indian texts, classical Sanskrit texts and treatises as well.

Now, if we try to understand the effects of Raja Rammohan Roy’s understanding or articulation of modern liberal education. There was a polarization between the Anglicists and the orientalist for a very long time, even among the colonial administrators and scholars as well as the natives. So, a section of them, wanted English education, but a large section or equally number of people opposed to modern Western education in India championing the orientalist understanding.

So, when the British committee on public instruction was slow to react on the growing demand for a new educational system in India. And, when Thomas Babington Macaulay,

as you may be familiar with his approach that he wanted his system of education in India which will make Indians, in the manners, style, dressing an English man, but they will serve merely as junior level clerks in the administration of the Raj. So, the objective of Macaulay was very instrumentalist kind of understanding about the role and the objective of modern system of education, which wanted to create a section of society that will help the British to sustain its rule in India.

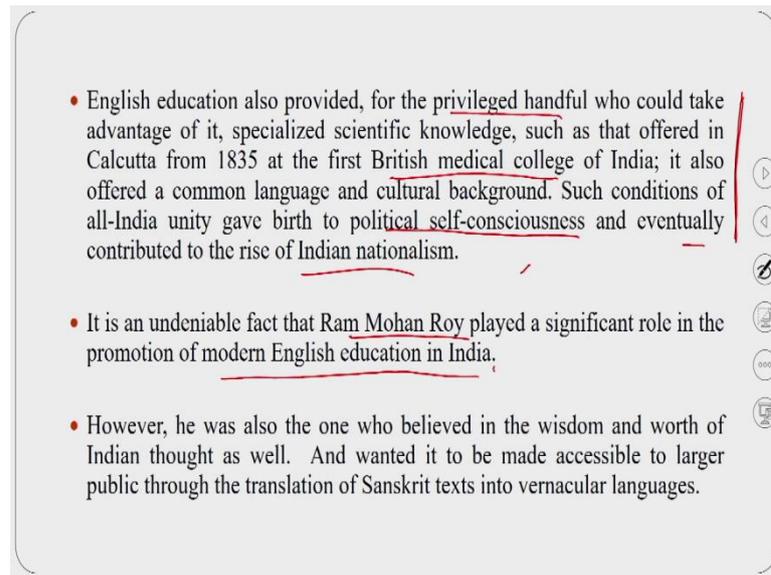
So, when Macaulay became the president of this committee, the British Committee on Public Instruction in 1834, the Committee was divided between the Anglicists and the Orientalists. And Macaulay favored the anglicizing the education and government of India. So that was very clear. The orientalist, on the other hand believed that there was much wisdom that could be gained from the orient or the Indian texts and traditions. And thus, they were resisting the efforts of the Anglicists. Macaulay ended up supporting the Anglicists for promoting the modern English education and literature in India.

And here, it is interesting to understand his famous statement that a rack of books contained in any good library in Europe, was worth the knowledge of all the systems of or traditions of knowledge contained in the Asian, African and many other oriental countries put together. So, his understanding of knowledge contained in orientalist (Refer Time: 52:31) thought was very problematic, very despicable in a sense, and many people contested such position, and such remarks about oriental philosophy and oriental system of knowledge.

But, in the larger context, where we have begun this discussion on modern education by 1830s, it became clearer that the British would promote the modern system of education in the English language, instead of promoting the classical Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian language and their system of education.

No single Act of British policy has had such a lasting influence on Indian mind, and also, on the evolution of modern Indian thought, than this decision in 1835 taken by Macaulay to use government funds to support education in the English language and also to adopt the curriculum prevalent in English Schools. So, this single decision of the British government or by Macaulay has such a remarkable influence not on the minds of the Indian people, but also, the modern system of education that we have now, is shaped to a great extent by this decision of 1835.

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- English education also provided, for the privileged handful who could take advantage of it, specialized scientific knowledge, such as that offered in Calcutta from 1835 at the first British medical college of India; it also offered a common language and cultural background. Such conditions of all-India unity gave birth to political self-consciousness and eventually contributed to the rise of Indian nationalism.
- It is an undeniable fact that Ram Mohan Roy played a significant role in the promotion of modern English education in India.
- However, he was also the one who believed in the wisdom and worth of Indian thought as well. And wanted it to be made accessible to larger public through the translation of Sanskrit texts into vernacular languages.

What you also find that English education has provided, for the privileged handful who could take advantage of it, specialized scientific knowledge, such as that offered in Calcutta from 1835, at the first British medical college of India; it also offered a common language and cultural background. Such conditions of all-India unity gave birth to political self-consciousness and eventually contributed in the rise of Indian nationalism.

So, this modern system of education in a sense also helped Indian coming from different social, linguistic, cultural background to develop a kind of all India outlook. And that outlook was supplemented by the thoughts and ideas prevalent in modern Western, political thought and thinking. So, the birth of Indian nationalism in a sense and the idea of India that we have, which is secular, republic, democratic, parliamentary, those ideas and vocabulary comes from this modern liberal system of education.

Now, it is undeniable fact, that Raja Rammohan Roy played a very significant role in the promotion of this modern English education that we have in India. And therefore, when it comes to the role and contribution of Raja Rammohan Roy in modern education, one has to give him credit for ardently or completely supporting the modern liberal education in contrast with many orientalist who believed in the knowledge and wisdom which contained in oriental and Indian tradition.

So, in contrast to them, Raja Rammohan Roy was first to understand the pragmatic or the practical use of modern liberal education, which will help in cultivation of mind. And

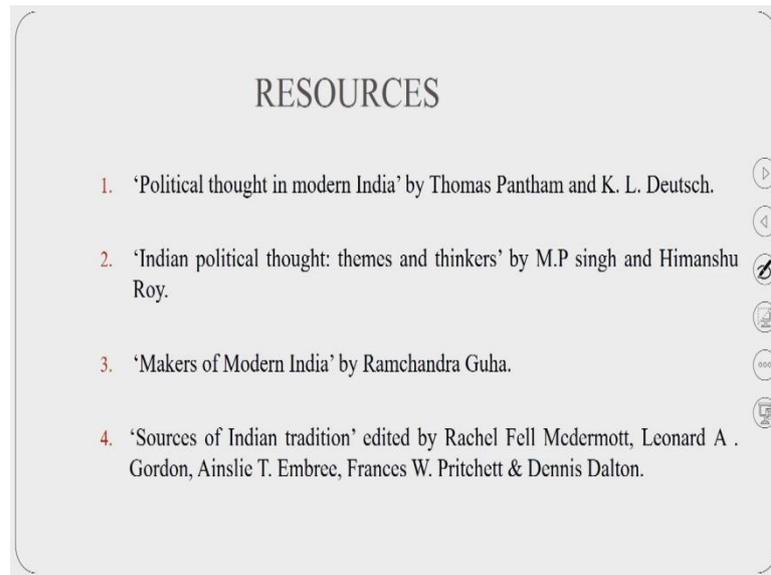
also, in formulation of morality and ethics which is based on sounder (Refer Time: 56:16) principle with scientific rational approach, and not on superstitions and irrational prejudiced behavior and outlook.

Besides, we also have to acknowledge the fact, while he was in total support or wanted the British rule to promote modern liberal education in India. He was also the one who believed in the wisdom and worth of Indian thought as well. And wanted such thought to be made accessible to larger public through translations of Sanskrit text into the vernacular languages, also. So, in that sense, Raja Rammohan Roy was kind of combining the modern western liberal education with the same approach towards learning classical Indian Sanskrit texts.

So, one cannot have really, easy interpretation that when he was supporting the modern liberal education, he was objecting the Indian tradition of thought and thinking. Actually, he wanted to combine both and that is why he was also critical of Christian missionaries and the hypocrisy on the part of colonial administrators, which were actually denying some of the principles; some of the ideas; and some of the rights that they were preaching in their home country. More on that, I will discuss in the next lecture.

But, he wanted modern Indian mind to be rational, scientific, to engage in the problematic or the pragmatic questions and concerns of their lives or the lives of their community. To do that, he wanted to promote, to impart this modern liberal education. And that is a kind of cure to the widely prevalent superstitions and ignorance or the prejudices of Indian mind that lead to their degenerate status during the time he was thinking about.

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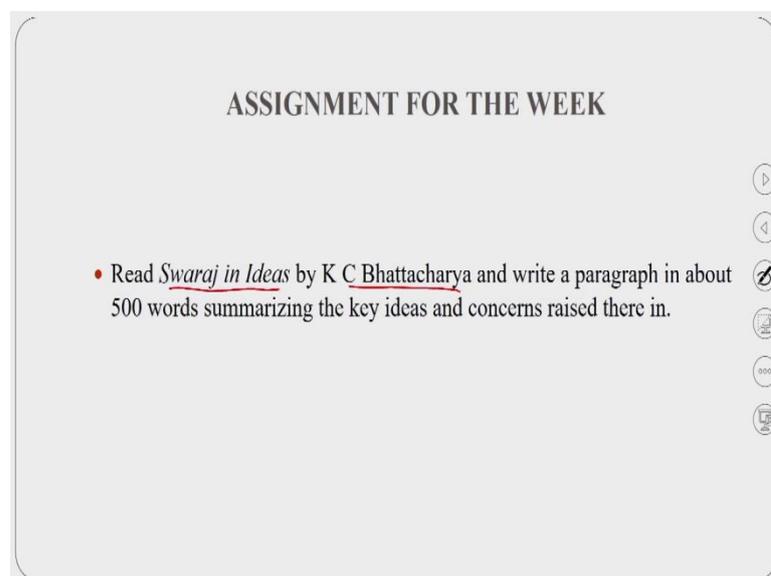


RESOURCES

1. 'Political thought in modern India' by Thomas Pantham and K. L. Deutsch.
2. 'Indian political thought: themes and thinkers' by M.P Singh and Himanshu Roy.
3. 'Makers of Modern India' by Ramchandra Guha.
4. 'Sources of Indian tradition' edited by Rachel Fell Mcdermott, Leonard A. Gordon, Ainslie T. Embree, Frances W. Pritchett & Dennis Dalton.

So, on this you can look at some of these resources: from Pantham and Deutsch, you can look at introduction from their work *Political Thought in Modern India*. And also from M.P Singh and Himanshu Roy, you can look at the chapter on Raja Rammohan Roy. Similarly, from Ramchandra Guha and Rachel Mcdermott and Dalton et all, edited *Sources of Indian tradition*. There are some excerpts from Raja Rammohan Roy and his views on modern education. And you can look at from these sources to understand, whatever we have discussed in this lecture on Raja Rammohan Roy and his views on modern liberal education.

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ASSIGNMENT FOR THE WEEK

- Read *Swaraj in Ideas* by K C Bhattacharya and write a paragraph in about 500 words summarizing the key ideas and concerns raised there in.

Now, this is also a time to give you an assignment for this week. An assignment for the week is a text by K. C. Bhattacharya, which is called *Swaraj in Ideas*. I want you to read this text and write a paragraph in about 500 words summarizing the key ideas and concerns raised in this text. So, please read this text. This text is widely available on the net. If not, you can write to us, we will send you the PDF copy, and then you can read and write a paragraph in about 500 words.

So, thank you for listening to me.