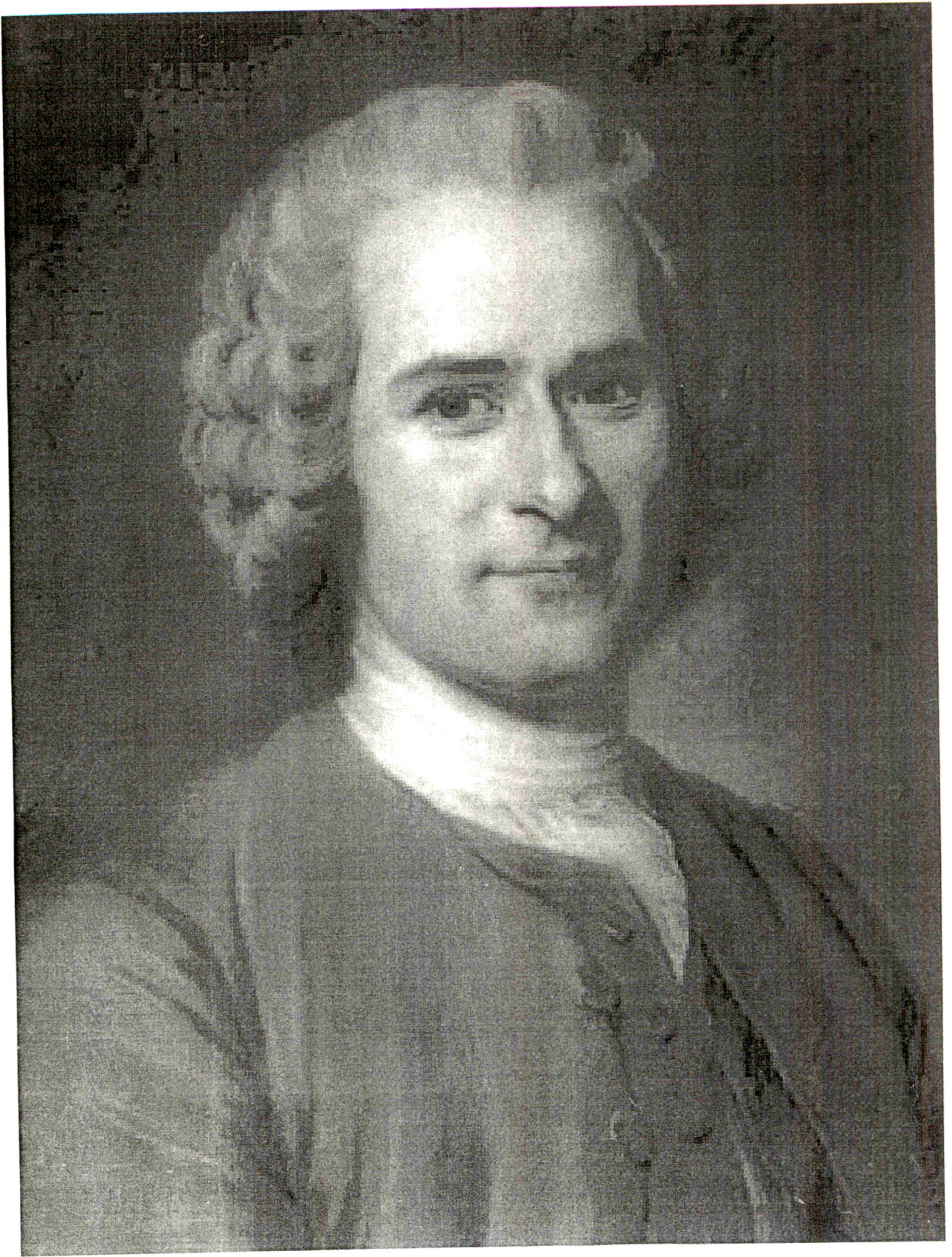


## **CHAPTER- II**

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
(1712-1778)



## CHAPTER II

### THE CONFESSIONS

#### Introduction :

This chapter critically analyses *The Confessions*, the autobiography written by J.J. Rousseau on the accepted literary norms of the form of autobiography and it also contains his self revelation and the contemporary documentation.

- *J. J. Rousseau, Life and Works*

Jean – Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva on June 28, 1712. He lost his mother at his birth and was brought up by his father Issac and an aunt and uncle. At thirteen, he worked as an apprentice to an engraver. At sixteen, he left this trade to travel but soon became secretary and companion to Madam De Warens. Under her patronage he developed a taste for music. He worked as a music teacher in Champéry in 1732, and began a period of intense-self-education. In 1740, he worked as a tutor of children of M.de.Mably in Lyon. In 1742 he moved to Paris and wrote articles on music for the *French Encyclopaedia*. He became the personal secretary to the French Ambassador to Venice.

He returned to Paris in 1745 and became a music teacher and copyist. He loved a seamstress Therese Lavasseur. They lived together but never officially married. He gave birth to five children. All of these children were given to an orphanage. Rousseau took part in a essay contest with *Discourse on the*

***sciences and Arts (1750)***, won and found himself famous. He had quarrels with his friends and members of the high-society. He visited Geneva and reconverted to Calvinism. He got the citizenship of Geneva. There he loved Madame de Houderot. Because of his erratic behaviour he was considered insane by some of his friends. He suffered from mental ill health.

In 1755 he published his very influential theories on inequality and Political economy in ***Encyclopaedia*** and settled at the northern part of Paris. During the next four years he produced his three major works.

His controversial religious views in ***Emile***, invited the anger of the Church in France. The book was burnt in a number of places. He had to leave France within a month and go to Switzerland. In 1766 he went to England at the invitation of David Hume but after sometime he had quarrel with him. In 1767 he returned France under false name. He returned officially in 1770 on a condition that he would not publish his works. He continued writing completing his ***The Confessions*** and started private reading of it. In 1771 the police banned him from readings. The book was finally published after his death. In 1776 he published his major work ***Dialogues***. In the next two years, before his death in 1778, Rousseau wrote the ten classic meditations of ***Reveries of the Solitary Worker***. He studied music and botany in the solitude of nature.

On July 2, 1778 after his morning walk Rousseau died of apoplexy (a Haemorrhage).

Rousseau Wrote *Discours Su less Sciences cl les arts* (1755), *The New Heloise* (1761), the popular novel, *The Social Contract* (1762) an influential book on the Political theory, *Emile* (1762) a classic statement on education. *Dialogues* (1776), The ten classic meditations of *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1778), *The Confessions*, (1781).

His autobiography *The Confessions* (1781), is discussed critically in this chapter.

- **The Confessions : Background**

In 1766, Rousseau began work on *The Confessions*. His health was not good. He was living in exile in England (a country he hated), his books having recently been burned in both Paris and Geneva. He was paranoid and insecure, believing that dark forces meant to do harm not only while he lived but also after his death by painting him as a monster in the minds of future generations.

He probably finished Part I in England, and Part II following his return to France in 1767.

Rousseau wrote *The Confessions* in French his mother tongue. Its English translation was first appeared in a privately printed edition dated 1904. The translator remained anonymous. The text was also printed in the Everyman edition, Published by Dent.

The edition published 1996 by Wordworth Editions is used for the purpose of this study. The references and quotations in this chapter are taken from the above edition. The author has used simple but effective diction to describe his emotional conflict.

- **Title**

The title refers to Rousseau's motive. It is short but repetitive. It refers to St. Augustine's *Confessions* which has religious meaning. In Christian view confession is exposing ourselves before the God. In *The Confession* Rousseau discloses all the dark sides of his personality which he never told to anyone in the whole life, so the title is suitable though there is no novelty.

- **Structure**

*The Confessions* has conventional chronological structure. It begins with Rousseau's birth and follows his life, through its many vicissitudes until he reaches old age.

The book has 645 pages in all. It is divided into Twelve Books. The Book one begins with author's motive behind writing his autobiography then follows the details of author's birth, parentage, childhood memories, his likes and dislike etc. Peter France describes the structure of *The Confessions* as Memoir novel. He states,

"The Confessions, in particular possess the

structure of the 'memoir novel' which was popular in the eighteenth century. In such works the hero usually from the vantage point of mature, retracts his or her steps through adventure, crime and disaster."<sup>1</sup>

The book is well constructed. There is coherence in the narration of events Peter France comments,

**“That’s why even from the first two Books, we will gain a fairly reliable impression of the whole work, as well as a vivid impression of Rousseau’s mind and personality.”<sup>2</sup>**

- **Motive**

Rousseau gives some subtle purposes to write his autobiography. In the opening page of Book I, Rousseau tells the motive behind writing *The Confessions*. He states,

**"I desire to set before my fellows the likeness of a man in all the truth of nature, and that man myself."<sup>3</sup>**

He wants also to remove the burden of from his mind. In Book II, he states about this intention,

“I can affirm that the desire of freeing myself from it in some degree, has greatly contributed to the resolution. I have taken of writing my Confessions.”<sup>4</sup>

However, Rousseau's principal motive is to present himself exactly as he is made by Nature with failings and vices without attempting to apologise to the readers for his often surprising revelations. He states,

"Myself alone ! I know the feelings of my heart, and I know men. I am not made like any of those who are in existence. If I am not better, at least I am different, whether, nature has acted rightly or wrongly... can only be decided after I have been read...I will present myself before the sovereign Judge with this book in my hand..."<sup>5</sup>

Thus Rousseau intends to write his autobiography like the final true accounts to be presented by a man to God, his master on the Day of The Judgment in a confessional mode.

- **Standpoint**

Rousseau started to write *The Confessions* in 1766 when he was already 54 years old. It was the mature age to introspect and retrospect his past properly. He wants to record the past events as good or bad to the confession before the God.

- **Selection of Events**

Rousseau's proper standpoint of writing autobiography compels him to select events for his autobiography. He selected both trivial and major events. At one incident he states about it,



“ These observation are, if you will,  
childish, but they furnish an example  
which, since the time that the have  
been children is perhaps unique.”<sup>6</sup>

The events like breaking of the Comb, anecdote of Walnut tree, the incident at the opera, the conduct of the Moor, the ribbon episode, his longing for Madame de Warens, Passion towards Madane. Lambercier his relation with Therese etc. have importance in shaping the personality of the author. Rousseau creates an image of the self by proper selection of the events.

- **Truth**

*The Confessions* is Rousseau's truthful and candid revelation of self. He tells not only of his virtues and forgivable experiences, but also less forgivable episodes, sexual adventure and mis-adventures, his exposing himself to women. He narrated the real events of his childhood mistakes, his changing moods, his sensual nature, his attraction for Madame de warens, his many sex affairs and his relation with Therese. All these details are honestly and faithfully recorded. He states,

“I should not fulfill the object of this book, if  
I did not at the same time set forth my inner  
feelings and heisted to excuse myself by  
what is strictly of true.”<sup>7</sup>

He tells frankly about his sensitive and tender feelings of love and secret attraction for Madame Lambercier. He tells that he liked to punish by Mademoiselle Lambercier. He states,

“I found in the pain, even in the disgrace, a mixture of sensuality which had left me less afraid then desirous of experiencing it double from the same hand. No doubt some precocious sexual instinct was mingled with this feeling.”<sup>8</sup>

Rousseau's concept of truth is religious; specifically Christian. He narrates, “My duty is to state the truth not to make people believe it.”<sup>9</sup> He did not hesitate to describe his crimes. He confesses his stealing of ribbon and his falsly accusation to Marion. Marrion was innocent but Rousseau accused her boldly. He narrates,

“I boldly accused her, she was astounded, and unable to utter a word; looked at me in a manner that would have disarmed the Devil himself, but against which my barbarous heart was proof.... but I, with infernal impudence, persisted in my story, and declared to her face that she had given me the ribbon.”<sup>10</sup>

Rousseau records truthfully his longing for Madame de warens. He was highly impressed by her beauty and grace. He had some mixed feelings towards her.

- **Subjectivity and Objectivity**

The book tends to be more subjective owing to sensitive and subjective analysis of the 'self' by the author. The intention of the book is subjective self-revelation and it is done in detail. It is the subjective analysis of his feelings and impressions of his growth as an individual. Author's childhood, his secret attraction for Madame Lambercier, his interest in reading and music, his involvement with Madame de Warens, his relation with Therese and his so many sex affairs, etc. all provide the details of his subjective view of his own personality as well as 'Self' analysis. These personal emotional details give extreme subjectivity to the book. The book also records the objective world around the author. The life conditions in France, the ambassadors, the church authorities, Kings and knights, the rules of French government etc. provide the objectivity of the book. There is fine combination of the subjectivity done. The author's subjective world.

#

*incomplete*

- **'Self' as centre**

Rousseau, the author, occupies the central position in the narration. The other men and woman that crowd the autobiography, the society and the conditions of the contemporary life comes as a background only to throw more light on the central person. i.e. Rousseau.

- **Detached view of "self"**

Rousseau makes a dispassionate scrutiny of his 'self'. To that extent it seems that he is looking to his own 'self' as an

outsider. His narration of the incident of ribbon is a fine example of detached view of 'self'. He describes how he steals the ribbon and falsely accuses the girl Marion. The whole narration of the event is candid. He stole the piece of ribbon but in front of the crowd of people, he falsely declared that the ribbon was given to him by Marion. He narrates,

".....this ribbon alone tempted me, I stole it, and, as I took no trouble to conceal it, it was soon found. They wanted to know how it had come into my possession. I became confused, stammered, blushed, and at last said that Marion had given it to me." <sup>11</sup>

There are no instances of the exaggeration of facts. Rousseau never glorifies himself. He described his follies with equal frankness e.g. He tells his foolish behaviour towards Madame Dupin. He was fascinated by her beauty and fell madly in her love. He wanted to declare his love for her but he was shy and had no courage to show it. At last, he wrote a letter to her but insulted by Madame Dupin. He narrates,

".....the poor Jean-Jacques could not flatter himself with the idea of making a brilliant figure in the midst of such surroundings... On the third day she returned it to me, with a few words of admonition, spoken in a tone of coldness which froze my blood. I tried to speak, the words died upon my lips; my sudden passion was extinguished with my hope." <sup>12</sup>

He narrates his past events in the same detached manner and it brings in the Self-examination of the past events.

- **Self – Revelation**

J.J. Rousseau's self-revelation in ***The Confessions*** is about his childhood his early formative years, his wandering life, his sex affairs, and his role as a music teacher, as a writer and Philosopher.

Self-revelation in this autobiography shows a definite planning in its narration. Every part of the book deals with a certain role or aspect of the author's self-revelation.

**Book I** describes the author's revelation as a miserable child, a sensual adolescent, a youthful lover etc. It covers the author's life period from 1712 to 1719.

**Book II** deals with period from 1728 to 1731. It reveals author's revelation as a miserable child, a sensuous adolescent, a youthful lover etc. It covers the author's life period from 1712 to 1719.

**Book II** deals with period from 1728 to 1731. It reveals author's wandering life, his visit to Madame de Warens, his meditations upon religion, his passion for Madame Basile and his theft of ribbon.

**Book III** also deals with the author's life period from 1728 to 1731. It narrates the author's attachment to Madame de Warens and his taste for music etc.



**Book VI** deals with the author's set-up as a music teacher, his service as a interpreter. It covers the period from 1731 to 1732.

**Book V** describes the author's residence at Chamberi, his varied passions and restlessness. It deals with period from 1732 to 1736.

**Book VI** narrates the author's role as a tutor, his attraction for study and love for animals in 1736.

**Book VII** deals with his passion for Madam Dupin, his duties as ambassadorial secretary, his strange conduct, his visit with Therese, etc.

**Book VIII** deals with author's defending of conduct towards his children, his return to Protestantism etc. It covers his life period in 1749.

**Book IX** described the author's life in 1756 to 1758 and remaining three books covers the author's life period from 1758 to 1766.

Rousseau reveals himself as a miserable and unhappy child. He was weak and ailing from birth. He lost his mother at his birth. He narrates his misfortune as,

"I cost my mother her life, and my  
birth was the first of my misfortune."<sup>13</sup>

Rousseau was brought up in the world in almost dying condition. His father's sister took care of him and saved his life. He describes himself as an extra-ordinary child. He narrates,

"I felt before I thought : this is the common lot of humanity. I experienced it more than others."<sup>14</sup>

He learned to read in the early childhood. He had taste for reading romances. He used to read the romances left by his mother. This reading affected his childhood. He states,

"I only remember my earliest reading, and the effect it had upon me; from that time I date my uninterrupted self-consciousness."<sup>15</sup>

Rousseau was interested in reading so much that he acquired an extreme facility in reading and understanding what he read. After this reading he started serious readings of Pylarch's *Lives of Famous Men*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *The History of the Empire and the Church* by Le Sueur etc. This reading conceived an interest for these authors which was rare and unique at his age. The readings of Agesilalus, Brutus and Aristides formed in him free and republican spirit. It laid the foundation of his theory of Naturalism and freedom of human beings. He narrates.

"This interesting reading....., formed in me the free and republican spirit, the proud and indomitable character unable to endure slavery or servitude, which has tormented me throughout my life in situations the least fitted to afford it scope."<sup>16</sup>

Rousseau's early childhood was well cultured. He was only child in the family because his brother had left the house forever. He states,

“.....the children of kings could not be more carefully looked after than I was during my early years worshipped by all around me.”<sup>17</sup>

He was good natured. He had good habits. He was smart, shy and gentle because of well breeding. He admits,

“How could I become wicked when I had nothing but examples of gentleness before my eyes, and non around me but the best people in the world.”<sup>18</sup>

He was sensitive towards animals. He loved them. He narrates,

“I have never found pleasure in doing harm or damage, in accusing others, or in tormenting poor dumb animals.”<sup>19</sup>

Rousseau tells his weaknesses. He confesses his stealing money and commodities. He narrates,

“I was a chatterbox, a glutton, and, sometimes a liar : I would have stolen fruits, bonbons, or eatables.”<sup>20</sup>

He had developed a taste for music from his aunt Suson. He had attraction for her singing which he remembers at the time of writing this autobiography. Later on, he became a music teacher which laid its foundation in childhood hobbies.

The course of Rousseau's education was interrupted by an accident. His father had a quarrel with a French captain, and so

he is compelled to leave Geneva. It affected his whole life. He admits,

"This course of education was interrupted by an accident, the consequence of which have exercised an influence upon the remainder of my life." <sup>21</sup>

Then he was sent to Bossey for his further education. He developed a love for games at Bossey. He was under the care of Protestant minister Labercier who was intelligent and created interest for study in Rousseau.

Rousseau was a sincere student and had a good memory. He learned with interest. He narrates,

"I have never recalled my hours of study with any feeling of disgust and also that, even if I did not learn much from him, I learnt without difficulty what I learn and never forgot it." <sup>22</sup>

Rousseau claims that his life at Bossey shaped his mind. It made him very affectionate, sensible and it inculcated in him gentle feelings. He states,

"The life which I led at Bossey suited me so well that, had it only lasted longer, it would have completely decided my character." <sup>23</sup>

He always craved for others love. He tells that,  
"My liveliest desire was to be loved by all  
who came near me." <sup>24</sup>

Rousseau narrates that he had knowledge of passion in the early age, though he had not known the exact notion of it.

He had some confused emotions which gave him the romantic notion of human life. He narrates,

".....they shaped them in me of a peculiar stamp, and gave me odd and romantic notions of human life, of which experience and reflection have never been able wholly to cure me." <sup>25</sup>

He had secret sexual attraction for Madame Lamercier at the age of eight. She had motherly affection for him. Sometimes she punished Rousseau for his antics. It gave him great comfort. He liked her punishment. He enjoyed it secretly as there was hidden sensuality. He narrates,

"I had found in the pain, even in the disgrace, a mixture of sensuality which had left me less afraid than desirous of experiencing it again from the same hand. No doubt some precocious sexual instinct was mingled with this feeling....." <sup>26</sup>

But he had not the exact idea of sexual union. He only had confused notion of it. He states,



“Until I was a young man, I not only had  
no district idea of the union of the sexes,  
but the confused notion.....”<sup>27</sup>

Rousseau’s innocent obsession for Madame Lamerciers had indirectly given him some undescribable secret pleasure. Since then his mind was always occupied with the ideas about the other sex. However, due to his shy nature he had no courage to face women.

Rousseau remarks that the bad treatment given in the childhood had affected his whole life. Once he was punished by M. Lamercier and Madame Lamercier for breaking the teeth of the comb. Actually Rousseau was innocent about it, The incident of punishment destroyed the peace of his childish life. It marked the end of his innocence. It changed his attitude towards life. He lost his respect for his teacher M. Lamercier. The feeling of violence and injustice made a permanent mark on his mind. He narrates,

“That first feeling of violence and injustice has  
remained so deeply graven on my soul, that.....  
when I see or hear of any act of injustice  
whoever is the victim of it, and wherever it is  
committed – my heart kindles with rage, as  
if the effect of it recoiled upon myself.”<sup>28</sup>

Rousseau was very sincere and gentle from childhood. Once Madame Lamercier fell upside down at the bottom of the meadow, at that time King of Sardinia saw her as he was passing

by. Though it was a comic incident, Rousseau became aware of her safety because he loves her as a mother. He declares,

"I found absolutely nothing to laugh at in an accident which, although comic in itself, alarmed me for the safety of a person whom I loved as a mother and, perhaps, even more."<sup>29</sup>

Rousseau narrates that his boyhood was full of mistakes. Once he planted a tree on the terrace of Lamercier's house. There was a walnut tree planted by Mr. Lamercier, he diverted the water from the walnut tree to his newly planted willow tree. But one day Lamercier detected and destroyed the willow plant. Rousseau, though it was his folly, he admits.

"The most valuable time of my boyhood was wasted in follies, before my future career had been decided upon."<sup>30</sup>

✓ Rousseau's father sent him to work as an assistant of M. Masseron, a town clerk. Rousseau did not like to be a slave. He began to prepare himself to become a lawyer under the guidance of the clerk. He found that it was a bad profession to earn money. He observes,

"the occupation itself appeared to me wearisome and unendurable; the constant application, the feeling of servitude completed my dislike, and I never entered my dislike, and I never entered the office without a feeling of horror, which daily increased in intensity."<sup>31</sup>

He was dismissed from the job, as he had no knowledge of the subject, and also for his dullness and foolishness.

After his failure to become a lawyer, Rousseau was appointed as an apprentice to an engraver. The engraver was rough and violent young man. He treated Rousseau very badly and destroyed his innocence and tender feelings. He forgot his learnings from Lamercier and developed some very bad habits. He admits,

“My master’s tyranny at length made the work, of which I should have been very fond, altogether unbearable, and filled me with vices which I should otherwise have hated, such as lying, idleness and thieving.....

I became timid with my master, and from That moment I was a lost child.”<sup>32</sup>

The brutality of master, made Rousseau to hate his job. He began to secretly escape from the workshop to enjoy freedom. It was due to the cruelty of his master, Rousseau became arrogant, bad and rebellious. He became lazy and dishonest. He narrates,

“In this manner I learnt to covet in silence, to dissemble, to lie, and lastly, to steal, - an idea which, up to that time, had never even entered my mind, and of which since then I have never been able to cure myself completely.”<sup>33</sup>

Rousseau’s theory of *Naturalism* is rooted in his own experiences. His sad childhood experiences had spoiled his

childlikeness. He was completely changed. The memories of it taught him the difference between a young boy's dependence upon his family and his miserable slavery. And later in the life he urged for freedom.

Rousseau admits that his first theft was intended to help someone else, though it was a bad act. He helped M. verrat by stealing the asparagus, from M. verrat's own mothers, garden, Rousseau remarks that if is theft was discovered he would be punished and Mr. Verrat wouldnot have accepted his role and responsibility in that act. Rousseau develops the philosophy from above experience that in our world the strong man who is guilty saves himself and puts the blame upon the weak and innocent person.

Rousseau learned that stealing was not a terrible thing as he had imagined. He remembers an act of stealing apple which cost him very dear. He was caught and beaten by the master. In order to take revenge on his master he began to steal more quietly as he was not afraid of the punishment.

Rousseau admits that he was not greedy. He is fond of eating but he had no time to like a particular food. He had never been tempted by money. Once he found boxes containing gold and silver ornaments, coins and valuable jewelry but he never wanted to steal them due to his good breeding and the secret fear of disgrace, prison and punishment. Instead of stealing money he liked to get a drawing sheet. This is one of the peculiarities of his character. He narrates,

"I did not become a regular thief, it was because I have never been much tempted by money."<sup>34</sup>

Rousseau was aware of the bad effects of the bad habits. He had developed passionate feelings inside him. So he turned towards reading to save himself from passions. He read while working and travelling. His master punished him for reading.

Rousseau started the second stage of his life's journey with an illusion. He ran away from the master. He was under the impression that he was a totally free and independent person. He says that he entered the world with a feeling of security and he could win fame and success in the world. He expected friends always ready to serve him and a mistresses ever ready to please him. He was ambitious to marry a daughter of a nobleman and lead a happy and trouble – free life.

Rousseau has beautifully presented his emotional crisis. When he became sixteen years old, he became restless. He was dissatisfied with himself and others. He narrates,

"In this manner I reached my sixteenth year,  
restless, dissatisfied with myself and .....  
I was ignorant, weeping, without any  
cause for tears .....<sup>35</sup>

Rousseau confesses that he is a man of very strong passions. Very often he is unable to control them and forgets all discretion, all feelings of respect, fear and decency. He admits,



"I am a man of very strong passions and, while I am stirred by them nothing can equal my impetuosity, I forget all discretion, all feelings of respect, fear and decency."<sup>36</sup>

He had strange feeling and secret passion for Madame de Warens. When he first saw her, he was impressed by her beauty and her kind treatment. He had fallen in love with her though he was too young for her. He lived ten years with her. Her absence made him restless. He narrates,

"I only felt the full strength of my attachment when I no longer saw her. When I saw her, I was only content, but during her absence, My restlessness became painful."<sup>37</sup>

He called her 'Mamma'. He had a strong faith and respect for her. He had sincere love for her. He admits,

"I loved her neither from the feeling of duty or self-interest, nor from motives of convenience, I loved her because I was born to love her."<sup>38</sup>

He also had attraction for other beautiful ladies. He admits that he enjoyed all possible sensual pleasures. He has adolescent sensual love for Madame Basile. Once he kissed her hand. But the knock on the door, disturbed him and he could not step further. His love adventure stopped there. He narrates,

"Never in my life had I enjoyed so sweet a moment,  
but the opportunity which I had lost never came  
again, and our youthful loves stopped at that point." <sup>39</sup>

In Book VII Rousseau described his sex affairs in Venice. He had passionate attraction for Madame de Broglie, Mille Goton, Madame Dupin, Mademoiselle de cataneo, Madame de Larnage, Zuletta, Therese etc.

Rousseau had bad attitude towards women. He narrates,  
"I have always disliked common prostitutes." <sup>40</sup>

He has relations with many women. At one incident he talks about Mademoiselle de Cataneo, daughter of the agent of the King of Prussia,

"Mademoiselle de Cataneo... would have been  
more to my taste." <sup>41</sup>

He wanted to enjoy the company of women. He described his relations with Therese and mentioned Therese as his keep. He had sexual relations with her but didn't intended to marry her. He admits,

"I declared to her beforehand that I would never  
forsake her, but that I would never marry her." <sup>42</sup>

Therese had five children from him. But he defended his role as a father. He sent his children to the Foundling Hospital. He blamed that Therese might have affairs with others, he couldnot take responsibility to look after their children. Fortunately Rousseau married here after many years.

As a person, Rousseau was kind hearted. He felt sympathy for the poor and children. Once he and his friend bought a girl to keep sexual relations with her. But that 12-13 years girl, purged Rousseau's mind. He felt fatherly affection for her and refused sexual relations with her. He helped the girl for education. He narrates,

"My compassion was stirred at the sight of this child. She was fair and gentle as a Lamb, no one would have taken her for an Italian. ...My heart became insensibly attached to the little Anzoletta, but this attachment was paternal." <sup>43</sup>

Rousseau admits that he spent his youthful days without much trouble or problems. He tries to convince the reader that he has passionate but weak disposition, so he couldnot develop great virtues or bad qualities. The first thirty years of his life were quite comfortable for him but the remaining thirty years were qualitatively very different for him. During this second stage of his life and career he was pulled between his position and his desires. As a result of it he committed many mistakes. He had to face and experience many misfortunes. He admits that laziness is a very bad trait in his personality and it is due to this he always appeared ungrateful to others. He narrates,

"Although I was greatly indebted to all these worthy people, I afterwards neglected them all, not certainly from ingratitude, but owing to my unconquerable idleness, which had often made me appear ungrateful." <sup>44</sup>

He tells about his another drawback. He has never been regular in his correspondence with his well wishers. He observes,

“Regularity in correspondence has always been beyond my strength : as soon as I begin to feel slack, shame and a feeling of embarrassment in repairing my fault make me aggravate it, and I leave off writing altogether.”<sup>45</sup>

Rousseau also reveals himself as a social worker in France. He worked very honestly in Venice. He solved many problems and protected interests of France and Venice but he did not get its credit. His boss M.De. Montaigu always grabbed the credit on several occasions. He did not bother to take part of Rousseau's perquisites. Rousseau's predecessors demanded this amount from Frenchmen and Foreigners. Rousseau did not like this practice. Though he was not a Frenchman, he abolished it for the good of the French people. He narrates,

“This I always did with an honesty, a Zeal, and a courage... I faithfully served France, to whom I owed nothing...”<sup>46</sup>

Rousseau tells that the noblemen of Venice had a bad habit of not paying their loans or debt taken from a foreign country. Rousseau tried to settle the claim of a French Wig-maker. In the meantime he had a quarrel with the ambassador M.de Montaigu and he retired from his service. Venetian nobleman Zanetto Nani had agreed to pay a little amount. But the bill was missed and

Le. refused to pay his dues. At that time Rousseau gave full amount to the wig-maker. It was a great loss for him to settle the debt of a foreigner.

On another occasion Rousseau helped the captain of a merchant ship. He had rescued him from a difficulty. Because of a violent quarrel between his sailors and the Slovenian residents of Venice, the ship was not permitted to leave. When the matter came to Rousseau, he met the members of the senate and finally succeeded in getting freedom for the captain. Rousseau was very cautious, impartial and disinterested. He was always regular and honest in his duties. He observes,

"I exhausted all my attention in the effort not to  
commit any errors detrimental to my service.  
In all concerned the essential duties of my office.  
I was to the last most regular and exact."<sup>47</sup>

Rousseau has criticized the civil institutions. He says that these institutes sacrifice the real welfare of people and true injustice are sacrificed by the powerful ruling class. This ruling class gives a social sanction to the exploration of the weak. It justifies the injustice done by the strong.

It seems that Rousseau lived a tragic life. He was honest and good natured from childhood but he was always been a victim of the evil and unscrupulous elements in the society. From these experiences he had developed the philosophical view and acquired a broad knowledge of human life at his old age.



- **Documentation**

*The Confessions* records the contemporary Social, political and cultural life. The author narrates the existing milieu. It records the many social systems like marriage, religion, status of women, classes in the society, Monarchy etc. during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, it gives a lot of information about France and the cities like Paris and Venice etc.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the society had no idea and practice of family planning. There were many children in the family. Rousseau's father was one of the child among in fifteen children. The whole property was divided among all sons. Rousseau states,

“The distribution of a very moderate inheritance amongst fifteen children had reduced my father's portion almost to nothing.”<sup>48</sup>

Madame Basile also had five to six children. The love-marriages were unacceptable in that society. The lovers were opposed owing to class barriers between the the rich and the poor classes. Rousseau's father was ordinary watchmaker, he loved a daughter of Protestant Minister. But he found difficulty in marrying her because of class contrast. Rousseau narrates,

“My father had found difficulty in obtaining her hand.”<sup>49</sup>

There was no law for child labour. Children were worked in his shops, the engraver, or as the domestic servants. Rousseau

worked as an assistant to an engraver at his age of 8 years. His brother was learning his father's trade in the childhood.

Parents imposed their opinions on the children. Children did not have the freedom to select their careers. Rousseau was not interested in law and also in engraving. But his father forced him to learn that occupation. He narrates,

“...the occupation itself appeared to me wearisome and unendurable; the constant application, the feeling of servitude completed my dislike, and I never entered the office without a feeling of horror, which daily increased the intensity.”<sup>50</sup>

There was private educational system and no schools. The pupils went to the house of governors or teachers for learning the school subjects. Likewise Rousseau and his brother were sent to M. Lambercie, for education. They lived in his house. He writes,

“We were sent further to Bossey, to board with the protestant minister Lambercier, in order to learn, together with Latin, all the sorry trash which is included under the name of education.”<sup>51</sup>

There was no need to complete any course of degree or diploma. One can become a lawyer by practicing under the guidance of a town clerk Rousseau began to work as an assistant to M. Masseron, who was a town clerk. He states,

“I was put with M. Masseron, the town clerk, in order to learn, under his tuition, the useful trade of a fee – grabber.”<sup>52</sup>

People were interested in reading romances particularly women loved romances. Rousseau's grandparents and mother possessed variety of books. He states,

"My mother had left some romances behind her, which my father and I began to read, after supper."<sup>53</sup>

The people also had taste for music. They likes to listen and sing music. Particularly women were interested in learning music. In venice many women took the lessons in music from Rousseau. He told about his aunt, who was a good singer,

"She knew a prodigious number of tunes and songs which she used to sing in a very thin, gentle voice."<sup>54</sup>

Madam Dupin also sang and played piano. There was a class struggle in the society. The masters always dominated over the servants. They treated their servants badly. Rousseau was treated badly by the engraver. He states,

"My new master, M. Docummun, was a rough and violent young man, who in a short time succeeded in tarnishing all the brightness of my childhood, stupefying my loving and lively nature, and reducing me, in mind as well as in position to a real state of apprenticeship."<sup>55</sup>

Women in aristocratic society always obsessed in sex. They were not faithful to their husbands. Madame de Warens,

Madam Basile, Madam Duping, Madame Serre, Therese etc. were some the examples of such women. They were too much frank with their servants. They did not hesitate to love their servants and also to enjoy sex with them. e.g. Madame de Boze had some feelings for Rousseau, She wanted to enjoy his company. She was very bold and frank to him. Her behavior confused him. He states,

“...it would have been impossible for anyone to be more awkward and confused than I was in her presence. Her free and easy manner intimidated me, and made my own more ridiculous.”<sup>56</sup>

There were evils like prostitution in the society. Poor girls turned to this profession for one or other reasons. Rousseau and his friends bought a 12-13 years girl to keep serval relations with her. The mother of that girl sold her for some money. (Pp311-12) If means for poor class prostituion was only means of earning. The women like Therese worked as a keep. They had relations with few men.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the opera was popular. People were interested in watching opera's. There were opera theatres. In Book I, Rousseau told that he went to an Opera and bought the tickets for amphitheatre. The theatres were houseful.

There was conflict between the Catholics and Protestants. Catholics blamed protestants. The Catholic Priest M.de Pontverre belonged to the group of the knights of the Spoon. The Catholic knights were the subject of the Duke of Savoy. They

had formed a group against the protestants of Geneva. The Catholic knights claimed that they had defeated their (Protestant) enemies with a Spoon. Therefore, they wore a around their necks.

The Catholic Priests were corrupt. They had very little knowledge of their religion. They were over-zealous and were least interested in the good of their catholic faith and more interested in blaming the Protestant of the ministers of Geneva. Rousseau observes about M.de Pontverre,

“He was as enthusiast, who knew no other virtue except worshipping images and telling his beads... who could think of nothing better for the good of the faith than writing libels against the ministers of Geneva.”<sup>57</sup>

The Catholic nuns had a permission to forgive people, who had committed sins or mistakes. The king of Sardinia had permitted the woman to forgive, bless and liberate people who had committed sins. Madame de Warens, a new convert had such a permission from the king. Rousseau admits,

“...a good and charitable lady, whom the king’s kindness has placed in a position to rescue other souls from the error from which she herself has been delivered.”<sup>58</sup>

Rousseau criticizes the immorality of the Catholic Priests of his times. They did not hesitate to do immoral act. They tried to justify themselves and conceal their mistakes. During

Rousseau's stay with the catholic priests at Turin, one of the Moor friend to rape Rousseau. He did some ugly and sexual act with Rousseau. Instead of that, the superintendent and governors scholded Rousseau for bringing shame to the church and making a great fuss about a trivial matter. He narrates,

"the next day, one of the governors came at an early hour to administer a sharp reproof to me, accusing me of compromising the honour of a holy house, and of making a great fuss about a trifle."<sup>59</sup>

The letters were means of communications. The letters were sent through messangers. The important letters of kings and Court were written in cypher. The reader should decipher it.

There was the epidemic of plague at Messina.

***The Confessions*** is full of many political allusions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century France. There are references to social changes also.

Rousseau gives information about the kings, knights, ambassadors etc. of the contemporary period. He criticises the contemporary ambassador who was a foolish man. He did not know the political propriety or decorum. He did not know how to dictate or write legibly. Rousseau claims that the French ambassador M.de. Montaigu tried to maintain dignity of the office and never allowed the venetian officers to interfere in the embassy. He was a selfish person who was interested in the perquisites of the secretary.

The French consul M.de Blond helped and managed the affairs as M.de Montaigu was not familiar with the office matters.

Rousseau has criticized the civil institutions. He says that these institutes sacrifice the real welfare of people and true justice is sacrificed by the powerful ruling class. This ruling class gives a social sanction to the exploration of the weak. It justifies the injustice done by the strong.

There is the reference to the battle of Fontenoy. After the battle, several festival activities took place at Versailles. Several operas were performed at the theatre des petites – Ecuries.

There was monarchy in France. The king had all the authorities. The actors had permission to perform their act at the Court. Rousseau's opera was performed with full chorus and orchestra, with the financial help from the king, at the house of M.Bonneval, who was the financial manager of the Court amusements, ceremonies, festivals, theatrical and other performance.

Thus *The Confessions* is one of the major important document of the contemporary social and political conditions in France.

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## CHAPTER II

### REFERENCES

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