

Reflection of Early 20th Century's Japanese Society and Culture: Perspective of Bengali Women

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Abstract- The world knows Japan was secluded for consecutive 200 years during Edo Period, and after that, the renowned Meiji era started in 1868. Before this Meiji restoration, Commodore Matthew Culbreath Perry did several expeditions to Japan, and he wrote a book namely *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan Performed in the years 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy* in 1862. This book was translated from English to Bengali as *Japan* by Madhusudon Mukhopadhyay in 1863 and was the first book written in Bengali on Japan according to the existing materials found yet. This translation has opened the door of Japan to Bengal. On the other hand, India was partitioned in 1947, and till 1947, several renowned individuals went to Japan and the mass for specific purposes. Five women went to Japan before 1947, and all of them penned it as a memoir or travelogue. Hariprabha Takeda, Sarojnalini Dutta, Abala Basu, Shanta Devi, and Parul Devi. This article is all about these Bengali ladies' perceptions of Japanese society and culture after the Meiji Restoration. Society and culture reflect the similarity and diversity of a country, and these were the write-ups where the records of those westernising Japan are available.

Keywords Meiji · Taisho · Women · Travelogues · Bangla · Japan · Seclusion · Books · Japanese ·

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1. Introduction

Japan was a closed country for conjugative two hundred years at Edo period (1603-1868), which is also addressed as the Tokugawa period. Several reasons played as essential components for this seclusion, but seclusion provided three essential explanations to be more precise. First, the emerging Christianity led Japan to colonialisation and be a territory of another country. The second reason is that Japan always wanted to protect their land from cultural colonisation through seclusion, but the truth is, not only the culture, Japan was afraid of the emerging power- which was all around. They viewed outsiders as a threat to their power. Only the Dutch and Portuguese were allowed for the business commodity. Stating about the third reason - the three unifiers controlling the Tokugawa or Edo Japan from decades were Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) and there is a story which clarifies the pattern of how these three reunified and kept integrity inside Japan- it is stated as Nobunaga squeezed the dough; Hideyoshi baked the pie, and Ieyasu ate the pie (Woods, 2021).

These three were adamant about enduring their autocracy, and seclusion was one of the critical components to continue the supremacy they had acquired and practised for several decades in the name of the government (幕府). Therefore, they choose to continue with an anti-foreign and anti-Christianity policy for more than long two hundred years in the name of seclusion.

Before Meiji Restoration, in 1953, Culbreath Matthew Perry started his expedition to Japan from America and attempted three to four times; finally, in 1858, Matthew entered Japan, and the so-called 'chained country' was forced to take some concrete decisions regarding their seclusion policy. According to Hunter, during the 1840s, these official approaches increased, and Perry made his very first approach in the year 1853, but the Japanese government repeatedly denied him. Finally, in 1858, the US-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce was concluded, and Japan opened itself partially for the first time after more than two hundred years of seclusion (Hunter, 1989).

Commodore Matthew Culbreath Perry did quite a few excursions to Japan, and he wrote a book, namely *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan Performed in the years 1852, 1853, and 1854, under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy*. The original book was written in 1856 and was translated from English to Japanese first in 1862. In 1863, this book was translated from English to Bengali as *Jepan* by Modhusudon

Mukhopadhyay was the first book written in Bengali about Japan according to the existing materials found. This translation has unfastened Japan to Bengal (Das, 2012).

In the last half of the 19th century, India went through turmoil in social and political issues. From Bengal's side, India was partitioned in 1947, and till 1947, many famous people went to Japan for specific purposes. Among them, Manmothonath Ghosh and Sureshchandra Bandhapaddhay took the lead. Manmothonath went to Japan on April 1, 1906, and reached Yokohama on April 30 to learn technical science (Ghosh, 1910). Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyay left Kolkata on December 10 and reached Yokohama on January 10, 1907 (Banerjee, 1910). If we categorise people who visited Japan into four categories: political purpose, business purpose, cultural purpose, and personal purpose, Radha Binod Pal, Rash Bihari Bose, and Subhash Chandra Bose were in Japan on those days for political purposes. Manmothonath Ghosh and Sureshchandra Bandhapaddhay went for business purposes and learned technicalities. Rabindranath Tagore, Mukul Dey went to serve cultural purposes, and last but not least, Hariprabha Tadeka, Shanta Devi, P.C. Sarkar went to Japan for personal purposes.

One thing must be mentioned here: most of the people who visited Japan at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century penned their experiences as memoirs or travelogues for further acquaintance. All those people who went to Japan tended to write about their experiences, and thus they conserved their history in a form. This article emphasises these five women: Hariprabha Takeda, Sarojnalini Dutta, Abala Bose, Shanta Devi, and Parul Devi. Five of them were educated enough, and among them, Sarojnalini was self-educated, and all of them were from a sophisticated and well-groomed background and the upper strata of the Bengali society.

Hariprabha Devi, Sarojnalini Devi, Abala Bose, Shanta Devi, and Parul Devi went to Japan along with their husbands. The timeline of this research is the early 20th century, and at that time, Bengal was also going through social turmoil and absconded regarding women's position in Bengali society. People of Bengal perceived common interest in Japan and these memoirs and travelogues are the indication and evidence of their sheer curiosity. Considering Japan, it was also going through a complex and perplexing situation as they encountered Meiji Restoration in 1868, and after that, Japan was open to all who were attracted to it. Moreover, Hariprabha entered Japan when Japan entered the Taisho era (1912-1926). Japan faced several difficulties encountering the west and the whole world after waking up from two hundred years of deep sleep and self-abundance.

Among them, Hariprabha was the first who travelled to Japan even before Rabindranath Tagore himself. Rabindranath visited Japan in 1916 for the first time and then in 1924 and 1929, and he published the famous *Japan-Jatri* Book at the year of 1919. So, after Meiji Restoration, Hariprabha was the first Bengali woman who visited Japan and wrote a memoir according to the existing documents found so far. Before Hariprabha, in the portal areas like Yokohama and Kobe, Indian merchants and traders started their living from the later part of the 19th century, and most of them were from Gujrat, Sindhu, and Maharashtra (Huq, 1999).

In this discussion, one important thing must be said. It is a known factor that the conception and idea of 'home' that humane consists have always been persisted in our minds do not matter wherever we go. When we encounter a new culture, our mind starts comparing with one's own culture, belief, and society- in light of new pieces of knowledge that we gathered in a different land. In this article, the writer offers an overview of how these five women travellers, who had visited Japan in the early 20th century, had tried to portray Japanese society and culture from their perspectives. In this course of the discussion, one thing is pretty evident these five women travellers who travelled to Japan in the 20th century were undoubtedly not of the regular type of people.

2. Literature review

Haripravha Takeda, Sarojnalini Dutta, Abala Bose, Shanta Devi, and Parul Devi went to Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, and several research studies were conducted on Hariprabha Takeda. Monjurul Huq is the pioneer who found her book from India Office Library, London, and reprinted it in 1999. The name of the book is *Bangomohilar Japan Jatra*. This book is an eye-opener for those who work on Japanese Studies because she was in Japan and wrote about Japan before Rabindranath Tagore was there in 1912. An article is also found on Hariprabha written by Monjurul Huq in the 'The transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan,' and the write-up is titled *The Bride from Bengal: Hariprabha Takeda in early Taisho Japan*. It is also a significant work to depend upon. The article *Mirroring the Self in the Light of the 'Other': Early 20th Century Travelogues on Japan* written by Pratyay Banerjee in the journal namely *The Journal of the Comparative Literature of the Association of India* in 2015 had also represented Hariprabha's acuity of Japanese society and about social dimensions and position of women obstinately. However, he had included more travelogues of Monmothonath Ghosh and Shureshchandra Bandhapaddhay for detailed discussion. Besides that, Shudakkhina Ghosh had mentioned and discussed

Hariprabha's journey in her write-up *Ghor Hote Angina Bidesh: Bangimohilader Vhromon Kotha* in *Balaka* (Bangla magazine) (Ghosh, 2012).

Barun Mondol, a researcher of Gourbang University, wrote an article as *Hariprabha Takeda Bongomohilar Japan Jatra: Unish shotoker Nari Vhabnar Aaloke* in a journal namely *Pratidhwani the Echo* in 2018. He and Sudhakkhina Ghosh also mentioned and discussed Sarojnalini Dutta in their research works. Muntasir Mamun wrote an article in 2004 in a Bengali magazine *Kali o Kolom* as '*Hariprabha Takedar khonje*', and he focused on her as the first lady from Dhaka visiting Japan in the early 20th century. Subrato Kumar Mondal also did his research in this field, and some vital information could be found from his book *Shekaler Bangla Shamoyik potre Japan*.

More information could be found in Vhisshyodev Chowdhury's book *Jonantike Muktijuddhyo o Onanyo Probondhyo*. Vhisshyodev also remarked Hariprobha as the first women writer from Dhaka who wrote about Japan from 1901 to 1920.

Shimonti Ghosh compiled a book in 2010, namely *Indumadhav er Chin Vhromon and Sarojnalini's Japane Bongonari*, and from her preface and Sarojnalini's own write up, we get to know about Sarojnalini's travelogue and her. Besides this, her husband Gurusaday Dutta published another book as an autobiography, namely *Saroj-Nalini*, after her demise. Specific no article is found concentrating on Sarojnalini Dutta only. The article's writer has presented a paper on Sarojnalini Dutta, concentrating on Shimonti's write-up and shared documents.

A book composed and compiled by Daymantee Dasgupta in 2017 as *Abala Bosur Vhromon Kotha* on Abala Bose and a write-up is also available, but the article's source is not reliable and not reliable adequately given. Jayati Gupta, in the year of 2020, wrote a book namely *Travel Culture, Travel Writing, and Bengali Women, 1870–1940*, and in her book, except Parul Devi, all four names are mentioned, and she tried to keep all the travelogues written in the 20th century by women under one single roof.

Shanta Devi and Parul Devi are the two names who were always in the shadow whenever it came to memoirs or travelogue. No mention has been found so far. They both went to Japan and penned their observation as others like Krisnavabini and Hariprabha, but their names were forgotten easily in due course. A little information could be gathered on both the ladies through their works only. So far, it could be found, Rabindranath wrote a letter to Parul Devi, and it seems she was a relative of Rabindranath Tagore somehow (Tagore, 1958).

This discussion will continue as in two major parts. The first part will focus on a trivial biographical observation and the background of Hariprabha Takeda, Sarojnalini Dutta, Abala Bose, Shanta Devi, and Parul Devi. The later part will emphasise their observation and perception about westernising Japan, which is reflected in their memoirs.

3. Research methodology

The methodology of this study is solely based on existing literature analysis, book, and article review. As qualitative research is the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting non-numerical data, this study will proceed with qualitative analysis, and as there is no scope for data analysis, no survey is required for this particular study.

4. Short biography and background: Hariprabha, Sarojnalini, Abala, Shanta, and Parul

4.1 Hariprabha Takeda (1890-1972)

Hariprabha was named Hariprabha Mallik before her marriage as her father was Shashivushon Mallik and her mother was Nagendrabala Devi (Sengupta et al., 1976). She was born in 1890, possibly in Dhaka. Her parents were social actives in those days, and they worked heart and soul for their organisation, namely Matriniketan. As an outstanding achievement when Bengali women were not adequately educated, this Mallik family took the initiative to work for women. According to Sudhakkhina Ghosh, Shashivushon Mallik and her wife used to be addressed as Shebok (Attendant male) and Shebika (Attendant female) of their Hermitage (Ashram) Matriniketan. One thing must be cleared here that though the word hermitage is used to explain their organisation in actuality, their organisation was considered Ashram, where people could live if they do not have any support and relatives to depend upon (Ghosh, 2012). This Mallik Family was worshippers of the Brahma religion. Brahma religion originated and was



Hariprabha Takeda
Source: Monzurul Huq, Bongo
Mohilar Japan Jatra.

founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828, and Hariprabha's family was one of the few followers of that Brahma religion. The people associated with this new religious thought were comparatively progressive, so they agreed to marry their daughter to someone different from them in every aspect. Hariprabha got married to Uemon Takeda in the year of 1906.

After the Meiji Restoration, those who initiated exploring the world by going abroad, Uemon Tadeka, was one. First, he worked in a soap factory as a 'Bulbul' soap factory, but later he managed his factory as Dhaka Soap Factory, and it is mentioned that possibly he was patronised by his in-laws for this factory (Huq, 1999). Discussion on Hariprabha's institutional education is unattended and excluded in all the documents found. How far Hariprabha studied at school and about her organisational education could be a relevant question here, but it could be easily said that she was educated enough to write a travelogue being the first woman from Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 1915. According to Samsad Bangla Choritabhidhan, Hariprabha wrote another book, 'Shaddhyi Gyan Devi'. However, the manuscript is not available yet (Sengupta et al., 1976).

In an article, it is proposed (Mondol, 2018) that Hariprabha went to Japan in the year 1912 for the first time and then in 1928 and lastly in 1940 and the travelogue she wrote '*Banga Mohilar Japan Jatra*' was based on her travels took place in 1912, 1928 and 1940 but the context of the original book reflects that this was her first visit to Japan in 1912 and the book was solely composed based on her very first visit. Some confusing information is also available about Hariprabha, and more research is needed before concluding that.

4.2 Sarojnalini Dutta (1887-1925)

Sarojnalini Dutta went to Japan, accompanying her husband Gurusaday Dutta and her son Birendrasaday Dutta. The family started for Japan on April 17 and reached May 14, 1920, by ship. Firstly, some personal information should be rendered about Sarojnalini Dutta. On October 9, 1887, Saroj was born at Bandel (Hoogly), West Bengal, India. His father, Brajendranath Dey's and mother Nagendra Nalini Dey had frequent communication with Brahma Samaj in those days (Sengupta et al., 1976).

Sarojnalini was the pioneer and a reformer of the movement for uplifting women in Bengal in the early 20th Century. In a word, she was a feminist. She initiated the formation of Mahila Samitis (women's institutes) in Bengal. She started her first Mahila Samiti in 1913 in the Pabna district by developing friendly

cooperation among the pardahnashin (veil-covered) ladies. Subsequently, she started the Mahila Samitis of Birbhum (1916), Sultanpur (1917), and Rampurhat (1918) districts, respectively (Dutta, 1925).

Sarojnalini was the secretary of the Indian Section of the Calcutta League of Women's Workers (later Bengal Presidency Council of Women), member of the Council of the Nari Siksha Samiti (Women's Educational League), and Member of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation's committee to make suitable arrangements for allowing women to elect councillors. She was also the vice president of the Sylhet Union- an association set up to promote female education in the Sylhet district (Dutta, 1925).



Sarojnalini Dutta

Source:<http://sesquicentennial.blogspot.com/2013/01/rabindranath-and-gurusaday-dutta.html>

She was married to Gurusaday Dutta, who had an incredible life full of events, but among all other alternatives, he was a social reformer, and that should be considered his first and foremost significant position in society. He thought about the lagged behind women of those days primarily concentrated on women's education. After Sarojnalini's marriage, she also started thinking and started working together with her husband for women's education; moreover, in addition to that, she had connections with nationalist activities as well. One aspect must be remembered that she worked hard to demolish the conservative culture called 'Abaya' in Arabic, which means hiding women's faces and entire bodies with some cloth named Barkha. In a nutshell, Saroj tried her best for women's freedom, and she understood the bitter truth that this could never be ensured without education. So, she took several initiatives to make Indian women aware of their rights; for example – being aware of their right to education, the right to enjoy their freedom, and the right to think independently.

It is deplorable that when this book '*Japane Bongonari*' was finally published, Saroj was no more. Her Husband Gurusaday Dutta had compiled her write-ups and published them in her remembrance. Respected Jagadanando Roy had written the preface of her book. Saroj died in 1924, and the book was published in 1928, four years after her demise. It was published in a journal in the same year, namely

'Bangalakshmi' divided into fourteen parts. Later, in 2010, the book *Japane Bangonari* (Sarojnalini Dutta's part) was compiled by Shimonty Sen.

4.3 Abala Bose (1865-1951)

Abala Bose was born on August 8, 1864, in Bangladesh at Barishal. Her father was a social reformer, Durgamohon Das (mother-Brahmyamoyi Das). They used to live in Telibagh, Dhaka. She was married to the renowned scientist Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose in 1887. Abala studied at Bethune College, and in 1910 she became the Sampadok (Principle) of Brahma Balika Biddyalaya and continued the position till 1932. She and her sister (Sarala Devi) contributed immensely to establishing Gokhel Memorial school (Sengupta et al., 1976).



Abala Bose

Source: Dasgupta (ED). Abala Basur Bhromonkotha

Abala Bose established Nari Sikkhya Samiti in 1919. She worked hard to establish an organisation, namely Adult Primary Education for older people. Abala's written articles on women's education and empowerment were published in *The Modern Review* journal (Sengupta et al., 1976). *The Modern Review* (1907) was a monthly magazine published in Kolkata founded and was edited by Ramananda Chattopaddhay (Eisamay, 2019)

Abala visited several places in India, and once Rabindranath Tagore accompanied them. Talking about abroad, Abala visited England, Italy, America, France, Germany, and Japan. In 1925, her first travelogue was published after travelling Europe in Prabashi magazine titled '*Bangali Mohilar Prithivi Vhromon*'. In 1914, they travelled Europe for the fourth time, and at that time, in 1915, they started from San Francisco and reached Japan's Yokohama port on April 7 (Sen, 2017). Abala Bose worked hard to create an Adult Primary Education centre with the money funded by Jagadishchandra Bose after his demise, and she died in the year 1951 at the age of 87. Shudhirchandra Sarkar proposed that Abala Bose had established Bhidyasagar Banibhaban for widowed women of that period (Sarkar, 1964).

4.4 Shanta Devi (1893-1984)

Shanta Devi was born on April 29, 1893. Her father, Ramanando Chatthopaddhay, was an eminent journalist and social reformer. Their homeland was in Bankura district, West Bengal, India. Shanta Devi and Sita Devi were two sisters who were renowned for their effective contribution to the Bengali and English literary world. Both of them were grown up in educated surroundings, and having a father like Ramanando Chatthopaddhay, who was the editor of *Prohashi Patrika* and *Modern Review* at his time, was enormous support for them. Shanta Devi was also a student of Bethune College as Abala Bose was. Shanta Devi received the Padmabati award in 1914 for being the first female student who passed Bachelor of Arts. She was excellent in English, Bangla, Hindi, and Sanskrit. Her first translated book was *'Folk Tales of Hindusthan'* in Bengali from *'Hindusthani Upokatha'*. Famous writer Upendrakishor Roychowdhury had drawn the pictures of that book (Sengupta et al., 1976).



Santa Devi

Source: Santa Devi, Purbasmriti

In 1917, the English-translated version of *'Tales of Bengal'* was published by Oxford University Press, and Shanta Devi did the work. Shanta was married to eminent historian Kalidas Nag in 1925. She wrote many books and novels like *Jibondola*, *Chirontoni*, *Duhita*, *Alakhjhora*. Some of her childhood stories were also renowned for their attractiveness. Stories written by her are *Ushashi*, *Sithir Sindur*, *Badhubaran* – so on and so forth (Das, 2003). She obtained a Bhubonmohini gold medal in 1949 for her remarkable book *'Bharat Mukti Sadhak Ramanando o Ordhyo Satabdir Bangla'*. *Purbasmriti* was one of her memoirs. (Sengupta et al., 1976).

The exact date of Shanta Devi's travel to Japan could not be found, but after her return, she wrote her travelogue in four segments, which started in 1938 at *Prabashi Journal*.

4.5 Parul Devi

Parul Devi was the last person among the five women, and she went to Japan for very few days. No reliable document is found about the actual date of her visit.

Any biography of Parul Devi could not be found in *Samsad Bangla Sahityo Sangi* or *Samsad Bangla Charitavhidhan*. Some letters were evident that Parul Devi was Rabindranath Tagore's Granddaughter as Rabindranath addressed her as his granddaughter in his poem. In a letter to Parul Devi, Rabindranath mentioned Mira Devi as Parul Devi's aunt, so it could be imagined that Parul Devi was in the Tagore family tree. From another source, it could be found that Parul Devi was the wife of Alakendranath Tagore, who was the son of famous artist Abanindranath Tagore (Lahiri, 2021). All know that Abanindranath Tagore was the son of Rabindranath's brother Gaganendranath Tagore. In short, Abanindranath Tagore was the nephew of Rabindranath Tagore. Parul Devi went to Japan along with her father (it is not clear father or Father-in-law), husband and daughter, which meant Alakendranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore (possibly) both accompanied her to Japan.

5. Japanese society, as observed

As we go through the write-ups written by these five women, they all visited Japan from 1910 to 1945. Hariprabha was the first person who visited in 1912. . After Meiji Restoration, when Japan compared herself with the rest of the world – found herself lagged and tried to become advanced, taking every possible measure. Kazuhiro Watanabe had described this turmoil simply but magnificently with very few words. Specifically, when Hariprabha had reached Japan for the first time, in 1912, the Meiji Government ended its sad legacy, and prince Mutsuhito died after reigning for over 45 years. In the reign of Mutsuhito, Japan defeated China in 1894, and Japan conquered Russia in 1905. In 1912, with the demise of Mutsuhito, the effort Japan has been delivering to be a so-called modern country came to its next step forward (Huq, 1999).

For better understanding, it will be more precise if the perception of these ladies could be compartmentalised based on their observation. Their observations will be discussed here as a whole about Japanese society and culture where-People, social strata, education, Japanese houses, Japanese women, festivals, dresses, food, religion, visited places- so on and so forth will be incorporated.

5.1 People

Starting with Hariprabha Takeda, she was the first who went to Japan in 1912, as mentioned before. Hariprabha had viewed and candidly rendered about Japan. She had described Japan flawlessly as she witnessed. Hariprabha's work had no

comparison with Rabindranath's *Japan Jatri* from the context of its aesthetic. Hariprabha's write-up was more like a diary where she shared her experiences visiting a new country. She possibly avoided making any political statement and, in her writing, also, Hariprabha evaded political portions of both the countries and mainly wrote about Japanese society and customs. From a social perspective, when Hariprabha reached her in-laws' place, many people came to see a foreigner, and sometimes her father-in-law got annoyed facing so many people every day. It reflects that in those days, Japanese people were not very familiar with foreigners so, whenever they encountered one, they could not miss the chance to observe her and know the world unknown to them (Huq, 1999). It is understandable through this above-written part that Japan was locked for so many years and mass people who lived in the countryside, they were interested about the outer world and so they frequently came to see someone who came from India, and it could also be found in the book that they were eager to know about the society, culture, and customs of Hariprabha's country (Huq, 1999, 37). All these women faced almost the same experiences.

Hariprabha mentioned that all the workers who worked in the hotel or the attendants of the ship were so well behaved and well-mannered, they were always attentive about their guests or border or guests' convenience (Huq, 1999, 35). Abala Bose also mentioned the attendee's attentiveness to their borders. She observed and understood it as one of Japan's marketing policies to win passengers' goodwill for the proposed contact and collaboration in future voyages. (Dasgupta, 2017,103). Saroj reached Japan on May 14, 1920, and just only after two days of staying in Japan, she went to a concert on the 16th and attending that concert, she was mesmerised witnessing Japanese women and children. She mentioned that the women came along with their children, but they were so well-mannered that they enjoyed the concert fully without any disturbance. Saroj felt that these children were well-mannered because their mothers taught them to be so. The mental tranquillity of these mothers had been reflected through their children. The thing which made her more astonished was that the fathers of those children who were singing and taking part in this conference had arranged this program to promote their child's creative and cultural excellence. For the first time, Saroj came to hear Koto and Shamisen, and she found Koto quite similar to Piano, and Shamisen had some resemblance with Indian Sitar. She liked Japanese music (Sen, 2010, 171-173).

The tea culture of Japan was a focus for her appreciation. Wherever she had visited, she was always enchanted with the Japanese green tea offering system. Sarojnalini liked how Japanese people performed their tea ceremony. Saroj had

met Geishas also. She went to watch Cherry dance, and there she witnessed Geishas performances and noticed that they were overdressed and did excessive facial makeup, but Saroj had denoted that as another way of preparing oneself (Sen, 2010, 181-172). In her book, she described Jujutsu also. Saroj found the Japanese Card exchange system unusual (Sen, 2010, 214).

Sarojnalini Dutta also never complained about the attendees in her book. She instead praised an unknown person who was a Japanese national and tried to help them find their ways to bank on the very day they have reached Japan - though they denied taking the favour offered by him (Sen, 2010, 170). Shanta Devi stated that Japanese people knew English well, but she observed that they did not know English and were perfectly okay with that (Sen, 2010, 170). Parul Devi mentioned that all these Japanese people were busy doing something. She had compared Japan with Europe and said that even the people of Europe were not as happy workers as the Japanese were (Devi, 1342). Saroj Nalini, Abala, and Hariprabha found the Japanese greeting system very interesting, especially the Japanese bowing culture that Japan practised for so long, which was enchanting for these ladies.

5.2 Social stratification

Every society has its sections and divisions regarding social stratification to understand this. Japan also has its version. According to Hariprabha, there is no such first-class, second-class compartmentalisation inside the train as we have in our countries till today (Huq, 1999, 40). Comparing this with her own country, she found that Japan did not promote social stratification in the name of race or commodity, though there might be several arguments on that note. Concentrating on the context, Abala also noticed while travelling that Japanese people act in a much more civilised way compared with the other countries. Japanese people were well-aware that they were superlatives, but all the passengers of their ship were treated equally. It is mentioned that the Director of the shipping company had invited all of them for dinner so, it could be said that Abala did not notice and mention any social inequality during her visit (Dasgupta, 2017, 103-108). Shanta Devi did not touch on this topic. Parul Devi said they all work together very hard to build a better society (Devi, 1342). Parul Devi and Shanta Devi stayed there for a short period. Sarojnalini mentioned in her book directly that Japanese people do not have any social stratification, so they do not hesitate to eat sitting anywhere (Sen, 2010, 236). However, she mentioned a first-class and second-class sitting arrangement in Japanese trains (Sen, 2010). All social stratification is undoubtedly

not dependent on sitting arrangements inside the train, but most of them mentioned Japanese train and tram and about the sitting arrangements in their works. Any social classification discussion is not found in the available text.

5.3 Education

Among these five women, Sarojnalini talked much about Japan's education system as she was mesmerised with Japanese initiatives and ideas to educate their children, especially the girl child. Sarojnalini was a social reformer, so she had a personal interest in the Japanese education system and visited several schools to obtain ideas from them. She went to High School for Girls. According to Sarojnalini, as students entered from the main gate, there was a large garden and a playing place at that high school. A vast place was allocated for high school girls, where students were 750 in number, and 30 to 40 teachers were available. Saroj noticed that they used a skirt on their kimono while drilling. A Science laboratory was also located inside the school, and Saroj was astonished watching the Japanese girls doing their things by themselves and their sincerity towards their study (Sen, 2010, 184-187).

Doshisha School was an American Missionary school. The students of this school were not exceptionally pragmatic for hard-core studies. She found the students doing classes for domestic science. The number of students was 600, and among them, 200 were the school's borders. One specific thing Saroj found interesting was that the schools did not depend on books for education; they were doing practical each thing to make it more understandable (Sen, 2010, 201-202). Both Abala Bose and Hariprabha also noticed this specific idea. Both of them probably visited Doshisha school while travelling to Japan. Sarojnalini visited Kyoto Imperial Higher Industrial School, one where students learn how to design something and do the chemical dying, Stencil at cloths, weaving by hand and machine (Sen, 2010).

After visiting primary School, Sarojnalini noticed that the compound of the primary school is bigger than the high school compound, and inside their premises, they had a museum and bird statutory. There were 550 students in that school, and the number of teachers was 23. Sarojnalini mentioned a governmental rule that if a student has belonged to that prefecture where the school is located, the government will pay his or her fees (Sen, 2010, 203-207).

Sarojnalini visited Middle School for Girls and boys also where the number of teachers was 40, and the number of students was more than 800. According to her,

the school had two to three science laboratories. Most of the girls stayed as a boarder in this middle school. The speciality of this school was that the school used to teach their students about nature; learning about nature was also a part of their study (Sen, 2010, 203-207). Moreover, there were places to do exercise, museums, and hospitals. Abala Bose also mentioned these school activities in her write-up (Dasgupta, 2017, 108). In front of the Middle English School canteen for boys, Saroj noticed something had been written in Bengali "*Amra Kaaj korar jonnyo khai, khawar jonnyo kaaj kori na*", which meant that we eat to do works, we do not work to eat. In their write-ups, Parul Devi and Shanta also mentioned the same things about the Japanese unique schooling system (Sen, 2010, 212-213).

Saroj mentioned that she had visited places for women who have had their vocational training and technical education curriculum. There were 2000 students from primary, middle, and high school levels in that school. From 4 to 17 years, girls could enter these schools for vocational training. The children here do not do mainstream study at all, and they learn how to make dolls, learn about nature, sing-song and draw pictures. Saroj had visited vocational and technical education for men also (Sen, 2010, 255-259).

Parul Devi visited some of the Japanese schools, and she compared them subconsciously with the schools of her country. She was astonished, noticing that the girl's school had a department as Laboratory of Manners where they teach how to act accordingly and live one's life (Devi, 1342).

5.4 Japanese houses

Regarding Japanese houses, Shanta Devi had mentioned in her write-up that a small garden was indispensable in Japanese houses. According to her Japanese house without a simple touch of a garden is sparse. Parul Devi once visited someone's place and mentioned that Japanese houses are immaculate, no dust can be found anywhere, and they do not use sandals inside the house; they are significantly sincere about their cleanliness. (Devi, 1342). Abala Bose also discussed Japanese houses similarly, such as wooden houses, significantly clean and perfectly organised household materials (Dasgupta, 2017, 107).

Sarojnalini Dutta described Japanese houses were decorative but not ornamental. Saroj mentioned that Japanese houses are not complete without a small place for a garden. House doors were made of wood and paper, and their houses were mostly wooden, and unnecessary furniture was a ban in Japanese houses. She mentioned

the tokonoma and about where they placed the ikebana, though Saroj was unaware of the Japanese words but mentioned those. She and Hariprabha successfully felt the pulse of the Japanese sense of beauty witnessing those houses (Sen, 2010, 179-182).

Hariprabha was married to a Japanese national. She could see Japanese houses and household things much more closely than the others as a Japanese person's wife. She used some Japanese words very casually, which is relatable to her situation. She also mentioned their well-furnished houses where unnecessary things were strictly avoided. Shoes were not allowed inside their houses, and she described that their houses did not resemble the conception of the house we had prior in our mindset (Huq, 1999, 46).

5.5 Japanese women

Sarojnalini was mesmerised by observing that Japanese women were primarily free. They were answerable to their family members for sure, but they used to go out and buy groceries freely. Do works without any male supervision. From the context of those Indian ladies, this sort of free movement was indeed surprising. Sarojnalini once mentioned that Japanese women are happy because they are free. Witnessing Japanese women's fashion, Saroj perceived that they were not interested in ornaments. Though they wear some expensive pins in hair other than that r, there was no gold or silver as adornment. Japanese people fix their teeth well, but that was never counted as a showy fashion. The way Japanese women make their hair, Saroj found that fascinating. It did not have any semblance with the Indian one. However, Japanese ladies used to apply various hairpins as the Indians do (Sen, 2010, 174-75).

Saroj mentioned in her book that India had a trend to marry their young girls at the age of 15 or 16, but Japanese ladies get married at 22 or 23, but none of them remains unmarried. Saroj found this very interesting. She felt disappointed when she noticed all the girl children were liberated and appropriately educated. Saroj tended to compare her country with the country she had visited, and while comparing the literacy rate with Japan, she found it frustrating (Sen, 2010, 175).

Hariprabha also mentioned the position of Japanese women inside their society. She said that Japanese women do not have any occlusion in their freedom. According to Hariprabha, Japanese women are free, happy-go-like, but if their mother-in-law is unhappy with her, the marriage could reach its end easily (Huq, 1999, 50). From the Japanese context, this could be easily understandable that

Japan has their UE (家) and SOTO (外) concept, and they never allow anyone to break their inner circle, and they are comfortable being reluctant to their outer circle (Ikeno et al., 1949). Abala Bose also mentioned that Japanese women are educated, hard-working, and experts in household activities. Abala found Japanese women are purely unpretentious, away from wearing ornaments (Dasgupta, 2017, 106).

Both Shanta Devi and Parul Devi mentioned that Japanese women were spontaneous and hard-working. Parul Devi said in her write-up that Japanese women could work like four men at a time with a happy face. (Devi, 1342). Shanta Devi also mentioned Japanese women's sense of beauty and their hospitality. Precisely, Japanese women were comparatively empowered to some extent compared to our expanse at those days.

5.6 Festivals

Saroj attended a Japanese festival, namely Omikoshi, which resembled the Rath-Jatra in Hinduism when she was there. An Omikoshi (神輿) is a sacred religious palanquin (also translated as a portable Shinto shrine). Shinto followers believe it serves as the vehicle to transport a deity in Japan while moving between the main shrine and temporary shrine. Saroj had watched Japanese Drama also. From her description and the photo shared in this book, it could be said that it was kabuki that she had seen, and she mentioned that the drama has some resemblance with Bengali Jatra –pala (Sen, 2010, 223-227).

Hariprabha was there with her in-laws at the time of Japanese New Year festivals. He penned in her write-up that Japanese people enjoy significantly at the time of their New Year festival; they pray for a good year, play kite-flying, wear new clothes, and enjoy for at least seven days. It seems that they try to enjoy and gather energy for the entire year by enjoying their most important festival (Huq, 1999, 39-40). Abala Bose mentioned in her write-up that a Scottish couple accompanied them to Japan, and Abala came to know that they had been to Japan twice before but missed the Cherry Blossoms festival, so they came again to witness the Cherry Blossom festival. Abala also said that Japan is the land of natural beauty, and they are the worshiper of exquisiteness. Nature of Japan is ready to mesmerise the rest of the world with her enchanting beauty. In a word, Japan is unique. Moreover, Abala revealed Japanese culture with two separate festivals for boys and girls. Abala witnessed these two festivals while staying in Japan, and she said that the fish Japanese people hang on the top of their

household as one of the customs of these festivals were colourful, fascinating, and captivating (Dasgupta, 2017, 105-106).

Parul Devi also joined their Cherry Blossom festival residing there, and she elaborated it as, at the time of Cherry blossom, people got keenly festive and enjoyed their life thoroughly during this spring season (Devi, 1342).

Shanta Devi introduced many aspects of Japan, but she did not mention the Japanese festival. She talked about Japanese temples and shrines elaborately (Devi, 1345). When she visited Japan, she did not get any chance to witness their festival and enjoy it.

5.7 Dresses and foods

All these women talked about Japanese dresses and their getups, as Kimono was so original, eye-catching, and very Japanese - those who get in touch with Japanese custom, never forget to mention Japanese dresses and 'Geta'. Sarojnalini cited in her book that in a concert, she found Japanese women wearing kimonos which attracted her the most, especially the 'Obi'. 'Obi' was the focal ingredient of that attraction. Saroj noticed that the more money they had, the more expensive their Obi was. Another thing Saroj noticed about Japanese women is that they are significantly concerned about choosing their kimono colours. The women were well aware of the fact while selecting colours of the Kimono in combining their age, status, and complexion. Saroj mentioned in her book that the young girls wearing kimonos and wandering around were just like butterflies from one flower to another. However, sometimes loud colours were very appreciated. Sometimes Saroj found their hairs extremely ornamental (Sen, 2010, 172-177).

Hari Prabha also mentioned their Obi uses. Hari Prabha noticed that Japanese women are very fancy about their hair makeups, and they used something relatively different than a pillow for sleeping to ensure that their hairstyle remains unfussy and to refrain from being messy. Hari Prabha contributed more by saying that Japanese people usually do not use ornaments but like to decorate their hair with fancy hairpins and hairbands. They used flowers also for decorating their hair, especially the young generation (Huq, 1999, 47-48). Abala said that she did not like Japanese dresses at all. Their dresses were clean and well-suited, but those were never beautiful. Shanta Devi and Parul Devi also said almost the same thing about Japanese dresses, like the others, especially Parul Devi, stated about Obi and their colourful Kimonos (Devi, 1342).

Regarding Japanese food, Sarojnilini stated Japanese food was terrible for her. The taste of Japanese fishes and the scent that came out from Japanese cuisine demanded Sarojnalini to be accustomed to. Sarojnalini said superlative about Japan throughout her travelogue, but Saroj disliked food (Sen, 2010, 188-189). Hariprabha did not convey her thought about Japanese food as Saroj did, but it was Hariprabha's in-law's house, so she got the chance to cook on her own, and she did that also (Huq, 1999). Thus, we can understand that food was a significant discomfort for both the ladies. Parul Devi stayed in Japan for a little, and she had her food with Bengali people, so she did not talk much about Japanese food, but she tasted Japanese green tea several times, which tasted bitter to her (Devi, 1342).

Shanta Devi mentioned that when she was in Japan, she noticed that Japanese people wore Japanese dress for the lower part and western dress for the upper portion. Moreover, they used to wear a hat with their dresses and an overcoat for the winter season, which was funny to observe. All these fashions were nothing but a mimic of western culture. Ladies started using scarfs along with their kimono. Their shoes were also changed along with the new breeze from the western part (Devi, 1345).

Shanta Devi did not talk much about Japanese cuisine, but Abala Bose mentioned authentic Japanese cuisine – rice, fish, and pickles. Hariprabha, Sarojnalini, and Abala mentioned that Japanese people were not accustomed to deserts with dairy products. Three of them mentioned that Japanese desserts were made with rice and sweet beans in their writings. They found it astonishing, and from the perspective of a Bengali person, it is hard to believe in deserts that were not produced from dairy products.

5.8 Religion

These women repeatedly visited Japanese temples and shrines, but some delivered a detailed analysis of the temples and Goddesses. After visiting several sacred places, Shanta Devi found some resemblance with Hindu Gods and Goddesses with the Japanese version. Sarojnalini also mentioned that Japan was very sincere to protect its heritage and tangible cultures like temples and Shrines. Saroj compared this with the condition of their homeland and felt frustrated that Indian people are unaware and reluctant about these things.

Hariprabha and Parul were from the same religious background – both practised the Brahma religion, though they did not know or meet each other, but both

visited several Japanese temples and shrines and understood the necessity of amorphous God, and both of them had mentioned that. Shanta Devi was from a different background, and the things she had observed were focused on Buddhist rituals, and as mentioned earlier, she found some God and Goddesses who have a resemblance with Indian deities. Abala did not put much light on the religious sights for some reason.

5.9 Visited places

From the point of natural beauty, Saroj found Japan exceptionally aesthetic and artistic. Especially, Parul mentioned that the love and respect for their motherland- make the land more beautiful, gorgeous, and stunning. Abala mentioned Japan as the heaven of natural beauty but did not mention any specific visited place inside Japan. From some sources, it is visible that Jagadishchandra Bose delivered her speech at Waseda University, so they visited the Waseda University (Devi, 1342).

Among them, Sarojnalini visited the most. Parul Devi mentioned visiting Osaka where they enjoyed Cherry dance and remarked Tokyo, Kobe, Kyoto, and Nara as her visited places. (Devi, 1342). They were in Kyoto for three days and visited the Hozu River, Biwa Lake, Buddhist Temple. She especially liked Nara for the deer, and she mentioned that. She also visited Fuji Mountain and compared it with Nikko's mountains, and she found Fuji Mountain more attractive.

Sarojnalini visited Arima, which was situated in Kobe prefecture. She noticed that the people of this place, especially labourers were economically solvent. Saroj had written that the fountain water containing sulphur was good for health, which is why these people were so healthy and happy looking.

Sarojnalini, Shanta Devi, Parul Devi – all of them visited Maruyama Park. Saroj meant the famous Maruyama Park of Kyoto, and all these ladies mentioned this park. Saroj found big red fishes inside the park, and the place was a bit uneven, and that was the park's beauty. Saroj liked Biwa Lake, but unfortunately, she found the lake too noisy and loud, with many people coming and leaving (Sen, 2010).

Hariprabha visited some of the parks near Tokyo. She mentioned those as 'Asaku (probably Asakusa) park', Ueno Park, Hibiya Park. Hariprabha went to Kyoto also. It could be understandable through her write-ups that she visited some of the

Kyoto temples and elaborated on how Japanese people pray and chant (Huq, 1999).

Saroj visited Kinkakuji Temple. She stated that the temple was in Japanese style and the nature of that place was appealing and artistic. According to her and Shanta Devi - there was no furniture, not a single thing without the Amida Buddha inside the temple. She went to Honganji temple and witnessed 300 years old paintings of Peacock, swans, and flowers. The people who went to worship were chanting accordingly, saying 'Nama Amitav'. The thing that made her most astonished was that the temple also had an office and Japanese people were reasonably practical about their system and when it comes to religion - even though they remain the same (Sen, 2010, 179-182).

Shanta Devi went to Nara from Osaka and mentioned the famous park of Nara as Parul Devi did. Shanta Devi visited Nara Museum. She also visited Daibutsu in the Todaiji temple in due course and stated that she visited Arashiyama and Kinkakuji temple in Kyoto (Devi, 1345). While visiting Nara, Saroj had mentioned that she used Rickshaw as a vehicle. With the Rickshaws' help, they also visited temples and saw deer. Saroj had shared a photograph of her son feeding deer some food in Nara Park. Saroj noticed that Japanese people went to places to enjoy natural beauty to learn from nature but comparing the situation of her homeland, our people do not have the experience to go out and learn from nature.

Sarojnalini found the Daibutsu temple unique, and she mentioned that it was the best thing she had seen coming to Japan. She also mentioned that Goutam Buddha was born in India, but Japan had bestowed him with the due respect he deserved all the way (Sen, 2010, 131-132).

Regarding village life, Hariprabha's in-laws' house was in a village, so she lived in the village and experienced Japanese villages for an extended period. Though sometimes she found people annoying, she enjoyed living in Japanese villages most of the time. Parul Devi did not mention Japanese villages as she stayed there very short. Saroj noticed that people do not waste anything in Japanese villages, and they try to use the garbage as fertiliser. She went to Kanazawa Horticulture School also (Sen, 2010). Saroj noticed that village areas were more organised, there were signboards everywhere, almost all the places were neat and clean. The department of agriculture offered a price for those who would not leave an inch of space unused. Saroj also visited soap factories (Sen, 2010, 151-55).

The most visited tourist spot was Nikko and Shanta Devi, Sarojnalini, Parul Devi, and Hariprabha – none of them missed the chance to visit Nikko. They went to Nikko to see the cemetery and temples. Among these temples, Saroj mentioned that she had witnessed the three wise monkey's photos at those temples, which went from India to Japan saying –'Do not Speak Evil, do not hear evil, do not see Evil' (Sen, 2010,264) Saroj went to Nakano, an agricultural university, Tokyo and Yokohama also but it was sad that she stayed three days to Hakone to see Mount Fuji but could not see that. However, they could not see the great Mt. Fuji because of the cloudy weather.

6. Conclusion

Both countries encountered hurdles and hitches at the end of the 19th Century and the 20th. Renaissance started in Bengal in education, culture, and thought in the latter part of the 19th century and continued till the first half of the 20th century. The concentration on westernisation and following the west unquestionably had hypnotised the whole world, and Bengal was not out of that consequence. Women's education and educated women's social up-gradation was in progress at that time, and some of the educated women's contributions to society had enhanced the social and cultural diaspora of Bengal for sure. Considering the context of visiting Japan -these names were on top of that list.

Along with the famous Krisnabhabini, these women also proved themselves in every way that they were educated enough to think independently and inscribe their thoughts. It was when Neo-polarization in the socio-cultural sphere of contemporary Bengal began with the traditional religious reform movements, and from this, the introduction of the Brahma doctrine originated. People got the chance to think inversely and learn to compare. On the other hand, after encountering the western world and the whole world for more than 200 years, Japanese people are also in dilemma and quandary what to receive and what to deceive. The dilemma was in what to imitate undoubtedly and what to protect as authenticity. The observation of these five women about Japan was nothing but the honest deliberation of their understanding. For instance, Hariprabha and Shanta were from a background where Bhrama doctrine was promoted, so when they saw Japanese Shinto temples, they understood the profundity and impact of formless God.

On the other hand, Shanta Devi was from a hard-core Hindu upbringing, so she found resemblances with Japanese God and Goddesses with Hindu deities. None of them was wrong either, and both were correct from their perspectives. All these

people were honest in their judgments. Parul Devi and Abala Devi were mesmerised and amused at the hospitality and mannerism the Japanese women delivered, and Saroj was speechless observing their education policies, especially for women. Parul Devi raised her concern about how a country as small as Japan has made such progress in the last fifty years, and they (Indians) were lagged. All of them were from different areas, but all these travellers understood one essential component of Japan's prosperity. Their prosperity was their patriotism which never let them be failed as a nation.

After analysing their write-ups, the outcome came out: Japan learned hospitality, mannerism, and business. Japan is the heaven of natural exquisiteness, Japanese education policies are full-proof, and Japanese cuisine is not that tasty. According to them, Japan is small in size. They never uttered and remained silent about one thing which was reflected in their writings: Japan may have scarcity in recourses, Japan might be imitating the western world, Japan could easily be defeated, but Japan will never fail.

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