

COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS: DOCUMENTING JAPAN THROUGH BENGALI TRAVELLERS' EYES

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During the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, along with the surge of travels to the West, to Europe and England in particular, we also find Bengali travellers frequenting the eastern nation of Japan. This paper will focus on select travel narratives of Bengalis visiting Japan, the proverbial 'Land of the Rising Sun,' by people like Swami Vivekananda, Manmathanath Ghosh, Suresh Chandra Bandyopadhyay, Sarojnalini Dutt, Hariprabha Takeda, Rabindranath Tagore and others. Taken together as a whole, they give us a better understanding of a race and oriental culture which are mind-boggling in their diversity.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, along with the surge of travels to the West, to Europe and England in particular, we also find travellers frequenting the eastern nation of Japan. Prominent among them were Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, the freedom fighter Rashbehari Bose, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and Justice Radha Binode Pal along with a lot of other lesser known names. Though not crossing the proverbial 'kalapani' and hence not ostracized from contemporary Bengali society, the travellers to the east create a vast knowledge bank for the people back home. Apart from Europe, a new horizon for exploration opened up with the burgeoning pan-Asian sentiments and the idea of 'Greater India.' Though not directly related to the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, it is interesting to find numerous accounts of journeys to the East during this period. Though subjective on most occasions, the experiences garnered by these travellers create a micro-history which is as significant as grand narratives of cross-cultural encounters. Here it has to be remembered that though several people travelled to Japan, not all of them

wrote down their experiences in the form of travel narratives. Thus the ratio of documentation versus actual physical journey is quite out of proportion.

Though related to the same geo-political space, the travel narratives on Japan appear in different styles, contexts and purpose, some in the form of letters, diaries, or memoirs. Let us begin with Swami Vivekananda. In a letter written by him to Alasinga Perumal of Madras, from Yokohama, dated 10 July, 1893¹ he describes the picturesque countryside and the discipline and meticulousness of Japanese life. Vivekananda's visit to Japan on his way to the World Congress of Religions in Chicago in 1893 opened a great vista to the people of India about Japan and her people.² He writes:

The Japanese are one of the cleanliest people on earth. Everything is neat and tidy. Their streets are nearly all broad, straight and regularly paved. Their little houses are cage-like, and their pine-covered evergreen little hills form the background of almost every town and village. The short-statured, fair-skinned, quaintly dressed Japs, their movements,

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¹ See The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol.5, Epistles, First Series, Alasingha III. [https:// en. wikisource.org/wiki/](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/)

² His voyage aboard the S.S. Peninsular began from Bombay on 31 May, 1893 and took him to Colombo, Penang, Singapore, and Hong Kong from where he visited Canton, then coming back to sail via Nagasaki harbor to Kobe in Japan. The rest was a land route that he took, visiting the interiors of the country - Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo.

attitudes, gestures, everything is picturesque! Almost every house has a garden at the back, very nicely laid out according to Japanese fashion with small shrubs, grass-plots, small artificial waters, and small stone bridges.³

It is not merely the aesthetic sensibilities of the Japanese people that he appreciates but also their industriousness and self-confidence:

The Japanese seem now to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present times. They have now a thoroughly organised army equipped with guns which one of their own officers have invented and which is said to be second to none. Then, they are continually increasing their navy. I have seen a tunnel nearly a mile long, bored by a Japanese engineer. The match factories are simply a sight to see, and they are bent upon making everything they want in their own country.⁴

As Rajaram Panda rightly points out, Vivekananda's "firsthand reports about Japan through his letters, lectures, etc. had only one message for the young students of India, "Look East," go to Japan and learn from them about the development strategy of the Meiji Government and how they implemented their plans. Vivekananda's call to the youth led many Indian students going to Japan for higher education to learn about advances made in science and technology. The Indian students under the aegis of the Oriental Young Men's Association also hoped that Japan would become the hub for Asian students to exchange ideas, provide mutual encouragement and that on finishing their studies they would be the pioneers in bringing about development and enlightenment for Asia.

The next historical connect with Japan, though not directly through a travelogue, is the role that the freedom fighter Rashbehari Bose played and which is often underplayed in India. It was Rashbehari who founded the Indian National Army and later handed over the task to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Escaping from India to continue his tirade against the British rule, Rashbehari had reached Tokyo in 1915 and reached out to the Japanese sympathizers. How he went into hiding in the cellar of a restaurant Naka Muraya and later got to develop a bond of affection with the Soma family, who offered their eldest daughter to marry him is quite like a fairytale. Another

person who cemented India-Japan relations was Justice Radha Binode Pal. At the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, known as the 'Tokyo Trial', as the representative of the British power, Justice Pal, much to the surprise of the Allies became the sole judge to give a dissenting judgement exonerating the Japanese of any war crimes. This event of 12 November 1948 when Pal declared all defendants as "not guilty" still raises questions about criminality, power and justice. Unfortunately, we do not get any specific travel narrative to discuss the last two entries in details.

Another Bengali, a Tibetan language scholar, Sarat Chandra Das (1849-1917), visited Japan in 1915 after he had met Akai Kawaguchi, a Buddhist monk and traveller who learnt Tibetan from Sarat Chandra and was in touch with him in Darjeeling in 1897. Sarat Chandra delivered an address at the meeting of the Indo-Japanese Association in Tokyo on 21 November 1915, where he remarked:

Not one in a hundred thousand Indians has yet met with a Japanese merchant, traveller or scholar. There is no record of even a single Japanese lady having ever visited India, it is therefore, necessary that the Indian ladies and gentlemen come here to see for themselves Japanese home-life. Here they will see how artlessly modest the fair sex is, and how collected in mind and manner the men of all classes generally are.⁵

Coming to lesser-known figures, we get references of two Odia travelogues namely Mahesh Chandra Roy's *Japan Prabasinka Patra* (Letters of a Visitor to Japan, 1902) and *Tokyo Ru Kolikata* (From Tokyo to Calcutta, 1903). A few years later we again get Kailash Chandra Bharatkar's *Japan Jatra* (Journey to Japan) and *Japan O Tara Rajbansa* (Japan and Her Royal Dynasty), both published in 1911. The year before these Odia accounts were published, a comprehensive Bengali travel narrative called *Japan* written by Suresh Chandra Bandyopadhyay had been published from Calcutta in 1910. The same year saw the publication of another book called *Japan Probas* (Living in Japan) by another Bengali gentleman called Manmathanath Ghosh who had travelled to Japan in 1906. Later in 1915, he also published another book entitled *Shupto Japan*. The noted social scientist Benoy Kumar Sarkar wrote an article "Pritibir Purbottamo Desh" (The

³ See *The Complete Works*, footnote no. 1

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Mukul Chandra De, *Japan Theke Jorashanko, Chithi O Dinalipi*. Ed. Satyasri Ukil. Kolkata: New Age Publishers, 2005. p. 260. Also quoted by Jayati Gupta.

Easternmost Country of the World) and it was published in *Prabasi* in 1916.⁶ Rabindranath Tagore's 1916 trip to Japan was published as *Japan Jatrîn* 1919. All these travel narratives presented different facets of Japan to the readers in Bengal. They provided them with perspectives of that nation which, taken together as a whole, give us better understanding of a race and oriental culture that are mind-boggling in their diversity.

Suresh Chandra Bandyopadhyay travelled to Japan in 1905 to pursue higher education at Tokyo University and stayed there for four years till 1909. After returning to India, he joined as a ranked official at the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceuticals Limited in Calcutta. He was probably the first traveller from Bengal to document his experiences in Japan and disseminate his knowledge about how the country fought colonial rule and re-casted her identity as a nation. In the introduction to his book *Japan* (1910), he mentions that his prime intention was "to do away with the dearth of informative books on Japan" and acknowledges the help he received from Arthur Lloyd's book *Everyday Japan: Written after Twenty-five Years' Residence and Work in the Country* (1909) and Patrick Lafcadio Hearn's books about Japan, especially his collections of Japanese legends and ghost stories.⁷

Having a didactic agenda, Bandyopadhyay divides his book into five sections and each one deals with a different aspect of Japan. Like all travellers at that time, the first section called "Samudre" (At Sea) describes his trip from Calcutta to Tokyo in details. His impressions about living in the capital city of Tokyo, along with his personal experiences, comprise the second section entitled "Rajdhani" (Capital). Japanese social life and customs are narrated in the third section aptly called "Samaj" (Society), and he mentions that he took help of his friends in garnering information about Japanese women. The fourth section "Siksha" (Education) elaborately discusses issues regarding Japanese education. Providing statistical data, he mentions about women's schools and the number of girl students. In the last section the author narrates the history of the monarchies of Japan and names it "Purboitihaso Rashtraniti" (Past History and the Functioning of the State). If we compare Bandyopadhyay's

narrative with that of Manmathanath Ghosh's travelogue published in the same year, the difference in subject matter and approach become quite marked.

Born in 1882, Manmathanath Ghosh got involved in the Swadeshi movement and later on went to Japan to acquire industrial training under the sponsorship of Raja Pramathabhusan Deb Ray of Jessore. His voyage began on 1st April 1906 and incidentally there were sixteen learners from Bengal altogether on board the ship sailing for Japan and America which included Rathindranath Tagore, Santosh Kumar Majumdar, Satish Chandra Basu, Abaninath Mitra, Nagendranath Majumdar and others. In Japan, Ghosh first arrived at Tokyo from where he went to Kobe and Osaka. His experiences of working as an apprentice at a button-making factory in Kobe gave him the opportunity to know about the life and customs of Japanese people more vividly. The common trope of using the us/them binary is also present in Ghosh's narrative entitled *Japan Probas* published in 1910.⁸ The text can be of great help to a foreign learner of Japanese language who understands Bengali, and the prodigy of conversational Japanese that we find in this travelogue is a unique feature of this text. In the Preface the writer states:

Japan has managed to bring forth a unique feeling within the whole of Asia. Her fame has spread in all corners and has aroused unprecedented hope in the minds of the downfallen I lived in Japan for almost three years to get industrial education. Living among those polite but at the same time independent and liberal minded race, whatever information that I have been able to garner is being partly included in this book. (n.p.)

Unlike other travelogues, the last chapter in Ghosh's narrative entitled "The Path of Return" is quite exhaustive. He tells us how he left the port of Kobe on a clear sunlit day but from the third day onwards, the ship had to face storms and inclement weather. Leaving the last port Moji with a troubled mind, he writes, "Now I said 'Sayonara' (Good bye) to Japan. Readers will probably remember that on my onward journey, the first time when I saw Japan it was a clear day. So I thought that the Japan that had

⁶ Recently a collection of articles entitled *Sekaler Bangla SamoyikPotre Japan*, edited by Subrata Kumar Das and published from NabajugProkasani, Dhaka, give us more information about Bengalis travelling to Japan during this period. Gleaned from articles published in magazines like *Bharati*, *Bangadarshan*, *Prabasi* and others, it contains essays on Japanese life and culture by eminent writers like Jadunath Sarkar ("Dai Nippon"), Benoy Kumar Sarkar ("Japanese Delhi"), Mukul Chandra De ("Japaner Katha"), Shitoko Hari (the first international student at Santiniketan) along with some articles by unknown writers as well.

⁷ For more details, refer to MadhurimaMukhopadhyay's article "Searching the 'Ideal' in Japan," pp.166, 181.

⁸ A new revised and edition of this travelogue has been edited by Subrata Kumar Das and published by DivyaProkash, Dhaka in 2012.

welcomed me with a smile was now pained to bid farewell to me.”

Rabindranath Tagore’s interest in Japan developed in Calcutta in 1902 with his friendship with Japanese art historian and curator Tenshin Okakura (1862-1913) and it was path breaking in the context of Asian Renaissance and a new awakening in asserting Asian identity. As one of the most widely travelled persons of his age, Rabindranath Tagore visited Japan three times: in 1916, in 1924 and in 1929. During his first visit in May 1916, he was accompanied by William W. Pearson, Charles Freer Andrews and the young artist Mukul Chandra Dey. In a lecture entitled “The Spirit of Japan” delivered for the Students of the Private Colleges of Tokyo and the Members of the Indo-Japanese Association at the Keio Gijyuku University on 2 July, 1916, Tagore began by stating that since his visit had been so short, he doubted whether he had earned his right to speak about anything concerning Japan. He was critical of Japan’s preoccupations with material progress and did not mention his friend Okakura in the lectures, as by then differences had cropped up in their world views. But then he opened up his mind to his impressions about the country:

...I have come to the conclusion that the welcome which flowed towards me, with such outburst of sincerity, was owing to the fact that Japan felt the nearness of India to herself, and realized that her own heart has room to expand beyond her boundaries and the boundaries of modern time.

I have travelled in many countries and have met with men of all classes, but never in my travels did I feel the presence of the human so distinctly as in this land. ...What has impressed me most in this country is the conviction that you have realized nature’s secrets, not by methods of analytical knowledge, but by sympathy. (“The Spirit of Japan”)

Scholars always mention Tagore’s travel to Japan in 1916 by referring to his travelogue *Japan Jatri*, [Traveller to Japan] that was published in 1919. Like most traditional travelogues, Tagore begins by describing in details the boredom with which he boarded the ship ‘Tosa Maru’ at the Khidderpore docks in Calcutta, and like a true voyager, goes on describing the ship, the people there including the crew, and also the sights and sounds he encounters enroute to Japan. After three chapters, he illumines the reader about his visit to Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong and by the time he reaches the port of Kobe in Japan, the reader has already reached section 12 of the

narrative. Once in the country, he writes about men-women relationships, praises the Japanese culture, the reticent nature of the people which does not allow carrying their emotions upon their sleeves, the power of the minimalist haiku poetry etc.

Simonti Sen and several other scholars consider Japan *Jatri* to be an oft-referred text “both in the context of the growing pan-Asiatic vision of the Bengalis/Indians in the early half of the last century as well as Tagore’s emerging critique of nationalism” (Sen, 2010, 90). It has to be admitted that many of his observations are somehow linked to the different speeches he delivered in Japan and the articles he wrote on Nationalism. With his dislike of Japan’s aggressive foreign policy, he was critical of Japan’s Great Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere definition. In the context of travel narratives that we are discussing in this article, I would like to omit the clear political overtones that Tagore expressed in his visit to Japan and simply focus on the essence and impressions of the country that the poet expressed towards the latter part of his narrative:

It has been a week that I am in Japan but it seems that I have been here for a long time. That means, the streets, the trees, the people that are new are actually not that deep – whatever is old in them is much more significant. There is nothing endlessly new anywhere, that means there aren’t things which do not yield to that we eternally know; there is nothing incompatible in this world. (*Japan Jatri*, 77)

His narrative is replete with reiterations about the superior aesthetic sensibilities of the Japanese people and he abhors industrialization by stating that all civilized races of the world are gradually being moulded in stereotypes:

Sitting at my window and looking at the city of Kobe what I see is a Japan made of iron, not the Japan of flesh and blood. On one side is my window, and on the other is the ocean and the city lies in between the two. It is similar to the huge and horrible figure of the dragon that the Chinese people draw. With its crooked huge body, it seems as if it is eating up the greenery of the earth.... After looking at the landscape of the city of Kobe I can understand that man has spoilt the uniqueness of what is required (78).

Tagore ends his narrative with comparisons of Japanese and European world values. But in him we could discern both expectations and also a sense of disquiet with regard to Japan.

II

Considering the more well-known travel narratives by men, there are also several travel narratives by Bengali women too especially by Hariprabha Takeda and Sarojnalini Dutt that show how they differ from their male counterparts. Interestingly, both the narratives mentioned the identity of the writers as 'Bengali ladies' in their titles without mentioning their actual names.

Hariprabha Takeda, an obscure housewife from Dhaka in East Bengal made her trip to Japan in 1912 for a humble cause and to almost no public effect. Five years after her marriage to a Japanese national Oemon Takeda in Dhaka, she decided to visit her in-laws in Japan and embarked on a four-month long trip, the memoirs of which was published in 1915 by her sister Santiprabha Mallick after her return to Dhaka as *Bangamohilar Japan Jatra* [A Bengali Lady's Trip to Japan]. The narrative was perhaps the first one about Japan written by a woman from the Indian subcontinent. Hariprabha Mallick Takeda's (1890-1972) evocative account enables us to understand and sympathize as she left her supportive natal family and progressive Brahmo community in Dhaka and set sail across the seas with her husband into a world largely unknown to her. She had to adapt to distinctive Japanese foods, clothing styles, the freezing winter climate, unembarrassed naked public bathing by men and women together, ways of sitting in homes, and drinking alcoholic saké with formal meals. Further, like many dutiful Bengali brides, she made sincere efforts to fit into her husband's family and its unfamiliar domestic customs. But, she spoke little Japanese and her husband's family spoke no Bengali. Moreover, the overall cultural distance between her and her in-laws was vastly greater than for many other Bengali women married into Bengali households of their own community. However fond her Japanese in-laws became of her, they acted with kind hospitality but also distancing formal attitudes since she felt that they regarded and treated her like an honoured foreign guest. To assist, her husband explained to his parents, other relatives, and friends about India and its heritage, including about 'sati' and also Lord Buddha. Indeed, Buddhism, which was the faith community of her in-laws, proved one of the ways that they could relate to her as an Indian, someone coming from the Buddha's own far-off land. Apart from her visit to Japan in 1912, Hariprabha visited Japan again in 1924 and 1941 during the Second World War when she met

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Rashbehari Bose. Her clandestine broadcasts in Bengali from Tokyo Radio on behalf of Azad Hind Fauj are recounted later as part of her experiences in war-torn Japan.⁹

Around the time that Hariprabha was in Japan during the Second World War, unknown to the world, another Bengali school teacher, Suhasini Biswas (1895-1970) was held as a prisoner of war in the civilian camp at Fukushima.¹⁰ She had travelled to Australia around the end of 1941 to see the country and meet her Baptist missionary friends. On her return journey, the ship that she was travelling in, *S.S. Nankin*, was captured by a German raider, and all civilians, the crew and the passengers on board were taken hostages. The Germans handed over to the Japanese all the prisoners who were initially transported to Yokohama. Suhasini did not pen a travelogue, nor was she able to move around when in Japan. Yet her observations of camp life are interspersed with some general insights gathered from her lived experiences in a Japanese setting.

A significant travelogue on Japan written by Sarojnalini Dutt who went to Japan in 1920, was published posthumously in 1929 as *Japane Banganari* (A Bengali Lady in Japan). Published serially in the journal *Bangalakshmi* between 1928-1929, *Japane Banganari* is radically different from the travelogue of Hariprabha Takeda. Her husband Sri Gurusaday Dutt with whom Sarojnalini visited Japan writes in the Preface of the travelogue:

For various reasons it took us quite long to publish Sarojnalini's Japanese travelogue. Anyhow I feel relieved that I have been able to present it before the common public. Sarojnalini had a great desire that her experiences of foreign travel may be utilized for the welfare of our country. I hope her wish will be fruitful and her eternal *atma* will remain satisfied. (n.p.)

As an Indian feminist, social reformer, and a pioneer in forming Mahila Samitis (Women's Societies) in Bengal at the inspiration of her husband, Sarojnalini travelled to Japan along with her ICS husband and son for three and a half months. Written in the form of a diary, this travelogue is basically a day to day narration of her stay in Japan. It began with the sailing of her ship from Calcutta port on 17 April, 1920 and ended with the return journey

⁹ For details about this experience see the essay "In War-torn Japan" in *The Journey of a Bengali Woman to Japan and Other Essays*. Translated by Somdatta Mandal. Kolkata: Jadavpur University Press, 2019.

¹⁰ The author gleaned the information about this entry from Jayati Gupta's book *Travel Culture, Travel Writing and Bengali Women, 1870-1940*.

when the ship neared Hong Kong harbour on 1 August, 1920. But even within that came out her judgmental remarks, her evaluation of Japanese life and society in binaries. For a lady who had worked a lot for the development of Indian women, it is quite natural that in her travelogue a lot of space is devoted in narrating the nature of Japanese women, their lifestyle, their educational development, their independent spirit, their love for discipline etc. She upheld Japan as the Asian alternative and model that should be followed by India. She gave a detailed description of her visit to a girls' school and lamented:

How much more time will the people of our country need to understand the significance of women's education? When will they impart female education in such a dedicated manner? These healthy Japanese girls will one day turn into Japanese mothers. The Japanese have realized this and are making their daughters capable of filling up the roles of their mothers.

Of course the discernible reader also finds a lot of touristy information from Sarojnalini's diary entries as well. Some entries towards the end of her trip are quite materialistic and describe what she and her family did, whom they met, what shopping she did, and how they passed their time on the ship. Of course, the great number of photographs that are included in her travelogue make the readers 'see' a lot of Japan through the narrator's eyes, thus covering up the lacunae of description in some of the disjointed diary entries.

In her detailed research on Bengali women travelers, Jayati Gupta further mentions that like Sarojnalini Dutt, there were many other Bengali women who travelled to Japan and grew interested in seeing Japanese culture and the position of their women. So other travel articles by women about Japan were published in prestigious monthly periodicals, like *Mukul*, edited by Shivnath Sastri, *Prabasi*, edited by Ramananda Chattopadhyay, and *Bharatvarsha* edited by Jaladhar Sen. Abala Bose, wife of the renowned scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose was a frequent traveller and she too visited Japan. Her visit to Japan in 1915 is recounted in an article "Japan Bhraman" published in the children's monthly period *Mukul* in an early 1916 issue. Though written for a juvenile readership, her travelogue sums up several aspects of the socio-cultural life of the country. The writer is curious and seeks insights into the secret of Japan's progress. Abala Bose refers to Japan as

the country where children enjoy great privileges. Since she was travelling to Japan from America, she naturally compares the conditions in the two countries.

Charubala Mitra visited Japan in 1937-1938 and wrote articles for journals like *Bharatvarsha*. Though details about the writer-traveller are not available, these articles as Jayati Gupta rightly states, were obviously written by upper middle-class, educated women, in the pre-Second World War years when Japan was in the process of capturing the imagination of the Bengali middle-class public sphere through the radial activities of Subhas Chandra Bose and later the Indian National Army. Charubala does not tell us about her actual journey to Japan, so dates and circumstances of travel are unavailable. The article documents her visit (she was taken there by a Mrs Mazumdar) to Jiyu Gauken, a school for girls founded in 1921 by Yoshikazu, husband and co-worker of Motoko Hani, Japan's first female journalist, who was born into a former Samurai family and baptized as a Christian in 1890. Charubala wrote several other articles on Japan, and her account of the New Year in the country was published in *Prabasi* (Baisakh 1346 B.S/April 1940, pp.32-39). Two of her articles, "Japan's Yasukuni Shrine" and "In Japan, the Land of the Chrysanthemum," were written for the Bengali children's magazines, *Kaisharak* and *Mouchak*. Her observations about the system of education for Japanese girls becomes a critique of colonial education in India in the early 20th century.

Shanta Devi (1893-1984), daughter of Ramananda Chattopadhyay, the renowned editor of *Prabasi*, visited Japan in 1937 along with her husband Kalidas Nag, known to be a collector of Japanese artefacts and prints. She published experiences of her Japanese sojourn first in an article entitled "Japan Jatra" and then continued it under the title "Japan Bhraman" that extended over 14 consecutive issues of *Prabasi*.¹¹ Shanta Devi's stay in Japan was around 28 days, and the articles describe her visits primarily to educational institutions, an exclusively children and women's hospital, a women's medical college and a technical school for vocational training of girls. Her serialized travelogue reproduced several photographs, postcards and visual material that complemented the written documentation. Citing official statistics compiled in 1933, she refers to the widespread prevalence of literacy in Japan. Other detailed descriptions are about Japanese entertainments – theatre, kabuki and dances, including performances by geishas. The description of everyday

¹ The issues of *Prabasi* cover a span of 14 journal issues from October 1937 (Kartik 1344) to January 1939 (Poush 1345).

items and exotic crafts, the buyers and the shopkeepers find place in the text. Also the underground railway seemed to be a novelty that she describes.

To conclude it needs to be mentioned that from the few selected travelogues from Bengal to Japan that have been discussed here, it becomes clear that though travel narratives have not been taken as a serious genre of study for quite a long time, as nuggets of subaltern history their importance needs to be acknowledged by us now. Instead of sole reliance on grand narratives to disseminate knowledge about nation states we can also string together the little bits and pieces of information and equally enhance our knowledge of places which were out of reach of the ordinary citizens of our country, especially during colonial times.

Note: Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations from the original Bangla texts are mine. □

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