

## **A Travelling Wife's Tale:**

### **A Gendered Reading of Travelogues by Lady Abala Bose**

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In the age of European Enlightenment the Grand Tour functioned as a comprehensive model of tourism. The grand tourist was usually a young aristocrat sojourning in France and Italy, prime cultural destinations that encapsulated the essence of civilized Europe. Exposure to such civilized foreign countries was an adjunct to a liberal education and a part of the Lockean empirical project of enhancing knowledge by coming in contact with varied external stimuli (Gupta).

Though spoken in the European context of Grand Tour, these words present “a comprehensive model of tourism” in the colonial context of India as well. The stalwarts of “colonial modernity” in India, to be more specific in Bengal, like Raja Rammohan Roy<sup>i</sup> Debendranath Tagore<sup>ii</sup> and Michael Madhusudhan Dutt<sup>iii</sup>, akin to the eighteenth-century grand tourists found travel as a gateway of aristocratic leisure, culture and connections: it was their gateway to the path of enlightenment and they embarked towards it. The declaration of fellowships and scholarships by the British government for Indian students studying abroad in 1868 played an instrumental role in inviting many nineteenth-century secular-minded youths to cross the sea. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869,

[. . .] travel to Britain from India promised to become easier, the British Indian Association, an association supportive of British rule in India, established a departure for encouraging both Muslims and Hindus to travel to Britain, not for trade or legal reasons, but for education and scientific purposes (Lahiri 110).

This led a large number of Western-educated middle-class Bengali men to England “to study, to travel for pleasure, engage in social reforms, or advance their careers” (Lahiri 111). Rabindranath Tagore in his essay *Samudrajatra* (Travel by the Sea), published in 1892, linked sea voyages with the ideas of “liberty” and “independence” – an opportunity to broaden the mindscape. Excluded from the male domain of “liberty” and “independence”, women were never encouraged to transcend the threshold of the home and lead towards enlightenment. Partha Chatterjee in “Colonialism, Nationalism and Colonized Women - the Contest in India” (1989) explains this phenomenon thus:

The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility for protecting and nurturing this quality. No matter what the changes in the external conditions for life of women, they must not lose their essentially spiritual (that is feminine) virtues; they must not, in other words, become *essentially* westernized (626-27).

In such cultural context, Indian women’s travel to foreign lands was considered a transgression of social, religious and nationalist codes of conduct established by patriarchy. Though a few courageous women transcended their limited “space” and went out to “see” the world, their act of “going out” was subjected to negative criticism in the contemporary popular culture: a farce called *Kalapani ba Hindumote Samudrajatra* by a Bengali playwright Amritalal Bose<sup>iv</sup> satirised the female sea voyagers as she-babus<sup>v</sup>:

Farewell! Farewell! Gungajee  
We will sail across the sea.  
Burah Burah babu for our freight  
With their lily-face and belly weight,  
Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho!  
Hi! Hi! Hi!

Our Captain Brahmin  
A genuine Kulin Brahmin,  
All the crew  
Are Hindu true;

...On Christmas eve  
 With your leave  
 We'll carry the babus both He and She.

The value of these deviant women lies in the fact that deprived of higher feminist shenanigans like independence and equality they successfully negotiated their liberation by travelling and writing their travel experiences. Overcoming the prejudices against female advancement, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bengali women travellers found the experience of travel, especially foreign travel stimulating and cathartic. The metaphors of travel in this context represent the twists and turns, discovery and drudgery of intellectual and psychological development. This paper will study the travel writings of one such deviant woman – Lady Abala Bose (1864-1951), whose contribution to nineteenth-century travel writing in India needs to be recognised. Her travel writings never received the wide critical attention given to those of Krishnabhabini Das<sup>vi</sup>.

The present paper endeavours to fill this scholarly gap and would read Bose's travel writings from the perspective of gender and subjectivity. In her context, travel and travel writing was a thoroughly gender-inflected cultural practice as a substantial portion of her subjectivity was constructed by gendered discourse. Accompanied by her celebrated husband Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose<sup>vii</sup>, she was one of the few women in nineteenth-century Bengal who travelled abroad. The couple travelled through various continents: the whole of Europe except Russia, America and some parts of Asia and almost the whole of India. But Bose has recorded her travel experiences in England, Italy, America and Japan only: *England Bharaman* (Travel to England, written in three parts in 1897-98); *Italy Bhraman* (Travel to Italy, written in 1901); her travel narrative on America, *Americar Balakbalikader Katha* (About the Children of America, written in 1908); and the travelogue on Japan, called "Japan Bharaman" (Travel to Japan, written in 1915), which was published in a famous Bengali periodical *Mukul*<sup>viii</sup>. Later she published a travelogue called *Bangali Mohilar Prithibi Bhromon* (World Tour of a Bengali Woman) in 1928 in the eminent periodical *Prabasi*<sup>ix</sup>. While Krishnabhabini chose to record her travel experiences in a full-fledged travelogue, Bose has recorded her travel experiences in brief journal articles. Damayanti Dasgupta, the editor of Bose's only available travelogue collection, has pointed out Bose's unique position among the late nineteenth-century

Bengali women travellers: Bose was privileged to accompany her scientist husband on several foreign expeditions throughout her life, unlike her contemporary Bengali women travel writers who got the opportunity to travel once or twice in life. She has interpreted this unique position to be the impetus behind Bose's choice of genre: as she went abroad time and again, maybe that's why she never felt the urge to record her travel experiences in a full-fledged travelogue (9).

Though she travelled and wrote from the subject position of wifely accompaniment, Abala Bose was much more than a dedicated wifely biographer: Bose articulated her own travel experiences in the narratives which recorded the traces of her personal growth and adventures in foreign land. In her travel writings, women-identified, feminine and feminist discourses pervade her inscription of her subjectivity: the paper will draw out the specific aspects of Abala Bose's proto-feminist identity, her pedagogical ambitions, and her comparative cultural commentaries that emerge from the discussion. Her travel writings presented her a rare opportunity (in the gendered context of nineteenth-century India) to articulate views on the world around her and her responses to it. Partly personal, biographical and intimate, her writings were often also political, descriptive, forthright and polemical. Through travel, Bose could fashion herself into informed, discriminating observer, acute social commentator and listened-to cultural critic. While encountering a variety of foreign customs and traditions, travel makes her aware of different culture, history, religion, belief, tradition and lifestyle of the residents living at distant places. And she ends up exploring, in this process, more about one's own self, culture and society, which leads her to a deeper understanding of her own culture and customs. The paper will discuss the critical significance of Bose's travel writing as a gendered document and endeavours to achieve a comprehensive, contextualized analysis of Indian women's travel writing in the nineteenth century.

A proto-feminist, Abala Bose deserves a special mention in the history of nineteenth-century Bengal in her own right. Born on August 8, 1865 at the river-bound district *Barishal* in South-Central Bangladesh, she devoted her whole life to unbind the oppressive shackles of society that engulfed the lives of women. Inheriting reformist instinct from her parents Durga Mohan Das (a renowned *Brahmo* reformer and one of the founders of Bethune Collegiate School for girls) and Brahmamoyee Devi (who devoted all her short lived life to the betterment of the conditions of the widows) Bose devoted her

whole life to advocating for women's rights and education. In 1910, she was elected as the Secretary of the *Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya* (Brahmo Girls' School) and held the position for 26 years. One of the first generation of women students at Calcutta University, she worked all her life for furthering educational opportunity for the womenfolk of her nation. She established around 80 primary schools and 14 adult education centres for women and in 1919, she launched the *Nari Shiksha Samiti* (Committee for Women's Education) to spread female education throughout India. In 1928 she formed the Bengal Women's Educational League, an institution that campaigned for women's franchise and gender sensitivity in the curriculum. She called for the introduction of self defence and the Maria Montessori system in the school education system in India. Her three decade long foreign travel experiences, between 1896 to 1933, introduced her to the innovative educational approaches and methods there and back home, she implemented those techniques in the institutions established by her.

The mid decades of the nineteenth century in Bengal witnessed a caravan of wives travelling abroad accompanied by their husbands – Sashipada Banerjee's wife Rajkumari Bandyopadhyay<sup>x</sup> went to England in 1871, accompanied by her three children. Gyanadanandini Devi<sup>xi</sup> travelled to England in 1877, Krisnabhamini Devi, and Hemangini Bonnerjee<sup>xii</sup> also went there at the same period. In addition to playing an instrumental role in maintaining harmony in their blissful domesticity in foreign lands, these accompanying wives functioned as “incorporated wi[ves]” whose identity is “an intimate function of [their] husband's occupational identity and culture” (Callan 9). Bose was but one of a wide range of nineteenth-century Bengali women determined to elevate themselves through travel. By the end of the nineteenth century, she, along with a number of deviating women had begun to settle into their pursuit of a ‘life of a mind’: foreign travel allowed them to carve out niches in the intellectual geography of nineteenth-century Bengal. These women who had the chance to travel were changing the course of common assumptions and showing others how the experience of travel helped them arrive at a new position – personally and socially- in polite society. Bearing the trait of a perfect travelling wife's tale, Bose's travelogues form a reliable documentation of her husband J. C. Bose's public achievements in the foreign lands. As the original momentum to travel was not her own, her subjectivity got somehow amalgamated with her husband's in her travel writings: she

was a “participant” wife, who “choose to sublimate [her] own interests and identify themselves with [her] husband’s work” (Gartell 179). The taxonomy of Gartell, though useful in analysing women’s travel writing, falls short in capturing the wider spectrum of experience we come across in Bose’s travel writings, as her husband’s career path led her abroad and compelled her to find the significance of her travel - apart from fulfilment through spousal support and home making. Her desire to map out her own existence in these foreign lands leads her to the autonomous spheres of self-fulfilment and self-realization. The impetus behind her travel writings was a personal one: it mapped the subjectivity of a woman seeking, constructing and defining the meaning, purpose and significance of her journeys. She often uses anecdotal technique to make her narrative interesting. As her target readers were adolescent boys and girls, she subtly makes a comparative study between two cultures – the one to which she belongs and the other which she visits. In her *Kashmir Bhraman Kahini* (Travelogue on Kashmir), published in two issues in *Mukul* in 1898, Bose has talked about the importance of travel narratives in building the characters of the young minds of a nation. She recalls how the young children in England and America are fond of reading travelogues since their childhood. She wanted the young minds of India to undergo a similar kind of intellectual training and one of the major impetus behind her travel writings was to educate and inspire these young minds. Bose addresses her young readers thus:

Children in the developed countries like England are fond of reading travelogues since childhood; it is advantageous for them as it generates in them an urge to discover new nations, to sacrifice their life for this cause. . . I wish, by reading our travelogues you will be inspired to travel to various nations and relish the beauty of nature . . . (Dasgupta 4, translation is mine).

Bose was a constant companion to her husband’s expeditions both inland and abroad. This is a rare feat to be achieved by a woman of her time. Famous physicist and J.C. Bose’s relative D. M. Bose recollects how:

The couple used to go out on travel twice every year during the vacations. Their objectives were to visit famous places of pilgrimages, caves and rock-cut temples, scenes of natural beauty, of cultural importance, sites of ancient universities. Armed with a full plate of camera the couple explored and photographed; Amongst the places they visited may be

mentioned Ajanta, Ellora, Sarnath, Budh Gaya, Pataliputra, Nalanda, Taxilla, Badrinath, Kedarnath, the temple at Puri, Bhubaneswar, Konark, and many temples of South India, glaciers etc . . . In later life in connection with his scientific deputations Jagadish Chandra accompanied by his wife travelled extensively in Europe (barring Russia), America, Japan and Egypt (quoted in Dasgupta 5-6)<sup>xiii</sup>.

They have explored almost the every landscape in India – Budhgaya, Rajgir, Sanchi, Chittor, Ajmer, Ambar, Jaipur, Kashmir, Bakipur, Amritsar, Mumbai, Udaygiri, Khandgiri, Lucknow, Nainital, Punjab. Bose's first expedition abroad occurred in 1896 when she accompanied her husband to England. Bose in her memoir *Bangali Mahilar Prithibi Bhromon* (World Tour of a Bengali Woman) considers herself lucky as she has witnessed many tempestuous events in the world history during her travels to the various parts of the world along with her husband (Dasgupta 59). Her subjugated life as a woman and her access to the patriarchal world of science with her husband gave her a "dual" access to the world and turned her into a sensitive and perceptive observer with an unmediated woman's gaze. Unlike the standard domestic discourse of travelling wives, Bose's self-deprecating narratives do not mention the myriad domestic challenges specific in foreign lands. Rather she chose to play the role of "reliable narrator" of her husband's achievements and splendour there. At the same time Bose fashioned herself into the role of an informed and discriminatory observer and acute commentator. Her insightful "female gaze" found a similarity between the gender-based discrimination in the *zenana*<sup>xiv</sup> of *Lucknow* and the apparently liberated space of the English Parliament: Bose recollected how the female visitors to the parliament are made to sit behind a wall with narrow holes on it, just like the female domain of *Lucknow* (Dasgupta 71). She also gave a detailed description of the discriminatory process of pass collecting technique there:

... It is compulsory to collect passes to enter into the [Parliament] hall . . . The male visitors don't have to toil much to collect the passes, as they have a wider sitting space, but the space assigned for women are very narrow . . . sometimes they have to wait for many days for a pass (ibid, translation is mine).

She also thanked Sir John Lubbock for his benevolence of gifting her two passes. There she witnessed the passing of a Factory Bill for the welfare of the working class and in the

manner of a true pedagogue, she expects her young readers to inculcate the British virtues. While recollecting this incident, Bose also criticised the passivity of her countrymen in a subtle manner. In a satiric, rebuking tone she condemned the Indians for their excessive dependence on fate that draws them away from Independence.

By successfully negotiating between patriarchal oppression and women's liberation, traditional thoughts and modernist ideas, she found her travel writing to be a perfect platform to voice her thoughts. In her travelogue on *Japan Bhraman* (Travel to Japan), published in the periodical *Mukul*, she wrote how the birth of a child, irrespective of its gender identity was an occasion of merriment there. She recollected how:

Women are liberated there, without feeling ashamed, they freely roam on the road. If the maidservant is not available, the housewives take their children out . . . As the practice of veil do not exist here, the women here are healthy and strong. Men and women, travelling together in rails and trams is a familiar sight there. Japanese women are educated, hardworking and adept housekeepers (Dasgupta 106, translation is mine).

Interestingly, Bose did not make any overt comparison between the liberated state of Japanese women and the oppressed state of women in her motherland. Yet her covert message for the need of women's liberation in India marks her departure from the patriarchal image of the self which Friedman defines as "alienation from the historically imposed image of the self" that actually motivates the "creation of an alternative self" by her act of writing (41). In disguise of narrating her experiences in the foreign country, Bose rebelled against the "silence imposed by male speech" (Friedman 41). According to Sidonie Smith, in autobiographical writings, "the [female] autobiographer purposefully identifies herself as subject, situating herself against the object status to which she has been confined" (190). Bose, in her travelogues, by choosing to write about her perceptions on women's lives in foreign lands, has deliberately placed herself as a subject with a voice of her own and presented herself as an agent who subverted the imposed and accepted position of women in the patriarchal set up. In a subtle manner she pointed out the derogatory effect that the 'closure system' had on the health of Indian women: she mentioned how the Japanese women are stronger and healthier than the women in her

country as the Japanese do not practice the unhealthy practice of *parda* (veil) unlike the contemporary Indian cultural practice that presented *parda* to be the epitome of ideal Indian womanhood. Bose's voyage to Japan played an instrumental role in shaping up her subjectivity and journey towards self-fulfilment. In her essay "Nari Shiksha Samiti" (Women's Education Committee) she recollected how she was inspired by the Japanese women: "On witnessing the development of education in Japan during my visit there in 1914, I became conscious of the deplorable state of education in my country. It triggered me to set up the "Nari Shiksha Samiti" (Women's Education Committee)" (Dasgupta 106, translation is mine). Thus Bose's travel text goes beyond feminine discourses of domestic support or public assistance in her husband's career and we find discourse of self-fulfilling travel experiences beyond wifely incorporation here.

Education, to be more precise women's education, was one of the major concerns in nineteenth-century Bengal. The Western-educated patriarchy, eager to strike a balance between the colonial subject's ideas of liberation and their traditions gave birth to a new cultural formation called *bhadramahila* – a Bengali counterpart of the Victorian "angel in the house": "the model [*bhadramahila*] was an attempt to synthesize the virtues of the new and old, based on traditional Hindu womanly qualities mixed with modern features derived from the Victorian image of the 'perfect lady'" (Borthwick 56). The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a number of publications by Western-educated men that prescribed the "proper" behaviour model for the "new woman". The titles of two of these publications - *Grihalakshmi* (1884) by Girija Prasanna Roychowdhury, *Ramanir Kartavya* (Duties of Women) (1890) – speak volumes in this context: by upholding the traditional role of women as housewives, these texts reemphasized patriarchal control over women's body and mind. According to the dominant ideas of the time, women's liberation consisted in being able to read and write, keeping household accounts, looking after children's education and being a perfect companion to her enlightened husband. Geraldine Forbes traces the complex politics behind women's education thus:

In the case of female education, early supporters saw opportunities for social mobility as demand for educated brides increased. They were also motivated by a desire for social reform, possible only if women as well as men were educated

. . . The concern here was not with women as individuals but with their development as companions of men, as ‘scientific’ nurturers, and as members of civil society (41).

Bose, being shaped by the dominant ideologies of her time, echoed the concern of her age in her travel writings. Travel helped her to develop views on the opportunities and rights to education. By advocating the lifestyles of middle-class British, American and Japanese women as a model for the Indian ones she is seen to uphold the virtues advocated by the nineteenth-century new patriarchy in Bengal, according to whom women’s education was a mark of their cultural superiority. In spite of being impressed by the educational opportunities available to the foreign women and wishing the same for their Indian counterparts, she is seen to uphold the traditional role of women as doting mothers and dutiful wives (the role prescribed by nineteenth-century Bengali patriarchy for its womenfolk) in her narratives. She is full of praise for the wives for playing their destined roles. In addition to eulogizing the middle-class women for their womanly virtues, she praised the wives of the famous scientists whom she met in London: the wife of Lord Kelvin has earned her admiration for her dutiful service to her unmindful husband (Dasgupta 63). Bose’s ideas regarding women’s education were in line with the nationalist discourse on women’s education and modernity. Yet she never failed to advocate the need for women to cultivate their mental abilities. Writing in the English magazine *Modern Review*, Abala advocated the need for women’s education:

[N]ot because we may make better matches for our girls . . . not even that the services of the daughter – in- law may be more valuable in the home of her adoption, but because *a woman like a man is first of all a mind*, and only in the second place physical and a body (“Problems”, emphasize mine).

Bose’s celebration of women in their traditional roles accords with nineteenth-century Bengal’s patriarchal emphasis on women’s education as enhancing these roles. Yet she traded on the patriarchal territory of education, mostly complying with its dictates, but at the same time trying to push the boundaries a little further.

By the nineteenth century, Bengali women had started recording their perceptions of the world and their lived experiences on the pages of their autobiographical pieces. But travel writing was very much an unexplored area as travel was still considered to be an unwomanly occupation and very few Bengali women got the opportunity to see the world and only a very few of them chose to write about their expeditions. The majority of Bengali women writers then chose to focus on the condition of women, the need for women's education and various womanly issues. The title of the first printed book in prose by any Bengali woman, *Hindumahiladiger Hinobostha* (The Degraded state of Hindu Women) by Kailasbhasini Devi was published in 1863 (Murshid, Rassundari 58) is self evident enough: it focuses on the deplorable state of women in nineteenth-century Bengal. In this context, Bose choosing her travel writings to voice her thoughts, instead of any other form of prose narrative, makes her stand apart from her contemporaries. Following the conventional manner of travel writing, Bose focuses on the places visited by her, juxtaposing her travel writings with narratives on the lifestyle or the cultural life of her destinations. Her restricted existence as a Hindu woman heightens her sensibility to appreciate the comparative freedom enjoyed by her counterparts in foreign lands. Rowbotham's concept of "collective consciousness" that plays a pivotal role in the making of a woman's self, as discussed in Susan Friedman's essay "*Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice*", is operative in her case as well. It is this collective consciousness which makes up Bose's psyche and identity which is actually a "sense of shared identity with other women, an aspect of identity that exists in tension with a sense of [her] own uniqueness" (44). This tension between her individual identity and shared identity adds to the complexities of her travel narratives. Her act of writing travel narrative can be read as a deviation from her gendered role which Friedman defines as "alienation from the historically imposed image of the self" (41). Bose's act of using the male address "*shri*" instead of the traditional female address "*shrimati*" in her travel narratives (all her travel narratives in *Mukul* and *Prabasi* were published under the name Shri Abala Basu), is a reflection of this act of "creation of an alternative self". It can be interpreted as an act of self assertion on her part, a minor but significant step towards equality.

Bose's aphoristic travel writings, though scanty in number, carried much significance with them. They are travel writings with a difference – a subtle negotiation between the indigenous culture and foreign culture, these travelogues anticipated the post-colonial

concern regarding the self and the other. While on the one hand, Bose provided her young readers with a firsthand account of foreign culture, lifestyle and the country she was visiting, on the other hand, her subtle analysis and comparison of the home/foreign culture made Bengal a constant presence in the text. As mentioned earlier, Bose also appropriated aspects of European travel discourse, particularly the binaries between self/other, East/other, and home/abroad. In her research on women's travel narratives, Rita Felski recognises a contemporary model where:

[F]emale self-discovery is depicted as a process of confrontation and dialogue with a social environment. Although the text often emphasizes internal growth and self-understanding rather than public self realisation, only by moving into the world can the protagonist become critically aware of the limitation of her previously secluded existence and her unquestioning acceptance of the circumscribed nature of women's social role (135).

Bose's travel writings are such reliable documents of her journey towards "self-discovery" that traced her expedition towards "internal growth and self-understanding": a growth of her female subjectivity seeking an independent meaning and significance to her travel. Her role as a participant wife provided her adventurous opportunities that were otherwise denied to her and lead her to the path of self-realisation and also gave her impetus to take an initiative towards change and progress.

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<sup>i</sup> Raja Rammohan Roy (1772- 1833) was a great socio-religious, educational reformer in India. He is hailed as the father of modern India. In 1829 Roy travelled to England as the unofficial representative of the titular king of Delhi.

<sup>ii</sup> Debendranath Tagore (1817- 1905) was a follower of Raja Rammoham Roy's revolutionary principles and turned into a Brahmo.

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<sup>iii</sup> Nineteenth-century Bengali poet and dramatist, Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824- 1873) was a pioneer of Bengali drama. His magnum opus *Meghnad Badh Kavya* is exceptional both in terms of style and content.

<sup>iv</sup> Amritalal Basu (1853-1929) was a famous play writer and actor who introduced *kautukrasa*, farce on the Bengali stage. He was given the title of *Rasaraj* for introducing humour in his writings.

<sup>v</sup> *Babu* is a Bengali address for a gentleman, equivalent to English 'Sir'. But in nineteenth century Bengal it was sometimes used in the derogatory sense to refer to the Western-educated young men in Kolkata. The term *she-babu* mockingly refers to the liberated-minded young women then.

<sup>vi</sup> Krishnabhabini Das (1862-1919) accompanied her husband Devendranath Das to England in 1882. She published her travel experiences there in a travelogue *A Bengali Lady in England* (1885), which is one of the pioneering texts in Bengali women's writing tradition.

<sup>vii</sup> An extraordinary man of genius in nineteenth-century Bengal, Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937) is one of the founders of modern science in the Indian subcontinent

<sup>viii</sup> Mainly directed towards the children of the age 8-17, *Mukul* is a Bengali periodical. It was first published in 1895.

<sup>ix</sup> Founded in 1901, *Prabasi* was an eminent Bengali literary magazine.

<sup>x</sup> Rajkumari Bandopadhyay, the wife of Sashipada Bandopadhyay was the first *Brahmo* woman to travel to London.

<sup>xi</sup> Gyanadanandini devi (1850-1941), wife of Satyendranath Tagore was a trailblazer in nineteenth-century Bengal. She went on a sea voyage to England in 1877.

<sup>xii</sup> Hemangini Devi, the wife of Congress leader and barrister, Umeschandra Banerjee held a special position among the early generation of women travellers to England as she travelled without her husband.

<sup>xiii</sup> Abala Basu has published her travel narratives in nineteenth and twentieth century Bengali periodicals but never wrote a full-fledged travelogue. Damayanti Dasgupta has published a modern edited volume of her selected travel narratives in 2005. All the quotations of Bose are from this volume. As the edition is written in Bengali language, all the translations are mine.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Zenana*, literally meaning “of the women” or “pertaining to women”, contextually refers to the female domain of the house in the Indian sub-continent.

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