CHAPTER I
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INTRODUCTION

The Meiji Restoration (1868) in Japanese history is almost universally acknowledged as the dividing point between traditional and modern Japan, as it had led to a multitude of revolutionary changes in various spheres of Japanese society and the life of its people. Unconventional reforms and changes followed after the Restoration had not only changed the political, social and economic structure of the nation but also led the country to rapid modernization, as a result of Western influence which started few years before and continued for many years after the opening of the country. Especially, for the first twenty years after the Meiji Restoration, Japan had gone through very intensive modernization process under the influence of European and American culture. Amazed by the startling advance and progress in science, technology and political thought and philosophy of Western countries, the leaders of Meiji Restoration earnestly made concerted effort to make their nation modern and advanced like the advanced Western countries. These intelligent and vigilant political personnels in Meiji: Government and scholars in various fields, like Fukuzawa Yukichi etc., were also very apprehensive about the military and economic might of Western powers in the second half of nineteenth century. Their
watchful eyes were assessing constantly the political and economic situations of other Asian countries which were colonised by these Western powers. They feared similar fate for Japan also. In order to get rid of such a crisis, and to withstand and resist any external threat they found only one solution that is to modernize the country in both terms of military on occidental lines and economy. Under the sole motto of "Fukoku Kyohei" or a "Rich nation and strong military", these political leaders of post-Meiji Restoration period universally advocated the modernization of their country on Western lines. Unlike the great Asiatic cultures like those of India and China, Japan voluntarily and with set purpose decided to meet Europe half-way and to remodel her national life following Occidental pattern, so that she would be able to counter any threat from Western countries and retain her independence and enjoy full sovereignty. Japan's Westernization was farther and faster than any of the Asiatic countries, and in a short span of only about twenty years after the Meiji Restoration, Japan had already achieved the status of an advanced nation which could compete with any of the advanced Western countries of that time.

However, Japan did not slavishly copy the Western civilization altogether blindly. Its leaders very prudently

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selected certain aspects of Western civilization and introduced it after rearranging suitably to fit into the Japanese society. Japan has a long history of adoption and introduction of Chinese culture and civilization, but certain important institutions of ancient China never took root in Japanese soil because those were not suitable for their society. It was the same case with Western culture and civilization also. Although they wholeheartedly welcomed the idea of Westernization, they executed it prudently, scrutinizing every aspect of Western culture minutely and experimenting their suitability into Japanese society - a society conventionally set up according to Confucian principles. In fact, the Meiji leaders possessed personal animosities toward the West, particularly for forcing Japan to accede to the 'unequal treaties', which were signed between the Tokugawa Bakufu and the Western nations before the Meiji Restoration. According to this treaty, signed on July 29, 1858, the Western powers had extraterritoriality or in other words, Western residents in Japan had the right to be tried by their own consular courts under their own national laws. The Japanese people considered it as an insult to their national feeling and sovereignty. Therefore, one of the first items in

the agenda of Meiji government was to get this treaty either abolished or rectified. However, these leaders were by and large pragmatic men who respected the material superiority of the West. Moreover, by the time of Restoration Japanese society had already reached a fairly high degree of maturity in the crucial areas of politics, economics and education. The very existence of these internal conditions enabled the Japanese to grasp and understand the meaning of Western civilization properly and assimilate it into their society successfully.

The Meiji government immediately after the Restoration sent a goodwill mission to America and Europe in 1871, first of all, to persuade the Western countries to revise the 'unequal treaties' and then to get a first hand information about the much advanced Western civilizations. This mission known as "Iwakura Mission" was consisted of prominent personalities, like Iwakura Tomomi, Ito Hirobumi, Kido Takayoshi, and Okubo Toshimichi and nearly a hundred other Japanese. They first of all visited nine major cities in the United States and then travelled to England, and Scotland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Austria and Switzerland. During their stay in the West, members of this mission earnestly examined and

3 G.B.Sansom, op.cit., p.328; Paul Varley, op.cit., p.207.
studied various political systems, education systems, social set up, economic conditions, development of science and technology, defense systems etc. of these developed nations. Upon their return in the next year, the Iwakura mission made various proposals to the government. The Meiji government after studying the mission’s report minutely, embarked on various reforms. Hence, a chain of reform activities were to follow one after another, in almost all social spheres, which ultimately moulded the prototype face of the modern Japan. As we shall see later on, all major social and political reforms such as abolition of class system, introduction of universal education system, regulations related to possession of property, family, marriage, divorce, religion etc. had been executed one after another immediately after the return of Iwakura mission in 1872. To the general Japanese public after the Restoration, the idea of progress and Westernization was not only welcome, but extremely stimulating. It was interpreted by them not in terms of spiritual enlightenment but of material accumulations - more facts, more wealth, more strength, more manufacturers, more men, shops and guns. To realize the slogan of 'Fukoku Kyhei' (Rich nation and strong military) it was inevitable for the Japanese to assimilate the Western material culture on a priority basis. This craze for Western things and ideas lasted for about two decades after 1868, described by some Japanese historians as the period of
intoxication. The attitude of the authorities towards the adoption of Western institutions and customs was to a great extent shaped by their anxiety to show to Western nations that the Japanese people had assimilated enough of Western culture to justify their claims to be treated as members of a civilized modern state. They wanted Western nations to agree that the constitution and laws of Japan were enlightened and that her standards of public and private behaviour were high enough to make their country a respectable and worthy member of international society. Therefore during the era of enlightenment, that is between 1868-1888, the only doctrine which could be successfully preached in Japan was a utilitarian philosophy suitable to a country which was aiming at the material development of the nation and the individual.

Fukuzawa Yukichi, renowned philosopher of enlightenment movement and stout proponent of universal education for both men and women, was the leader of this utilitarian philosophy. His visit to America in 1860 and to Europe in 1862 gave him the opportunity to watch and experience directly the wonders of Western everyday life in Western countries. He was amazed by the scientific and technological advancement of the West,

4 Fukuzawa Yukichi, Seiyo Jijo, Condition in the Western World (1861-1867).
5 Fukuzawa Yukichi, Gakumon no Susume (An Encouragement of Learning) (1872-1876)
such as telegraph, galvanising process, boiling process in sugar refinery and horse-drawn carriages etc. Upon his return to Japan, Fukuzawa started publishing a book titled 'Seiyo Jijo' (conditions in the West) in 1866. This book contained precisely the kind of information which Japanese at that time were needing to substantiate their shadowy vision of the Western lands. It gave them concise accounts of everyday social institutions such as hospitals, schools, newspapers, workhours, taxation, museums, and lunatic asylums. He argued that Japan could become civilized and strong only if it adopt the Western scientific techniques and introduce teaching of natural sciences, medicine, astronomy, geography etc. on a large scale in an organized manner as in the West. He attacked the traditional pessimistic attitude of Buddhism which taught the people traditionally that “all things are impermanent, suffering is universal, and a man is the helpless victim of his fate”, and enlightenment could be achieved only with the help of right views, right intentions, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. He argued for material prosperity and physical enlightenment of the individual which would ultimately bring wealth and prosperity to country and strengthen its hands so that it can retain its integrity and sovereignty and face valiantly any external threat. He, at the same time cautioned the country against blind, complete
Westernization on Western lines. Instead he preached a balanced adaptation of Western civilization, arranged in such a way that it will not destroy the national character of the Japanese. "We want our learning independent, not licking up the less and scum of the Westerners. We want our commerce independent, not dominated by them. We want our law independent, not held in contempt by them. We want our religion independent, not tangled underfoot by them. In short, we have made the independence of our country our lifelong objective, and all who share these aspirations with us are our friends, and all who do not are our enemies." His philosophy was the philosophy of the achievement of this goal, although there were some opposition from certain sections of the Samurai and peasant leaders.

The appropriate and balanced amalgamation of "Western techniques and Eastern ethics" was the main goal of the Meiji leaders, and apart from political leaders and political philosophers, it was the people who were in the literary world who contributed mostly into its realization. All the great literary figures of Meiji period, including Shimasaki Toson whose works are the subject of this study, had been influenced

6 Fukuzawa Yukichi, Jiji Shimpo, Hatsuda no Shushi, FYD, III, 131.

by the Western civilization and thought in one or the other way. Hence, a detailed study of Western influence on the social, political, economic spheres of Meiji Japan becomes all the more important for this study. In the following pages a brief description of various direct and indirect Western cultural impact on the Meiji Japan during 1868-1890 is discussed.

Political and Economic Changes

The driving force at the restoration and in political life for the best part of early Meiji period was provided by leaders who had been brought up in feudal, or at any rate a feudalistic atmosphere. They were low class Samurai who were ambitious and dissatisfied by the ineffective rule of Tokugawa Bakufu. They were mainly young Samurai of lower ranks from Western Japan who never before had been in political power. However, they had solid military support from powerful domains like, Satsuma Choshu etc. Their outlook was coloured by their antecedents and it was these men, not the bourgeoisie who laid the foundation of a capitalist structure and at the same time developed a political system needed to unify the country and modernize it on the Western lines. These young leaders who succeeded in overthrowing the Bakufu and restoring the emperor based their fight against the bakufu and the emerging external

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threat on the slogan, "reveal the emperor and expel the barbarians" (Sonno joi). However, after the restoration these same groups of leaders realized the need for modernizing their country, borrowing western technology and knowledge, in order to defend it from any external threat. Hence, the same people who were once advocating the expulsion of barbarians (foreigners), now started stressing the importance of building material wealth and strength of the country, which could be possible only through various reforms. A first glance at the course of events gives the impression that one belief after another, one institution after another, fell before the attack of Western influence. Yet a closer examination shows that many of the important changes that took place in political and social life came about not by direct imitation of Western models but by a natural process of evolution. Certainly, various Western political, social and educational systems were made to direct and indirect examination and scrutiny by the Meiji leaders during the process of creation of various modern, reformed political or social institutions.

The first and foremost achievement of Meiji restoration was the unification of the country into a single unified nation under a imperial government. In the Tokugawa period, Japan was divided into several clans and fiefdoms, although

the shogunate had an overall control over the daimyo. Based on article-1 of the Charter Oath, "Deliberative assemblies shall be established on an extensive scale and all measures of government shall be decided by public opinion"," taken by the emperor on 6th April 1868, the Meiji government strived toward the creation of a constitutional government. But, it took almost twenty years more to realize this plan as the Constitution was promulgated in 1889 and the first Diet meeting after the establishment of new Constitution was held in 1890. The first post-Meiji government was a simple structure, consisting of a Supreme Controller and senior and junior councils of state. The controller was an Imperial Prince and his deputies were two court nobles of highest rank, Iwakura Tomomi and Sanjo Sanetomi. These appointments were necessary in order to emphasize the power of the throne and the civil aristocracy, which military aristocracy had for so long usurped. The controllers department was manned by youngish and ambitious but modest origin Samurai from the clans of Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa and Hizen. This government established under the term of charter oath was very ineffective and did not embody any Western form and was not inspired by any Western influence. Therefore, full reorganization of the administrative system was planned and

carried out in 1885. In fact, Japan was not ready for
democracy during the early period of Meiji era. But still the
Dojokan or Council of state, the supreme organ of the first
government was abolished and its place was taken by a cabinet,
composed of ministers of the several departments of state and
presided by a Prime Minister. Under this arrangement the
emperor remained as an absolute monarch, nominally exercising
personal rule with the advice of the Prime Minister. This
system of government was partially influenced by the German
system of the period. The domestic situations of Germany and
Japan of that time were similar and the leaders of early Meiji
period found it most suitable to their country. In 1881 Ito
Hirobumi led a study mission to England, France, Germany and
Austria. The greater authority of the monarch and the limited
powers of the parliament in Germany seems to him better
suiting to the existing needs and conditions in Japan. This
choice of conservative German model for the constitution and
government also coincided with the change in the attitude of
people toward things Western. In fact, by this time the craze
for things Western was subsided by a growing spirit of
nationalism and craze for Japanese things.

However, a group of young liberal leaders, led by Itagaki
Taisuke Eto Shimpei and Goto Shojiro, could not compromise
with the conservative and reactionary policies of the
government. They, in contrast to the peasant riots and
Samurai rebellions in the early and mid-1870s, began a more peaceful form of political protest, relying on political agitation, local organization, journalistic attacks," and direct petition to the central government. Intellectuals, inspired by Rousseau and British liberal thought also joined this group, giving it somewhat radical fringe. This was the beginning of the freedom and popular rights movement" (Jiyu Minken Undo) in the middle of 1870s. Itagaki and his followers organized several agitations under their organization Risshisha, a local political association in the Tosa region, and demanded for the establishment of a national assembly based on a constitution, reduction of taxes, and revision of unequal treaties. The emperor had agreed to promulgate a constitution by 1890. Efforts for drawing up the new Constitution were started from the beginning of 1880s under the leadership of Ito Hirobumi and it was promulgated finally on February 11, 1889." The new Constitution contained a section on the rights of the people, including most of the civil rights, generally accepted in the advanced nations of the West. However, these rights were carefully circumscribed by strict laws and regulations. Promulgation of

12 Ibid, pp.311-12. Also see, H.Paul Varley, op.cit., p.213.
13 G.B.Sansom, op.cit., pp.358-68.
Constitution (1889) and establishment of National Diet (1890) were major turning point in the political history of Japan. The successful inauguration of constitutional government, together with a complete remodelling of the legal system in accordance with Western practices, compelled the British in 1894 to give up their extraterritorial privileges in Japan. Soon after, all other Western powers also followed suit.

Prior to the promulgation of the constitution, voting system was introduced, though the electorate was consisted of men only who were paying more than 15 yen in direct tax. Prefectural assemblies were established in 1879 and village, town and ward assemblies in 1880 and city assemblies in 1888. Universal conscription was introduced in 1873, making an end to the concept of a privileged military class, the Samurai or the warriors. Thus within twenty years of coming to power, the new government had cleared away the outdated political system of Tokugawa period and had achieved complete control over the nation and succeeded in convincing the Western advanced countries that Japan had modernized its political and economic institutions.

The Meiji government’s economic policies were based on the slogan of "Fukoku Kyohei" or a "rich nation and strong military". Article-2 of the charter Oath by the emperor urged

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14 For details, please see, Early Meiji: The Political Scene, G.B.Sansom, op.cit., pp.310-77.
the people to unite 'in vigorously carrying out the plan of the government' irrespective of their class or rank. The general public of early Meiji Japan made its first acquaintance with Western economic ideas through the writings of the versatile and prolific Fukuzawa Yukichi. His "Seiyo Jijo" (western conditions), first published in 1867-69 gave some elementary facts on commerce and banking and his Minkan Keizairon (1877) was a popular statement of economic principles. One of the major policies of the new government was the abolition of 'han' system in August 29, 1871 and introduction of prefectures in its place. The new government put the fiefdoms under centrally appointed governors and paid off the daimyo with government bonds. For the Daimyo, their government bonds became an important source of future banking capital. But it was the Samurai (or the warrior class) who were the great losers in this reformation as many of them lost this source of income to survive. In fact, Samurai's hereditary stipends had been cut in half in the reform of 1869 and finally, in 1876 the government forced those Samurai to commute their remaining stipends into lumpsum payments of further reduced value.

A banking system was created in 1872, at first along the lines of decentralized American banks and later on the

15 G.C.Allen, A Short Economic History of Modern Japan, p.43.
basis of the centralized banking system of Belgium. The currency was made uniform, and in 1871 the yen was adopted as the unit of value. In order to make budgetary possible, the land tax, the chief source of revenue, which had been paid in percentages of yield, was shifted to a fixed money tax in 1873, and the payers of this tax were recognized as the outright owners of the land. The new government laid telegraph lines throughout the nation to facilitate communication and control. A postal system was created in 1871. It improved the facilities in the existing posts and began to construct railway lines in 1872 with a line between Tokyo and the port city of Yokohama. It also developed a modern munition industry in the lines of Western models so that Japan could be independent of imported Western weapons. Mines were developed and pilot plants in various industries were built. The new government had expanded the existing industries of shipbuilding, cotton spinning and weaving etc. by the mechanization of their plants. Besides this, the new government introduced many other small and light industries like bricks making, glass etc.

16 Ibid, p.33.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid, p.34.
The new leaders clearly realized that to succeed in all these efforts, Japan would have to learn a great deal about the technology, institutions and ideas of the West. They were also aware that their policies would not be successful if there are no educated public capable of supporting a modernized economy and society. In the imperial edict delivered to the family heads of nobles on October 22, 1871, the Meiji Government had clearly instructed its subject to pursue all the means to improve their knowledge and technology. It instructed the people to go abroad if needed and acquire the modern, advanced practical skills of the West. "Nothing is more effective for developing knowledge and improving technology than studying useful subjects with an eye out for the trends in world civilization or acquiring practical skills by going abroad to study in foreign countries. Even for those who are too old for studies abroad, travel overseas to widen one's horizons may be helpful for increasing knowledge." Therefore, some students, including even a few girls, were carefully selected on the basis of their capabilities and sent to study in countries selected with equal care. The government sent students to England to study navy and merchant marine, to Germany for the army and

19 The Peerage Act, July 7, 1884; Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources, vol.3, 1869-1894, p.89.
medicine, to France for local government and law and to the United States for business methods.

Social Changes

The social changes which followed the Meiji Restoration had far reaching effects on the life of Japanese people. The Japanese people who were leading an isolated social life for more than 250 years in a closed condition under the iron fist of feudalism and a rigid class system, got amazed by seeing the advanced social life of the Westerner. Soon a popular craze for Western civilization swept through the country, among young and old, man and woman. "The sudden opening of Japan", as the scholar Nishi Amane remarked in 1874, was like "the overturning of a bottle" - Western clothing, architecture, food, fashion, even hair cuts spilled out into Japan in indiscriminate ways." 20 Both government and the public realized the urgent need for transforming their traditional society based on obsolete but rigid Confucianist principles into an enlightened, advanced society based on scientific principles and western thought. Specially, they were aware of the "unequal treaties", signed between the Bakufu and Western powers, which gave the Western countries extra territoriality or the right of Western residents in Japan to be tried by their own consular court under their own

20 Thomas R.H.Havens, Nishi Amane and Modern Japanese Thought
national laws. This was a humiliating treaty as far as the Japanese concerned, and they wanted to get this revised as early as possible. People of Japan knew that they can acquire the status of an advanced nation only if they come out of their backward social set-up and modernize themselves, by borrowing and adapting western customs and habits.

Abolition of Class System

Article 3, 4 and 5 of the Charter Oath taken by the emperor in 1868 facilitated the process of social reforms and modernization. "All classes of the people shall be allowed to fulfill their just aspiration so that there may be no discontent" (Article 3). This has ensured the public the freedom and liberty to act according to their convenience to achieve the common goal of 'Fukoku Kyohei' or a "Rich nation and a strong military". As a first step to social reformation, the Meiji government abolished the class system, which remained as the backbone of feudal system throughout the Tokugawa period, in 1871. During the feudal period, especially during the Tokugawa period (1602-1868), the Japanese society was mainly divided into four classes; namely, the warriors (Samurai), farmers (nomin), artisans (Kojin) and tradesmen (Shomin). The warrior class was the ruling class

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21 Hozumi's version of English translation of the character oath as quoted in G.B. Sansom, op.cit., p.318.
who enjoyed several privileges and rights which others could not get. All other three groups of people were together called as the 'commoners'. Apart from these four recognized classes, there were also the outcastes (eta) and hinin (non-humans) who were treated like animals by the upper class people. The new law provided legal equality for everybody, including the outcast elements. The warrior class or the Samurai, who were the elite group in the society lost their privileged special status, as the government decreed universal conscription in 1873. Their profession, their revenues and their prestige had vanished or sunk to a low level. And in 1877, the Samurai were denied the right to wear their swords. As a result there were occasional uprisings among Samurai from 1874 onwards but the Meiji government successfully controlled and suppressed them. On the other hand the erstwhile lower classes of the society namely, the farmers, artisans, businessmen (traders) and the eta community (who are known as burakumin now) were conferred with new rights which enabled them to choose their own occupation according to their wishes and even they were allowed to obtain title deed to land. The Japanese are a restless people who believe in action than contemplation. Under the influence of "utilitarian philosophy" advocated by early Meiji government

23 Ibid, p.334.
and the thinkers and educators like Fukuzwa Yukichi, etc. the liberated mass of Meiji Japan disposed to accept the theory that a good life can be attained only by assiduous devotion to practical matters.

A rigid class system was prevailed under the feudal system of Tokugawa period, where the duty and responsibility of each individual had been determined by his status. The society was guided by the hierarchical principles preached by Neo-Confucianism. Although the Tokugawa Shogunate and its authorities had little interest in the purely metaphysical side of New-Confucianism advocated by Chu-Hsi, they found this philosophy the best medium to legitimatize and perpetuate the feudal structure of the society. Neo-Confucianism held that the physical world was based on an inherently perfect order and each individual was guided by 'li' ('ri' in Japanese means principle or reason), and when men failed to comprehend this 'li' of things, social disorder would occur. Hence, Confucianism taught the people to be obedient and loyal to their masters and demanded a strict observation of hierarchical set up of the society based on five primary human relationships; namely relationship between father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, older and younger


brother, and between friends. It was this hierarchical set up and class system which were got abolished by the Meiji government in 1871, as the young leaders were well aware of the fact that in the changed condition of the society, the feudal hierarchy and class system cannot be practicable. Under the new law each individual had the freedom to act according to his will and conscience, like the citizens of the advanced Western countries of that time.

Western Influence on Food, Dress, and Other Social Changes

Opening of the country and its subsequent contact with the advanced Western nations not only provided the Japanese with social equality but also influenced its eating habits, dress and other social systems. Article 4 of the Charter Oath" taken by the emperor laid the way for such social changes as it goes in the following way; "Uncivilized customs of former times shall be broken through and everything shall be based upon just and equitable principles of nature". The new government of early Meiji period persuaded the public to imitate the eating habits, clothing etc. so that they would become modern and civilized like the Westerners. The most important change brought forth into the menu of Japanese people by the Meiji Restoration was the introduction of meat.

Meat eating hitherto was prohibited by both Shintoism and Buddhism as it was regarded as defiling worshippers at temples and shrines. However, the authorities assured the public that its consumption does not defile either the worshippers or the shrines because the westerners eat it often and their religion, Christianity, does not ban it. On the contrary, it must be consumed in large quantity for becoming modern. Hence, meat eating had become a status symbol for the enlightened Meiji Japanese. Not only meat, but various other Western dishes became the favourite of the Japanese. Specially, Italian, French, English and American food became very popular.

Kanagaki Robun, a popular comic writer and prolific journalist satirized the scene of beef eating by enlightened Japanese in an eating house, in his famous work "Agura nabe", written in 1871. The typical man of the day, he said was the "beef eater", a westernized swell with long flowing cologne-scented hair, calico underwear peeping from under his kimono, a gingham umbrella at his side, and a cheap Western pocket watch ostentatiously consulted from time to time. Sitting in a new style restaurant, he gobbled down a plate of beef, telling his neighbour how fortunate it was that "even people like ourselves can now eat beef, thanks to the fact Japan is
becoming a truly civilized country". Along with meat eating, having a pocket watch, holding an umbrella, wearing western style underwear and hats were also considered as symbols of civilization.

"Civilization Ball Song" was a kind of game designed to impress on young minds the advantages of Western culture. In this game, they were to count the bounces of the ball by reciting the names of ten objects deemed to be the most worthy of adoption - namely, gas lamps, steam engines, horse carriages, cameras, telegrams, lighting-conductors, newspapers, schools, letter post and steam boats."

Another important item came under direct influence of the West was the clothing. An imperial ordinance in 1872 prescribed foreign dress for court and other official ceremonies. Military uniforms of Western type were adopted even before the Restoration of 1868, as they were much more convenient than the traditional Japanese dress. Government authorities made a statement (after the above said ordinance) which stressed the point that the traditional Japanese costume was not appropriate to the times. To achieve the common goal of prosperous and a strong nation, all of its citizens must

27 Kanagaki Robun (1871), Agura Nabe, quoted in Donald Keene Modern Japanese Literature.
28 G.B.Sansom, op.cit., p.383.
29 Ibid, p.382.
work together actively and for that purpose Western dress was
most appropriate. The rage for Western clothing is described
in an early issue of the Tokyo Time: "...in the 2nd and 3rd
years of Meiji, the demand for foreign goods remarkably
increased. Those who formally looked upon them with contempt
changed their minds and even dressed in foreign cloths. Our
males adopted the European style. They put on fine tall hats
instead of wearing large cues on their heads and took to
carrying sticks after discarding their swords. They dressed
in coats of the English fashion and trousers of the American.
They would only eat from tables and nothing would satisfy them
but French cookery." 30 Initially many people opposed the
introduction of Western clothing, but as they realized that
Western dress was more convenient than their own, without any
hesitation they discarded 'kimono' and adopted it. Thus the
Meiji Japanese moved one step further toward the final goal of
complete westernization.

Various other changes occurred in society as a part of
Westernization. The traditional umbrella made of Japanese
paper was replaced by Western style umbrella made of cloth.
People were instructed to discontinue the traditional fashion
of hairdressing. The 'topknot' was abolished and men were
asked to cut their hair short and maintain it after the

30 Tokyo Times, January 27, 1877, p.46 giving as its source,
"Kinji Hyoran - Translation of Japan Gazette".
foreign style. Traditional paper lantern and candles were replaced by "oil lamps" of the West. Traditional bathhouses in Japan were common for both men and women which was a matter of surprise and ridicule by the Westerners. The new Meiji government made a decree which directed the bathhouse owners to separate the male and female bathhouses and maintain proper privacy and decorum by placing screen at the entrance etc. Rickshaw pullers were directed by the Tokyo municipal authorities to dress properly, because it was a shame to expose one's naked body parts according to the Western manner and morality. Staging of naughty, offensive plays was prohibited and strict warnings were issued to theater owners and playwrights. Similarly, spring picture of pornographic art and spring tales or erotic writings were also banned. In 1871, government brought out laws to prohibit the sale of girls as prostitutes or geisha. Traditionally, in Japan, prostitution was not considered as a sin or anti-social activity as other countries do, but when the young leaders of Meiji got convinced that such acts were considered immoral in Western countries, they prohibited it by law.

Impact on Education

Another important field which was subjected to direct and indirect Western influence after the Meiji Restoration was

education. The new leaders of Meiji Japan had recognised the importance of extensive universal education of both boys and girls for building up a modern state. During the Tokugawa period, education was monopolized by the Samurai class and commoners had very little opportunity to acquire it, although the "Tera-Koya" system of education was existing in some quarters of the society. In fact, education was not regarded as a function of the state during this period. However, recognizing the importance of Western subjects, such as medicine, surgery etc., the Bakufu in 1855 had created the Bansho Shirabe dokoro or the office for the study of western writings, initially Dutch books mainly and in 1860 it enlarged the curriculum to include English, French, German, Russian and Chemistry. It did not give much impact on the general public as its scope was very restricted.

"Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world, so that the welfare of the empire may be promoted", article-5 of the Charter Oath taken by the emperor stated." In pursuit of this goal, the new government had created a ministry of education in 1871, which embarked at once on an ambitious programme of education for girls as well as boys. The

32 During Tokugawa period, only children of Samurai were given education in Tera-Koya, or temple schools originally. However, later on children of commoners were also admitted.

33 Charter Oath, Hozuni's version, as quoted in G.B.Sansome, op.cit., p.318.
The utilitarian philosophy of the intellectuals, pioneered by Fukuzawa Yukichi, stressed the immediate necessity of expanding the universal education on a priority basis. Fukuzawa argued that a country cannot become civilized and rich if its subjects are illiterate. He sighted the examples of the Western countries where advanced universal education of both men and women had not only enlightened the public but also made their countries advanced, especially in the field of science, medicine, and military. In his famous work "Gakumon no susume" (An Encouragement to Learning), Fukuzawa boldly argued that education is the only criterion which determines the future of a nation. "It is said that heaven does not create man above or below another man. This means that when men are born from heaven they all are equal. There is no innate distinction between high and low. It means that men can truly and independently use the myriad things of the world to satisfy their daily needs through the labours of their own bodies and minds, and that, as long as they do not infringe upon the right of others, may pass their day in happiness. Nevertheless, as we broadly survey the human scene, there are

34 Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1901) published this work in several instalments in the 1870s. He urged students to learn Western languages and, thus, indirectly helped to bring about a transformation in literature. Besides Gakumon no Susume, Fukuzawa also wrote 'Bunmeiron no Gairyaku' (An Outline Theory of Civilization, 1875) Seiyo Jijo (Things Western), Sekai Kuni Zukushi (All the Countries in the world), etc.
wise and the stupid, the rich and poor, the noble and lowly, whose conditions seem to differ as greatly as the cloud and mud. The reason for this is clear. In the Jitsusokyo we read that if a man does not learn he will be ignorant, and that a man who is ignorant is stupid. Therefore the distinction between wise and stupid comes down to a matter of education. 

Fukuzawa emphasised the introduction of compulsory universal education not just for the sake of individual's enlightenment only but also for achieving the government's goal of Fukoku Kyohei (Rich Nation and Strong military). If the citizens are educated and enlightened they will naturally contribute to the advancement of their country, therefore, it is, first of all, inevitable to give education to the citizen by the government. His opinion although utilitarian in nature was the opinion of the early Meiji government also. He himself founded a school (Keio Gijuku) in 1858 to teach Dutch, English, economics, law and other subjects, which had grown into an outstanding educational institution now known as the Keio Gijuku Daiku (Keio Gijuku University).

In 1871, the government had sent Tanaka Fujimaro, then Minister of education, to Europe and America to conduct a first hand study and investigation of various education

35 Fukuzawa Yukichi, An Encouragement of learning, translated by David Dilworth and Umeyo Hirano.
systems prevailed in those countries. However, to his surprise he found that many countries in the West, namely France, Germany, Holland, England, Russia and America had entirely different system of education suitable to their domestic conditions and hence, Japan must also derive an education system suiting to its requirement, by combining various useful elements from different traditions. He returned to Japan in the following year, and the government issued the Education Act and Fundamental Code of Education in 1872, which laid the foundation of state controlled education system. The plan was very ambitious one, providing for universities, middle school elementary schools, normal schools, and technical schools on a larger scale. The statement of policy that accompanied the Education Act stated clearly that education was to be organized on Western line in future. "Learning is the key to success in life, and no man can afford to neglect it", and "Every man shall of his own accord subordinate all other matters to the education of his children", were the two important statements in the Education Act, which made universal education in elementary level compulsory. Eventually, elementary education for six years was made compulsory and inescapable duty of the state in 1880 and its execution was carried out vigorously. The percentage

of children receiving elementary education rose from 46 in 1886 to 61 in 1869 and 95 in 1906.

As mentioned earlier, education was considered by the new government primarily as a tool for government to train obedient and reliable citizens in the various skills required by a state in the path of modernization. This philosophy had the solid support of Shinto religion. In 1886, Mori Arinori, then Minister of education introduced an act which instructed the school administrations to keep in mind always that "what is done in the school is not for the sake of the pupil but for the sake of the country."37 Further, the regulations creating the new university open with an article stating that the purpose of a university is to teach the arts and sciences essential to the state, and the educational system is conceived throughout not in a spirit of free inquiry but in conformity with strong nationalistic principles of a predominantly utilitarian trend.

However, by 1890, a conservative, anti-foreign wave swept the country demanding the reestablishment of an imperial state, and revamping the education system to create a citizenry with ardent fervour for nationalism and loyal to the emperor. As a first step to the achievement of this goal, the

government issued the Imperial Rescript on Education on October 1890. Its full text is as follows:

Know ye, our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue, our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of our Empire, and herein also lies the source of our education. Ye, our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers, furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the state; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall yet not only be our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with your, Our subjects, that we may all attain to the same virtue.

The 30th day of the 10th Month of the 23rd year of Meiji.

Although the Imperial Rescript contains only small reference to Education as such, it instructs the people to be obedient

38 This is the accepted translation, quoted in G.B.Sansom, op.cit., p.464. Also see, Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources, vol.3, Compiled and Published by the Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, p.128.
and loyal to the Throne and strive toward creating a strong nation in the traditional way of their ancestors. It admonished the public not to follow the Western pattern of culture and civilization blindly as it would destroy the national identity. A regulation issued in 1891 for the guidance of teachers in primary schools laid down the following rule: "In education the greatest attention should be paid to moral culture. Hence, whatever is found in any course of study relating to moral or national education should be taught with care and assiduity. All teaching should be based upon matters essential to life, lessons should be so taught that they may all be turned to practical uses." Thus after about 20 years after the Restoration, the Meiji authorities reoriented its education system, consciously inculcating national obedience and conformity through a standardized and strictly controlled education system.

Christianity and Meiji Intellectuals

Christianity was first introduced into Japan in the middle of 16th century (1549) by Francis Xavier, a Jesuit Priest. Thereafter, it flourished in certain quarters of Japan, getting special favour from certain Daimyo and even from the Tokugawa Bakufu in the beginning. However, realizing the potential threat of getting colonized by the Western

countries the Tokugawa Bakufu banned the preaching of Christianity and introduced rigorous censorship of Western books in order to prevent the entry of Christian books, and sent all the foreign missionaries back to their country. Offenders of the Tokugawa order were executed by the authorities. This hatredness for Christianity remained in the Japanese society throughout the Tokugawa period. Ban on Christianity was not withdrawn at the time of the Meiji Restoration. However, the Iwakura mission which visited America and Europe in 1871 was severely criticized by the Western countries for Japan's rigid laws against Christianity and the maltreatment of Christian believers. As a result, upon the return of the mission the government had withdrawn the anti-Christian edicts and ban on Christianity in 1873, and people were ever since free to choose their religion.

Large number of Meiji youth, especially the proponents of modernization, was attracted to Christianity. However, most of them converted into Christianity not because of their yearning for the religion, but for their zeal and enthusiasm for Western science and knowledge. Christian missionaries in Japan, apart from preaching their religion, also encouraged Western learning and languages, especially English, by establishing schools and Universities. Many of the Meiji

40 Ibid, p.470.
youth considered learning of English as the shortest way to the acquisition of Western knowledge. Literary stalwarts of Meiji Era, like Kitamura Tokoku, Shimozaki Toson, Kunikida Doppo, Tokutomi Soho, Uchimura Kanzo etc. were converted into Christianity to study English and for knowing more about Western literature. Some prominent Japanese of the time, like Nakamura Keiu the founder of Dojinsha in 1873, even advocated the introduction and total conversion to Christianity so that the Japanese can master the Western science and knowledge quickly. Fukuzawa Yukichi, although not advocated the introduction or conversion to Christianity, praised Christianity for its world outlook and philosophy and commented it as a good and progressive religion which helped the Western countries to advance.

Unlike Confucianism and Shintoism, Christianity emphasized the Western concept of individualism, which ran counter to the traditional tendency to subordinate or sacrifice the freedom of the individual to the sake of family or wellbeing of the society. This Christian philosophy was very attractive to the liberals of early Meiji, who not only demanded a democratic political set up and freedom and liberty of the individuals but also stressed the need for human rights. The leaders of 'Jiyu Minken Undo' (Freedom and People's Rights Movement) of mid-1870s based their movement mostly on these Christian principles and the conservative
groups in the society branded them as anti-nationals. Christianity advocated equality of men and women in the society, and emphasized the higher education for women and the down-trodden people in the society for their emancipation. Unlike the pessimistic outlook of Buddhist teachings which places everything to destiny, Christianity encouraged its adherents to fight against the social evils and acquire their liberty, and human rights through education and hardwork. Christianity had influenced greatly the world view and writings of romantists and naturalists, like Kitamura Tokoku, Shimazaki Toson etc, of the mid and late Meiji periods, as these writers were greatly moved by the Christian ideals of love, individual freedom and liberation of soul. Hence, during the first twenty years or so after the Meiji Restoration it was Christianity which helped the Meiji intellectuals and writers to shape their philosophy and outlook suitable to the changing conditions of the society.

Influence of Western Literature

Another field which was tremendously influenced by the West was literature, although introduction of Western literature and philosophy was begun much later than the introduction and adoption of Western material culture into the Japanese society. It was through translations and summaries of Western literature that the enlightened and educated classes of mid-Meiji period acquired some knowledge about the
literary and intellectual background of European culture. Japanese literature especially the fiction at the time of Meiji Restoration was lifeless and reached its lowest point, as the Tokugawa authority treated fiction as a useless form of literature which may be enjoyed by less educated women folk or children. Moreover, novels were considered as a medium for inculcating Confucian ethics into the minds of the public, as they always deal with the theme of 'Kanzen Choaku' (Reward virtue and punish vice).

Tsubouchi Shoyo (1859-1934) was the first Japanese who emphasized the need for literary reform through his book Shosetsu Shinzui (The Essence of the Novel) written in 1885. Tsubouchi deploring the poor quality of the literature of his time, sought to analyze what was wrong with it, and how it might be rectified. In fact, he was one of the first Japanese to have had a good understanding of European literature. "Novel must be regarded as art to be appreciated solely for its own sake" he argued and pointed out that the Gesaku fiction of Tokugwa period and the contemporary political novels usually dealt only with stereotypical characters who were motivated by the desire to "reward virtue and punish vice". Therefore, he called writers of new fiction to

41 Tsubouchi Shoyo, Shosetsu Shinsui (1885).
penetrate the "well springs of individual behaviours" and reveal it candid, in all its manifestations. Before going to the first original novels by Japanese writers based on Western concept of modern literature as introduced by Shoyo it would be appropriate to give a list of European literatures which were made available to the Japanese readers in translations.

Initially, the Japanese readers were interested in Western books which might provide them with information about life in foreign countries and explain them the life style and character of Western peoples and reveal their secrets of success. Robinson Crusoe was translated into Japanese in 1859. Samuel Smile's 'Self Help' was translated in 1870 by Sudo Nansui and was enthusiastically welcomed by a public that was eager to get on in the world. Soon after the translation and introduction of 'Self Help' and 'Robinson Crusoe', complete or abridged translations of biographies of great men such as Homer, Bacon, Shakespeare, Voltaire and Napoleon were appeared in Japanese. Children's stories from the 'Aesop's Fables' and 'Bible' were also translated into Japanese. Part of New Testament was translated in 1876 and Rousseau's 'Contract Social' in 1877. Oda Junichiro had translated Bulwer Lytton's 'Ernest Maltravers' in 1879 under the Japanese title "Karyu Shinwa" (A Spring Tale of Flowers and Willows)

and it had a large readership in Japan. 'Ernest Maltravers' was the story of a talented and ambitious youth who had risen to high position after overcoming various hurdles in life. His love affairs, separation, disappointments, and the political background which he had to pass through, and his final success in life were interesting subjects for the enlightened youth of the Meiji. Oda Junichiro also translated other works by Lytten, namely, "The Last Days of Pompei", and "Paul Clifford". Lytten's "Kenelm Chillingly" was translated in 1885 and was popular among the Meiji youth because it seemed to have some bearing on political issues of the moment. Adventurous stories like, "Round the World in Eighty Days" and a "Journey to the Moon" (translated by Kawashima Chinosuke) by Jules Verne were also popular among the Meiji Youth.

"Life of Epaminondas of Thebes" was translated and published in 1883 by Yano Fumio under the title of "Keikoku Bidan" (A Noble Tale of Statesmanship) and it became a model for aspiring youth in Japan. "It was one of several successful works describing heroic struggles for independence and the deeds of Patriots who strove against oppressors, and it shows very clearly that the rising generation of Japan was already filled with hopes for national greatness and a certain hostility towards the great powers of the West". 13 "Julius

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13 G.B.Sansom, op.cit., p.400.
"Caesar" by Shakespeare was translated under the name of the Last Blow of the Sword of Freedom in 1884 by Tsubouchi Shoyo. Apart from these, Works by Russian writers like Pushkin Turgenyev, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy were also translated and became well known in Japan later on and these works also exerted a considerable influence in literary world. All these translations were made from English originals as the Japanese were already aware of the importance of English as foreign language. English language had also influenced the style of writing in Japanese. The classical style of Japanese writing (Bungotai) was very difficult for the common people to understand. Therefore, a new style, known as 'genbun-itchi' or a compound of colloquial and literary style, was brought to perfection by Japanese novelists who were immensely influenced by English and Western literature. This new style was started for the first time by Futabatei Shimei, one of the first novelists of Meiji period, who translated 'Rendezvous' one of Turgenyev's 'Sportsman's Sketches' into Japanese in genbun-itchi style in 1889. It was a turning point in the history of Japanese literature, as this quasi-colloquial style turned to be accepted as the literary medium ever since and served as a model for younger writers who later on founded the naturalistic school of novelists.

Another revolutionary movement in Japanese brought by the influence of Western literature was the introduction of 'new
verse forms', since English poetry could not be suitably rendered in conventional Japanese poetical modes. This new style is known in Japanese as 'Shintaishi' and a book entitled Shitaishi-sho (A Selection of Verse in New Forms) was published in 1882. It contained translations from Shakespeare, Gray, Campbell, Longfellow and Tennyson and some original poems written by Japanese poets in the new verse form.

Influenced by the translated Western literature, many young and prolific writers of mid-Meiji period began to write original works. Yano Fumio in 1885 wrote 'Kajin no Kigu' (Strange Encounters of Elegant Females) and Suehiro Tetcho wrote Setchubai (Plum Blossoms in the Snow) in the same year. These were the two political novels that made a great impression in the years of political strife before the opening of the Diet in 1890. Besides these works, Sudo Nausui wrote 'Ryokusa Dan', a political novel written under the influence of English books on self-government. Baba Tatsui's Essays on Natural Rights, written in 1882, was a hallmark in the National Rights Movement in Japan. Futabatei Shimei wrote 'Ukigumo' (the drifting clouds) in 1889, which was considered as the first novel written in the Western style, based on the principles of Tsubouchi Shoyo's "Shosetsu Shinzui". Japanese writers were familiar with the Western literary movements such as Romanticism, realism etc by the middle of Meiji period. In
short, the nature of Japanese literature completely got changed ever since it came under the influence of Western literature as new Western concepts of individual freedom, liberty, love, social equality etc. became the subject of Japanese literature. Apart from literature, Japanese press and journalism were also developed under the influence of West.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to outline major Western influence on early Meiji Japan, especially, on Shimazaki Toson and other writers, in order to support and substantiate arguments made in the subsequent chapters. Only the major historical events have been taken up here which will have a direct bearing on the coming chapters.