

**THE WOMAN: A RADICAL FEMINISM STUDY ON THE OPPRESSION OF
WOMEN IN JAPANESE SOCIETY**

FINAL PROJECT



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THESIS

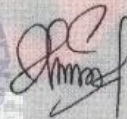
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ABSTRACT

This project aims to find out what impact do women's oppression in Japanese society have on Japanese women in modern society. To answer this question, I conducted a review on related studies and theories, and an interview. As a result of the research done, I created a short story entitled *THE WOMAN*.

Women's oppression is a serious problem in every corner of the world and Japan is also one of the countries which have the big problem of women's oppression. Therefore, a study to understand women's oppression is important for every society in the world and it is essential for the next generation.

Additionally, the project explored the history of feminism in Japan, women in society, and the relationship between men and women by Richard Lee and Richard Daly's *Man's Domination and Women's Oppression*. They discussed about the foundation of the problem and social system, and the relationship between men and women in society and radical feminism in Japan. Radical feminism was used to see the basic division in society and the relationship between men and women and women's oppression. An open-ended interview was used to have a deeper understanding on what really happened in Japanese society, especially on women's oppression.

A creative short story based on the study of radical feminism study the oppression of women in Japanese society is the result of this research. Hopefully, it will enlighten reader's understanding on the real condition even in modern society, especially in Japan; and eventually, help reduce or stop the vicious cycle of women's oppression.

I. Introduction

A Background of Study

Some discrimination against women and women's oppression happens in the world. A lot of women experienced women's oppression at school, working place or home, but most of all they can't say "NO" (against) and thus it made them suffered from oppression by society. Women and girls in every corner of the world face extreme violence and sexual harassment daily. Japan is one country where has a serious problem with women's oppression. In 2020 Japan placed 121st out of the 153 countries in the rank of global gender equality – record low- performing by far the worst among the Group of Seven major economies. Many women can't escape from the women's oppression because of culture, history and the system of society. The idea of "subjectivity" (man is subject and a woman is an object) is still deeply rooted at present in Japan. We can see it in politics, language, education and everywhere. I choose this topic because I am a woman and a Japanese. I haven't worked yet, I haven't experienced a lot, however, I feel the value of Japanese women is less than men when I live in Japan. I have the intention to share what happens in Japanese society and why does it happen in my work.

B Research Problem

What impact do the women's oppression in Japanese society have on the main character's life in the short story entitled "THE WOMAN"?

C Objective of Study

Japanese society still has a strict patriarchal idea. Many Japanese women have taught by their parents about "the ideal Japanese women". "Because this is women are" is a refrain we heard from childhood, spoken about mother and female relatives, and later about myself, by way of explanation for the tremendous amount of household chores that fall on a woman's shoulders, whether she happens to have a job or not. This is Japanese culture, the history of women's oppression is long in Japan, and this thinking is the base of Japanese

society. My project portrays these women oppression in Japanese society through the protagonist character in a short story entitled “THE WOMAN”.

D Significance of Study

Since women’s oppression happens in the world for a long time, this study is to bring a light on the dark condition of women. It is not easy to get out of the vicious cycle, therefore knowing and understanding the problem of women’s oppression and think about the solution is important for society and the next generation.

I. Literature Review

A Review of Related Study

The history of women’s oppression is long, many women face this problem and it comes from the social system in every place. There are some discussions about the foundation of the problem (social system), the relationship between men and women in society and radical feminism in Japan.

The first study discusses the history of feminism in Japan. The movement of gender and human rights created a new society in Japan. Japan’s first movement for civil emerged in the 1870s, and a small number of women were part of it. It was the first movement of feminism in Japan and women’s legal status was significantly developed through many historical events such as Japan’s Meiji Restoration (1868), World War I (1914-1918), Tokyo earthquake (1923) and World War II (1939-1945). Working with transnational women’s organizations gave Japanese women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries a space for influencing state policy in the absence of civil rights at home. The traditional idea of a woman is that she must be a “good wife, wise mother” and women couldn’t learn in the same way as men do. But due to the influence of western countries, Japanese women voiced women’s rights and they founded the *Nihon Fujin Sanseiken Kyokai* (Japan Women’s Suffrage Association) in 1921. This association became Japan’s leading suffrage group and it

included teachers, journalists, writers, housewives, and workers.

The lives of men and women were radically changed in many ways in the postwar years. In the 1970s the “Second Wave” of the feminism movement took off, and many observers at that time incorrectly believed it was a new challenge to a “traditional” family made up of a stay-at-home housewife, a white-collar husband more dedicated to his company than to his family, and one or two children driven academic success by and “education mama”. But this “tradition” only dated from the 1950s. Japanese women, men, and children had always worked in shops, in factories, and on farms. When 1970s feminism attacked a society dived into a female-dominated home and a male-dominated workplace, they were challenging institutions of relatively recent history.

The second study discusses women in society. The relationship between different levels of human social organization and experience, this relationship has changed over time therefore, also the view of historically forming is also important to analyze women’s oppression. Women’s oppression is an integral part of capitalism, and not independently determined, tend toward reductionism. Women’s social position is low, it is like the class struggle. Because of these social relationships between different levels of human social organization and experience. Women’s oppression is not a prerequisite for capitalism, this liberation would require:

(1)[A] revision of labor and childcare responsibilities; (2) an end to the actual or assumed dependence of women on a male wage; (3) a transformation in the ideology of gender. (Barrett 1980)

The third study discusses the relationship between men and women by Richard Lee and Richard Daly’s “*Man’s Domination and Women’s Oppression*”. Women have always been subordinated to men in the world. This is people of human nature transforms a historical and cultural question into a question of biology, innateness, and universality in the world. The concept of universal female

subordination, “man the hunter”, and “women the nurturer”. This complex of power relations varies from society to society, like male dominance is strong in some, while it is weak or nonexistent in others. Therefore, male dominance differs from feudal or slave, European or Asiatic, and to the Middle Eastern countries. However, when we see the male-female relationship, the female is always lower than men in almost every society. For example, the girls have very little say in the original choice, many of these marriages fail because the girl is less than enthusiastic about the husband’s choice for her, or also sometimes women are oppressed by the burden of caring for children because of this unhealthy relationship. “We see that women predominate in some spheres of behavior and men in others, while the overall sense of the relations between the sexes is one of giving and take” (Lee and Daly 36). Male domination of gender inequality must reckon with inter-corporate *social* reality.

Takashi Koyama, the writer of “*The Changing Social Position of Women in Japan*” mentioned the social position of women in Japanese society. When we see the Japanese society and family relationship, we can find the system of *samurai* society which is the patriarchal system in Japan. Women submit to their fathers, husbands, and sons. Housework, raising children, follow their husband is the basic women role in Japan. Today, patriarchal marriage has disappeared legally, but the position of women in society is still lower than men, and housewife is the main role of women in Japanese society.

The system of society is made up of each country and culture. However, women’s position is low, so women’s oppression and discrimination happen everywhere. For example, patriarchal society exists as a matter of course in the world and many people think that the subjectivity relationship between men and women is natural. Therefore, a lot of women are suffered from general knowledge of social systems like the Japanese “*samurai*” society and it is not easy to realize in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. People need to know there

are no differences in the role of men and women in society. Changing the thinking of the relationship between men and women and throw away the old ideas in history is important to solve the radical feminism problem in a long history.

B Review of Related Theory

Feminism is believing that men and women are equal in society. Women have been faced with sexual discrimination from the pre-colonial to post-colonial eras for a long time in history. Radical feminism is discussed here because it is the basic division in society and the relationship between men and women, and women's oppression. According to radical feminism, oppression as a women is the most fundamental form of the problem of radical feminism.

Radical feminism in society

In the 1960s and 1970s, feminism wanted to put women in the "system" which is the educational, legal and economic policy in the society. But the women's rights groups didn't become interested in women's issues as a result of working for government agencies, being appointed to the commission on the status of women at that time. Instead, their desire to improve women's condition emerged in the context of their participation in radical social movements, such as the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. These revolutionary feminists came from their personal experience as women with each other.

The radical feminists to the stereotypical depiction of the woman as 'imperfect man' or the Aquitaine diction that is masculine and the matter are feminism to search for alternative, feminist ideological, theoretic, linguistic, and philosophical expositions.

Women's oppression

Radical feminists proclaimed that both "the personal is political" and that all women are "sisters" thinking lives and women's self-identity, self-respect, and self-esteem are the most fundamental of all the oppressions human beings visit on each

other. Women's oppression as women is a more fundamental form than human oppression. According to Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg;

1. That women were, historically, the first oppressed group.
2. That women's oppression is the most widespread, existing in virtually every known society.
3. That women's oppression is the hardest form of oppression to eradicate and cannot be removed by other social changes such as the abolition of class society.
4. That women's oppression causes the most suffering to its victims, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, although the suffering may often go unrecognized because of the sexist prejudices of both the oppressors and the victims.
5. That women's oppression...provides a conceptual model for understanding all other forms of oppression. (Tong 49).

In the system of society, women are at the bottom and the lower class. Gender equality is a difficult thing to do because women's oppression is a common thing in the world. If people solve the problem of radical feminism and oppression as women, go against the grain and decide to change the social system.

II. Method of Study

This study is qualitative research, since the nature of this research is contextual. It is also because the data were taken by using two methods. The first method is through library study, which aimed to find historical evidence on women oppression, especially in Japan, and also to find an underlying theory that is suitable for this research. The second method of data collection was done through an open-ended interview which aimed to gather information about behaviors, values, and knowledge about women's oppression in Japanese society.

There were 5 female participants who live in Japan and all participants are from different generations. The types of interviews are computer-assisted personal interviewing and computer-assisted telephone interviewing. There are three topics

of the interview.

Firstly, asking about the real experience of women's oppression in Japanese society is necessary for building up the setting. Understanding and knowing about what happens in Japanese society is the foundation of the short story entitled "The Woman". To get facts about Japanese society and women's oppression is the most important thing to create "THE WOMAN".

Secondly, asking about the behavior of participants will be used as a source to create the main female character and symbol. Daily behavior in society shows their personality, position, post, and status. Questions are about behavior at school, working place and in the family. For example, an occasion when participants used logic to solve a problem, or how to work effectively under the pressure of men. These questions of behaviors are all about the relationship between men and women in Japanese society.

CREATIVE WORK PROTOTYPE

I. Title: THE WOMAN

II. Component of Creative Work

A Theory

A radical feminism study of the oppression of women in Japanese society

B Characters

1. Aiko Kuwahara– A Japanese housewife who is a good wife and a good mother. She is the daughter of a wealthy family. She is a small and elegant lady. Her dream was to become a piano teacher, but she gave up when she got married. She thinks she can't live without her husband and to be a housewife is the best way of life for her.
2. Tokio Kuwahara– Aiko's husband who believes in the domination of men over women. He is wealthy, and well educated but selfish and unkind to his family especially his wife. He does not care about his family because that is not his "job". And he does not want his wife to work due to his pride.
3. Mei Kuwahara– Aiko and Tokio's daughter. She is 14 years old and at a rebellious age. She does not like to be with her family because she does not like her mother who is always following her husband and selfish father.
4. Yuri Harada– A single mother who has still just moved into Aiko's neighborhood. She is a tall and beautiful woman. She has a bad experience with domestic violence.
5. Takumi Harada– Yuri's son.
6. Yoshi – Tokio's mother. Aiko's mother-in-law. She is a role model of Japanese traditional women and also Aiko respects her. But she always tries to direct Aiko about her family.

C Point of view

The first-person point of view

D The Settings

1. Place: Tokyo, Japan
2. Time: Present

E Plot

1. Introduction

Tokio came back home at night and had dinner with Aiko but there was no conversation between them. Tokio treated his wife as a housekeeper and Aiko just followed him. Mei, their daughter was in the upstairs, but she did not care about her parents. The quiet atmosphere of the house was the start of the turbulence in the marriage.

Sometimes Aiko remembered her dream when she was a girl, but she gave up. Her role in this world was just to be a good wife and wise mother. That was what her mother taught her.

2. Expository

A weekday afternoon, Aiko finished her work in the house and she was bored. She opened the cover of the piano for the first time in a long time and she played the piano with joy. She remembered her dream when she was a little girl but suddenly she stopped playing because she thought Tokio was back. She knew he did not like the sound of the piano. It was Mei but Aiko left the piano and ready for dinner. Aiko told Mei to study well as usual but Mei glared at Aiko because she felt sad when she saw her mother pretended a perfect wife and curried favor with her husband. Mei didn't want to follow such as loveless her parents.

3. Raising action

One day Yuri and her son moved near Aiko's house. Aiko visited Yuri's house to say hello and they had a daily conversation. But Aiko

and Yuri knew that their personalities were the opposite. Therefore, they weren't happy to talk because Aiko was always anxious to please everyone but Yuri said whatever she wants to say. Yuri was irritated by Aiko and it was not a very nice moment for both of them.

4. Climax

A couple of months later, Aiko accidentally found some messages and pictures of her husband and the other woman. She read that messages and she knew that Tokio had an affair with her. Aiko asked about it to Tokio when he backed home, but he did not apologize. Aiko felt very miserable and she realized that she was not important to him. But she pretended that she was okay because she didn't want to broke her family. Yuri realized that something happened to Aiko's family, but Aiko didn't tell anything because of her pride. Yuri worried about Aiko and she said the idea of the Japanese patriarchal society was wrong. Aiko got angry and she said Yuri is very rude. However, the truth was Aiko could not say anything because she was afraid of her husband.

5. Denouement

After the conversation with Yuri, Aiko was thinking about her family and future because of the influence of Yuri. She wanted to talk with her husband but because she met Tokio's parent at the new year ceremony and had a conversation about the role of women in the house, Aiko can't seem to be able to put into action. However, one day she can't control her emotion and finally, she showed her emotion and all of her thinking to Tokio. But unfortunately, Tokio did not understand and even he got angry and tried to hit her. Tokio also grew up in a patriarchal Japanese family. Aiko was frozen with fear and just said "I'm sorry" but Tokio threw a glass at his wife. The glass did not hit Aiko but it struck their daughter Mei who just got back right now. Aiko was just sitting and staring at the blood which was dripping from Mei's cheek. Aiko couldn't say anything but Mei said: "it's enough". Aiko was deeply regretted her action, and she hates Yuri.

6. Conclusion

After that night, Aiko accidentally met Yuri in front of her house. Aiko remembered the feeling of last night and she said Yuri destroyed Aiko's family. But Yuri was very calm and told about her experience with her ex-husband. It was a story of domestic violence and due to that Yuri decided to live as a strong woman. Aiko suddenly ashamed and couldn't say anything. Aiko went back home and think about her value and her own life. Suddenly Aiko felt so sick and cried. She realized that she needs to change her mind.

At the end of March, Aiko and Tokio attended Mei's graduation ceremony. Since the accident, Tokio couldn't talk with Aiko and Mei because of what he did and his sense of guilt, but Aiko invited Tokio to join the ceremony. At the ceremony, Tokio was shocked because there were few fathers in the ceremony place. Also, Tokio surprised that he thought Mei was not doing well at school but in fact, she was one of the most popular students in the school. Tokio admitted that he was unconcerned with his family. He tried to left the ceremony because he felt awkward but someone recommended them to take a picture of their family memory. After that, Aiko told Tokio that she needs to properly talk about family relationship with him. Tokio approved that and made a promise to come home earlier the next day.

CREATIVE WORK

THE WOMAN

Monday, June 10th. It was drizzling.

6:45 P.M. It was almost time for his come back home. Aiko looked at the clock then went to the kitchen to wash her hands. Aiko started to prepare for dinner. She wiped a nice wooden table clean and put three placemats, three spoons and three chopsticks on it. After that, she went to the small garden to pick some lavenders. Kissing the flowers lightly, she put them in a white single-stalk flower vase and put it at the center of the table. She remembered to put an evening paper on the table in front of the chair usually used by her husband's. She returned to the kitchen to heat the stew which she cooked in the afternoon; the nice smell of white sauce filled the kitchen and dining room. She stopped heat after a while, right at the time she heard the sound of the car at that very moment. Aiko ran to the entrance to welcome her husband.

7:00 P.M. Tokio opened the door. He gave Aiko his bag and she helped him off with his coat. He pulled off his leather shoes and went to the dining. The aromatic stew approached his nostrils but he did not say any word as he knew his wife was waiting for any compliment. *My praise would make you proud of yourself, huh?* Aiko put his shoes together nicely and neatly and hang a coat up to it doesn't get creases. And then she went to the kitchen to serve hot stew and rice. Tokio sat on the chair and open the evening paper. Aiko put dishes in front of her husband then he read a newspaper while eating. Also, Aiko took a seat and started to have dinner.

“It's chilly outside, isn't it?” Her soft voice broke the silence.

“Yes...” Tokio answered efficiently.

He was still eating while reading a newspaper. Aiko didn't care about that. Both of them didn't look and mention about an empty seat. Not a single time.

7:30 P.M. After they finished the dinner, Tokio went to the bathroom to take a long bath. It already filled the bathtub with hot water, and his nightclothes was prepared. While he

took a bath, Aiko washed the dishes, wiped the table clean and boiled the kettle to make tea.

10:00 P.M. Aiko woke up due to the soft noise of someone opening the door. Aiko looked at the clock and sighed. She heard soft footsteps go to the upstairs after a while. Aiko stood up and went to her daughter's room on the second floor. She knocked and opened the door.

“Mei, come down to have dinner.”

“I've already done at the outside” Mei replied as she was looking at the phone.

“I told you that you have to contact me when you don't need dinner,” said Aiko but her daughter did not say anything.

Aiko closed the door and went to the dining room. She put Mei's lunch mat, spoon, and chopsticks in the cupboard. She tried to gasp some air but her chest was felt tight. *It must be my fault, I fail to raise up her in this kind of situation.* She sighed deeply again, turned the light off and went to the bedroom.

Tuesday, June 11th. It stopped raining but it looked a bit overcast.

7:00 A.M. Aiko woke up at the sound of the alarm clock. She changed her clothes, washed her face, and ready for breakfast. She opened large the curtain at the dining, wiped the table clean, put three placemats and three spoons and folks. She changed the water in the single-stalk flower vase on the table. She went to the kitchen to cook salad, fried eggs, and home-made bread. She served breakfast to her husband and her daughter, after that she started to clean the house. She repeated it every day. That was her job. That was her role in this house.

Friday, June 28th. The sun felt closer to the roof. It was the hottest day of that month. Summer is coming. No matter the slightest house chores she did, Aiko had to sweep her sweat with her kimono arm.

“It’s Friday.” Aiko looked at the calendar. Tokio usually returned late on Friday night because he went for a drink with his co-workers after work. Mei got home late that day too. Aiko looked around the large living room which had a unified look with the color white and clean. She was in a state of daydreaming, without the need to think of anything for a while on the sofa. Currently, she was a condition of having no energy to do something when she was alone and had already finished all of her housework. Aiko suddenly stood up, walked to the corner of the living room, and trusted her body on the piano chair. She pushed a key with her pointing finger and smiled. Soon, a melodious Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 8 tempestuously aired the living room, touched the ceiling, bounced by the walls, and some of the tunes sneaked out through the opened windows asking for the moon to come down. But, there was no moon. Sonata Pathetique was played by talented fingers that were moved smoothly and easily. Aiko finished the song with tears at the corners of her eyes but had a relaxed expression on her face. The sonata failed to persuade the moon coming, but Aiko didn’t realize that her husband got back home while she was intent on playing the piano.

Her mind wandered to her childhood time. A little piano girl was always with music. A shy and timid girl lived together with her best friend, the piano. When she played the piano, she sounded like she was singing and dancing. She believed that she would be together with her best friend forever...

She practiced more than anyone and made a sacrifice of everything for the piano, then she entered the college of music. But the world was wider than she thought. Some so many students play the piano better than her. Aiko soon realized that her level was just an average or less than that. She was shocked. It was the first time that made her almost hate the piano. Those four years at the college was a pain for her. In the fall, the fourth-year university when graduation just before her, she had an offer of marriage on the recommendation of her aunt. She had not decided what to do after graduation at that time. She didn’t know about the person she was going to get married to, but she decided to be with him. Her husband didn’t talk much but he looked kind for her. After the marriage, Aiko started to play the piano in the free time again. She noticed that she still loves the piano. She couldn’t become a pianist, but she had a new dream to become a piano teacher. She told her husband about her dream once. At that time, he didn’t say agree or disagree, just listen to her talking, however, soon Aiko got pregnant. Fifteen years have passed

since that, but Aiko had not become a piano teacher yet for some reason.

“...hey... hey!... HEY!”

Aiko stopped playing the piano and looked up surprisingly. There was Tokio in front of her. Aiko looked at the clock in confusion and said, “Oh... You get back early...”

8:00 P.M. She stood up and took husband’s jacket in a hurry.

“Have you had dinner yet?” she asked.

“Not yet” her husband.

“Okay, I’m going to cook something... please wait... oh, do you want to take a shower first?”

“Oh yeah...”

Aiko went to the bathroom in a hurry to fill the bath. After that she went to the husband’s room and took his nightclothes then she went back to the bathroom and put them in a basket then she called her husband to tell that bath is ready. Next, she went to the kitchen and started to cook some dishes. *Wow, it’s quite rare for him to comes back early on Friday! Usually, he gets home at 10 or 11 P.M, but it’s... 8:30! What happened to him? He looked a little bit upset... hmmm... is that sick? Do I need to ask him something? No... it must annoy him when I ask him like that... but...*

Aiko couldn’t stop thinking about the “strange incident” on Friday night. It was just her husband got home two or three hours earlier than usual, however, that “insignificant incident” was a big problem for a wife who spent in a house for almost a whole day. Aiko saw her husband finished taking a bath came to the dining room. She set supper before husband. While she was watching her husband, she was thinking about what she needs to ask him.

“How was the day...” When she started to say something, just then her husband began to talk.

“Don’t play the piano.”

At first, Aiko couldn't understand what he said.

"...Yes?" Aiko asked.

"Do not play the piano," he replied without expression and reading a newspaper while he eating.

"Why?" Aiko asked again. Her husband paused momentarily and looked at Aiko's face and laughed scornfully.

"Huh? Aren't you ashamed of doing that at night? Your husband and everyone works hard but you have a lot of free time huh? Wow, you are too prone to extravagance! What if our neighbors or my co-workers listen to the sound of your "beautiful" piano at night? They might think the same way as I told you. Don't be so stupid. Take a good look at yourself."

Aiko couldn't say anything. She was just sitting silently. Her husband continued to eating and reading as if nothing had happened. Only the whirl of the air conditioner broke the silence in the house.

Just then, Aiko realized the footsteps which went to the upstairs. Aiko stood up and went to Mei's room. She knocked three times, opened the door.

"You're back. Have you had dinner?" Aiko asked but Mei didn't reply.

"Mei, I think it's good to enjoy with your friend, but you also need to spend time with family. And don't forget to study well, okay?"

Aiko said kindly and behaved as usual. Mei stopped using a phone and glared at her mother then closed the door angrily. Aiko sighed but soon she heard that Mei's voice.

"Don't be so stupid. Take a good look at yourself," she said.

Mei was still playing and chatting on the phone. Mei was just staring at the phone's screen with a blank expression on her face. But tears were dropping from her eyes.

Thursday, July 4th. The rainy season was finally over.

Aiko saw a moving van in front of her house when she dried the laundry at the balcony

in the morning. That house was a small but new solitary house. *Someone will move to that house. I have to say hello to them.*

After a short time, Aiko saw the black Mercedes-Benz enter the site of the house and parked. A woman who was tall and had short hair and a slim boy got out of the car. The boy seemed like the same age as Mei. Aiko went to the kitchen and started to bake some cookies for them. In the afternoon, Aiko visited the house with cookies. She dressed a white dress and ringed the door chimes. After a moment, a woman whom Aiko saw in the morning came out of a house. Aiko smiled and bowed.

“Hello, I’m sorry to visit you suddenly. My name is Aiko Kuwahara. I live in a house in front of you. I saw the moving van this morning so I come here to say hello to you and your family.”

“Nice to meet you, Ms. Kuwahara. I’m Yuri Harada.” Yuri spoke clearly.

“Oh! Just a moment.” Yuri said that and she entered the house and came out with a boy.

“This is my son, Takumi, now he is fourteen years old.”

“Hello, Takumi.” Aiko smiled at him.

“Hi,” Takumi said and went back to the house.

“Oh boy... he is super shy.” Yuri laughed.

“It’s okay. Oh, I baked some cookies for you. Here you are.”

“Wow, thank you so much! But sorry, I can’t eat it due to my flour allergy, but my son loves it. Thank you.” Yuri said.

“Oh, you have an allergy? Sorry... ah... if you need help, please call me anytime. Ah... oh, when will your husband come here? Is he busy?” Aiko said quietly with a forced smile.

“Sorry? What did you say?” Yuri asked.

“Oh, ah... When will your husband come here?” Aiko said again.

“Huh! I don’t have a husband. I mean... I’m a single mother.” Yuri replied.

“Oh! I’m so sorry... It’s... It’s tough isn’t it?”

“Tough? No, not. I’m happy to be a single mother. I’m sick of my husband! And don’t be sorry again and again!” Yuri laughed and said as a joke. Aiko was a little surprised but smiled.

“Okay, so... nice to meet you, Ms. Harada.”

“Nice to meet you too. And please, just call me Yuri. May I call you Aiko?”

“Ah... yes... yes please,” she said but there was a puzzled look on her face.

“Thank you for your kindness. See you again.”

“See you.”

While she was preparing for dinner, Aiko couldn't stop thinking of Yuri and herself. *How different we are.* She moved her shoulder and sighed. *Yes, how different we are.*

Saturday, October 12th.

At the weekend, Aiko, Tokio, and Mei were in the house for a whole day.

“We have a typhoon approaching. Take necessary precautions against possible gusts of wind,” said the announcer on the TV. Since early morning, therefore, nobody could go outside. How weird it is to be at home together without warmth and care. Tokio was occupied with his business. Mei, as usual, was busy with her phone. When Aiko asked something to any of them, their replies were cold and stop Aiko to ask further. She felt lonely in her home just at the time when they are together.

8 A.M. After breakfast, Tokio worked at the table in the living room. There were a laptop and two phones which colored black and white on the table. The black one was for private and the white one was for his work. He looked very busy even in the house. Mei stayed in her room until she slept. Aiko was just doing the housework as usual. It was very quiet in the house, but only Aiko busied herself with the move and walk around in the house.

10:00 A.M. The wind was echoing the outside. Suddenly the phone ringed on the table when Aiko finished the washing. It was Tokio's phone but he was not there. Maybe he went to the bathroom. The phone was still ringing, so Aiko went to the table and took the white phone. There was a name on the screen. Erika. Aiko read-aloud that name. She felt strange because it was not a family name but the first name. Tokio didn't call his co-worker on their first name. *Who is that?*

After a while, the phone ring stopped and Tokio came back to the living room. Aiko didn't say anything. No, she couldn't say anything because she knows Tokio would get mad if she asked about that. But she was curious. She pretended nothing happened but she couldn't take her eyes off the white phone before she knew it. She cleaned up the house, prepare the meal, read some books, but her head was full of "Erika".

10:00 P.M. Tokio went to bed earlier than every day. Just then Aiko realized that he left all of his stuff on the table. There was a white phone too. She stared for minutes and finally she took the phone. The phone was unlocked unexpectedly. When she tapped the screen, the phone opened. She once looked at the bedroom where Tokio slept and opened some files on his phone. It was very easy to found some messages and pictures of her husband and Erika. Aiko didn't even know her feeling herself. She couldn't make out what it was all about and just said,

"Why?"

She knew that she was not perfect but she did very well in the house. She sometimes felt lonely and her daughter didn't talk to her, but she did what she had to do in this house every day. She stopped playing the piano at night since that Friday. She wasn't sad but she shed tears. She couldn't sleep at all at night. She heard the thunder the outside and inside her mind the whole night.

The next morning, Mei went outside to meet her friends. Aiko was sleepy but she woke up at 7:00 A.M. and ready for breakfast.

It was the clear sky after the storm. Her husband woke up and started to have breakfast. Aiko hesitated a moment but finally, she said, "Who is Erika?"

There was a moment of strange silence. But her husband was expressionless.

"Did you see my phone?"

"Yes, I did. So, who is she?"

“You touched my phone without my permission?”

“I asked you, who is Erika?”

“Damn! You are preposterous! Is there anyone who peeps into somebody’s phone?”

he said in rage.

“I’m not somebody, but I’m your wife!”

“So, you can do anything because you are a wife? Are you crazy? What are you thinking about?”

“NO! Please, you’re not answering my question! Who is that girl?!”

“Huh, you are so terrible! I don’t want to talk to you.”

Tokio stood up, changed his clothes quickly and left the house. Aiko was miserable. She put off an apron and threw it on the table. She took her bag and went out without a purpose. After walking for a while, she realized that someone called her. Aiko looked back and there was Yuri.

“What are you doing!?” Yuri asked surprisingly.

“What am I doing? I’m just walking...”

“Without any jacket on?”

Aiko looked at her clothes and soon she realized that it was pretty cold outside.

“Oh... I didn’t realize that... sorry...” she smiled weakly.

“Huh...” Yuri heave a sigh deeply and said,

“Don’t be sorry. I don’t know what happened to you, but anyway, come to my house! It’s super cold here!”

Aiko was embarrassed but she just followed Yuri. Yuri served hot lemon tea for Aiko in her house.

“What happened?” Yuri asked but Aiko just looked down and said nothing.

“It’s okay to talk to me, but you don’t take it all on yourself. You have to talk with your family or your friend.”

“I’m... I’m okay. I just had a quarrel with my husband.”

“Did he talk in earnest? You probably think I need to mind my own business and not worry, but I have never seen you and your family smiling. I sometimes see your

husband but he was always talking on the phone. The person at the other end of the line is not you, right? I think you need to think about the relationship between your family. If you don't do that, the situation will get worse."

"Thank you, but I have to go." Aiko stood up.

She didn't talk about the problem in her family. She wanted to be a good wife, a good mother, and a good neighborhood. What she had was only her family. She just wanted to protect that.

"Wait." Yuri grabbed Aiko's arm and let Aiko sit on the chair.

"Let me talk about me." Yuri started to talk and gave Aiko by looking at Aiko's eyes.

"I was a housewife until five years ago. I had a lot of problems with my former husband like his affair, my stress, and child-raising but we didn't communicate well. Because he didn't want to talk with me and I was also afraid of him. And one day I suddenly think about my existence. Who I am? What is the purpose of my life? Why do I live with him? And I realized that I am nothing. My ex-husband always looked down on me and I couldn't against him because I wanted to be a good woman. But what is a good woman? Then I decided to leave him with my son because there was no reason to be with him. Aiko, think about your role and your family well. You don't have to walk in a cold outside without any jackets."

Aiko listened to Yuri's story quietly but she couldn't stand it. She stood up.

"I enjoy being a housewife. I have a role in my family. My husband works hard for me and my daughter and we are doing well. What is wrong with being a good wife and a good mother? That's an important thing for all women! And why do you think that my family looks unhappy? That's rude!" Aiko said loudly for the first time in front of Yuri. Yuri's eyes were widened I surprise.

"Alright. If you're happy, it's okay."

"Thank you for your tea," Aiko said without looking Yuri's eyes.

"You're welcome," said Yuri.

Aiko left Yuri's house. To be honest, she wanted to spill out everything to her neighborhood or her mother, but she couldn't due to her pride. She had nothing special except her wealthy family that's especially why she always smiled to smooth things over.

Wednesday, January 1st. Aiko opened the window then she shivered momentarily with a biting cold wind. But soon she looked out over the world which was covered in a blanket of shining sunlit snow. It was too bright to keep her eyes open. She closed eyes and took a deep breath of the morning chilly air. She opened the eyes again and stared out of the window. She made a smile forcedly.

Aiko and her family visited Tokio's parents' home. She arrived there very early in the morning to help ready for the new year ceremony in that house.

"Happy new year, Tokio and Aiko. How are you? Oh, where is Mei?" Yoshi, Tokio's mother said.

"She doesn't come, mother. She has something to do with her friends." Tokio replied to his mother then he went to the living room.

"What did you say Tokio? No way...it's new year. Oh, I'm disappointed about it..." Yoshi sighed deeply and turned her face toward Aiko.

"Aiko, you have to bring her next year, okay? It's important because we don't have much chance to meet."

"Yes, *Okaasama*¹," Aiko answered awkwardly.

"Huh... I feel bad since the first day of the new year... Alright, no more talking about it. So, Aiko, can you come to the kitchen to help me?"

"Sure, mother." Aiko followed her mother-in-law.

"How's Mei in her usual days?" Yoshi asked Aiko while preparing the meal in the kitchen.

"She is... she's just fine." Aiko answered.

"But I heard that she is not a good student and she is troublesome," Yoshi said

¹ Okaasama means mother

quietly.

“Hmmm... who said that, mother?”

“Oh, Aiko. Everyone says so.” Yoshi sighed.

“A few months ago, my sibling’s family gathered together in this house then I was so embarrassed. Because my every nephew, niece, and their children are the success and they are so excellent but I had nothing to be proud of Mei.”

“I’m sorry, mother,” Aiko said.

“I understand that she is going through a difficult stage, but Aiko, it’s your responsibility to raise your child. You know that Tokio is very busy to work so you have to take care of Mei well.”

“Yes, mother.” Aiko looked at a ceiling with a tired look but Yoshi didn’t stop talking.

“Aiko, I think you look thinner than before. Do you eat well? You need to care about your appearance because if you look tired, our relatives, your neighbor, and Tokio’s co-worker might think that you have trouble. That’s shameful! Smile, Aiko! I know that you are blessed, so you have to be happy, okay? And I think you... oh, someone comes!” Yoshi heard the front doorbell rings then she left the kitchen.

“She is always saying the same thing when I meet her.” Aiko talked to herself.

Aiko thought Yoshi is a good mother and a good wife. She is sociable, attentive and she always wants to be perfect for everything. Aiko thought she is the role model of women. Aiko tried to become like her for a long time. However, Aiko remembered the time when she met Yuri. Yuri said Aiko looked not happy. Aiko was confused. She didn’t know what is right and what is wrong.

Monday, January 6th.

Aiko woke up at 7 A.M. and started to clean the room, washing clothes and ready for the meal. She remembered the day when she met Yuri. She kept talking to herself that “*I’m okay, I’m okay,*” while she was doing her job in the house but her heart was full of anxiety. She was against Yuri, but she was also started to think about the relationship between the family and the meaning of her life. She was not happy. She was lonely and like a shadow everywhere. She had no one to talk to. Her mother believed that Aiko was doing well in the family and her father didn’t talk too much with Aiko. Aiko loved her daughter Mei,

but Aiko thought she should not talk about the problem in the family with her daughter. There were so many neighborhood and friend but she didn't want to come out the secret in the family to them. Aiko tried to become a nice person and built a happy family but failed after all. She couldn't do anything on that day.

Tokio spent every day as usual. Aiko couldn't believe him but she pretended to be okay. However, on that day her husband didn't come back home. Suddenly Aiko felt antsy.

"This never happened before," said Aiko. She called her husband but he didn't answer.

"I know where he is."

She knew that. She knew that her husband continued the relationship with that woman, Erika. But she didn't say anything and just endured in these three months. Because she was not ready to talk with him and she was afraid of him. Mei went back late as usual but she didn't ask about her father.

Tokio came back home the next morning. When he saw Aiko he said, "I'm hungry. Is there anything that I can eat? Oh, and I need a cup of coffee."

Then he sat on the chair and started to read a newspaper. Aiko couldn't believe what he said. That phrase was in despair over Aiko. She couldn't handle it anymore.

"I'm not your mother," she murmured.

"What?" her husband looked up her.

"I'm not your mother! I do not belong to you! Who do you think I am?" Aiko shouted. Her husband surprised and said,

"What happened to you? Why are you so mad?"

Aiko replied,

"Have you... have you ever thought of me? Have you ever taken care of me? Yes, I AM your wife but I'm NOT your servant! Please think about me and your family. When was the last time you talked to Mei? How much do you know about her? I don't want to just pretend like a good wife and a good mother anymore! I can't do that!"

"So, what do you want? Listen. Just think about your role in the world. What can

you do? Have you ever worked in society? Because you had a sheltered upbringing and don't know anything about the world besides the piano. But it's okay, you can live in this house and you don't do anything but you can eat every day. Do you need more than that? You can just stay in the house and do what you have to do here. My mother and your mother also live like that." He said very calmly. Aiko felt so miserable.

"You don't understand at all. What do you think about my existence? I live in comfort but I'm always lonely!"

Just then Tokio threw a newspaper on the floor. Suddenly Aiko felt fear and said "sorry" in a reflex. But Tokio didn't stop. He grabbed a glass and threw it at his wife. The glass did not hit Aiko but it struck their daughter Mei who just woke up and come to what happens in the living room. Aiko was just stood up and stared the blood which was dripping from Mei's cheek. Aiko couldn't say anything. Her husband left the house angrily. Mei was shocked but she didn't lose her composure. She looked at both of them.

"It's enough!"

Then Mei left the room. Aiko was deeply regretted her action. What if she didn't say anything and just serve a cup of coffee and breakfast? She injured Mei's face due to what she said to her husband.

"I was wrong. I just need to bear and do like every day."

And she remembered why she decided to claim.

"It's Yuri. Because she said to me like that. She destroyed my family."

She sighed heavily and couldn't move for a while. She felt so empty and her heart was broken just like the pieces of the glass on the wooden floor.

Aiko sat on the sofa and slept there. She didn't clean the house, wash or cook. In the evening, Mei came down and said: "I'm hungry." Therefore, they decided to eat out in such a long time. They went to McDonald's and ate burgers and fries that Aiko didn't eat these many years. Aiko was very tired so they didn't talk. Mei seemed that she didn't care about her face but Aiko felt sorry for her.

On the way back home Aiko accidentally met Yuri in front of her house.

“Hello, Aiko and Mei!” Yuri smiled at them.

“Oh, what’s wrong with your face, Mei? Did you stumble on a stone and fall or fall down the stairs?” said Yuri.

Suddenly Aiko remembered the feeling of in the morning and said,

“You destroyed my family and you injured her face!”

Mei upset and tried to stop her mother but Aiko made her enter the house. Aiko continued to talk about what happened in her family to Yuri.

“Because you told me such an unnecessary thing, I did such a crazy thing and my husband got angry!” Aiko said.

Yuri was very calm and replied,

“Was that because of me? Really? Don’t push the blame on others. You were lonely because of your husband? Was your heartbroken because of me? No, it’s because of your value and your bound mindset. We, women, can be free from that.”

“But I can’t. I have to... I have to live with my husband and be a good wife and a good mother. That’s my mother and everyone expects me.”

“I also thought like that before. But after I experienced domestic violence, I decided to live as a strong woman.”

“Domestic violence,” Aiko asked.

“Yes, I gave some advice because I didn’t want you to hurt like me. I believe that you can be a nice person better than a good wife and a good mother. You have to think about your life. Because it’s yours.” Yuri said.

After that Aiko went back home and think about her value and her own life deeply. When she thought about her husband and her daughter, she felt so sick and cried. But now she realized what she needed and what she had to do. She had to be independent and protected her family by herself. She would not depend on her husband because her life is hers. Not anybody or anyone else.

A few weeks later, Aiko was cooking in the kitchen as usual in the evening. She put on an apron and stirred Mei's favorite curry in the pot which she didn't know who to eat. Her husband and Mei come home very late recently especially Tokio sometimes didn't go back home. Aiko was doing housework alone in silence but she had decided something in her heart. *I don't know how but one day I want to become independent as a woman.*

At that time, Aiko heard the sound of the entrance door opened. Mei entered the kitchen with her uniform and gave Aiko a letter.

“You don't need to come but... I give you this.”

Mei said that and went back to her room. Aiko wondered the letter and opened it. It was an invitation letter from Mei's high school graduation ceremony. *“Oh, no! It's tomorrow!”* Aiko turned off the heat at once and ran to her room to ready for the graduation ceremony. Aiko was always felt sorry for Mei because of many troubles in the family. “At least I can do something to celebrate her graduation,” said Aiko.

At that very late night, Tokio went back home quietly but the light in the living room was on and Aiko was sitting on the sofa.

“You're still awake?” said Tokio.

Aiko gave him an invitation letter of Mei's graduation ceremony and said,

“It's tomorrow. Please come together.”

“Tomorrow? No, I have work to do.” Tokio tried to leave the living room but Aiko looked her husband right in the eye and said,

“Please! We have to go. We need to go.”

Tokio was a little surprised to hear that.

“Alright. What time should we leave?”

He said with a resigned look.

The next morning, Aiko and Tokio were at Mei's school hall. There were a lot of people there, but Tokio looked around and said,

“There are almost all women here. Gosh, I feel ashamed. Where’s the student’s father?”

“Maybe they have a job.”

“But it’s a ceremony. Everyone has to come.”

“I agree with you,” Aiko gave a little chuckle and murmured with an amazed expression. At that moment Aiko heard Mei called her.

“Mom!”

“Oh, Mei! Congratulations on your graduation!” Aiko presented a bunch of flowers to her daughter.

“Thank you... I thought you don’t come here...” Mei said bashfully but soon noticed her father’s existence.

“What!? Daddy? What... what are you doing?”

“Hey, Mei... I... I just come here to celebrate.”

“But you’ve never come to my event, huh? I can’t believe it. What’s happening?”

“What are you talking about? It’s nothing special, right?”

“Oh no... you are so weird today dad...”

Tokio went in a bad mood and Mei knitted her eyebrows and went to her friend’s place but Aiko realized that Mei brought up both corners of the mouth.

After the graduation ceremony, everyone went to the courtyard to miss each other. Aiko and Tokio saw that many students gathered around Mei to take some photos with her.

“Wow, everyone is gathering around Mei. She looks like a different person today. And look at her face, Aiko! I haven’t seen her smile for a long time,” said Tokio.

“You know what? She has a lot of friends and I heard she’s very popular.”

“I thought she was just shy and introverted child.”

“No, I think she’s a very bright girl in the school.”

“Oh, I didn’t know that...”

Just then, someone talked to Aiko. It was Yuri.

“Hello, Ms. Kuwahara,” said Yuri.

“Hello Ms. Harada! Oh, your son also graduates today, right?”

“Yes, congratulations!”

“You too. Well... I’m sorry I was having been rude to you. You just worried about me but I was... I was so rude.” Aiko apologized to Yuri.

“Hahaha, I don’t care about that. By the way, is he your husband?”

“Oh, yes! This is my husband Tokio. Tokio, she is our neighbor, Ms. Harada.”

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Kuwahara.” Yuri bowed to Tokio.

“Nice to meet you, Ms. Harada.” Tokio bowed too.

“It’s nice weather today. Did you take a picture?” Yuri asked Aiko and Tokio.

“No, actually I don’t like picture... Ummm... Aiko, I’m going to go ahead,” said Tokio because suddenly he felt awkward to talk with Yuri. But Yuri said,

“Really? So why don’t we move to under the cherry blossom and call your daughter to take a family photo?”

“No, no, no. It’s okay,” said Tokio but Yuri already called out Mei so Aiko and Tokio reluctantly followed her.

“Get closer!” Yuri held a camera and talked to Aiko, Tokio, and Mei under a cherry tree. They looked at each other embarrassingly but they got closer.

“I’m sorry Mei,” Tokio looked at a cut on Mei’s cheek and said.

“I know,” said Mei and she nodded.

Aiko looked at them and she whispered to Tokio,

“I want to properly talk about us with you,”

“Okay, so I’ll go back home earlier tomorrow,” said Tokio.

“Thank you.”

The three of them looked at the camera and smiled.

Cherry blossoms started to bloom. Spring was just around the corner.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

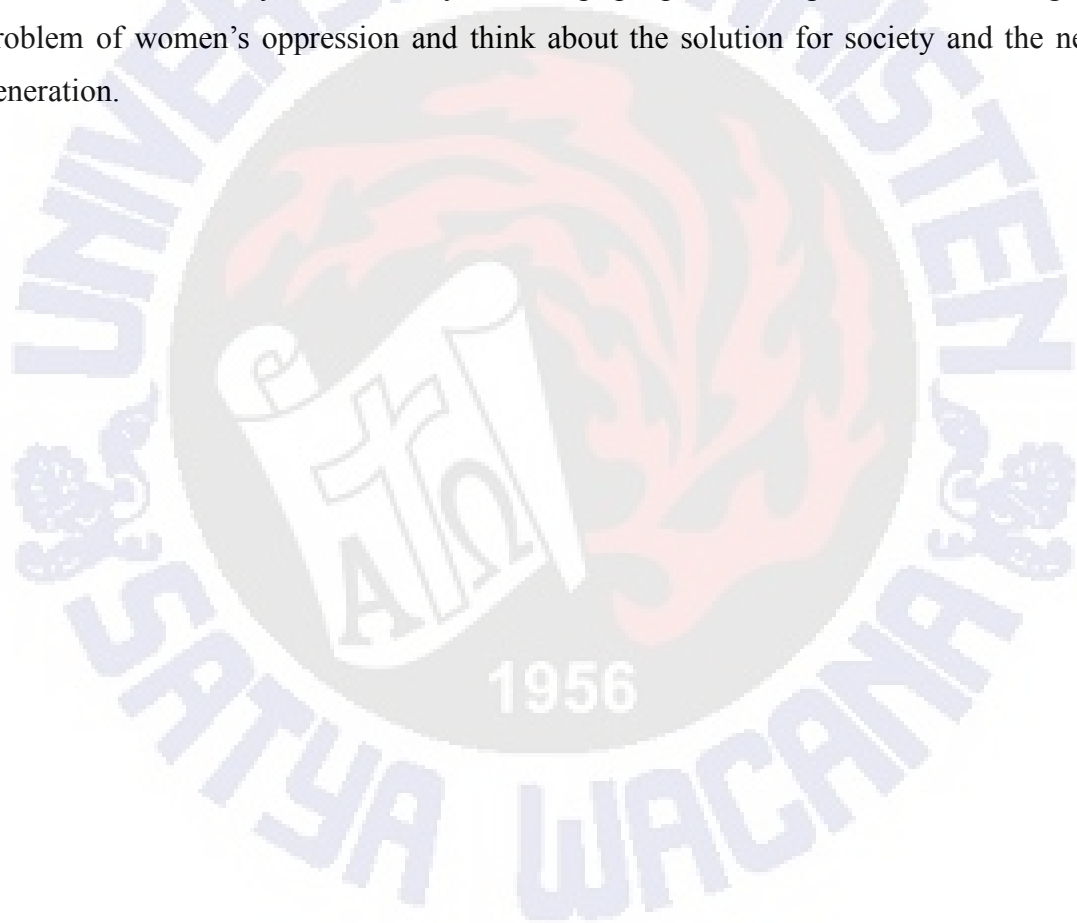
As I explained in the background of the study, women and girls in every corner of the world face extreme violence and sexual harassment daily. Japan is one of the developed countries however, Japan is also one country which has a serious problem with women's oppression and it is difficult to live and raise children in Japanese society. For example, the percentage (ratio) of female legislators is 14% in Japan (Indonesia is 20%). And Japan has problems with the declining birth rate and aging population. Therefore, Japanese women are under a lot of pressure on sexual discrimination, the traditional idea of the role of women.

According to my study, radical feminism theory, understanding women's oppression means also understanding the fundamental issue of society and it is deeply connected with each culture, identity, and history. In my creative work, I wrote about just an ordinary Japanese woman. The main character Aiko is a housewife in a wealthy family. She is a nice wife and a good mother but she always worries about her family relationship. She cannot find the meaning of her life and she does not satisfy. When seen from outside, she looks happy but every behavior of her husband and her relatives hurts her. The traditional role model of women is lower than men and that is good for family and society in Japan. However, sometimes this idea causes women suffering in modern society. I studied radical feminism and related studies to find out the reason for women's oppression in society and how to solve this problem.

To study radical feminism in Japan and for my creative work, I used the method of the open-ended interview. I asked some Japanese women about their real experiences of sexual discrimination and women's oppression in Japan. For example, someone told me about sexual harassment. During a job interview, the interviewer asked her about her private matters, like her boyfriend and marriage. And the other one told me about the experience of sexual discrimination at her workplace. This interview was very good to develop the setting and characters in my creative work.

The biggest challenge to writing my short story *THE WOMAN* was how to develop the conflict. At first, I thought that the conflict of my story is a man (Aiko, the

main character) versus man (Tokio, Aiko's husband) and I add the kind friend of the main character in the story. However, it does not succeed to develop the story and represent the connection and relationship between the radical feminism in Japanese society and Japanese traditional idea (culture, identity, and history). Therefore, I add a woman as an antagonist for the main character, Yuri in my story. And also, the conclusion was one of the elements which I consider a lot. I thought a lot about the main character's husband and I ended the story with him. Because I thought at least men need to know the importance of the existence of women and they are equal. There were many difficulties to create the short story but I wish my work helps people knowing and understanding the problem of women's oppression and think about the solution for society and the next generation.



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