

DAY 2

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Zoom Link

Literature 2

The Personal Narrative and The Self in Ogawa Yoko's *Ninshin Karendaa*

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Ogawa Yoko becomes one of the sensations in the 1990s Japanese literary scene after winning Akutagawa for her novel *Ninshin Karendaa*. This novel tells the story of a young woman, portrayed as “Watashi”, who lives with her pregnant sister. Written in a diary form, Watashi narrated her sister's transformation throughout her pregnancy, observing the emotional changes and providing commentaries. In this paper, I will be discussing how *Ninshin Karendaa* portrays observant woman in the contemporary Japanese culture and how Watashi as a Japanese young woman's character is different from the usual woman characters. I argue that Ogawa Yoko presents Watashi as a different Japanese woman character through her observation. Watashi's observation also becomes a narrative mode that enables her to observe her sister freely and without pretence, and in extension also enables young Japanese woman's character to safely express their comments about the socio-cultural daily life. This free and safely expression by the Watashi can be argued as a form of personal narrative from woman's point of view about their experience, and this narrative constructing the self of woman in a Japanese literary work.

Keyword: Ogawa Yoko, woman character, personal narrative

Desiring as the Colonial Elite: the pursuing of recognition and the dilemma of double-alienation in Ikemiyagi Sekihō's *Officer Ukuma* (Ukumanu Junsu)

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My paper analyzes *Officer Ukuma* (Ukumanu Junsu, 1922), a novella written by Okinawan poet and novelist Ikemiyagi Sekihō, through the examination of the desire of its Okinawan protagonist, who was born in a socially and economically marginalized Okinawan village while working as the local police officer. In the story, the protagonist's desire for social advancement and recognition drives him to actively socialize with his mainland colleagues and consciously estrange from his Okinawan neighbors. The protagonist's intentional aligning with mainlanders and self-differentiating from Okinawans nevertheless results in his alienation from both sides, making him feel as "a wild beast fallen into a trap" (71). In my analysis, I read the protagonist's personal dilemma against the larger context of the 1920s, when the hierarchical power relations between Okinawa and mainland Japan inevitably forced upon Okinawans the pressure to assimilate. Yet, the double alienation suffered by the protagonist in *Officer Ukuma* lays bare the gloomy reality, in which Okinawans can neither straightforwardly embrace its past nor be completely recognized by mainland Japan. The trap that confines the novella's protagonist, I maintain, represents the dilemma faced by many of the time's Okinawan intellectuals and elites, whose desire for mainland recognition and economic development drove them to follow the mainland standard for civilization, based on which they initiated the reform of Okinawan culture and customs that were labeled as backward. Ironically, such endeavors for assimilation became the very force that pushed down Okinawan individuals to a trap, inside which they not only suffered from the loss of identity, but were also deprived of the very ability to speak as subjects.

Encountering Japan through Bengali Travel-writings: Visions for Women's Education

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Independent scholar

People from countries all over the world developed an interest in knowing more about Japan as Japan opened its doors after the Meiji Restoration (1868). Undivided Bengal in pre-Independent India was also harbouring curiosity towards this newly 'opened up' country. Bengali

luminaries like Narendranath Dutta (more famously known as Swami Vivekananda) and Rabindranath Tagore visited Japan and emphasised that people of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal has a lot of things to learn from an independent Asian country like Japan. Even the common people who travelled to Japan as tourists or students from Bengal also held the same opinion that Bengal should be inspired by Japan in a number of different aspects, such as social customs, a deep sense of nationalism and the educational opportunities for women. The freedom of Japanese women and their education was something that was considered a role-model for women in Bengal by all the Bengali travellers who went to Japan in the first few decades of the twentieth century. The first school for women in Bengal was the Hindu Female School established by John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune which was later renamed as Bethune School in 1849. Gradually, the concept of education for women began to gain momentum but even in the early decades of twentieth century, activists in the field of women's education in Bengal were far from satisfied with the results they were able to achieve.

The scenario of education for Japanese women in Meiji Japan was different than in Bengal. During the Meiji era (1868-1912) important education laws were implemented, such as the Education Ordinance of 1872 which emphasised that it is essential for both girls and boys to receive elementary education and the Girl's High School Law of 1899 after which it was mandatory to have at least one high school for girls in every prefecture of Japan. When Bengali students like Manmathnath Ghosh and women activists like Sarojnalini Dutta travelled to Japan during the Meiji era (1868-1912) and Taisho era (1912-1926) they highly praised the system of women's education in Japan in their travel-writings. Focusing on select travel-writings on Japan by Bengali authors, this paper will discuss which aspects of women's education in Japan was well-received by the Bengali travellers and how they viewed the necessity of women's education as a part of the ongoing process of nation-building and struggle for freedom in pre-Independence India.

