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Review Article

The Life and Suffering of Mieko Kamiya: As a Truth-seeker and as a Woman

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Abstract

Mieko Kamiya (1914-1979) was a renowned psychiatrist known for her research in psychiatry focusing on leprosy and her many publications including "On the Meaning of Life (Ikigai ni Tsuite)" and "A Close Look into Human Beings (Ningen o Mitsumete)". Blessed with the ability to master many languages, she was proficient in numerous languages such as French, English, German, Italian, Greek, and Ancient Greek. She assisted her father, Tamon Maeda, who became the Minister of Education after the end of the World War II and even after Tamon's resignation, she continued to work as an interpreter and translator at the General Headquarters of the Allied Forces (GHQ). After marriage and having children, she worked as a language instructor and a member of a university's teaching staff in order to help pay the bills while fulfilling her duties as a wife and a mother. She also translated books on philosophy, medicine, and poetry.

As described above, blessed with diverse and rare talents and skills, Mieko accomplished great work; however, her life was far from being smooth and straightforward. According to her writings in "Diary (Nikki)" and letters exchanged with her best friend, Masa Uruguchi, one can see that, although she felt joy and had a sense of gratitude, her life was filled with suffering and conflict. She had a unique sense of duty and a strong desire that could be called an impulse, which she named a "demon". As a woman with a family, a deep conflict also existed within her with regard to her focus on

her career. In spite of her burning desire to work for leprosy patients, she did not work long at Nagashima Aiseien Sanatorium as a psychiatrist.

This manuscript describes the life of Mieko Kamiya, focusing on the struggles that she faced as a truth—seeker and also as a woman while empathizing with the vivid words and thoughts that she left behind in "Diary of My Younger Days (Wakaki Hi no Nikki)", "Diary (Nikki)", and the "Collection of Correspondences (Ofuku Shokan Shu)" she had with Masa Uruguchi. Lastly, a discussion about the people who supported her in her life was added. Suffering, leprosy, sense of mission, meaning of life.

Keywords: suffering, leprosy, sense of mission, meaning of life

Introduction

Mieko Kamiya (1914-1979) ^{*1} was a psychiatrist who was well-known for her psychiatric research into leprosy and for her many publications, including: "Ikigai ni tsuite" (On the Meaning of Life), "Ningen wo mitsumete" (Gazing at Humanity), "Henreki" (My Journey), and "Kokoro no tabi" (Journey of Mind). In addition to this, she had a command of a number of languages, including French, English, German, Italian, Greek, and classical Greek, and she assisted her father, Tamon Maeda, who became Minister of Education after World War II, and even after Tamon resigned, she continued to play an active role as an interpreter and translator for the General Headquarters (GHQ). After the war, she married Noburo Kamiya, had two children, and fulfilled her roles as a wife and mother, as well as translating the

works of Marcus Aurelius, Michel Foucault, Gregory G.P. Gilborg, Khalil Gibran, and others. Mieko's impact on the advancement of Japanese psychiatry and her reach within the broader cultural landscape are unparalleled.

Even from this brief summary of her achievements and career, you can see how Mieko was blessed with rare talent and ability, and how much work she accomplished. However, Mieko did not accomplish this work easily. She had a strong sense of mission and desire that could be described as an urge, and as a woman with a family, she also had marked conflicts regarding how to approach her work. This can be seen from the diaries she left behind that were published after her death: "Diary of My Youth", "Mieko Kamiya Diary", and "Mieko Kamiya and Masa Uruguchi Correspondence Collection".

Here, through the vivid narrative mainly written in her diaries, I would like to outline Mieko's life, and highlight the suffering she faced throughout it, especially as a truth-seeker and woman.

I. The Life of Mieko Kamiya

1. From birth to age 18

1) Birth and Family

Mieko was born in Okayama City on January 12, 1914 as the second child and eldest daughter of her father, Tamon Maeda, and mother, Fusako. Her siblings were an older brother, two younger sisters, and a younger brother. Mieko herself said that she had a dark impression of her childhood, and that she was a whiny, fussy child.

2) The education that Mieko received

Mieko enrolled in Shimo-Ochiai Elementary School in 1920 (age 6), and the following year she was transferred to the elementary school section of the Sacred Heart School.²¹⁾ In 1923 (age 9), Tamon was appointed as the Japanese government representative to the International Labour Organization in Geneva, and the family moved to Switzerland with him.²¹⁾ Mieko was enrolled in the primary school associated with the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute, and from the age of 11 she attended the junior high school division of the International School of Geneva.²¹⁾ The fact that she was educated in French for three and a half

years from the age of nine had a marked impact on her. She came to feel that thinking in French was the most natural thing for her, and this is thought to have laid the foundations for her later attitude to learning and spirit of inquiry.

In 1926 (age 12), her family returned to Japan, and the following year, Mieko was transferred to Jiyu Gakuen, but in September she was transferred to Seijo Girls' High School.²¹⁾ At the same time, she continued to study French at Athénée Français, and also studied the Bible at the meetings of her maternal uncle, Tsuneo Kanazawa, a Christian missionary of the non-denominational church. In 1932 (age 18), encouraged by her older brother, she was enrolled in the main course at Tsuda Eigaku Juku. In her second year, on the verge of graduating, she was asked by the headmaster what she would do to contribute to society in the future, and she was at a loss for an answer, wondering what kind of path she should take.⁷⁾

2. Encounter with leprosy patients (age 19)

In 1933 (age 19), Mieko visited the Tamazenshoen Leprosy Sanatorium at the request of her uncle, Tsuneo, who asked her to play the organ. "For someone who knew nothing about the disease of leprosy, the appearance of the

patients was a great shock. “Even though we were born in the same world, there are people who have to suffer from such a disease.... It was as if my very existence was shaken”.⁷⁾ After observing the relationship between a motherly nurse and patient, she thought: “I want to work with patients like this! This is where I belong!”, and she strongly desired to work as a doctor, but she had to give up due to her parents' strong opposition.⁹⁾

3. Tuberculosis, convalescence, and the path to medicine (ages 20-25)

1) Tuberculosis and convalescence

In 1935 (age 21), Mieko graduated from the main course at Tsuda Eigaku Juku and went on to study at the university department, but it was discovered that she had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis. She was in a state of relative calm during her first recovery period, but when she relapsed, she begged to go to her parents' villa in Shinshu by herself.⁹⁾ Determined to “read the world's great books in their original forms”, she immersed herself in reading while living a regular life as her doctor had instructed, and read the New Testament in Greek, Homer, Plato, and Marcus Aurelius's “Meditations” in classical Greek.⁹⁾

2) Encounter with Marcus Aurelius's “Meditations”

It was “Meditations” that helped Mieko, who felt that she had become “useless” after contracting tuberculosis, to “discover the basis of the meaning of life”.¹³⁾ Mieko says that Aurelius taught her to think about things cosmically and to take a detached perspective.¹³⁾

3) “Reconstruction experience” and “Flash of light experience”

Although the exact timing is unknown, during this period of recuperation, she experienced what she later called “reconstruction experience” and “flash of light experience”. In “A Japanese Woman's Memoir”, she writes: “I had been thinking that the only two options for me were madness or suicide. Suddenly, a dazzling flash of light like a bolt of lightning crossed my field of vision from the upper right diagonal. At the same time, I was filled with intense joy from the bottom of my heart, and I found myself blurting out words of victory that seemed strange to me”.⁶⁾ This seems to be an account of her own experience.

4) Cure of tuberculosis, moving to the United States

Fortunately, the tuberculosis was cured by the artificial pneumothorax surgery she underwent in 1937 (age 23), but her doctor told her not to get married for five years. That same year, Mieko was awarded a Japanese Women's Scholarship to the United States, and she decided to study abroad

in the United States.⁹⁾ The following year, her father was appointed as the director of the Japanese Cultural Center in New York, so the whole family moved to the United States, and Mieko, at the age of 24, enrolled in the Graduate School of Columbia University's Department of Greek Literature.¹⁰⁾

In the United States, at the age of 25, she spent a brief period of time from February to June in a Christian Quaker dormitory called Pendle Hill, at the suggestion of her mother.¹⁰⁾ She met many people, but the encounter with her lifelong friend, Masa Uraguchi, was particularly important.¹⁰⁾

5) Medicine

Around that time, Mieko went to the World's Fair in New York with her father and sister. Here is a quote from Mieko's diary: "We visited the World Fair in the morning. ... What I was most attracted to was the Public Health Medicine and British Social Work sections. When I went to those places, I was so absorbed that I didn't move for a long time. When my father and Toshiko took turns explaining this to my mother when we got home, my father suddenly laughed and said, 'Mieko, you might become a doctor. You've become obsessed with medicine too. Maybe it's fate or something. All right, I've given up too. As long as I'm alive, I'll support you, so go ahead'. I was startled. 'What?

Are you serious?' 'Yes, I am'. My father's face was serious".⁵⁾ (May 13, 1939, age 25)

Six years had passed from the time she was 19 and longed to work as a doctor until she received her father's permission.

4. From medical education to graduation (ages 25 to 30)

1) While studying medicine

In September 1939 (age 25), Mieko began studying medicine at Columbia University's School of Medicine.¹⁰⁾ Although her family had already returned to Japan, due to the worsening situation, the prediction that Japan would start a war, and the fact that she was told that she would not be able to work as a doctor in Japan unless she obtained a Japanese medical license, Mieko also returned to Japan in July 1940 (age 26). In 1941 (age 27), Mieko transferred to the main course at Tokyo Women's Medical College. While studying hard, her thoughts about leprosy were always in the back of her mind, and in August 1943 (age 29), just before graduation, she spent 12 days at the Nagashima Aiseien Sanatorium, where she received practical training under the supervision of Director Kensuke Mitsuda.¹¹⁾

2) Entering the world of psychiatry

Mieko decided to pursue a career in psychiatry after graduating from

university, partly because of her father's strong opposition to her going to Aiseien, and partly because she met Toshiki Shimazaki, the head of the Department of Psychiatry at Tokyo Imperial University, and became strongly attracted to psychiatry.¹⁶⁾ When she visited Tokyo Metropolitan Matsuzawa Hospital, she wrote: "I thought that the hardships of the people who work here are no less than those of people who work in hospitals....I am attracted to this point, a path where people are rarely thanked or admired".³⁾ (December 14, 1943, age 29) However, as can be seen in the passage: "When I said that I couldn't make up my mind about going into psychiatry because I felt bad about leprosy, Masa laughed at me and said, 'You're like someone who's engaged to a leper'³⁾ (January 5, 1944)", her feelings were wavering.

3) On the eve of graduation

One day, on the eve of her graduation, Mieko was walking down a street in Shinjuku, Tokyo, almost in tears. "I'm going to break myself, I'm going to break myself", she mumbled to herself, biting her lips as she felt like crying at any moment. "The thing that would be 'broken' is my ideal. The dream of becoming a doctor and making a daily effort to serve others was also something fleeting when it became a reality. First of all, I am the one who will destroy this dream. What good can come

from me, who is too weak in body and mind, who is ugly?"⁵⁾ (July 11 of the same year) Due to the worsening war situation, Mieko graduated from Tokyo Women's Medical College in September of the same year, six months ahead of schedule, at the top of her class, and received her medical license.³⁾

5. As a psychiatrist (from the age of 30)

1) Entering the Department of Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, Tokyo Imperial University

On October 10, 1944 (age 30), Mieko entered the Department of Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, Tokyo Imperial University, and began training as a psychiatrist under Professor Uchimura Yushi. She wrote: "I never thought there would be a job that would fit me so perfectly, without a single flaw, as this work in psychiatry. I can't help feeling that I was born to do this".³⁾ (October 18 of the same year) However, there were days when she wrote: "I have painfully experienced over the past couple of days how my careless and showy personality affects my attitude towards learning, and I have become completely anxious. There were also days when I would reflect on my situation with painful feelings, wondering if I had any qualifications to study or to be a doctor at all".³⁾ (November 19 of the same year)

In the course of her studies in psychiatry, Mieko also became aware of her own pathological aspects. She listed her own depressive and manic states, writing: “In short, I am schizothymic (split temperament) + zyklthymic (manic-depressive personality), so I should be able to understand most psychopathologies”³⁾ (January 31, 1945, age 31), and she later reflected that she was attracted to Birnbaum's “Psychopathologie” because it “made my own pathological [sick] nature clearer and clearer”.³⁾ (March 26 of that year) Mieko also felt that she was constantly living on the edge of chaos, and was aware of the threat of chaos, being attacked by “a sense of doom, as if I myself were being torn apart and scattered in all directions”.³⁾ She was also aware of the need to “shape something out of this chaos that would be acceptable to other people”.³⁾ (May 15 of the same year) in order to avoid a mental disorder.

2) In the midst of a worsening war situation

In March 1945 (at the age of 31), the war situation was worsening, and war victims were also being sent to psychiatric hospitals, where they were forced to deal with the dying. Amidst this, Mieko was surprised to see that “Many doctors were leaving the care of these patients to just one doctor, and not even paying attention to them”. “I don't

like doing things that seem like a doctor's job, or I've already forgotten about internal medicine and surgery - how can such excuses be accepted? Becoming a doctor means forming an inseparable bond with people who are suffering, doesn't it?”³⁾ She was outraged, but also thought: “It was hard for me to believe that a doctor could be indifferent to the suffering of others. I had always thought that the motivation for becoming a doctor should be to serve others above all else, without question. But it wasn't like that at all...What a stupid idiot I am”.³⁾ (March 19 of that year)

Later, their house in Higashi-Nakano was burned down in an air raid, but Mieko felt that “since Miyagi and Omiya Palace were also hit, it was only natural that we were hit too, and I even felt that it was good that we were hit like everyone else”.⁵⁾ (May 26 of that year) Although her family had evacuated, Mieko lived in the psychiatric ward of the University of Tokyo and worked on her medical practice and studies.¹¹⁾

6. After the war, helping her father

1) End of the war, thoughts on her father

Immediately after the war ended in August of the same year, her father Tamon was appointed Minister of Education. “The more I thought about my father's job, the more I felt the

weight of responsibility and wondered if he would be able to fulfill it even a little. It may seem presumptuous and funny to say this, but if you think about the close relationship between me and my father from long ago, you will naturally understand. As when he was the governor of Niigata Prefecture, I was the first family member to see my father after he was appointed to that position. When I rushed to the Imperial Hotel, my father said to me: "We're in big trouble". At that time, I said to him: "If you're going to die for this job, isn't that okay?" I vowed to do everything I could to help my father."⁴⁾ (September 2-26 of the same year) This is what she confided in Masa.

2) Mieko's struggle

Mieko took a break from her work in the medical office and began work translating documents for the Ministry of Education, but she was conflicted. "I can't help wanting to live by revealing my true nature. My true nature is "nonsense". I don't really know how to integrate the *aesthetisch* (esthetic), *religiös* (religious), *wissenschaftlich* (scientific), and *sozial* (social) aspects of myself. Each of these aspects pulls me in different directions, and I feel like I'll be torn apart if I'm not careful. They all have the same power as instincts such as sexual desire and appetite - or maybe they are instincts themselves. It is because I think this that I resonate with

Nietzsche. (omission) I must be the one who is completely possessed by the seven demons".³⁾ (October 18 of that year) Mieko referred to these instincts and impulses as demons or devils.³⁾

The following year, in 1946 (age 32), her father resigned. At the request of his successor, Minister Abe Yoshishige, Mieko continued to work as an interpreter and translator for GHQ and other organizations. In May, when Abe resigned, she also resigned and returned to work at the University of Tokyo's Department of Psychiatry.

7. Marriage to Noburo Kamiya, child-rearing (from age 32)

1) Marriage to Noburo

Mieko was to marry Noburo Kamiya, a lecturer of the Department of Botany in the Faculty of Science at Tokyo Imperial University, and she wrote: "His love and understanding are pouring down on me like the spring rain...I feel that I don't deserve to have such a spring, and I feel that I don't know what to do when I think about all the unhappy people in the world".³⁾ (February 16, 1946, age 32) Despite her confusion, she continued to deepen her love for him. They married in July of that year and rented a four-and-a-half tatami mat room to live in. She began working at the medical office three times a week, and in order to support her family and help Noburo succeed as

a scholar, she began working part-time translating Japanese into English.

2) Life of child-rearing and part-time work

In April 1947 (age 33), their first son was born. Mieko started working as a private tutor for English, German, and French. In 1949 (age 35), when Noburo was working as a professor at the Faculty of Science at Osaka University, their second son was born in December. In the same year, Mieko translated and published Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations". In 1950 (age 36), Noburo moved to the United States, and Mieko began teaching French at Athénée Français while raising their two children. In 1951 (age 37), Noburo returned to Japan, Mieko resigned from the Tokyo University Medical Department, and the family moved to Ashiya. Mieko became a part-time lecturer at Kobe College, but she continued to suffer, saying: "The devil was raging at that time, and I don't know how many times I felt like giving up on everything".⁵⁾ (October 16, 1951)

3) Entering the Department of Neurology at Osaka University School of Medicine

In November of the same year, Mieko entered the Department of Neurology at Osaka University School of Medicine as a research student and resumed her studies in psychiatry. However, in 1953 (age 39), it was discovered that her

second son, who was three and a half years old, had contracted miliary tuberculosis, and in order to buy the expensive streptomycin, Mieko started a private French language school.²¹⁾ In 1954 (age 40), she became an assistant professor in the English Department at Kobe College, but the family finances were still tight. "When I'm correcting English every day, I get frustrated and want to kill myself. Is life about doing things you don't want to do? How long do I have to be a language teacher? Language, you are my curse. If I spend so much time on such things, I'll never be able to stand as a psychiatrist ... I have to live each day wisely and somehow achieve my goals before I go too crazy. I must fulfill the psychiatric work that only I can do".⁵⁾ (August 27 of the same year) Despite her suffering, she encouraged herself. Her eldest son was 7 years old and her second son was 4 years old.

8. Research at Nagashima Aiseien and writing "On the Meaning of Life" (ages 43-58)

1) Discovering uterine cancer and turning to psychiatric research

In 1955 (age 41), her mother passed away. Mieko was diagnosed with early-stage uterine cancer, but this was successfully treated with radium irradiation.⁵⁾ At Noburo's suggestion, she approached Professor Jiro Kaneko

of the Department of Neurology at Osaka University and asked for permission to conduct psychiatric research on leprosy. In September 1956 (age 42), she visited Nagashima Aiseien for the first time in 13 years and conducted the first survey. From April 1957 (age 43), she became a part-time lecturer at Aiseien, and while carrying out her medical practice, she spent a total of 50 days conducting psychiatric research there by 1958 (age 44).²¹⁾

2) Mieko's sadness

Mieko's feelings were complex, even though she had longed to practice medicine and conduct research in Aiseien. Going to Aiseien²²⁾: "Whenever I'm about to leave for this trip, I feel sad at the thought of parting from N, R, and T²³⁾, and I get depressed".⁸⁾ (October 30, 1957, age 43) "As the day got closer, it became harder to leave N and the children, and I haven't been able to sleep well for the past few days. I feel like a heartless villain. I couldn't take my eyes off the mother with her two little boys on the train".⁸⁾ (March 28, 1958, age 44) She blamed herself and was tormented by her pain and grief.

3) Revelation from Van Gogh, and the writing of "On the Meaning of Life"

While continuing to visit Aiseien once or twice a month, she wrote her dissertation: "Psychiatric Studies on Leprosy", but when she went to see the Van Gogh exhibition, Mieko had a

revelation that she should devote herself to artistic expression and the rest of her life to that mission.⁵⁾ (December 20, 1958) Noburo agreed, and the content was finalized with the words: "I want to put together a piece of writing called 'On the Imi Feeling', including the case of being pathological".⁵⁾ (November 10, 1959, age 45) After completing her dissertation, she began writing: "On the Meaning of Life".

4) Medical treatment at Nagashima Aiseien

In 1960 (age 46), after being awarded a doctorate in medicine from Osaka University and becoming a professor at Kobe College²⁴⁾, Mieko continued to provide medical treatment at Aiseien.

"I was able to come out again today. I'm tired from busy school work, and I'm always worried about the children and N. But everyone at home is fine, and they seem to have accepted my occasional 'running away' from home as if it were normal. But my heart is always torn apart".⁸⁾ (June 10, 1961, age 47) "Last night, as I was about to say goodbye to my family, I became depressed and couldn't even speak".⁸⁾ (July 24 of the same year) Although her sadness continued, going to Aiseien was a path Mieko could not avoid.¹⁷⁾

She also struggled and suffered in terms of her treatment at Aiseien. "I would quickly get into a cold bath and

fall asleep immediately. It felt like I had become a garbage dump for people's emotions.... Even in places like leprosy sanatoriums, the majority of people live their lives by wearing down their peripheral nerves, just like in the outside world. Desire, envy, irritation, hatred - the pain of being obsessed with oneself and trying to protect oneself at all costs, the futility of it all. But if you think about it, isn't that how you are too?"⁸⁾ (July 21, 1960, age 46)

Regarding her interaction with a patient, she wrote: "The patient said in a depressed tone, 'I have no joy left. My hands and feet are useless, and I'm completely defeated. I have to bear all the sins of others as well', but then suddenly he said: 'But it is a comfort to have someone listen to my thoughts like this', and I was surprised that she had broken through her previous hardness.... 'This time, I was made to think a lot. Anyway, there is joy in life in resisting stagnation'.⁸⁾ (October 22 of the same year); as she wrote, there was much to learn and be aware of.

She sometimes wrote to Masa like this: "The difficult patients here are probably beyond your imagination. Last night I was abused by one person for 20 or 30 minutes. And it was for something I didn't even do. But I've gradually gotten used to just smiling and being quiet. I even fell asleep in the duty room after that, so I guess my nerves got

pretty strong. I learned a lot here about how aggressive people can be. I think they want to vent their anger somewhere, as an outlet for the suffering caused by the great misfortune of leprosy".⁴⁾ (April 29, 1967, age 53). In 1962 (age 48), her father Tamon died of stomach cancer.

5) As a psychiatrist

Mieko became a part-time employee at Aiseien in April 1957 (age 43) as a result of her interest in psychiatric research.²¹⁾ In 1965 (age 51), she became the head of the psychiatric department and continued to work twice a month from Wednesday to Saturday (Figure). In 1967 (age 53), she went from being the chief doctor to working part-time, and in April 1972 (age 58), she resigned from Aiseien for health reasons.⁸⁾ What did Mieko think about and what kind of treatment did she provide as a psychiatrist during these 15 years? In her diary, she wrote: "When I think of each patient, I feel a sense of helplessness. It must be a task that requires more than human effort. I can't do it. All I can do is look in that direction".⁸⁾ (May 14, 1961, age 47)

In a book review of Kaga Otohiko's "Flanders no Fuyu" (Winter in Flanders), Mieko wrote: "Being a psychiatrist is a difficult profession that requires one to constantly face the abyss that lies at the root of human existence, unless one becomes completely

insensitive. It is a profession that has aspects that exceed human capabilities and aspects for which humans are not qualified for. Perhaps for this reason, the more seriously you take your work, the more you want to escape from it from time to time".¹⁵⁾ According to her colleague Yukihiro Takahashi, Mieko "would think about what method would be best for the patient, considering the patient's thoughts and suffering, even while examining the patient. She respected the patient's spiritual freedom or something like that".²⁵⁾

9. The final years (ages 58 to 65)

In December 1971 (age 57), she had her first attack of angina pectoris, and after which she was repeatedly admitted to and discharged from hospital for angina pectoris, transient ischemic attacks, etc.²¹⁾ Fortunately, she did not suffer any serious after-effects, and when she was in a stable condition, she would devote herself to housework, reading, and writing manuscripts.²⁰⁾ Here is an excerpt from her thoughts in her later years: "I have no power to heal even a single one of the many sick people. I have to leave the rest to God and live each day as it comes. Even after I became a doctor, I realized that I didn't understand anything about people. It seems that I studied to understand that".⁵⁾ (October 18, 1972, age 58) "I feel that I have finally become free of

everything, having gone to the point of dementia and paralysis. More than anything else, I have learned to my heart's content about my own limitations".⁵⁾ (December 31, 1974, age 60) "I want to live each day that remains to me with care. However, when I have a headache or a sore leg, my whole being becomes pain itself. What should I do?"⁵⁾ (June 17, 1978, age 64) It seems that she entrusted herself to God, reflected on the past, and lived her life while coming to terms with her health.

The wife of the second son reported that in her later years, Mieko talked a lot, and that she would read materials related to Virginia Woolf and psychiatry, exclaiming: "Oh, how interesting!" and "How mysterious!" Her voice was so youthful and vibrant that it was reminiscent of her childhood, when she was called Mimi.¹⁹⁾ According to Noburo, in the days before her death, she expressed her gratitude and prayed for those she left behind on a daily basis.²⁰⁾ In 1979, she was hospitalized three times for transient ischemic attacks, but on October 22, during her brief visit home, she suffered an acute heart attack and died at Okazaki City Hospital. She was 65 years old.²¹⁾

II. Mieko's Suffering

1. As a truth-seeker

Mieko, who was attracted to literature and art and who thought

about her inner self and essential things, was puzzled when her teacher at the Tsuda School of English asked her what she would do for society. Shortly after that, however, she met people with leprosy in Tamazenshoen, and she began to long to be a doctor for those with leprosy. After that, she contracted tuberculosis, but was cured, and this too seems to have led to feelings of guilt and regret at the thought: “Why only me?”, and she came to long even more to be at the side of the sick. Mieko became convinced of her mission and the path she should follow, saying: “Now is neither a time to suffer for myself nor a time to rejoice”.⁵⁾ (April 2, 1939, age 25) “If I were to abandon what I believe to be my mission for mere convenience, I would lose respect for myself”.⁵⁾ (December 18 of the same year) However, she sometimes wavered in her thoughts, thinking: “I am not Florence Nightingale or Joan of Arc. If I could, I would like to be freed from this sense of duty and live a quiet, ordinary life as a woman”.⁵⁾ (August 27, 1943, age 29)

Mieko's “sense of mission” was, in part, “to be involved in medicine as a way of loving people” (April 29, 1944, age 30), it was a subjective “sense of God that I feel, a kind of inspiration that I feel all over my body” that she lived by, and it was something that came instinctively.³⁾ (November 26 of the same year)

Moreover, Mieko was strongly attracted to various things, and stated: “how to live with all of these things - natural scientific objectivity and the desire to explore, artistic contemplation and sensuality, moral purity and restraint, religious immersion and resignation - is still my problem. I have a head that is about to burst, about to explode into a thousand pieces”.³⁾ (November 28 of the same year)

She also had a strong desire to not only be at the side of the sick, but to express that in some way. She became more and more attracted to: “A life in which one observes oneself and others closely and listens carefully, in which one engages in a one-on-one battle with patients - that is, with 'people' and 'life' - from a human and academic perspective, in which one devours and digests the 'essential' and becomes blood and flesh and writes with that blood and flesh”, “A life of 'on-site', the opposite of a life that is flashy and ostentatious on the surface of society, playing with words and actions that are half-baked”, “A life that is humble and serious, but also poetic and full of humor and tears”, and “A life that quietly enjoys the tragedy, poetry and beauty of life, instead of making big speeches about trying to change society or the nation”.³⁾ (October 25, 1945)

She also had a strong desire to work, and while translating for GHQ after the

war, she wrote: “My desire to work is aroused by every stimulus. This in turn raises concerns about married life. No matter how much you prepare mentally, who can guarantee that this 'work fiend' won't destroy family life when the time comes? I want to write, I want to research, I want to present my research... What should I do about this burning urge?”⁵⁾ (January 30, 1946, age 32) and she was at a loss.

As we have seen, one of the internal problems that caused Mieko's suffering as a truth-seeker was that she was torn between various impulses, such as wanting to be a doctor and be at the side of the suffering, having a strong desire for science, art, morality, and religion, wanting to work, wanting to research, and wanting to express something. The other was an external, practical problem, namely the fact that, after marriage, she had a long period of difficulty in following the path she wanted to take. During the time when she had a family and was away from psychiatry, she continued to inspire herself, as she wrote: “Deep down, my heart is with the sick and suffering. My mission will not be complete until I have fulfilled my work in that world”.²⁾ (September 24, 1959, age 45) “I am already 46 years old and have not yet fully recovered from the effects of the radium I received during my cancer treatment.... With the remaining time

and strength I have, I must fulfill my mission. I cannot die without having done so. Who can understand this intense sense of mission? ... There is something in me that goes beyond my own understanding”.²⁾ (May 15, 1960, age 46)

As mentioned above, even after she was able to attend Aiseien, she still had to deal with the pain of leaving her family behind and the difficulties and suffering of being a psychiatrist that came with being there for the patients' pain.

However, it is precisely because she endured these struggles and conflicts for so long that she was able to create a body of work that so richly encompasses the many impulses and experiences that Mieko had, especially in her work "On the Meaning of Life". The same is true of her other works, and the author suspects that if Mieko had not experienced these sufferings, they would have been completely different and not read for long.

2. As a woman

Mieko thought that she was “born a woman and a 'monster' at the same time”⁵⁾ (March 2, 1944, age 30), and “What a tragedy that I was born a woman and have this personality. What a fate I have been burdened with”⁵⁾ (December 17 of the same year), “For a woman who is immersed in her work, it

is easy to become grotesque because she is a woman. I am sometimes horrified by the adventure I am about to embark on.”⁵⁾ (February 17, 1945, age 31) “I must say that I am unfortunately a masculine person. I feel that I am shut out of normal life, both in terms of circumstances and in terms of my own qualities.”⁵⁾ (December 9 of the same year), and she was well aware that she was different from ordinary women.

She also pointed out that there is a serious division among creative women, saying that “motherhood, as it exists in the biological form of women, is something that is completely absorbed by the child in front of them”, and that it has nothing to do with a high level of spiritual life”, and that “therefore, if women want to do spiritual creation, it may be better to give up motherhood”.²⁾

Despite this, Mieko fulfilled her various roles as a woman - daughter, younger sister, older sister, wife, and mother - and achieved creative work. As a daughter, she strongly supported her father, Tamon, who was the Minister of Education after the war, and after her marriage, she devoted herself to raising her first son, who was born prematurely, and her second son, who was seriously ill, while supporting and wishing success to her husband, Noburo, as a scholar. Her love and respect for Noburo, as well as her happiness as a mother, must have made her family life very

fulfilling. It is believed that there are many women who are so busy with the daily chores of housework and childcare and working to support themselves that they lose sight of their own path and goals and give them up. However, Mieko never gave up, and despite her suffering, she chose to walk her own path and live as a family-minded person. The feelings of guilt she experienced when visiting Aiseien and the depression that made it difficult for her to speak continued throughout the long period she spent repeatedly visiting Aiseien, and it seems that she also continued to suffer and grieve as a woman, wife, and mother.

Mieko also thought deeply about the difficulties women face in creating, and she wrote about the need for women to realize that the things that prevent them from being spiritually independent and creative are within themselves.²⁾ This may have enabled Mieko to devote herself to creative work and expression, including “On the Meaning of Life”.

3. What supported Mieko

While working as a psychiatrist, Mieko became aware of her own psychopathology.

It is not clear whether she was afraid of developing a mental illness, but Hisao Nakai points out that: “even if Mieko Kamiya was secretly afraid of

developing a mental illness, it is only natural, and it is even possible to say that she succeeded where many mental patients had failed”.²⁴⁾

When I read this point, I thought of Mieko's intense desire to express herself, and the French sculptor Camille Claudel, as well as Chieko, the wife of the Japanese sculptor and poet Kotaro Takamura, came to mind.

It is believed that both struggled to live in the world of creation and developed mental illnesses that were deeply related to the relationship with their partners and the burdens that resulted from it.²²⁾²³⁾

According to Nakai, the fact that Mieko succeeded in her life, which was full of strong impulses and conflicts, was like: “running through a narrow ridge with steep cliffs on both sides”.²⁴⁾

Assuming that Mieko was afraid of developing a mental illness, were there any factors or protective factors that prevented her from developing one? One factor would be the depth of Mieko's self-understanding and her ability to cope with many hardships. In addition, the presence of Mieko's god, her sons and other family members, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Nietzsche, Uraguchi Masa, and Mitani Takamasa,¹⁴⁾ whom she called “the only teacher I have ever met in this world”, would also have supported her.

Of these, the author believes that the most important for Mieko was the presence of Noburo and his understanding of her. Her second son, Toru, said at a gathering to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Mieko's birth: “My mother was someone who didn't understand jokes. She always seems to be smiling in the photos, but I think she was someone who cried and got angry quite intensely, and who had a lot of strong emotions. This is probably because my father was a very gentle person, so I felt that even more strongly”.¹⁾ It is believed that Noburo's stable and gentle personality and attitude, as well as his deep understanding of Mieko and his support and assistance in achieving her goals, protected and supported her.

There is a particularly memorable letter she wrote to Masa: “The other day, when I was absorbed in writing my paper, even though my husband and children came into my room from time to time, I just turned around and said ‘What?’, not knowing what to say, and I was so confused that it was as if I had met a foreigner, and I couldn't even say a single word. (This is something I can't really talk about with other people, but strangely enough, my husband said I was “divine” (?!), and the children are very worried about whether my paper is going well. This is something I really feel is a waste, and I feel full of gratitude,

and I want to at least repay everyone and make amends when I'm back in the real world and have regained my senses".⁴⁾ (April 7, 1965, age 51) This is thought to be an episode that shows the respect Noburo had for Mieko, to the point where he thought she was "divine".

Mieko also wrote, "N went to Tokyo yesterday. Even though we're close - or maybe because we're close - when I'm away from him, I really slow down, both in terms of time and emotion".²⁾ It seems that a not too close marital relationship has also helped to stabilize Mieko.

After Mieko's death, Noburo wrote: "Whenever the day of her departure for Aiseien approached, she became sad and depressed. The cause of her sadness was probably that she felt she was a 'heartless mother' and a 'bad wife' for leaving her children and husband behind. On the other hand, an inner 'voice' - or perhaps it would be better to call it a 'demon' - told her to go to Aiseien. What a contradiction! Her mind, which was trying to reconcile two things that were difficult to reconcile, was also a mass of contradictions, as she well understood. Depending on how you look at it, it could even be called tragic.... Once she left home, she was no longer a wife or a mother, but a truth-seeker, Mieko Kamiya".²⁰⁾ It seems to the author that Noburo supported Mieko through her tragedy and suffering, and that he himself achieved the great feat

of remaining a husband of a truth-seeker.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed Mieko Kamiya's life, focusing on her thoughts and narratives in her diaries, and has considered her struggles as a truth-seeker and woman, and finally I have described what supported Mieko. Although Mieko's many achievements were the result of her talent and hard work, the author feels that these achievements shine even brighter because she faced many difficulties, continued to struggle with her inner conflicts, and suffered herself while standing by the side of the sick and suffering. I sincerely hope that this paper will serve as an opportunity to remember Mieko and her writings, and that they will be re-examined and continued to be used in modern psychiatry and for the benefit of the sick.

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Notes

*1. In order to focus on Mieko's story, the expression "Mieko" is used, and the word "rai (leprosy)" is used in part due to the social situation at the time.

*2. Nagashima Aiseien

*3. Noburo, Ritsu (the eldest son), and Toru (the second son)



図 長島愛生園にて (1966年2月)
(文献18より引用)

Figure: At Nagashima Aiseien (February 1966)
(Adapted from Reference 18)