

Educational Philosophy Of Japan

Dr. Jaya Mukerji

Associate Professor in Education

Allahabad Degree College, Prayagraj

Abstract

Japanese educational philosophy is an amalgamation of various cultures-Oriental and Occidental. One finds nature-worship, inclination towards animism, Confucianism, Buddhism and also secular tendencies. The Imperial line was divine. After the Second World War, the Japanese thought has been unfailingly woven into the European and American cultural fabric. In the present age Japan is leaning towards New Humanism which can be established on the concept that all human beings are equal and have a shared vision.

Keywords: Shintoism, Confucianism, Imperial-line, Meiji Restoration, New Humanism

The philosophical views of Japan contain traces of Buddhism, Confucianism, State Shintoism, Sectarian Shintoism and Christianity. In addition to Eastern thoughts, there is considerable portion of Greek Philosophy, American Pragmatism, German Philosophy, French Literature, Christianity and Marxism¹. Every idea today is whirling around Japan although its history is not in a stable position. Japan is the melting pot of various cultures, ancient and modern, East and West. It has digested others' thoughts into its own system. Both Oriental and Occidental cultures are here rather metamorphosed².

Japan has a primitive religion with emphasis on nature worship, ancestor worship, a tendency towards animism and a strong disposition towards Shamanism³. Confucianism and Buddhism infiltrate into Japan during the latter half of the third century. A very strong belief in Buddhism can be seen. Secular tendencies are also presented by Dharmakaya doctrine of the MahaVairocana propounded by Kukai. Pantheistic Buddhism also has its role by emphasizing rituals. During the Kamakura

era (1192-1333AD) the doctrine of Bushido laid stress on the practical approach towards Confucianism and Buddhism. New schools of thought pertaining to Buddhism were set forth by Honen, Shinran, Eisai, Dogen, Nichiren etc. As per the Zen cult, one must return to one's heart in order to behold the Buddha-nature within oneself by way of meditation. Honen, a great educator taught the worship of Amitabha, the 'Infinite Light'. Honen states, 'There is no hamlet so forlorn that the rays of the silver moon fail to reach it nor is there any man who by opening wide the windows of his thought cannot perceive divine truth and take it unto his heart.'⁴

The Japanese mind is not analytical. It is intuitive; it has never been trained in inductively collecting data and abstracting a principle running through them. It merely grasps at each concrete datum of experience and wants to identify itself with it. It does not speculate anything supposed to be underlying the experience. It does not go beyond what confronts it.⁵ Confucianism, Tao-ism, Buddhism, Shintoism play a significant role in the development of Japan's intuitive mind and its tendency towards a concrete world of sense-perceptions.

The thought of Japan is "Kannagara". It means 'in conformity to the will of God'. Japan's idea of God is free from the force of human intellect. 'The land was divine-for it was created by the gods Jzanagi and Jzanami. The Imperial line was divine-for it was a direct descendant of Jinnu, who was in turn a direct descendant of the Sun- goddess AmaterasuOmikami. The people of Japan were divine... All were descendants of the gods, the Kami-but some were descendants of more favoured gods. The basis of occupational distribution had been set.'⁶One finds poor display of logic while evaluating the deeds of the gods humanly recorded and transmitted from one generation to another. However, they were not quite erroneous in their endeavor to communicate that there is something in human experience that eludes human estimation and that this is to be accepted as going beyond rationalism, as being just as it is, as ultimate reality, either natural or supernatural. But the error they committed was that they attempted to apply the irrationality of the gods to the political fields, attempting thereby to prove the divine origin of the Japanese imperial household.⁷ The

family is the most important unit of Japanese society. The Japanese have to owe their allegiance to the family, fidelity to the lord (in feudal Japan), and faithfulness to the emperor (in modern times), loyalty to teachers, supervisors and employers. The Japanese emperor treated himself as something divine up to the Second World War. Life of a Japanese is full of duties and that implies being on guard every minute. Many duties point to a fixed set of formal acts such as bowing and the delicate use of words of respect while meeting others. Japanese ethics is situational, depending on particular situations. Learning all these rules is, therefore, not easy⁸. In such a tradition a Japanese has very little of individual self-reliance or general moral principles to guide him.⁹ After the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912 and upto the recent times after the Second World War, the Japanese thought has been unfailingly woven into the European and American cultural fabric. The educational philosophy of Japan mainly influenced by American pedagogy, took to Western technology, education and specialized training so as to churn out industrial workers, technicians and managers. Thus, Western technology and teachers, and Japanese leadership, learning and hardwork have brought about a hitherto unprecedented change. Modern Japan exhibits a tendency to make national greatness the supreme goal of education. This trait is visible among all the great powers. The aim of education in Japan is to produce people who shall be devoted to the state and train their passions in such a way that they become useful citizens by acquiring the knowledge they possess. In the present age Japan is leaning towards New Humanism which can be established on the foundation that all human beings are equal.

Humanism is a philosophy that stresses the dignity or interests of human beings or the importance of man in relation to the cosmic order. It advocates the extension of participatory democracy and the expansion of the open society, emphasizing human rights and social justice. Values-whether religious, ethical, social or political have their origin in human experience and culture. Therefore, the goals of life are obtained from human needs and interests and human beings are responsible for their own destiny. New Humanism is not only theoretical but also practical. It not

only concentrates on the search for values but also directed towards implementation of clear cut programmes that bear definite results. Present day crisis raises challenges that cannot be dealt with by any single country. Societies are interconnected. Therefore, human beings should discover what best can unite human beings together. New Humanism means reaching out to people near or far.

It is essential to build a universal human community falling back on the fundamental values of humanity and above all on the resources of the mind. Being a humanist today implies bringing together human beings so that the human community can take up the challenges together. It implies a shared vision. Through communication, language learning and dialogue, scientific cooperation, human beings can go beyond the limitations of their own selves and establish intellectual and moral cooperation of humanity. This demands access to quality education for all so that everyone can make their voice heard in the universal dialogue. It means encouraging scientific cooperation networks, setting up research centres and disseminating information technology. The New Humanism ensures that every child goes to school to receive quality education, that men and women have equal access to knowledge and power. It also involves protecting biodiversity and cultural diversity.

The Japanese consider the love of learning as one of life's main virtues. Education has played a very important role in their culture, especially since the Meiji Restoration in 1868. There is emphasis on the necessity of a high quality education. Its achievements can be said to be the result of the nation's unique historical and cultural foundations and parental involvement as of pedagogical policies and practices.

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