

# Chapter One

## The Evolution and Development of Traditional Values of Peace, Harmony and Non-Violence in Contemporary Japan

Akihiro Chiba, Professor, Graduate School of Education,  
International Christian University, Tokyo

---

This chapter briefly describes the characteristics of certain traditional values in Japan that are compatible with present-day concepts of peace, harmony, non-violence and tolerance and how these traditional values have been transformed and are now evolving into new values in contemporary society as a consequence of interaction with western values and cultures. It must be pointed out, however, that this is not an academic analysis of these values and concepts *per se*, but focuses more on their evolution in education. It tries to describe how the mix of the indigenous and imported values and concepts has emerged and been introduced into education, which in turn has helped to form value orientations of Japanese peoples and societies in various stages of Japan's history.

Immediately after the end of the World War II in 1945, Japan started its post-war reconstruction by proclaiming its resolute determination to be a peaceful and democratic nation and adopted a unique, peace-dedicated Constitution. While some consider this Constitution was imposed by the US occupation forces and try to seek opportunities to revise it, basing it more on Japanese traditional values, the country nevertheless has maintained it for over fifty years, and the majority of the population is fully convinced of its values, especially its resolute emphasis on peace and democracy. Furthermore, Japan has opted to concentrate on economic, industrial and technological reconstruction and development by abandoning completely her military ambition. Unfortunately, however, Japan has often been portrayed as a military power because of its past military aggression against countries in Asia and

the Pacific, and many neighbouring countries still fear the revival of such militarism in Japan.

Some critics cynically consider that Japan is dominated by a war mentality that propelled it to achieve the domination of the world using economic force. The past aggressive military record weighs heavily on the present Japanese population even though the majority of its people today have no direct knowledge and experience of wars. It is an important task for the Japanese, therefore, to take cognisance constantly of the sufferings inflicted on their neighbours during the past wars and at the same time to inform and consciously demonstrate to the world Japan's genuine determination and capacity to contribute to global peace.

Have the people of Japan been dominated by a war mentality throughout its history? Have Japanese traditional values always acted against peace, harmony and non-violence? The answer is certainly 'No'. There exist many Japanese traditional values that support peace, harmony and non-violence. In fact, Japan's history in major parts was predominantly peaceful and the profile of ordinary Japanese today gives a more peaceful image than the former aggressive and cruel personality. Why, then, could not such traditional values prevent Japan from launching aggression and war against its neighbours?

In this connection, it seems important to review these traditional values within the context of national and social backgrounds at different stages of history and to see why these traditional values could not resist against stronger social forces of the time and consequently could not turn the direction of the national destiny toward peace. Unfortunately, education often served as a strong instrument for political demagoguery to transform the sentiments of the entire population towards wars and aggression.

## Traditional values in the national and social context

The role of values in society now will be analysed to show how closely they are interwoven into the fabric and dynamics of the society with multi-faceted dimensions. As a consequence, it is often difficult to single out specific values separately as basic values. Even the same traditional values have served negative purposes depending upon the social and national context of a given time. It may also be assumed that not

all traditional values are peace oriented in any given society or country, and there often co-exist both positive and negative values in an amorphous manner.

Any attempts to look at traditional values afresh often stem from the problematic situation of the present. Many countries of the region are becoming increasingly vulnerable to international pressures and influences in the age of globalisation. There exist serious concerns in many countries over the loss or blurring of national identities or traditional values. In this sense, attempts to look back at their own cultural values are on the increase. Some groups or social forces backed by traditional values tend to show alarm signals and to act more radically in defence of those values in response to the rapid pace and over-dominance of globalisation and internationalisation.

Certain values are formed in family or similar small social units to ensure their unity, survival and maintenance of status, or to facilitate their growth and development in society. Values of peace, harmony and non-violence are absolutely essential in such a context. Respect for parents and the elderly, obedience to family traditions and norms, care and love for children who need protection, friendly and peaceful interactions and dialogues and so on are a natural part and parcel of family and community life. They are natural values embedded in basic human emotion, sentiment and behaviour. They are strong within family or similar social units such as tribes or homogeneous communities but are not necessarily extended beyond such social units. Such intra-social values often take diametrically opposite manifestations such as aggression and violence, or suspicion and distrust, when these social units are confronted with or menaced by other external and heterogeneous groups, social forces, cultures or civilizations, although, in certain cases, these social contacts could result in a complete assimilation or more orderly transfusion of different values resulting in the evolution of new ones. Human history, in fact, has witnessed many different patterns of manifestations of intra-social values when faced with external forces.

It can be said that any society, without exception, has such values based on the laws of nature to respect peace and harmony and to avoid violent manifestation in respect of maintaining its own social unity and order. When a society or country is relatively isolated and static in its socio-economic or political evolution, these natural values

have predominant roles within society and permeate into the society and social hierarchy through informal education. However, such natural values are not necessarily automatically transferable beyond such social and cultural boundaries.

Many societies and countries have experienced the socio-political systems of feudalism, absolute monarchy or similar domination during their histories. Under such systems, rulers conveniently adopted these basic natural intra-social values as their political values of governance through which they one-sidedly imposed the values of respect for the rulers and superiors, obedience to their orders, uncritical acceptance of certain sacrifices and discriminations such as a caste system and other social orders to ensure their rules and privileges. Informal education in family and society is conditioned by such social belief and while small factions of the ruling class are given specific political and social indoctrination a large mass of peoples are left totally uneducated to avoid the emergence of critical minds.

Religions play an important role in fostering basic social values that provide the society with fundamental moral codes and disciplines. While they may not be completely identical, both the natural values and religion-based social values have many characteristics in common. Religions are not confined to specific national boundaries, nor to social units, and they spread over different parts of the world. If these religious values are absolute, all those who have faith in a particular religion must hold the same values, as these religious values must have been permeated among its followers for many centuries. Then why do so many differences exist between Christians in the USA and in Asian countries? Why are the traditional values groomed in Buddhist traditions in China, Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam different from each other? In addition to basic natural values, there must exist certain indigenous cultural or sub-cultural values in different places which are the combined products of natural values, ethnic particularities, geographical and climatic conditions, different forms of production and economy, and political histories. In fact, many religion-based values are often indistinguishable from traditional cultural values. Furthermore, while these religions often preached the importance of peace, harmony and non-violence, many were not necessarily tolerant of other faiths and there existed many instances of conflicts between religions, as well as wars and aggressions, sparked by religious motives.

Many countries of the region unfortunately have had experiences of colonisation and had to suffer from the denial of the right for independence and sovereignty for a long time. Human rights, freedom, equality and justice of colonised populations were neither protected nor even respected and these oppressed people had to pursue a long struggle for independence. Many of the political claims and slogans for independence were the combination of modern democratic principles and the traditional values. Some of these values have been adopted as national values after independence in many countries.

Many governments of modern nation states make efforts to promulgate certain values, especially to achieve their socio-economic development goals, such as the importance of human rights, democracy, political freedom, diligence, empowerment and participation in development efforts. Are these politically-oriented values genuinely indigenous? Are they based on traditional values? Is a top-down approach to values development effective, or is it indoctrination? Even if certain values are to be promoted by the governments for genuinely national socio-economic or even political development, can this be done independently of values development from the bottom up; i.e. from the people at the grass-roots?

It is not correct to conceive traditional values as static or uniform. Many traditional values have been evolving historically, even though such processes have been slow and gradual, almost without notice. It is not easy to identify which is a more genuine traditional value when we are faced with many different values and traditions. There are regional differences within a country and a certain set of values may be unique to a certain social class. Sometimes, a particular set of cultural values may be in vogue at a certain moment of history, based on a complex combination of many factors. Certain values are highlighted during a certain period, for example, to justify specific political purposes such as war propaganda. The problem lies in the fact that certain leaders and policy-makers often skilfully pick up, out of these amorphous values, a specific set of values as if they were the real and traditional ones, in order to mobilise the population in certain directions. Such attempts often tend to be more ethnocentric and emotional, rather than rational and conscientious, and are soon introduced into the school curriculum and other educational activities.

In most countries traditional values sustaining the present-day needs of democracy, peace, human rights, sustainable development, international and intercultural understanding, appreciation and tolerance have existed in varying degrees and forms, but they are often fragmented or given different meanings and emphases under certain social or national contexts at given times. It is important therefore to trace back to the roots of these traditional values but it should not be a simple nostalgic approach, nor simply a cataloguing of them. It is important to see them in a more global social or national context so as to clearly understand how these values interacted with the evolution of time and trends, and why these values could not lead to the emergence of democratic governance, equality, freedom and individualism in Japan. In fact, in the case of Japan, many such values were vulnerable and even utilised skilfully for justifying the totalitarianism and militarism. One therefore should analyse the factors which caused such an unfortunate linkage. It is important to draw clear conclusions and learn lessons from such analysis.

#### **Traditional values in the pre-Meiji Period**

It is often generalised that Oriental values are more subtle, being defined in relation to the universe in which human beings exist. The universe is composed of a harmonious and symbiotic order. Such order has been created, maintained and transmitted both horizontally and vertically over many millennia. Therefore many of the traditional values were developed in relation to the transcendental values of the universe, and of the symbiotic existence of all beings, including human beings, within it. The philosophy of life was to emphasise harmony with nature and the surrounding order, to respect parents, the elderly, ancestors and obedience thereto, to reason and learn the universal orders and principles, and to subject oneself to such orders. The individual human being is an infinitely small and fragile existence at the mercy of the greater orders. These philosophical concepts were expressed in arts, architecture and landscaping in Japan.

Traditional values in Japan evolved through the interaction of its indigenous culture with civilisations from China and Korea including Buddhism and Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism and Taoism. Rulers in the ancient period were not only open to new civilisations from outside but also introduced them enthusiastically, Buddhism, in particular. Japan, through such an historical process, underwent considerable transformation and advance in perfecting the form of

government including the adoption of many legal and other institutions and practices, in developing agricultural and artisan production with the introduction of new technologies and materials, and above all, in new thinking and philosophies, and new ways of life and arts. Opportunities for direct access to such new civilisations were initially restricted to limited sections of society, namely ruling classes of aristocrats, courtiers, intellectuals and priests and a huge gap existed between them and the majority of illiterate farmers and artisans. Cultural assimilation and interaction gradually seeped to the ordinary people over a long period of time and formed the old Japanese cultural traditions.

The reign of Emperors was gradually strengthened and the imperial system formed in the early stage of Japanese history. The Emperors became strong actors in the political history of Japan, the traditional Japanese value system being formed with the Emperors on top of the hierarchical order of the universe. The Emperors ruled that part of Japan under their direct control in the earliest stage, but later extended their control over the entire region of Japan. Although the Emperors often reigned they did not necessarily administer the imperial rules. The imperial system was maintained through hereditary succession. Leadership and administration also were assumed for long periods by other powerful actors in Japanese history, the military clans and shoguns, although they never tried to replace Emperors nor abolish the imperial system. Any attempts to replace the Emperors were considered as rebellion and could not be justified. However nominal the Emperors' role might have been in certain periods in the past, shoguns or the ruling clans had to obtain endorsements and sanctions from the Emperors on many major decisions in order to legitimate their actions in front of all the subordinate clans and the general population.

Buddhist priests constituted a strong power group in the history of Japan. While the Emperors and the shoguns were to control the present world, priests were supposed to act as guides to the other world. As the people became so faithful to Buddhism and all believed in the eternal happiness in the other world and reincarnation, the people listened to the holy words and advice of the priests and made the offerings to the temples.

Ordinary people are normally supposed to constitute the main power base for the development of any country, but they were long ignored and did not appear in the

history of Japan as powerful players in development before the age of modernisation. The traditional values were often formed and developed through the interactions and power plays of the above power groups to maintain the convenient social orders and division of powers in the domination of the present and the other world. Many of the Buddhist teachings were concerned with the moral conduct of daily life and therefore constituted the Japanese traditional values and it is often hard to distinguish between the Buddhist and other values in daily life. The oriental philosophy of respecting the universe and the greater order strengthened the peoples' acceptance of the Emperors' governance.

Many of the values such as harmony, stability, loyalty, obedience, caring, sharing, diligence and hard work, acceptance of status and roles in the present world and the subjection to the hierarchical order were those expected from the people to sustain the present social order. Under such contexts, such qualities as self-esteem, self-assertion, free expression, discussion, initiatives, creativeness and, above all, critical reasoning, inquiring minds and reflections were all considered dangerous and discouraged.

The national isolation policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate for nearly 300 years (1603-1867) matured Japan's traditional values without much interaction with external forces and influences. The solid and rigid feudal system was established dividing Japanese into the social classes of samurai (warriors), farmers, artisans and merchants/traders. Hierarchical supremacy of samurai was firmly established and inter-marriage of the ruling class with the subordinate classes was forbidden. Among the samurais, a rigid feudal hierarchy was established with the Tokugawa Shogun on top. All were to serve the Shogun and his clan, and absolute importance was placed on maintaining the *status quo* of hierarchy among the families/clans under the feudal system. The maintenance of the family/clan was more important than the human life of samurai who served the clan. It was considered a virtue to die for the honour of the clan and its master, and no doubt was cast on such a belief among the samurais. The exceptions were condemned and dishonoured not only by the clan but also by society at large. For such feudal rules, the Chinese philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism were very convenient and effective. Shintoism was invented to strengthen and glorify the national identities and social (feudal) orders. Buddhism provided strong theological support to ancestral worship and at the same time the salvage of



souls from the reality of hardship among the common people, promising happiness in the next life rather than in the present life. Caste-specific values were firmly established and the place of any individual and his/her role in society was clearly defined. Such a system was effectively maintained through the rigid hereditary system, giving importance to the eldest sons. Women were placed totally in the subordinate positions and considered as a means to support the smooth running of the feudalistic families and society.

Ironically, many of the traditional values attributed to the Japanese today originate from this heritage. Maintaining social harmony, respect and obedience the elderly, loyalty to the superior, avoiding arguments and disputes, maintaining peace and harmony, social behaviour with modesty and etiquette reflecting the social status, care and compassion, and the importance of deed rather than promise, are all important values and the virtues which sustained the feudal system. In a neutral sense, they may be considered positive values even today for living in a modern democratic society. However, these quality and values in Japan are part and parcel of the negative values groomed in a feudal system like the two sides of a coin. Maintaining social harmony is equivalent to *status quo* and a passive attitude to social change and progress. Loyalty often results in narrow sectionalism, and respect for the elderly and obedience often encourage an attitude of resignation that results in the lack of critical minds, initiatives and innovations. Peaceful conduct by avoiding arguments and disputes is equal to lack of opinions and of self-assertion. Compassion is interpreted as a paternal sense of superiority. Appropriate manners and etiquette reflecting social status resulted in a lack of individualism and produced millions of Japanese salaried workers in uniformly dark suits. The importance given to the deed rather than the promise makes the Japanese incompetent in negotiation, well articulated speech, debates and consultations.

What is important to recognise is that many of the traditional values contain both positive and negative connotations depending on the context in which they were valued. Many can serve present-day goals of peace, non-violence and democracy effectively as long as the global context is carefully defined and designed. In this connection, collective conscious effort to maintain peace and democracy is essential, which in turn will ensure the optimal contribution of traditional values.

One of the outstanding influences of Chinese philosophy in Japan was the respect for learning. Scholars were highly respected and even poor families aspired to send their sons to temples or other places of learning so as to help them move out of the low caste and establish themselves as priests or scholars. During the Tokugawa Period, there was no national system of education and each feudal clan offered its own schooling to the sons of its members. Many of them were trained in martial arts and Japanese fencing but bright young people were given education in Chinese philosophy, classical literature and poems. They were supposed to learn the state philosophy of Shushigaku (Doctrine of Chu Tze) to become effective feudal agents. The basic content of such education was designed to promote loyalty to the feudal lords and the continued existence of the feudal clans/families, sacrifice including death to safeguard them, thus emphasising the importance of house clans rather than individual life, which was the honour of the samurais, strict observation of the hierarchical orders and obedience.

Compared to these ruling classes, common people were totally uneducated and the policy of the Shogunate administration was 'not to let them know but to let them follow'. However, it would be extremely difficult to share the same traditional values between the two distinctly different categories of people, one educated and the other totally uneducated and illiterate. It would be very difficult to generalise certain values as the traditional Japanese values because it is not possible to assess what portion of the population actually shared such values, especially among the uneducated. We have to accept the undeniable fact that most of these values were often imposed from the top to support the specific social and national schemes in the past.

The ordinary people gradually developed their own set of values within the global values system in order to enjoy their own style of life. A certain set of values was unique to merchants in those days enabling them to enjoy sophisticated arts and culture without conspicuously showing them. A dual values system of nominal principles (*tatema*) and actuality or real wishes (*hon-ne*) emerged. This dual system may be more prominent among Orientals who are often criticised by Europeans as too subtle or ambiguous. One must also recognise the values systems unique to certain social classes. This trait of a subtle values system often stems from the survival needs of the oppressed.

In fact, all traditional values are not necessarily uniform nor do they conform to each other. They are often contradictory and the importance of certain values rose and fell in the course of history. However, in a society of homogeneous ethnicity, these individually contradictory values were given unique places and were contained within a larger social frame of feudalism and mono-culture matured over the ages. In such a society, everything was taken for granted socially as common sense and no logical reflection or expression was needed. The contradictory values were conveniently used according to situations. Following such social common sense, the society functioned normally and peacefully. Everything was judged in relative terms with importance attached to maintaining the balance.

However, a certain change started to appear in this social common sense when a rudimentary form of commercial capitalism started to emerge. As the commerce and financing business developed, the traders and merchants emerged as a new social power and formed a new social class. They were no longer satisfied with the lowest status of the feudal order and started to feel the importance of protecting their property and rights. These changes took place gradually but it was a decisive departure from the hitherto existing social common sense. Many of the feudal clans were indebted to these merchants as the feudal system could no longer support the totally unproductive members of the clans and the absolute supremacy of the samurais' social caste had started to gradually collapse. Other commoners such as farmers and workers started to feel the same and to protect themselves from the cheating of tax collectors or money lenders.

In all cases, literacy was considered as an effective arm for such change. A unique form of learning then emerged which catered to the learning need of commoners. They started to send their children to *terakoya* to learn the 3Rs, other practical skills and moral education. They taught less formal and more practical content by using famous literature, particularly correspondences. *Tera* means temple, *ko* child, and *ya* house; i.e., 'temple child house' literally but *terako* actually meant 'learning child', or 'learning centre' in contemporary terminology. *Terakoya* mushroomed from among the grassroots and towards the end of the Tokugawa Period some fifty percent of children, including girls, attended *terakoyas* in certain regions. Towards the end of the Tokugawa Period many samurais lost jobs as the feudal clans could not support them and they often opened *terakoyas* to obtain their livelihood by collecting small

fees from the parents of children. Many chiefs of the villages, Buddhist monks and other learned persons also acted as teachers and the values taught at *terakoyas* were more practical, reflecting qualities of commoners rather than the formalistic content of the samurais' academies. There existed some 7,000 kinds of texts. Students learned from these the life skills of living peacefully and harmoniously in communities.

This 'will to learn' among the masses at the grass-roots or 'popular will' is in fact the genuine Japanese traditional value which sustained the country's later development. Thanks to the widespread *terakoyas*, Japan could realise universal primary education within a short period of time in the succeeding Meiji Period that in turn facilitated rapid national development. At the end of the Tokugawa Period, Japan was divided between supporters of the Shogunate and royalists loyal to the long overshadowed Emperor on one hand, and between those who advocated the opening of the country towards the outside world and the introduction of western science, technology and civilisation, and those hostile to foreign powers who wished to uphold traditional values on the other. While loyalty within the respective groups was strong, values advocated by other groups were denied, and often developed into armed conflicts. Confusion persisted over the value system in the country and hitherto existing social common sense was broken. The end of the civil war restored the Emperor's reign after 300 years and resulted in the acceptance of a new destiny for modernisation by opening the country towards the outside world, the introduction of western civilisation, especially modern sciences and technology, parliamentary and public administration systems, and a modern system of laws and education. On the other hand, traditional groups with their traditional value systems also survived in the process of modernisation and adapted themselves as new conservative forces.

### **The Meiji Restoration and the development of nationalism**

The Meiji Restoration that started in 1868 marked Japan's first step toward modernisation and also toward the nation state. It was the first occasion to open the country to European civilisation that had been restricted during the Tokugawa Period, the new government advocating a policy of Japan's modernisation and launching a rigorous program of westernisation or 'Europeanisation'. The initial phase of the Meiji Restoration was marked by a predominantly liberal pro-European trend. The European system of government administration and its legal system were introduced

and many new institutions were established on European models including educational institutions. New concepts of freedom, equality, reasoning, critical thinking, democracy, citizenship, universality, and many values attached to Christianity, were introduced and although most of these ideas were very foreign to Japanese, many people appreciated and accepted them. New ways of life in a European style were followed by increasingly large numbers of people. European concepts were earnestly accepted, as was the concept of modernisation. In the minds of the Japanese people in general, many values originating from Christianity were established, not as a religious beliefs, but as rational concepts. While there was no dispute over the importance of introducing the science and technology of the west, the country was soon divided between those who advocated the introduction of European civilisation, and those hostile to westernisation who tried to maintain traditional values and the philosophy of nationalism, including many traditionalists who were alarmed at the rapid pace of Europeanisation. They feared that many good Japanese virtues and customs were being eroded or destroyed by western cultures and Japan would risk losing its identity, especially the Emperor-centred nationhood. Furthermore, in a country where traditional social common sense reigned for over 300 years, it was not possible for some traditionalists to tolerate the coexistence of Japanese traditional values with alien imported values in government, politics, education and the society at large. Severe disputes followed that helped to re-invent new social common sense. While many of the European and new scientific concepts were incorporated, it was finally the traditionalists who won the battle, especially defining education within the overall framework of imperialism.

The period from 1872 to 1885 was considered the first phase of modernisation of the educational system in Japan. The first educational policy statement of 1872 stressed the importance of education for all by stating that there should be no village with uneducated families nor should exist any uneducated member in a family. This was certainly the reflection of the traditional value of aspirations for learning as stated earlier. Thanks to the existence of wide spread *terakoyas*, the enrolment at primary level increased to 51% in 1883 and then to 97% in 1907. However, the universalisation of primary education did not result in a popular movement and development of democracy, nor in freedom of thought.

The country needed to strengthen its military power to defend it from invasion and colonisation. The government also pursued active economic and industrial development to accumulate national wealth, an important asset for a national power base. It was not a hard task for the government to convince the common people of the importance of diligence and hard-work as these had always been part of their tradition. The difference was that as the feudal castes were removed, every citizen became equal and anyone could climb up the social ladder using their hard work and obviously good luck. However, as the traditionalists succeeded in introducing the national hierarchy and order with the Emperor on top, each citizen was made responsible to strive to contribute to the construction of such an order, their hard work and diligence being emphasised as service to the nation. This imperial nationhood was justified as Japan's unique historical entity and the Emperor was then elevated to the status of god.

The traditionalist values culminated in the 'Imperial Rescript on Education' issued in October 1890. The year 1890 thus marked Japan's first step towards totalitarianism. Many of the traditional values were incorporated in the Rescript as the moral code for the Japanese. These values included, *inter alia*: respect and loyalty to parents; friendship towards brothers; harmonious relations of married couples; trust among friends; self restrained attitudes of modesty and economy; philanthropic affection to the general public; pursuit of learning; mastery of life and occupational skills; enhancement of intellectual qualities and virtues; initiatives to promote public service, welfare and responsibilities; respect for the Constitution and observance of laws; and volunteering with courage in case of emergencies. If any individual values are picked up independently, all of them are valid values even for today's democratic society. However the Imperial Rescript made it an absolute rule for the Japanese who were defined as the subjects of the Emperor to become united and mobilised to serve the Emperor through the manifestation of these values in order to maintain the imperial and divine national identity and sovereignty. With this global frame and condition, the meaning of each of the values listed above became completely different. They lost universal significance and became narrow, nationalistic and sectarian. The purpose of life for individuals, families, schools, communities and the nation was unified just to serve the totalitarian state. No universal consideration of humanity, nor of any values beyond national boundaries, emerged under such conditions. An oft-cited slogan of those days was 'Japanese spirit with western technology'.

While the nation adopted a parliamentary system, education was placed out of parliamentary control and put under the direct rule of the Emperor to avoid any confusion, or any unnecessary deliberations that might be influenced by partisan politics. State-made values were imposed on the entire Japanese nation through education. Education was designed to develop individuals who would obey the national order faithfully and without critical conscience. Education was thus used as an effective and efficient weapon by the state for national indoctrination. It was controlled tightly by the central educational authorities, *Monbusho*.

In addition to *terakoyas* in the Pre-Meiji Period, there had been a strong trend among the Japanese to develop an indigenous form of higher learning. There were many private academies (*shijuku*), many of which ventured to teach modern western sciences (natural and political) despite the official ban on alien academic disciplines by the Tokugawa Shogun regime. Many of them risked the death penalty but these private initiatives were far more resilient. Many young people went to Nagasaki, the only port officially open to European vessels, to learn new sciences from foreigners who were authorised to reside there. The traditional academies of the feudal clans could no longer cover up the contradictions of their teaching and logic with the emerging trends and realities. These private academies became the private institutions of higher learning in the Meiji Period. They contained both progressive schools for learning western culture and conservative schools to try to revive the traditional disciplines based on Buddhism and Shintoism.

Special needs of the early Meiji Period were the acquisition of the knowledge and skills of English language, law and economics, and many private academies were set up anew or evolved from the *shijuku* of the Tokugawa Period. Foreigners, mainly westerners, were encouraged to open their private schools. The first group of private institutions specialised in the teaching of English language. They were teaching not only English language skills and literature but promoted European philosophies and cultures including the European concepts of freedom, liberty, democracy, equality, modern sciences and even Christianity in certain schools. Some representatives of this group are the present Keio University, Waseda University, Doshisha University, and Aoyama Gakuin University. Waseda University was more prominent in the education of free and independent minds away from government and advocated

freedom and popular rights, while Keio University eventually excelled in leadership and management in the private sector, especially in business and enterprise. A second group specialised in the teaching of law and economics and many universities originated from this group, such as Hosei, Senshu, Meiji, Chuo, Kansai and Nihon Universities. A third group essentially comprised conservative schools advocating traditional spirit and culture such as those universities based on Buddhist or Shinto doctrines.

In the historical process of Japan's transformation in the late Meiji Period, the third group upholding Buddhist and Shinto doctrines was leading the nationalist movement in full cooperation with the government, while the second group of a more practical nature ended up in compromising with the government towards the totalitarian evolution of the state. The first group which was the advocate of western philosophy tried hard to resist the nationalistic trend until the last moment before they were finally forced to give in to cooperate with the totalitarian government. Education in Japan was directed by the Imperial Rescript from 1890 until 1945, i.e., until the end of the Second World War.

From the above illustrations, it is clear that simply listing any numbers of values would not serve a useful purpose without consideration of the global context and framework. Furthermore, the imposition of values defined from the top or by the state would risk the subjugation of many traditional values to serve certain political objectives. While such an act from the top in a genuinely democratic society may no doubt enhance further democratisation, the same act could facilitate a move towards autocracy and totalitarianism in a different political climate. Gaps and mismatches in value orientations between the state and the people would endanger democracy. The important lesson learned through Japanese history and its processes of modernisation and development is the desirability of having a harmonious ensemble of values interacting mutually from the grassroots and from the top.



## Concepts of peace, harmony and non-violence in contemporary Japanese education

Japan accepted peace and democracy as the state's fundamental policy at the end of World War II in 1945. The political system was reversed by placing sovereignty in the hands of the people under the new Constitution. Fundamental human rights were established as inviolable, with permanent rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and equality of all citizens assured under the law. The Constitution guarantees respect for the individual life of each citizen, and the right to pursue freedom and to enjoy happiness. Japan pledged to strive to establish international peace based on justice and equity through peaceful means by renouncing all forms of military action. Many of the traditional values that were used to serve feudalism or the totalitarian state were now freed from such constraints and revived as genuine human values. The traditional values of the Japanese such as diligence, hard work, modesty, humility, respect for order, obedience, perseverance and economy all contributed to re-establishing Japan as a peaceful nation, and also to national reconstruction and development. In fact, Japan has achieved a spectacular performance in its post-war recovery and its economic and technological development. Japanese people have a strong characteristic of collective being rather than individual existence which manifests in a tremendous power to mobilise and unite at times of national crisis or emergency, but they often have been criticised for lacking the qualities of individuality and self assertion that are basic values of democracy. Uniformity and conformity are often given preference over uniqueness of individual personality, thinking and behaviour.

Harmony, social cohesiveness, *status quo* and stability are more dominantly valued in social life as practical values. Difference, uniqueness, diversity, heterogeneity, or change in general, were often seen as disturbing factors by a population so used to living in social common-sense, adhering to conformity, or following orders from above. Under post-war democracy, the Japanese thus inherited many traditional values opposite to the basic principles of western democracies, but were required nominally to uphold basic values that gave more prominence to self, individuality and freedom as the new values of democracy. This dualism of value systems has

persisted until today. If any Japanese were asked to point out Japanese values in support of democracy, all would invariably list those values embodied in the Constitution and the fundamental law of education. How many of them would actually follow such values in daily life?

The Fundamental Law of Education (1947) defines clearly the goals of education as 'perfecting of human personality' and forming 'a peaceful and democratic nation and society'. Under these broad goals are specified qualities or virtues: love of truth and justice; respect for the value of an individual; the importance of work and responsibility; a spirit of independence; and being mentally and physically healthy. These virtues conform to and sustain the values of peace and democracy. Education with these goals and qualities has been in practice for over fifty years. Other human qualities also are emphasised: independence, respect for freedom and responsibility, critical and creative intellectuality, faithfulness, perseverance and courage, moderation and self control, self and conviction, diligence, inquisitiveness, creativeness, modesty and piety. The qualities emphasised by social ethics are kindness, goodwill, tolerance, cooperation, a sense of responsibility, equity, discipline, respect for laws, respect of rights and obligations, faithfulness, love of peace, and commitment to the well being of humanity.

The 1998 official course of studies for moral education specifies its objectives as follows:

- to nurture respect for human beings and human life
- to nurture a rich mind and a sense of humanity
- to foster people capable of renewing cultural tradition, and of developing and creating a rich original culture
- to form people who will make an effort to create and develop a democratic society and nation
- to form people capable of contributing to the realisation of a peaceful international community
- to form Japanese who will play an active role in developing the future
- to enhance morality.

These objectives are fully compatible with those of peace, harmony and non-violence. Although they may appear more universal in nature, rather than the

manifestation of traditional values, contemporary Japanese values, like those of many countries, have evolved into a mix of the universal and the traditional, the universal having been increasingly incorporated and internalised into contemporary Japanese values through more than fifty years of post-war democratic education. It must be pointed out, however, that there has been a constant attempt from right wing politicians and conservative forces to turn the values and goals of education towards a more traditional, nationalistic and right wing orientation. Such attempts often created diplomatic tensions with neighbouring countries that had suffered from Japanese aggression during its former colonial and military power, and during the wars of this period. It is regrettable that such incidences have often been repeated. Many fear that the revival of traditional values in education may compromise the post war efforts towards peace and democratisation.

The conceptual value of *kyousei* (to live together) has been widely advocated by the Japanese in recent years, long before the publication of the Delors Report, 'Learning: the treasure within'. This was the natural outcome of Japanese egalitarian value orientations. It was strongly advocated at the Regional Preparatory Conference held in Tagaytay, the Philippines, in 1994, that was convened in preparation for the 44th session of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, 1994) that adopted the 'Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy'. The same conceptual value was stressed at the World Conference of NGOs: Mid-term Review of the International Literacy Decade organised by the National Federation of UNESCO Associations of Japan in Tokyo in 1995. It may be pointed out that this value of *kyousei* is one of the most predominant values in contemporary Japan.

Technological development and economic prosperity since the 1970s have turned Japan into a mature, post-modern society. At one stage the nation was flattered by many social critics who referred to 'Japan's miracle' or 'Japan is No.1', which made the Japanese people over-confident, arrogant and conceited. Some proudly spoke in public that Japan has nothing more to learn from others. However this did not last long. With the bursting of the economic bubble, any contradictions, deficiencies and inequities hitherto covered up in the rapid and heated process of economic development started to surface, for Japan has found no answer to redress. Such a phenomenon also pushed Japan towards being a goal-less society and created

massive chaos, with no social cohesiveness. This in turn placed the Japanese in a very difficult situation as they could not and still cannot identify their own direction by themselves. The succeeding economic crisis of Japan in the late 1990s added further confusion and loss of confidence. Certain values and aspirations advocated in post-war education have certainly evaporated.

In recent years Japan increasingly has been preoccupied with disquieting phenomena in schools and classrooms, and particularly with the frequent occurrence of non-attendance, drop-outs, violence, bullying, harassment, murders and suicides. Tightly controlled education in the classroom has had a suffocating effect on many children. The excessive competition for entrance examinations has resulted in the loss of healthy human qualities and perspectives, as all pupils are measured and ranked by standard deviations. Those who are disillusioned or have dropped out of this competitive environment often turn to undesirable, anti-social acts of aggression, violence or bullying. Many children have lost their human sensitivity and integrity, unable to distinguish good from bad. Qualities of caring for the vulnerable have been eroded.

Post-war education has succeeded in enabling Japan to achieve remarkable development, but at the same time education has suffered from excessive expectations and interventions from all corners of society. Education has become the only passport for individual success in life on the one hand and at the same time the most effective means for achieving various national goals of all sectors by creating efficient national reserves of human resources. Education has been abused for political, economic and social conveniences, and children are now decrying and revolting against such a lost cause. Education in today's Japan therefore is being forced to pay a high price to restore what it has lost sight of, namely to place priority back on the genuine human dimension of the child.

The latest reform of education in Japan focuses on the importance of restoring a rich sense of humanity and self-realisation based on a variety of values, and advocates the importance of cultivating 'the zeal for living amid room to grow'. (This is an official translation by Monbusho, but the author would rather translate the phrase as 'to enhance the "force-to-live" through learning in composure'.) The 'force-to-live' is defined in the reform document as the ability to identify problems spontaneously, to

learn and think autonomously, to make independent judgments, and to take actions and improve problem solving. At the same time, it includes a rich sense of humanity, the firm will for self-discipline and for cooperation with others, a gentle heart to care for others and to share joys and passions, and the health and physical strength to live strongly. These 'forces to live strongly' require the solid backing of such core values as peace, harmony and non-violence.

One of the concrete reform measures was the introduction in 2002 was *sogo gakushu*, a period of comprehensive learning for three hours weekly at the primary level (3rd grade up) and for 2 to 4 hours at the junior secondary level. Three to four units of such studies will be required from 2003 onwards for graduation at the senior secondary level. This is an epoch making innovation in Japanese education that has been tightly controlled by the Monbusho. The Ministry introduced this reform with a view to activating the initiatives of schools and teachers and to empower teachers to move out of their over-dependency on the Monbusho-prescribed curriculum. For this reason, the Ministry issues no instructions or guidelines for *sogo gakushu*, although many teachers are expected to be at a loss initially. The areas most likely to be picked up by the majority of teachers will be: international understanding, health, information technology, environment, welfare, and voluntary activities. Many workshops currently are being organised all over Japan by the local boards of education and teacher training colleges to prepare teachers for this innovation. Results of such reform measures are yet to be seen, but this will no doubt be a turning point in Japan for invigorating education for international understanding. It is sincerely hoped that such a drive for international understanding will be genuinely based on the values of peace, human rights and democracy and also be a process in partnership with countries in the region and with international organisations such as UNESCO.

## Core Asia-Pacific values on peace and non-violence: a conceptual framework and teachers' guide

### **Rationale**

It is very clear that Asia and the Pacific region will have to live in peace and prosperity, but for this purpose all people in every walk of life must make a conscious effort to cooperate, contributing to the establishment and sustainability of peace at

national, regional and global levels. First must be the recognition that education has a critical role to play. As stated in the preamble of the UNESCO constitution, the lasting solution to such a human dream rests in the minds of people rather than mere political or economic compromises. In fact, the ultimate solution to many major contemporary problems and issues in large part rests in action for conscience-development, problem-solving and prevention through education and through continuing conscientious and cooperative efforts of all peoples, rather than rehabilitation after the outbreak of problems. For this purpose, teachers must have a common understanding and conviction of their own roles and actions.

This UNESCO sourcebook should be a dynamic instrument to motivate, empower and mobilise teachers for action, rather than a static indication of existing values. It is important that:

- The guide be a formative, working document rather than a one-time publication of a finished product soon to find its destination deep in library bookshelves. It should motivate teachers and teacher educators to take initiatives. It should not be an instrument handed down from above, but encourage them to participate in further elaboration and improvement.
- The expected outcome of the exercise should be a practical guide for teachers and teacher educators rather than an academic piece of work on core values. Many teachers and teacher educators will be at a loss if they are presented with a sourcebook that only lists the philosophical concepts and values existing in the countries of the region. The guide should provide hints on how to introduce and improve them further in their daily educational activities.
- A strikingly missing practice in teacher education in the region is research. Teachers are trained to follow an official course of studies faithfully without taking initiatives of their own. Teachers and teacher educators should be encouraged to engage in simple research or fact-finding activities instead of just repeating the contents of syllabuses or courses of study given by central authorities. It is their own research that will enrich and animate their teaching and interaction with children. There are many research activities that can be carried out without additional financial resources.
- The sourcebook should promote solidarity and cooperation with fellow teachers, and contact and exchange between teachers and between pupils both within each country and with other countries.

- It is important that the sourcebook promote teachers' conviction, determination and commitment to pursue education for peace and international understanding. The sourcebook should be attractive, challenging, thoughtful, constructive and forward looking.
- The ultimate goal of the sourcebook is to form and evolve the desired values and commitment in children, through experiential learning. Freedom of conscience on the part of teachers and a democratic teaching environment are the preconditions for effective use of the handbook.

### **Suggested outlines**

***A culture of peace: from dream to reality.*** Why do we need a culture of peace? Is there a genuine wish for peace within the region? Students might approach these questions by taking a historical perspective. Some of the unfortunate events of the past could be cited, including: colonialism; wars of aggression; inhuman cultural traditions; the impact of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and other acts of human destruction; dictatorship and exploitation.

The above realities are still far from resolved. Armed conflicts, oppression, tensions, and other inhuman acts still continue in the region. There are invisible and visible menaces for peace that students could explore, including:

- globalisation and the disquieting impact of materialism and consumerism that widen the gap between rich and poor
- poverty, illiteracy, deprivation and discrimination
- erosion of the family 's role
- social transformation, urbanization, slums
- community disorganisation
- the influence of the media
- environmental deterioration
- drug abuse and HIV/AIDS
- trafficking and human rights violations

In light of the above, international action could be reviewed, including UN and UNESCO normative instruments, the International Year(s) and Decade(s), as well as efforts by UN member states. Students then should consider education in action. What is the role of education in overcoming these problems? Is it the ultimate key to

a permanent solution? The teacher is an important role model here, especially in terms of his/her conscience, competence, commitment and cooperation. Common core values for peace and non-violence should be emphasised, along with those universal values reflected in international instruments and recommendations (e.g., peace, human rights, democracy, non-violence, international understanding, tolerance).

***Indigenous values sustaining a culture of peace***

Exercise I: What are the values in the community and nation that strongly support peace, harmony, non-violence and tolerance?

Exercise II: Identify specific values for peace and non-violence in the Constitution, laws on education, or in educational policies.

Exercise III: Identify specific values of peace, harmony and non-violence that appear in curricula and textbooks; find examples, if any, contrary to the above values.

Exercise IV: Write a monograph, story, songs or role play incorporating the values identified in Exercises I, II and III, and share them with students; also ask students to write stories of their own, sing songs or perform role plays and drama. In classrooms with a multi-cultural or multi-lingual background, teachers may develop a comparative approach to these activities.

***Link indigenous values with representative values in the region***

1. What are some representative or common values in the region sustaining a culture of peace? Develop an issues-oriented description of some common values. This should stimulate thought-provoking description and analysis of regional situations. Also consider: religions; philosophical concepts; economic, scientific and technological developments; nationalism, politics and globalisation; and the issues of tradition versus change; progress and materialism versus spiritualism; and self realisation, self assertion and competition versus cooperation, harmony, caring and sharing.

2. What are the major approaches in existing curricula and courses of studies to moral/values education in the region? What innovations are taking place in this domain? Collect and describe exemplary cases from the region:

Exercise I: Identify the link between indigenous-national values and regional values. Provide some exemplary cases.



Exercise II: Select some specific sets of values and prepare innovative courses of study and test them in classrooms, giving some methodological guidance.

Exercise III: Observe and if possible measure changes and improvements in pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes. Repeat the same exercise periodically to ensure sustainability.

Exercise IV: Cooperatively exchange experiences with other teachers and schools through ASP or other networks such as school twinning or cluster school schemes.

3. What are the difficulties in carrying out the above exercise and what recommendations can be made to overcome difficulties and obstacles? Consider:

- Individual teachers' difficulties, including intellectual, pedagogical, material or logistic, attitudes of other teachers, cooperation and support.
- Institutional difficulties, conflict with the overall school program, and lack of cooperation from school authorities.
- Difficulties from the perspectives of students.
- Global difficulties with policy and existing climates in schools.
- Parental reactions.
- The special roles of teacher training colleges, guidance and counselling, resource centres and other teacher support systems.
- Textbooks, instructional and other required teaching materials.
- Institutional linkages and cooperation for better sharing of experiences.

4. Take students out of schools and develop a community-based pilot project using the community as a classroom, and eventually making the world a classroom through effective use of mass-media, the internet and email.

5. Try to conduct similar exercises with adults and out-of-school children in non-formal settings.

6. Identify and formulate core Asia Pacific values from the above exercise and develop innovative courses of studies. With the use of this sourcebook, teacher educators or teachers-in-training should be able to develop their own sets of core values of the region and course of studies thereof. Support should be envisaged for such teachers and teacher educators to experiment further with these ideas in their own classrooms.

7. APEID, APNIEVE, APCEIU and other UNESCO linked organisations should be asked to collect details of these experiences and facilitate the sharing of ideas and innovations through periodical newsletters and bulletins. As an incentive, an annual UNESCO prize could be awarded for the best work. UNESCO APEID also could facilitate and support the formation of teachers' movements and associations in various member states of the region.