

Keynote Speech - JAPAN

Current Activities and Problems of Daily Life in the Information-Oriented Japanese Society

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It is a great honor for me to have the opportunity to give the keynote speech at this symposium. Japanese society, like Korean society, is rapidly becoming information-oriented. However, the necessary infra-structure has not yet been fully established and is still under development.

At present, telephone services are being improved in Japan. Mobile telecommunication services, such as portable and automobile telephones, supplemental telephone functions such as call waiting and call transfer services, and facsimiles which can transmit graphics and images, have been increasing in popularity.

PHS service, which was begun in July 1995, has been spreading quickly. As of the end of February 1996, the total number of subscribers to portable telephone and PHS services was over 10 million. Telegram services have also changed. In the past, telegrams were primarily used as a means of urgent communication. In recent years, telegrams have been increasingly used as a means of sending messages in some decorated form, such as musical telegrams and flower-decorated telegrams.

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At the end of January 1996, the computer mail service was started, which allows a letter to be sent through a computer network. With this service, the sender fills in the addressee and main text of the letter in a form displayed on the computer screen, and the post office then automatically inserts the letter into an envelope and delivers it to the addressee.

It is said that the multi-media age will come to Japan early in the 21st century, allowing two-way exchange of diverse forms of information through computers, such as text, sounds, images, movies and various other data. Everyone interested in multi-media is aware of the Internet, the world largest computer network. The Internet was initially used only for academic purposes. Its commercial utilization began in the end of the 1980s in the United States and around 1993 in Japan, leading to our current Internet boom.

The number of people who utilize the Internet is estimated at 3 million in Japan and 70 million throughout the world. In Japan, there were 31 internet service providers as of the end of 1994, but the number of internet service providers showed a 9-fold increase, to 279, by the end of 1995. In Japan, mail-order sales on the Internet started in the autumn of 1994. At present, a variety of commodities are sold on the Internet, including personal computers, books, food, beverages, and clothes. In addition, a succession of new businesses making use of Internet

have appeared, including hotel reservation and ticket booking services and translation services.

These information-related innovations have made our daily lives a lot more convenient, as compared to when I was a child. However, besides favorable effects, they have produced unfavorable effects on our daily lives, as well. I would like to tell you about clothing, eating habits and housing and problems we are having in these areas in Japan.

In 1995, the average household expenditure for clothing and footwear was Yen 20,229 per month. Since 1991, expenditures in this sector have decreased for 5 consecutive years, if inflation is taken into account. The expenditure in 1995 was 4.6% smaller on a nominal basis and 4.1% smaller on an inflation-corrected basis than in 1994. When analyzed in detail, expenditures for Japanese style clothes (kimono), women's blouses and sweaters, and men's underwear increased slightly in 1995 as compared to 1994, but the expenditure decreased for other commodities in this category on a corrected basis. The decrease was particularly great for footwear, women's stockings, neckties and other clothes, cloth and threads, and clothes-related services such as cleaning. This seems to reflect that each household reduced consumption during the depressed economy after the bubble economy collapsed.

Now, let's look at eating habits. In 1995, the average Japanese household expenditure for food was Yen 78,886 per month, which was smaller by Yen 2,666 than in the previous year. The amount paid for rice by a household in 1995 was Yen 4,331 per month, which was much smaller than the figure in the previous year. That is, there was a 16.9% decrease on a nominal basis and a 5.1% decrease on a corrected basis. In 1994, the daily caloric intake per Japanese person averaged 2,627 calories. Intake of grains, a staple food for the Japanese, decreased in that year, while that of foods of animal origin, such as meat, increased. Consumption of dairy products, such as milk, butter and cheese, also increased. The caloric intake of Japanese people appears to have reached a ceiling. It has not shown any great change in recent years.

When the Ministry of Health and Welfare investigated Japanese people's good nutritional practices in its nation-wide nutritional survey in 1993, it was found that the percentage of children who ate breakfast alone, without parents at the same table, had increased. This survey was conducted concerning children between 3 and 5 years of age. Of all children surveyed, 27.4% ate breakfast with their parents, and 31.4% ate it alone.

It was said that the Japanese lived in tiny houses resembling rabbit hutches. According to the housing statistics reported by the Statistics Bureau of the Japanese government every 5 years, the number of houses in Japan as of October 1, 1993 was 45,880,000, which was 9.2% larger than the number 3,870,000 reported for 1988. This kind of survey has been conducted since 1948. Between 1948 and 1978, the growth rate of the number of houses during each 5-year period was higher than 10%, but the growth has been slowed down to about 9% since 1983. In 1993, there were 5,110,000 uninhabited houses, accounting for 11% of the all houses. Of all the inhabited houses, only about 200,000 were shared by two or more families. Thus, the number of families inhabiting a single residence was approximately equal to 1.

Regarding the type of houses, the number of separate, free-standing houses was 24,140,000 in 1993, which accounted for 59% of all residences. The number of apartments was 14,270,000, accounting for 35% of all residences. The percentage of apartments was 18% in 1968, and has approximately doubled during the past 25 years.

When houses were analyzed by structure, no marked change was observed. More than 90% of all separate, free-standing houses were made of wood in 1993. A majority of apartment buildings are made of reinforced concrete. Of all houses, 24.38

million were owned by the inhabitants and 15.69 million were rented. Thus, 38.5% of all houses were rented houses. The percentage of owned houses had decreased to 59.8% in 1993.

Of the 40,770,000 inhabited houses, 38,460,000 houses (94.3%) were used solely for residential purposes. The average number of rooms in each residential house was 4.79 in 1993, which was approximately the same as the number in the previous year. However, the number of tatami mats used in a residence had increased by 0.81 to 30.96. The total floor space of a residence also increased to 88.38 m² in 1993 from 81.56 m² in 1983. Houses in urban districts were smaller than the national average. Houses in Tokyo and Osaka are particularly small.

Next; let's talk about durable consumer goods. Durable electric goods, such as electric refrigerators, washing machines and color televisions have spread to most agricultural and non-agricultural households. Electronic microwave ovens, which simplify cooking, have also spread rapidly. In 1980, the percentage of households which possessed an electronic microwave oven was 33.5% for non-agricultural households and 34.0% for agricultural households, but it had risen to 85.1% and 75.1%, respectively, in 1994. The governmental Bureau of Statistics has been conducting a nationwide survey of consumption. According to this survey, as of the end of October 1994, the purchase of some

durable consumer goods had increased markedly over the past year, although the percentage of households possessing these particular goods was still lower than 50%. One type of these goods includes the drinking-water filtration unit and the warm water bidet toilet, which were developed in response to people's increased concern about health, cleanliness and hygiene. The other type is electric home appliances with advanced functions, including air conditioners which both cool and warm, fully-automated washing machines, 29-inch or larger televisions, and 300-liter or greater capacity refrigerators. In the telecommunications field, word processors and personal computers have spread widely as home use items, and the percentage of households possessing facsimiles and cordless telephones has also increased.

What is daily life like under these circumstances? The NHK Institute of Broadcasting Culture and the governmental Bureau of Statistics have conducted a survey about how people spent their time in daily life. Both organizations conduct this survey every 5 years. The national daily life schedule survey report for 1995, published in February 1996 by the NHK Institute, indicates that the way people spend time on Saturdays has become increasingly similar to how they live on Sundays.

The recent spread of the five-day-a-week system at companies and schools and the decrease of time spent at work or

school on Saturdays has resulted in more free time which can be used for leisure or other purposes on Saturdays. This is why pattern of activities on Saturdays for employees and students is now quite similar to that on Sundays.

During weekdays, people daily sleep 7 hours and 27 minutes, eat 1 hour and 31 minutes, and watch TV. 3 hours and 19 minutes, on average.

Students and employees tend to sleep longer on Saturday and Sunday than on weekdays.

Looking back, we see that time spent sleeping has decreased. In 1980, about 29% of the population surveyed slept less than 7 hours, while in 1995 the percentage was 41%. The time spent watching TV. has increased quite a bit. On weekdays, the time spent watching TV. increased by more than 30 minutes, during the period between 1990 and 1995.

Next, I will refer to Japanese ideas about sexual equality. The Public Relations Section of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan conducted a survey of people's thinking about sexual equality in July 1995, following the same survey in November 1992. In the survey in 1995, the nation's ideas about involvement in society of both males and females from various angles. When asked whether or not there was equality between males and females in terms of social position, 75.6% of the

respondents thought males were dominant, 19.5% thought men and women were socially equal, and only 2.6% thought females were dominant.

Reasons offered for continuing male dominance included persistent old social views and traditions pertaining to separation of the roles of males and females.

Of all respondents, 78.4% welcomed women's involvement in society outside the home, particularly in the field of politics, that is, in the national and prefectural diets.

Increased involvement by men in local community activities and household affairs was welcomed by 74.3% of the respondents. Thus, many respondents pointed out the necessity of social support so that both men and women can participate in both outside occupations and housework, in addition to the necessity of increased involvement by men in local community activity and household affairs.

The need for payment of special allowances or preferential taxation systems for child care was pointed out by 58.0% of the respondents and for care of sick or other dependent family members by 83.5%.

On the other hand, 71% of the respondents (67.9% of males and 74.3% of females) said there was no need for preferential treatment which takes into account the involvement of people in

household affairs other than child care or care of sick or other family members.

20.7% of all respondents stated that as a rule, elderly people should be cared publicly, and 71.7% said that they should be cared by family members as a rule. Thus, there seem to be many people who think that elderly people should be cared by their family, but these people desire the use of social facilities and services related to the care of elderly people, when needed. Concerning the care of parents, a majority of respondents (59.2%) stated that both males and females should take care of their parents. This answer was particularly often seen among women in their 30s, with a percentage of 74%.

Our last topic is education, which is now a serious problem. As more and more young people receive access to education, the social trend has been to attach undue importance to the school careers of individuals. Education at junior and senior high schools has tended to overemphasize intellectual training, so that their students can win the competition entrance examinations for senior high schools and universities.

In March 1995, the percentage of graduates from junior high school who entered senior high school was 96.7%, and the percentage entering university or junior college after graduation from senior high school was 45.2%. Thus, most graduates from

junior high school who wanted to study at senior high school were able to enter senior high school in 1995.

On the other hand, this does not mean that graduates of junior high schools can always select the senior high school program that they really want. The ordinary senior high school program, which is viewed as the best course for those who desire to enter a university, cannot accept a sufficient number of students. The number of senior high school students who dropped out midway is close to 100,000 per year, accounting for about 2% of all students on the register. This means that although the percentage of students who receive higher level education has increased, the current education system does not satisfy the actual demands of students. Various attempts have been made to cope with these problems. These include establishing a unit system senior high school, in which students can select their curriculum flexibly, without being limited by the conventional school year system, and they can graduate from this school upon completion of the predesignated units of study during 3-year or longer periods. Another new system is "the general subject senior high school". There, the students are given greater freedom to select subjects from a wide range of alternatives, and they can graduate from this school upon completion of 80 units of study, including a minimum of required subjects and other selected subjects. In addition, the five-day-a-week system has

been partially adopted, in an attempt to create a more flexible educational environment. Despite these efforts, however, the problems related to education have not been resolved satisfactorily. As of 1995, there are 28 unit system senior high schools and 23 general subject senior high schools in this country.

In 1994, suicide by a junior high school student in Aichi Prefecture following continuing bullying by his classmates shocked the entire country. Similar events took place in 1995. Japanese people initially thought that bullying at school was probably an exclusively Japanese problem. However, some educational critics have pointed out that bullying is also seen in American, Chinese and European schools, and that this is in fact a world-wide phenomenon. They believe that bullying cannot always be attributed to the mental stress students suffer when receiving education biased toward entrance examinations or from control-oriented education systems.

I have been telling you about the current state of people's daily lives in Japan. I would not attribute all of these problems to our entrance into an information-oriented age. However, we may say that these problems reflect the loss of will among young people in this too convenient society. An advantage of an information-oriented society is that people can ease their anxiety by accessing these information systems. I have tried to draw a picture of the present daily lives of Japanese people and the problems they face, with the aim of promoting closer cooperation between Korea and Japan, through more comprehensive interpretation of the daily lives and cultures of both countries, and through the exchange and sharing of information. Thank you very much.