

# "Women's Education in Asia in the Next Twenty-five Years"

The above is the title of a keynote address given by Mrs. Kiyoko Takeda Cho at the Triennial Conference of the Presidents of nine Women's Christian Colleges in Asia, at Tokyo Woman's Christian University, May 1-5, 1978. The address brings out problems concerning all Asiatic women, and the following paragraphs give a condensation of it.

Mrs. Kiyoko Takeda begins with a glance at the Christian contributions to women's education in Asia during the past one hundred years, taking the case of Japan as an example.

Those western-modelled schools produced many career women who contributed to the education and liberation of women and to the development of general social welfare. Two outstanding women educators are here mentioned: 1) Dr. Inazo Nitobe, the first president of Tokyo Women's Christian University who pointed out the importance of women's professional training for social and economic independence, 2) Mrs. Motoko Hani, founder of the "School of Freedom" and a dedicated educator who initiated the successful housewives movement for the reorganization of families.

She goes on to say that the percentage of women who presently enter universities and colleges in Japan is 33.6% while that of men is 43.3%. In spite of this high proportion of university women, the opportunities for responsible jobs for them are not large. Though Japan is considered a progressive, modernized nation, it is still traditional in its concept of woman and of human relations in family life and society.

Concerning a new challenge for women's education in Asia in the next 25 years, she suggests:

1) A critical appraisal of the abilities useful for modern civilization and inquiry into potential abilities.

The speaker mentions the school and college programs with their uniquely intellectual orientation, the entrance examinations which require private preparation outside the ordinary school and the large number of candidates who are eliminated every year because they are not sufficiently equipped for entrance exams, thus depriving the country of creative potentialities, and leading many students to frustration and suicide. It is our task as mothers and educators, she adds, to question the validity of stereotyped criteria used to judge human ability. Do the educational programs and examination questions help dig out hidden potentialities and bring out creative abilities? Or do they serve to perpetuate out-of-date methods and encourage stereotyped thinking and activity?

2) Another question she proposes concerns the examination of (indigenous) Asiatic cultural roots which

function as a "Collective Unconscious" (Jung's archetypes) underneath modern life and ideologies.

In Eastern countries which won their independence after World War II, a strong wave of nationalism led (them) to absolute affirmation of traditional culture ending in cultural chauvinism, which is dangerous and unproductive.

The "ethos" or value concept, hidden in the depths of cultural roots, contains the possibility of both positive and negative elements. As an example, we may take Buddhism or Confucianism which contain some universal values like the humanitarian concept of man and the basic question of salvation of human beings. On the other hand, these systems contain a peculiar combination of Shamanism, emperor worship and religious-political concepts of traditional communal life and structure. In the radical student movements of a few years ago, there was hidden an element of this Shamanism which exploded in a display of quasi-religious ecstasy but without regard for individual freedom or responsibility. The family concept is of the same type because it requires unity and productivity from the group, and at the same time exclusive group egoism without regard for individual freedom. The indigenous concept of family as a basic ethos of communal relations may function with both negative and positive implications. It often functions as a "Collective unconscious" factor in our modern life, in individual or social behaviour. It is like the "archetypes" in Jung's terminology.

In modern education in Asia, careful examination of indigenous cultures would become more important, because modern social relations and institutions are so often determined by this invisible ethos, the "collective unconscious" in people's behaviour.

3) Comparative joint study of indigenous cultures in Asia and joint exploration for adventurous experiment of pluralistic and inter-cultural communities in Asia.

"For many nations which have acquired or which are acquiring political and economic independence, cultural independence is also an important concern. Every nation is claiming cultural identity and independence from the cultural imperialism of the West and of other nations."

The women's colleges and universities represented in this Conference are called to take up a comparative study of indigenous Asiatic cultures as a joint-study program which would give them creative insight in understanding each individual culture and deepening mutual understanding. The fellowship of these institutions in such joint comparative study would help produce a model of "mosaic" inter-cultural communities in Asia, during the next twenty-five years.