



日本でのカルチャーショック

加納 華 (中国)

日本には世界中の人が興味を持つことがたくさんあります。どこにでも綺麗な町や自然、発達した交通網や温泉などがあり、買い物や世界中の人に知られた和食など魅力的なことがたくさんあります。そして、人々は親切なので旅行者や外国人にとってとても素晴らしいことです。日本は地球上の天国だと言っても言い過ぎではありません。



外国へ旅行に行くときと習慣の違いはすぐ分かりますが、長く住まないと、その国の特有の文化や価値観、ユニークなことは深く理解出来ません。長い歴史を持つ日本に住めば、最初は誰でもカルチャーショックを受けます。私も日本人の妻として、異文化と向き合い、理解し、その壁を越えて行かなければなりません。一年ほど日本でも生活していれば慣れてきて、時間が解決してくれる事もたくさんあります。例えば、日本人の家に行くと靴を脱ぎ、靴を外側に向けて揃えて置きます。私の国では靴を脱いでスリッパを履いたまま家に入り、靴の向きは自由です。また、日本人はお茶碗を手に持って食べます。私の国の多くの地方ではお茶碗を手に持つのは慌てていると思われ失礼になります。

なかなか慣れないのは目に見えないことです。これは価値観や、ものの感じ方や考え方などです。例えば、なぜ日本人は仕事が終わってから会社の同僚や上司と一緒に食事をしたり、お酒を飲んだりするのか、と不思議に思います。私もたまに息子の幼稚園の役員さんにランチ会に誘われます。友人ではなく、仕事や幼稚園の付き合いだけの人と大切な時間を割いて一緒にいるなどということは、私には考えられないことです。中国では結婚して家族がいるなら、仕事が終わったら間違いなく家に帰って家族と過ごします。独身の人は、恋人がいなければ独りや親友とカフェで過ごすか、映画を見るなどでそれぞれの時間を楽めます。他人に合わせたり、無理をして嫌いな事に合わせる必要はないです。これは集団で行動する日本人の集団主義と「自分は自分、他人は他人」の中国人の個人主義の価値観の違いだと思います。

ある日、主人と買い物に行ったとき、私がお金を出すのに手間取っていると、そばにいる主人が早くしないと後ろの人に迷惑かけちゃうよと言いました。慌てる私、日本人はそれぞれが人の目を気にしますね、って感心しました。また、自分の意見をはっきり言わないのは、相手やグループに迷惑かけないよう、睦まじい雰囲気を作るため、柔軟な話し方をするのだと思います。誰でも「空気読めないひと」と言われたくないのでしょうか。自分が自分らしく生きることができる国の快適さに慣れてしまった私は、いろんなことに対して、完全に慣れるまでは時間がかかりそうです。

世の中の物事には良い面と悪い面があります。日本の生活に慣れるために、多くの視点から様々なことを見て行きたいと思います。日本のすばらしさを実感して、日本の明るい未来を楽しみながら、住み続けたいと思います。

LIVING IN JAPAN: FEELING PERPLEXED AT TIMES BY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Hana Kano (China)

Japan has numerous qualities that draw the interest of people from around the world. The clean, beautiful cities everywhere, blessed with nature's splendor, a well-developed transportation network, hot springs, shopping outlets and the world renowned *washoku* (Japanese cuisine) are but a few of Japan's abundant attractions. Besides, Japanese people are kind, which is a very gratifying feature for the tourists and foreign residents in Japan. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that Japan is like a heaven on earth.

The difference in customs and practices between different countries can be understood easily when travelling in foreign countries. However, a deep understanding of the culture, values and the unique characteristics of another country cannot be gained easily unless one lives there for a long time. When living in a country like Japan that has a long and rich history, anyone may feel rather puzzled - culture shock - at first. As the wife of a Japanese person, I too have to face the cross-cultural differences and have to understand and get over such barriers. In many cases, some were solved as time went by. I somehow became used to some aspects of life in Japan after about a year. Considering the minor differences in customs between Japan and my mother country, one is that when visiting a Japanese house, shoes must be removed and put them neatly facing the door. In my country, we normally remove our shoes and then wear slippers inside the house. We do not particularly pay attention to how the shoes are placed. Another is that in Japan, during meals people hold the rice bowl and eat. In contrast, in most regions of my country, this action may be considered as the person is in a hurry and is frowned upon as lack of etiquette. Still, these kinds of little things have long stopped to cause me any anxiety. The things I find rather hard getting used to are far more subtle and imperceptible. These are the differences in one's sense of value, how one appreciates things and the way of thinking. For example, I find it quite peculiar that Japanese people go out to dine and drink with co-workers and bosses after work. Sometimes, I also get invited for luncheons by the PTA committee members of the kindergarten that my son attends. I cannot fathom why it is necessary that one should devote one's precious time for social gatherings with mere acquaintances from workplace or a child's kindergarten, when they are not one's friends. In China, when someone gets married, they would definitely go back home after work, and spend the time with their family. If one is single and does not have a sweetheart, in their free time they would do things like spending time at a coffee shop alone or with friends, or watching a movie. People enjoy their time in their own ways. There is no need to attune with others and push oneself to the point of doing things one dislikes. These differences can be traced to the contrasting values and principles underlying the respective cultures of Japan and China; the collectivist mindset of Japanese people that lead them to act as a group and the individualistic values of Chinese society that makes one think as "I will do things my way regardless of what others do". An incident that fascinated me comes to mind here. One day, while my husband and I were shopping, it took me a while to take cash out of my wallet. Seeing this, my husband who was standing next to me urged me to hurry, saying I was inconveniencing the others behind me in the line. I got flustered a bit, but at the same time I couldn't help being impressed of the way Japanese people care about how their actions appear to others. Also, I think Japanese persons often refrain from expressing their opinions clearly and instead speak accommodatingly in order to create a harmonious atmosphere, without causing annoyance to the other party. Do they act this way because no one wants to be perceived as "a person who is unable to read the situation"? For me, who was used to the luxury of living in a country where one can maintain one's individuality, it may take more time to become completely accustomed to life in Japan. There are both good and bad aspects in this world. To gain a better grasp of things and get used to life in Japan, I wish to consider various things in many perspectives. Finally, I hope to continue living here, enjoying Japan's many wonderful qualities and looking forward to its bright future.