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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs : Based on well-known Japanese Proverbs (1) : 日英諺の比較研究

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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs

—Based on well-known Japanese Proverbs—(1)

(日英諺の比較研究)

Kengo Tamura

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I Introduction

The Japanese proverbs used in this thesis have been selected from “*Seigo Daijien*” (1955), “*Kotowaza Daijiten*” (1996), and the books in the bibliography at the end of this thesis. The contents of the proverbs are instructive, conveying many pithy and witty lessons. The proverbs in the *iroha karuta*, which were taken up in the previous thesis, are not included here. In the present thesis, the 50 proverbs which are taken up are divided into three categories: (A) Proverbs that have an almost exact equivalent in English in meaning, form, and usage. (B) Proverbs that have an almost exact equivalent in English in meaning, but with different forms and usage. (C) Proverbs that seem to have almost no equivalent in English. These categories are used solely in this thesis for the sake of convenience and

should not be considered as a definitive classification. For each category, I have chosen 17 proverbs for (A) ; 18 for (B) ; and 15 for (C).

These proverbs were translated into English and provided with a simple commentary, with related English proverbs listed below each.

The word “proverb” as used in this thesis means a short, popular, and witty saying which expresses some truth or useful knowledge or idea.

Notations used in this thesis : —

italics : Japanese

() under Japanese proverbs : literal translation from the Japanese

— — : the meaning of each Japanese proverb

Category A

A-1 *Awaneba iyamasu koigokoro.*

(You love people more when they are not with you.)

— We tend to like people more when we are parted from them.—

If we keep on eating delicacies every day, we shall get tired of them.

If we have a date with our sweetheart every day, we shall not find it so exciting. Another proverb says, “Love me little and love me long.”

Violent love is apt to come to an abrupt end ; and so, we must be cool-headed when we love someone. In the case of love between a man and a woman, it depends on the individual character or their views on love.

Related English Proverbs :

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Absence sharpens love.

Men are best loved furthest off.

A-2 *Kane ga kane o umu.*

(Money begets money.)

—A rich man can get more money.—

Money is where it should be. When the rich or the poor get money unexpectedly, the poor will soon have to spend it to make a living, but the rich do not have to spend it, so that they

can save it in order to increase their fortune. We need money to get more of it ; so, the poor are likely to remain poor. The rich know the blessing of wealth ; so, they tend to be stingier than the poor. Thus, the rich become richer : and the poor, poorer.

Related English Proverbs :

Money would be gotten if there were money to get it with.

Money breeds money.

A-3 *Kawaisa amatte nikusa ga hyakubai.*

(Excessive love could turn into hatred a hundredfold.)

— Deep love changes to deep hatred.—

After a man and a woman have been in love with each other, the woman betrays the man and leaves him. His strong love for her turns into strong hatred. The stronger the love is, the stronger the hatred becomes. But when we love a person, we should not try to force our love on our partners one-sidedly. We must respect and recognise their personality. One-sided and forced love is not true love.

Related English Proverbs :

The greatest hate springs from the greatest love.

Love too hot turns to hate.

Love and hate are blood relations.

A-4 *Kōkai saki ni tatazu.*

(Repentance never comes first.)

— It is useless to repent what was done.—

After we have done something or we have failed in something, it is no use feeling sorry for the outcome. The lesson which this proverb teaches us is that what was done in the past cannot be undone ; so, we should not be sorry for it all the time, but should be very careful of what we are going to do in order not to repent the same mistake.

Related English Proverbs :

It is no use crying over spilt milk.

Repentance comes too late.

A bird cries too late when it is taken.

It is too late to grieve when the chance is past.

Too late does the rat repent in the cat's paws.

A-5 *Kokoro koko ni arazareba mire domo miezu.*

(You cannot see what is in front of you unless you want to.)

— If your mind is occupied with other things, you cannot even see what is just in front of you.—

When we are absent-minded, we cannot give attention to what is happening around us. The lesson of this proverb is that it is of great importance to concentrate our efforts on what we are doing. When we do something, whether we can concentrate on the job or not is much more important than whether we have the ability to do it well or not.

Related English Proverbs :

None are so blind as those who will not see.

Who is more deaf than he that will not hear ?

The eye is blind if the mind is absent.

A-6 *Koromo bakari de oshō wa dekinu.*

(A robe only does not make a Buddhist priest.)

— We cannot judge men only by their appearance.—

We tend to judge men by their looks, social standing, and so on. But appearances are said to be deceptive, and things and men are seldom what they seem. To judge men correctly is the most important requirement for living because we are given a chance to live a happy life by people : but at the same time, we are deprived of that chance by people, too.

Related English Proverbs :

The cowl does not make the monk.

It is not the beard that makes the philosopher.

Wisdom consists not in a beard.

The feather makes not the bird.

Fine clothes make not a gentleman.

A-7 *Jū-nin to-iro.*

(Ten persons, ten colours.)

— Where there are ten persons, there are ten tastes.—

As many men have many different faces and forms, so people have many different ways of thinking and tastes. It should be remembered that human beings differ from each other by nature. It is impossible to find two persons exactly alike in looks, character, and abilities. Therefore, when we bring up children at home or at school, we must first recognise

their individualities and develop them. Teachers should make the best use of the individual characteristics of each child.

Related English Proverbs :

So many men, so many minds.

So many men, so many opinions.

Every man has his humour.

A-8 *Tanki wa sonki.*

(A short temper is a disadvantage.)

— A person who is short-tempered is likely to be at a disadvantage.—

A short-tempered person is apt to get excited and lose control of himself. He has a tendency to become selfish ; and so, if he is not careful, it will be difficult for him to maintain good human relations and to do well in his job. Although anger and haste often bring losses, it is very important to go ahead of others and to take the initiative when we set to work.

Related English Proverbs :

Anger and haste hinder good counsel.

Anger punishes itself.

A hasty (or An angry) man never wants woe.

Haste makes waste and waste makes want ; and want makes strife between the goodman and his wife.

A-9 *Nasake wa hito no tame narazu.*

(Benevolence is not merely for the benefit of others.)

— One who is kind to others is sure to be rewarded.—

If you do good to others, your kindness will be returned to you. But you should not expect any return. It is a matter of course to lend a helping hand to people in distress. We should keep it in mind that we cannot live alone. We have to help one another.

Related English Proverbs :

He who gives to another bestows on himself.

One good turn deserves another.

Charitable men lose nothing.

That which is given to the poor is lent to God.

A-10 *Hara hachibu ni isha irazu.*

(A stomach that is eighty percent full needs no doctor.)

— A person who eats moderately does not need a doctor.—

In order to stay healthy, you should not eat too much. Overeating will definitely shorten your life. People who follow a simple diet are usually much healthier than those who eat too much. We should refrain from excessive eating and drinking.

Related English Proverbs :

Feed by measure and defy the physician.

Many dishes make many diseases.

Temperance is the best physic.

Gluttony kills more than the sword.

A-11 *Hito o norowaba ana futatsu.*

(If you curse a man, there will be two graves.)

— When you invoke evil upon others, you will bring evil upon yourself.—

If you do harm to others, harm will be done to you ; and if you hate or frame others, you will be hated or framed. The lesson which this proverb teaches us is that it is not advantageous to hurt or curse others ; but if we do, we shall be hurt or cursed, according to the universal law of retributive justice. We must remember the law of rewards in accordance with our deeds.

Related English Proverbs :

Curses, like chickens, come home to roost.

He that digs a pit for another falls into it himself.

Curses return upon the heads of those that curse.

One shrewd turn follows another.

A-12 *Hito no furi mite waga furi naose.*

(Observe the behaviour of others and correct one's own.)

— We must learn from the manners and behaviour of other people.—

We tend to think that our own words and deeds are good, and we can easily see the faults of others, as the proverb says, "Lookers-on see more than players." But some imitate and follow the bad manners and behaviour of others. It is the responsibility of educators to teach children to have good judgment.

Related English Proverbs :

Learn wisdom by the follies of others.
He is happy that can be warned by others' misfortunes.
By observing others' faults wise men correct their own.
It is easier to see the faults of others than to detect our own.
The fault of another is a good teacher.
Nobody is entirely useless. They can always serve as a bad example.

A-13 *Hin sureba don suru.*
(Poverty dulls one's wisdom.)

— When you become poor, you become dull.—

When you become poor, you are very busy working every day to make a living ; and so, your brains fail to work well. What is most necessary for a hungry man is not a good story or a sermon but enough food. There are many proverbs dealing with the effect of poverty : “Poverty is an enemy to good manners.” “When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window.”

Related English Proverbs :

He that loses his goods loses his sense.
It is a hard task to be poor and faithful.
There is no virtue which poverty destroys not.

A-14 *Fūki ni wa tanin atsumari hinsen ni wa shinseki mo hanaru.*
(When one is rich, even strangers come to one, but when one is poor, even one's relatives go away.)

— It is only when you are rich or powerful that people gather around you, but when you are poor and distressed, even your relatives leave you.—

When we are wealthy or powerful, people want to make contact with us. Human feelings are unpredictable. Such is life, and men are all alike throughout the world.

Related English Proverbs :

In time of prosperity, friends will be plenty ; in time of adversity, not one among twenty.
He that has a full purse never wants a friend.
Prosperity makes friends, and adversity tries them.

A-15 *Minoru hodo kōbe no sagaru inaho kana.*

(Abundant ears of rice plants hang down their heads low.)

— When a person has become virtuous, learned, and respected by others, he becomes modest, as full ears of rice plants hang low.—

When we have attained a high and honourable social position, we tend to hold our heads high and behave haughtily to others. Such an arrogant person is not actually an honourable man. A truly respectable person does not forget his past, nor his gratitude to those who have helped him before ; and so, he will be modest and remember what he owes to others.

Related English Proverbs :

The boughs that bear most hang lowest.

The more noble, the more humble.

Modesty sets off one newly come to honour.

A-16 *Yamai wa ki kara.*

(Illness comes from the mind.)

— Worry often causes illness.—

When we worry too much, we shall get sick, and it will often be up to us to decide whether our illness is serious or not. We should not think about unpleasant things which might not happen and about things concerning which we cannot do anything to change the situation. Mental stress and worry will even interfere with the workings of our internal organs. It is foolish to worry about things which are beyond our control.

Related English Proverbs :

Fancy may kill or cure.

Care will kill a cat.

It is not work that kills, but worry.

Care is an enemy to life.

Care brings grey hair.

Care and sorrow make one soon old.

A-17 *Yo wa ai-mochi, mochitsu motaretsu.*

(Everyone helps another in his life.)

— We live this life by helping others and being helped by them.—

Although our life expectancy has increased greatly over the last hundred years, life is still short and time is swift unless we lead a life worth living. In order to enjoy this short

life, we need others' help and support ; and at the same time, we must be willing to help them. Useless conflicts should be avoided. It is a complete waste of time and a miserable tragedy that human beings engage in war and kill one another all over the world.

Related English Proverbs :

Live and let live.

He is unworthy to live who lives only for himself.

Both hands are cleansed when one is washed with the other.

Love makes the world go round.

Category B

B-1 *Ame futte ji katamaru.*

(The ground becomes firmer after rain.)

— A quarrel makes people closer.—

After some misfortune or trouble, we have a better situation than before. After it rains heavily, we can think in either of two ways ; (1) The bad condition of the ground has got better thanks to this rain. If it rains today, tomorrow will be fine. (2) The ground has become muddier and dirtier, because of the rain today. But if the weather is fine, the ground will be firm again.

We should always try to look on the bright side of life. It depends on us whether various hardships make us more courageous or faint-hearted.

Related English Proverbs :

After a storm comes a calm.

A broken bone is the stronger when it is well set.

After rain comes fair weather.

B-2 *Uso mo hōben.*

(Lying is sometimes expedient.)

— A white lie is sometimes a necessary evil for convenience sake.—

There are no parents who teach their children that it is good to lie. We have always been taught that lying is an evil, that we must not lie, but be honest, and that lying is the first step towards stealing. But this proverb says that we are allowed to tell lies which are told in order to be polite or to prevent someone from being upset by the truth.

Related English Proverbs :

The end justifies the means.

He that cannot dissemble knows not how to live.

A lie does good how little a while soever it be believed.

B-3 *Kai-inu ni te o kamareru.*

(To be bitten by a pet dog.)

— One's own dog bites the hand that feeds him. —

Dogs usually do not betray their masters. We are unexpectedly betrayed by people whom we have trusted. The well-known Japanese historical incident called *Honnōji no hen* (1582) furnishes us with the following example. Oda Nobunaga was assassinated in the burning temple by his vassal Akechi Mitsuhide, who, however, was killed in return soon after by Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Related English Proverbs :

He has brought up a bird to pick out his own eyes.

Breed up a crow and she will peck out your eyes.

The mad dog bites his master.

A falling master makes a standing servant.

B-4 *Kiku wa ittoki no haji, shiranu wa isshō no haji.*

(Asking is a moment's shame, not knowing is a lifelong shame.)

— If you ask, you will learn. If you do not, you remain ignorant until you die.—

It is not a shame to ask about what you do not know, but it is a shame not to ask about what you do not know. It is not shameful for you not to have experienced something, but it is shameful not to try to experience what is useful for you. You go to school to learn and experience what you do not know. If you want to know something, do not hesitate to ask and learn. Intellectual humility is essential for the enrichment of knowledge.

Related English Proverbs :

A man becomes learned by asking questions.

Ask much, know much.

From learning comes wisdom.

B-5 *Kodomo wa kaze no ko.*

(Children are creatures of the wind.)

— Children care for outdoor life in all weathers.—

Children are energetic by nature, and like to play even in the cold winter wind. It is very good for the health and development of children that they play in nature and run around the fields under the sun. But currently, nature is being destroyed, and in cities, children have few opportunities to play in nature. Grown-ups have deprived children of their natural playing fields in the name of industrial development. We must preserve the natural environment for our children.

Related English Proverb :

Children are as free as the wind.

B-6 *Shitashiki naka ni mo reigi ari.*

(There is courtesy even among good friends.)

— Even among close friends, there should be courtesy.—

When a friend of yours is always kind to you, you get used to being treated that way and forget to be thankful for his kindness. This is generally the case between husband and wife, teachers and students, and even parents and children. You are not necessarily entitled to receive love and kindness from others. Therefore, when you are shown kindness by others, you should show your appreciation and not forget courtesy regardless of the relationship between you and them.

Related English Proverbs :

Familiarity breeds contempt.

Love your neighbour, but pull not down your hedge.

A hedge between keeps friendship green.

B-7 *Jiman kōman baka no uchi.*

(Self-praise and arrogance are listed among stupidities.)

— Those who are full of self-pride or arrogance should be classed among fools.—

Some people flatter themselves. It goes without saying that it is not you but other people that evaluate what you are, what you can do, what you have, and what you have done. Proud people who do not listen to advice do not seem to develop their talents.

Related English Proverbs :

The first degree of folly is to hold oneself wise, the second to profess it, and the third to despise counsel.

There is more hope of a fool than of him that is wise in his own eyes.

Self-praise is no praise.

Put your pride in your pocket.

B-8 *Suki koso mono no jōzu nare.*

(What you like, you do well.)

— You can do well what you like to do.—

When you are willing to do something, you can do it well, but when you do it unwillingly, you can not do it so well. You should find out what your likings are, and keep doing what you like with all your heart. The value of our life consists in how much and how long we can do what we like, and whether what we do is useful and helpful for society.

Related English Proverbs :

Who likes not his business, his business likes not him.

Nothing is hard to a willing mind.

There is no accounting for tastes.

B-9 *Tou ni ochizu, kataru ni ochiru.*

(One does not tell one's secret when questioned, but reveals it when talking.)

— You keep your secret when you are questioned by others, but you tell it carelessly when you are talking of your own accord.—

People instinctively want to convey to others what they know. It is not natural for us to ask somebody to keep something secret. It is very difficult to control the tongues of others. The phrase “between you and me” is often used, but as a matter of fact, the secret is not kept, especially by the “me” in “between you and me,” who will often leak it out.

Related English Proverb :

If you would know secrets, look for them in grief or sorrow.

B-10 *Naite kurasu mo isshō waratte kurasu mo isshō.*

(It is the same life whether you spend it crying or laughing.)

— There are many different lives. We should try not to choose a tearful life but a merry one full of laughter.—

It is true that if we are extremely poor, we cannot lead an enjoyable life. But this proverb tells us that we should look not on the dark side of life but on the bright side. If we think life is full of hardship, that is true, but if we believe life is sweet, that is true, too.

Related English Proverbs :

As long lives a merry man as a sad. (=A merry man lives as long as a sad.)

Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone.

B-11 *Nagai mono ni wa makarero.*

(Allow yourself to be bound by something long.)

— It is better not to resist those in power.—

This proverb tells us that in order to succeed in life or in business, we should not contend against the powerful. Of course we sometimes cannot help being submissive to authority. However, great men who have been giving us dreams, hope, and courage did not submit to power in the past, nor did they act against their principles. Their indomitable spirit and achievements have been handed down to us and their names have become immortal.

Related English Proverbs :

If you can't beat them, join them.

If the master says the crow is white, the servant must not say it's black.

The greater contains the less.

There is no meddling with our betters.

B-12 *Naranu kannin suru ga kannin.*

(True patience is to bear the unbearable.)

— To bear what we cannot bear is true patience.—

This proverb is preceded by the following : “*Kannin no naru kannin wa dare mo suru.* = We can all bear what we can bear.” To be patient is important, but to be patient to the best of our ability is more important, and that is true patience. Who are more patient, the Japanese or Western people? It is difficult to answer such a question precisely, because much may depend on the situation.

Related English Proverbs :

Patience is a flower that grows not in everyone's garden.

Patience is a virtue.

Patience is the best remedy.

Patience, time, and money accommodate all things.

Patience conquers the world.

B-13 *Nō aru taka wa tsume o kakusu.*

(A clever hawk conceals his talons.)

— A really talented hawk hides his claws when hunting.—

Genuinely capable people do not make a show of their abilities when there is no need. Not to show one's abilities means not only to fight against one's enemies but also to be

modest and considerate of others. Incapable people always show off because they are lacking in real ability. But in some cases, depending on who/what your enemies are, you should not hesitate to show your claws to protect yourself.

Related English Proverbs :

Still waters run deep.

Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep.

Tell not all you know, all you have, or all you can do.

Cats hide their claws.

B-14 *Baka to mochi ni wa tsuyoku atare.*

(Pound rice cakes hard. Handle fools strictly.)

— Just as you have to pound steamed rice with all your strength to make mochi, so you have to deal with fools with a resolute attitude.—

We should be careful not to reveal our vulnerability to fools. They, like children, take advantage of our weakness. Another Japanese proverb says, “Fools and scissors can be put to use if they are properly handled.” It depends on your ability whether you can make a fool do useful work or not.

Related English Proverbs :

Restive horses must be roughly dealt with.

A whip for a fool and a rod for a school are always in good season.

B-15 *Mime yori kokoro.*

(Heart rather than appearance.)

— A good heart is better than a handsome face.—

Through all ages and in all places, people appreciate personal charm. Although we know the proverb, “Beauty is but skin-deep”, we cannot help appreciating the charm of beauty, as John Keats wrote, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever.” But to be good-natured is better than to be good-looking. Especially when you are considering marriage, this proverb will be helpful in choosing your partner. Even beautiful flowers wither, but the beauty of the human heart lasts forever.

Related English Proverbs :

Beauty without goodness is like wine that has taken wind (gone flat).

Choose a wife rather by your ear than your eye.

Handsome is that handsome does.

Do not look upon the vessel but upon that which it contains.

B-16 *Yanagi no eda ni yuki-ore nashi.*

(A willow branch is not broken by the weight of snow.)

— A willow branch bends easily, and so it never breaks under the weight of snow. It looks weak, but is actually very strong.—

This proverb tells us that what is soft and flexible is more durable, and that those who are flexible can endure hardships better than those who are not. We live in an age when the sense of values and the structure of society are changing rapidly and drastically. We should try to adapt ourselves to circumstances and different ways of thinking when we find it necessary in order to survive.

Related English Proverbs :

Oaks may fall when reeds stand the storm.

A creaking gate hangs long on its hinges.

Better bend than break.

B-17 *Waga mi o tsunette hito no itasa o shire.*

(Pinch yourself to know the pain of others.)

— Judge the feeling of others by putting yourself in their place.—

We have a tendency not to sympathize with others unless we have experienced the same suffering as theirs. This proverb tells us that we should accept others' suffering as our own, and that if we wish to understand how they suffer, we should experience the same suffering ourselves. But some can know the pain of other people even without pinching themselves, while others cannot do so even by pinching themselves.

Related English Proverbs :

Do as you would be done by.

Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

B-18 *Wazawai o tenjite fuku to nasu.*

(To turn a misfortune into a blessing.)

— You must turn a misfortune into good fortune.—

As the Japanese proverb says, "*Kafuku wa azanaeru nawa no gotoshi.* = Good and bad luck are interwoven like the strands of a rope," so we always have ups and downs in life. When bad luck befalls us, we should not be discouraged, but should try to counter the bad lack by changing it into good fortune.

Related English Proverbs :

When you see your house in flames, approach and warm yourself by it.
Make the best of a bad bargain.
Sadness and gladness succeed each other.
Bad luck often brings good luck.

Category C

C-1 *Azuma-otoko ni kyō-onna.*
(An *azuma* man and a Kyoto woman.)

— A man from Eastern Japan (*azuma*) is well matched by a woman from Kyoto.—

It was said that the best men were found in Edo, and the best women in Kyoto. *Azuma* men were considered to be manly and powerful, while Kyoto women, womanly and meek, so that they made a good match in marriage. Nowadays, Kyoto has many scenic spots and places of historical interest. People in Kyoto boast of their old traditions and culture. On the other hand, in Tokyo, many people coming from all parts of Japan live together so that they have a greatly varied culture.

Related English Proverbs :

Oxford knives, and London wives.

Oxford for learning, London for wits, Hull for women, and York for a tit (=horse).

C-2 *Ichī-oshi, ni-kane, san-otoko.*
(First, push ; secondly, money ; thirdly, good looks.)

— In order to win a lady's love, first you must have assertiveness ; secondly money ; and thirdly good looks.—

The lesson this proverb teaches us is that we must assert our love to a lady courageously, use money for her, and try to improve our appearance. Another Japanese proverb says, "*Ichī oshi, ni oshi, san ni oshi.* = Push, push, push !"

The top priority to win a lady's heart is a courageous spirit. A little while ago in Japan, a *san-ko* (=three highs) man was an ideal husband for a young unmarried woman. A *san-ko* man means one who is (1) tall, (2) a prestigious university graduate and (3) earns a large income.

Related English Proverbs :

Faint heart never won fair lady.

Fortune favours the bold.

C-3 *Itsu made mo aru to omou na oya to kane.*

(Don't think that parents and money will last forever.)

— This proverb warns us that parents and money will not always be with us.—

It teaches us that we should not waste money, because we lose money before we are aware of it; as the English proverb says, "It is too late to spare when the bottom is too rare." We must stand on our own feet and have the spirit of independence. Another Japanese proverb says, "*Kōkō no shitai jibun ni oya wa nashi.* = Parents are dead when you wish to treat them with true devotion."

C-4 *Inochi no sentaku.*

(To wash our life.)

— We wash off the dust of life and refresh ourselves.—

This expression is figurative. *Sentaku* means washing one's clothes or dirty linen. A man's life is not washable. The implication is that we store up energy and recreate ourselves by washing off the dust of life, by freeing ourselves from daily cares or physical and mental worries. The Japanese tend to overwork and soon become workaholics. Especially these days, it is very difficult for us to make a living, so that we have to work very hard. But by doing *inochi no sentaku*, we should try to relax by going travelling for a change of air, enjoying sports, and so on.

Related English Proverb :

To be as happy as a lark.

C-5 *Iro no shiroi wa shichi-nan kakusu.*

(A fair complexion hides seven defects.)

— *Shichi-nan* here means many defects. A fair skinned woman can cover many defects in her looks.—

The Tale of Genji written by Murasaki Shikibu at the beginning of the 11th century, tells us that one of the conditions of a woman's beauty is to have a fair complexion with glossy, black hair. In Japan, since olden times, it has been a traditional standard of women's beauty to have a fair and fine-textured skin, which compensates for all other defects. But these days, not a few young people change their fair skin to tanned and dark skin, they also change their glossy, black hair to brownish hair.

C-6 *Otoko wa dokyō, onna wa aikyō.*
(In a man, courage ; in a woman, charm.)

— A man should be brave, while a woman attractive.—

What is important for a man is an unyielding resolution and fearless pluck, while for a woman, an amiable character and gentle behaviour. There is another similar Japanese proverb which says “*Otoko wa matsu, onna wa fuji.* = A man is like a pine tree, a woman, like a wisteria flower.” Wisterias creep along a pine tree. Women lead a life of dependence on men. But currently, men and women are equal ; and so, both should be strong-willed and gentle-hearted in order to live happily.

Related English Proverb :

In the husband wisdom, in the wife gentleness.

C-7 *Otoko-yamome ni uji ga waki onna-yamome ni hana ga saku.*
(In a widower's home, maggots breed ; in a widow's home, flowers bloom.)

— A widower cannot keep himself clean and tidy, whereas a young widow always keep herself clean, neat and attractive to men.—

It has been generally said that women keep themselves cleaner and tidier than men. Women have been in charge of the affairs of the household and the upbringing of children, while men work away from home. Women have been concerned with cleanliness and tidiness more so than men. Basically, however it depends on the individual, irrespective of sex whether a person keeps himself/herself clean or tidy. These days, men have to help women with household chores and the upbringing of children, because many women cannot devote themselves full-time to housekeeping and looking after children as they work part-time.

C-8 *Oya wa nakutemo ko wa sodatsu.*
(Children grow up even without parents.)

— Children can grow strong by themselves.—

Parents tend to think that their children will not grow up properly without them. The growth of children is greatly influenced by their parents. But even when the children are thrown into the world or when they must be brought up without their parents, they can grow up strong physically and mentally. In this society, no one can live alone ; we are

dependent on one another. This proverb implies that children are healthy and active enough to grow up by themselves and that we can believe in the good will and benevolence of society.

Related English Proverb :

Nature is a good mother.

C-9 *Kago ni noru hito katsugu hito sono mata waraji tsukuru hito.*

(There are palanquin riders, palanquin bearers, and people who make sandals for the bearers.)

— This proverb has two meanings—(1) there are all sorts of people in the world, (2) many kinds of people live together and help one another.—

Another similar proverb goes : “*Donchi himpuku geko jōgo.* = There are all sorts of people in the world ; fools, wise men, poor men, rich men, teetotalers, and drinkers.”

Related English Proverbs :

This world is a stage and every man plays his part.

Some are born with a silver spoon and some without.

It takes all sorts to make a world.

C-10 *Ko o motte shiru oya no on.*

(After one has one's own child, one realises one's gratitude to one's parents.)

— After we have children, we remember the love of our parents.—

When we were children, we often failed to realise how much our parents loved us. Just as Kenko Yoshida, well-known Japanese writer, wrote in “*Tsurezuregusa* =Essays in Idleness (1330) “Only after those children who did not love their parents have their own child, do they realise their parents' love for them”, so we are unlikely to realise how deeply indebted we are to our parents until we have our own child. Is it impossible for people who do not have a child to understand their parents' love for them?

The next two proverbs may give us a hint to the answer to this question : “He who has no children knows not what love is.” “Wise men learn by other men's misfortunes, fools, by their own.”

C-11 *Koto o nasu wa un kon don.*

(For success in one's work, luck, perseverance, lack of oversensitivity.)

— In order to accomplish a task successfully, it will be of great importance to have luck, perseverance and not to be too touchy. It may be decided by God whether we are lucky or not. But even when we are unlucky, if we keep on making efforts to improve our situation without losing hope, we can change that bad situation for a better one. As the English proverb says, "Use the means and God will give the blessing", we should try our best and believe in God's blessing.

C-12 *Ko wa kasugai.*

(Children are clamps.)

— Children are clamps that bind husband and wife together.—

This proverb is used for the relationship between a husband and wife. Even when they are at odds with each other, their children often prevent them from divorcing, and form ties that keep them together. When a man and wife have a quarrel, they have to restrain their anger in front of their children. By controlling their feelings, they can learn to be tolerant each other. In order to show true love to their children, a husband and wife will have to try to make a harmonious family life. A child is the bond of union that keeps the parents together.

C-13 *Jishin, kaminari, kaji, oyaji.*

(Earthquakes, thunder, fires, and fathers.)

— Things most dreaded by the Japanese people are earthquakes, thunder, fires, and fathers, in that order.—

Japan is a country with frequent earthquakes, which cause a great deal of damage. The Japanese cannot think of their life, culture, and tradition, without taking the geographical features into consideration. As for fathers in present-day Japan, it is very difficult for them to maintain their dignity even before their own children. Currently, among young people, the word '*oyaji*' (=father, old man) is used in a derogatory sense not only as applied to their own fathers but to elder persons in general.

C-14 *Chichi no on wa yama yori mo takaku, haha no on wa umi yori mo fukashi.*

(Gratitude owed to one's father is higher than the mountains ; that owed to one's mother deeper than the sea.)

— Parental love is greater than anything else.—

Most parents would sacrifice their own lives for their children if they have to. Parental love is love that asks nothing in return. But there are many children who do not realise how deeply concerned their parents are about them. There are far more Japanese proverbs dealing with the parent-child relationship than English ones.

Related English Proverb :

God, parents, and our masters can never be requited.

C-15 *Baba-sodachi wa zeni ga yasui.*

(Children brought up by grandmothers are ineffectual.)

— Children brought up by grandmothers will be worthless grown-ups.—

They say that grandparents are not directly responsible for the education of their grandchildren : and so, they tend to be overindulgent to their grandchildren, although they had been strict with their own children. In a nationwide survey conducted by the Japanese government in 2001, 21% of Japanese grandchildren have never been disciplined by their grandparents. And in Japan, 23% of those over 60 years old live with their grandchildren ; in America, 5% ; in Germany, 1.5% ; in Sweden, 0.1%. Japanese grandparents seem to regard their grandchildren with greater affection than their own children.

Conclusion

The 50 proverbs in this thesis have been selected according to the writer's personal preference in view of their usefulness. Consideration of these proverbs has lead the writer to reach the following conclusions :

(1) There is a great deal of similarity between English and Japanese proverbs which deal with universal truth and human feelings.

(2) The Japanese tend to think that nothing is certain in life, and they take life as it is. On the contrary, Western people think that life is enjoyable, and they take a more positive attitude.

(3) The parent-child relationship is much stronger in Japan than in the West. There are far more Japanese proverbs which deal with this relationship than English ones. The Japanese tend to think that their children are their personal belongings. Western people think differently. They think of their children as independent individuals.

(4) The Japanese and Western people have similar views on money.

(5) There are some social, racial, cultural, and geographical background differences between them. The following are three conclusions mentioned in my previous thesis, and they are here added for further consideration.

(6) Most Japanese proverbs take an abbreviated form. Most English ones are in complete sentence form with subjects and verbs.

(7) Japanese proverbs are metaphorical and the expression is exquisitely variegated. The expression in English proverbs is logical, powerful and straightforward.

(8) Japanese proverbs are strongly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Oriental culture and civilisation, while English ones show traces of the influence of Christianity and Western culture and civilisation.

This thesis is based on traditional Japanese proverbs. These 50 proverbs have been used and loved for a long time by the Japanese people, as in the case of the *iroha karuta* proverbs. It is confirmed again that English proverbs have contents which are very similar to their Japanese equivalents.

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