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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs : With Special Reference to Well-known English Proverbs (7) : 日英諺の比較研究

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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs

— With Special Reference to Well-known English Proverbs — (7)

(日英諺の比較研究)

Kengo Tamura

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I Introduction

The English proverbs used in this paper have been selected mainly from the books listed in the Bibliography at the end of this paper. In the present paper, the 30 proverbs which are taken up are divided into three categories, as shown in Part II of the Contents. These categories are used solely for the sake of convenience, and should not be considered as a definitive classification. For each category, 10 proverbs for (A), 10 for (B), and 10 for (C) have been chosen.

These proverbs were explained and provided with a simple commentary and quoted phrases, with Related Sayings listed below each. By the word 'proverb' as used in this paper is meant a short, popular, and witty saying which expresses some truth or useful knowledge or idea. In addition, short passages related to each proverb mentioned in the title are quoted according to the writer's discretion.

Notations used in this paper

Italics : Japanese

— — : the meaning of each English Proverb

“ ” : quotation

II Categories of Proverbs

Category A

A-1 Actions speak louder than words.

— What you do is more convincing than what you say. —

You have to judge a man, not by what he says, but by what he does. Those who are always bragging about themselves and making excuses for their failures tend to be lacking in the ability to get things done. It should be evaluated, not by you, but by other people whether you are good or not. Excuses are likely to be made when you cannot do something because of weakness, mistakes, laziness, etc. Pestalozzi, a Swiss educational reformer, said, “Not art, not books, but life itself is the true basis of teaching and education.”

“People who know how to act are never preachers.” (Emerson)

“A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being.” (William Hazlitt)

“‘I am ashamed of my emptiness,’ said the Word to the Work. / ‘I know how poor I am when I see you,’ said the Work to the Word.” (Rabindranath Tagore)

“Action can give us the feeling of being useful, but only words can give us a sense of weight and purpose.” (Eric Hoffer)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Fugen jikkō*. (= Action before words.)
2. Fine words butter no parsnips.
3. The greatest talkers are the least doers.
4. A little help is worth a deal of pity.
5. Praise without profit puts little in the pot.

— It is best to attack head-on rather than to wait passively to be attacked. —

This militaristic slogan was used frequently after the American War of Independence (1776-83). It was used by George Washington: "Make them believe that offensive operations often times are the surest, if not the only----- means of defense." This proverb is found in varying forms; Offense is the best defense; The best form of defense is attack, etc. This proverb can apply to two opponents who are nearly equal in their skills, but when either of the two is greatly superior to the other and they fight for a long time, 'attack is not defense'. This proverb should not be used as an excuse for the strong to attack the weak. But to show your offensive spirit to your opponent is to deprive him of his fighting spirit against you, which gives you the best form of defense.

"It is far pleasanter to injure and afterwards to beg forgiveness than to be injured and to grant forgiveness. He who does the former gives evidence of power and afterwards of kindness of character." (Nietzsche)

"Never make a defense or apology before you are accused." (Charles I of Great Britain)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Sakinzureba hito o seisu.* (= If you go ahead of others, you will control them.)
2. First come, first served.
3. God defend me from my friends; from my enemies, I can defend myself.

— Even among people and things that in a general way or in most ways are the opposite to each other, there is sometimes one element that is common to both. —

People who have opposite qualities and traits tend to be drawn together: a short woman likes a tall man, an outgoing man prefers a woman who is reserved. It is often said that opposites make a happy marriage, but once they live together, they will frequently feel mismatched. For successful marriage, they should have much in common in their way of thinking, background, education, religion, tastes and so on. As another proverb says, "the greatest hate springs from the greatest love," so to be too 'humble' is closely related to being 'haughty', and so the extremes of haughtiness and humbleness meet.

“To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short.” (Confucius, 551-478 B.C.)

“What is objectionable, what is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme, but that they are intolerant. The evil is not in what they say about their cause, but in what they say about their opponents.” (Robert F. Kennedy)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Taiken wa gu-narugagotoshi.* (= To be too smart is to be foolish.)
2. Opposites attract.
3. No hatred is greater than that which proceeds from love.
4. Too much politeness is a form of cunning.

A-4 Fish and guests stink after three days.

— House guests begin to be very unpleasant after three days. —

Just as a fish will begin to spoil after three days without a refrigerator, so time makes the presence of any guest annoying. The Bible says, “Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor’s house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.” (Proverbs 25:17) If you keep on taking advantage of others’ hospitality, you will be shunned by everybody in the long run. Whether they are guaranteed financially or not and whether they are willing to be kind to you or not, they have nothing to do with you. Men are basically equal regardless of their background. If we are treated kindly or are helped by others, it is natural that we should thank them and repay them for their kindness according to our present financial situation or when we have a chance to do something good for them.

“My evening visitors, if they cannot see the clock, should find the time in my face.” (Emerson)

“The hospitable instinct is not wholly altruistic. There is pride and egoism mixed up with it.” (Max Beerbohm)

“It is equally offensive to speed a guest who would like to stay and to detain one who is anxious to leave.” (Homer, 962-927 B.C.)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Chinkyaku mo chōza ni sugireba itowareru.* (= The best guest will wear his welcome out.)
2. A constant guest is never welcome.
3. The first day a man is a guest, the second day a burden, and the third day a pest.

— A person who has two employers cannot serve both of them faithfully. —

This proverb implies that you cannot give equal support for and loyalty to two conflicting principles. The Bible says: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon is the god of riches. You must choose between godliness and worldliness. Throughout your life, you will have many occasions when you must choose between alternatives, sometimes between two opposing people or ideas. Your choice will decide your life, so you should exercise judgment and be broad-minded.

“Only the person who has faith in himself is able to be faithful to others.” (Erich Fromm)

“When young, we are faithful to individuals; when older, we grow more loyal to situations and to types.” (Cyril Connolly)

“It is right that what is just should be obeyed; it is necessary that what is strongest should be obeyed.” (Pascal)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Achira o tatereba Kochira ga tatanu.* (= I can not satisfy both sides.)
2. You cannot have your cake and eat it.
3. A door must be either shut or open.
4. You cannot burn the candle at both ends.
5. You cannot have it both ways.
6. You cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.
7. You cannot sell the cow and drink the milk.

— Doctors do not cure their own maladies. —

Before you correct or heal others, first take care to correct or heal your own problems. This proverb is of Biblical origin: “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself.” (Luke 4:23) It is said that even a very skilled surgeon tends to avoid operating on his own child. A specialist seems not to be good at looking after himself with his specialized knowledge and techniques. This proverb is used as follows: “You seem to be gaining weight. You should probably take

more exercise.” “Physician, heal thyself. You’re getting a little pudgy, too.” (NTC’ Dictionary)

“It is an easy thing for one whose foot / is on the outside of calamity / to give advice and to rebuke the sufferer.” (Aeschylus, 525-456 B.C.)

“Keep away from physicians. It is all probing and guessing and pretending with them. They leave it to Nature to cure in her own time, but they take the credit. As well as very fat fees.” (Anthony Burgess)

“Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.” (Hippocrates, 460-357 B.C.)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Isha no fuyōjō*. (= Doctors neglect their own health.)
2. None more bare than the shoemaker’s wife and the blacksmith’s mare.
3. He is a good physician who cures himself.
4. Practise what you preach.
5. He is the best teacher who follows his own instructions.

A-7 The devil is not as black as he is painted.

— No one is as bad as is commonly believed. —

The devil was painted black. Thomas Lodge, an English writer, wrote in 1596: “Devils are not so black as they be painted----- nor women so wayward as they seem.” This means that neither devils nor women are so bad as they seem. Even the worst people are not so bad as you think. There are two well-known ethical views on the good and the wicked: (1) man’s inborn nature is fundamentally good (Mencius); (2) human nature is originally evil (Junshi). It is almost impossible to define a person as being really good or wicked. People have inborn characters, and so they have a capacity for good nature and a capacity for bad nature. They can be devils or angels depending on the circumstances.

“Man is at the bottom an animal; midway, he is a citizen; and at top, divine. But the climate of this world is such that few reach the top.” (Henry Ward Beecher)

“A man has many parts, he is virtually everything, and you are free to select that part in him which pleases you.” (Saint Exupéry)

“Virtue and vice, good and evil, are siblings, or next-door neighbors, / Easy to make mistakes, hard to tell them apart.” (Ovid)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Wataru seken ni o-ni wa nashi.* (= There are no devils in this life. = You will find kind people no matter where you go.)
2. Give the devil his due.
3. Give credit where credit is due.
4. Goodness is better than beauty.
5. Kindness is the noblest weapon to conquer with.

A-8 The nearer the church, the farther from God.

— Church officials or those who live near the church are not godly. —

When you become used to persons or things, you are liable to get careless and lose respect for them. This proverb comes from the idea that those who are closely concerned with the organization of the church are not truly religious. They are likely to be more intent on the organization than on leading a pious life. This proverb is old and these two variants date from the Reformation: (1) The nearer to Rome, the worse Christian. (2) The nearer to the Pope, the worse Christian. When those connected with religion, such as clergymen and their children behave badly, this proverb is applied to them in a cynical sense. Superficial religiosity is a long way from a true religious spirit. Here is a well-known Japanese saying: “*Hotoke tsukutte tamashii irezu.*” (=Failing to put life into a Buddhist image.) What is important is neither name nor prestige but life and love.

“The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

“While God waits for His temple to be built of love, men bring stones.” (Rabindranath Tagore)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Tokoro no kamisama arigatagarazu.* (= The God in the nearby temple is not appreciated.)
2. A prophet will always be held in honor, except in his home town, and in his own family. (Matthew 13:57)
3. Familiarity breeds contempt.
4. Respect is greater from a distance.
5. No man is a hero to his valet.

— You must master basic skills before you can go on to more advanced levels. —

The wise know it is vital to acquire the basics first when they want to master some skill, but the foolish cannot understand this and think they can master the skill easily. The wise know that nothing is more precious than persistent practice in order to acquire a skill, and they continue to practice patiently. Fools do not realize how important the basic principles are, and when they cannot succeed at the beginning, they try to find some excuse, without trying to overcome the difficulty. They seem to forget that ‘practice makes perfect’ and that ‘patience is a virtue’. We should keep it in mind that it is not the goal but the process to achieve that makes people wise and strong, and that skills and knowledge cannot be acquired all at once; they must be gained step by step.

“Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves.”
(Ernest Dimnet)

“Education is the ability to listen to others without losing your temper or your self-confidence.” (Robert Frost)

“Learn as though you would never be able to achieve mastery; keep on trying as though you were in fear of never achieving your goal.” (Confucius, 551-479 B.C.)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Takasa ni noboru niwa hikuki yori su.* (= You have to start from the bottom to climb to the top.)
2. You have to crawl before you can walk.
3. Learn to speak before you try to sing.
4. Don't get into deep water until you have learned how to swim.

— Young people think old people are foolish, but old people know from long experience that the young are thoughtless and lacking in knowledge. —

This proverb teaches us that the young do not recognize the good points of the old, and vice versa. It is quite natural that the old and the young should never see things in the same way. We are easily influenced by the circumstances of our age. The old and the young should find common ground. Then the young will realize they need the

invaluable experience and wisdom of the old, and the old will also realize that they need young people's energy and passion in pursuing their dreams. It is necessary for both the young and the old to recognize this and help each other. Especially, old people are responsible for leading young people in the right way throughout life through what the old have experienced and learned. Remember that the old were young before and that the young will be old before long !

"In youth, it is common to measure right and wrong by the opinion of the world, and in old age, to act without any measure but interest, and to lose shame without substituting virtue." (Samuel Johnson)

"Dignity, high station, or great riches, are in some way necessary to old men in order to keep the younger at a distance, who are otherwise too apt to insult them upon the score of their age." (Jonathan Swift)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Toshiyori no mo-no-wasure wakamo-no no mufunbetsu.* (= An old man's failing memory and a young man's indiscretion.)
2. Youth and old age will never agree.
3. Youth longs and manhood strives, but age remembers.
4. The young cock crows as the old one does.
5. A young trooper should have an old horse.

Category B

B-1 An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

— If someone hurts you, you should be able to punish him by doing harm to him in equal measure. —

This concept of revenge is expressed in the Old Testament, but is tempered in Matthew 5:38 by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Also, "Vengeance is mine," said the Lord, "I will reply." (Romans 12:19) Mahatma Gandhi achieved the independence of India from Britain, not by fighting with military force, but by non-violent revolution. He said, "Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being." One revenge leads to another, and this can escalate to even war between

nations. Nothing valuable can be gained by taking revenge on others, although it may calm the anger of the injured, and enable them to maintain their self-respect. The perpetrators should make up for the crime they have committed, calling on justice and humanity in society. “Revenge is the poor delight of little minds.”

“Men regard it as their right to return evil for evil and if they cannot, they feel they have lost their liberty.” (Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Urikotoba ni kaikotoba.* (= Angry words bring angry words in return.)
2. Revenge is a dish that should be eaten cold.
3. Revenge is sweet.
4. The noblest vengeance is forgiveness.
5. The remedy for injuries is to forget them.

B-2 Call a man a thief and he will steal.

— When you give a person a bad reputation, he will be likely to live up to it. —

We do not know whether a person is actually a thief or not, but when we take him for a thief, he becomes inclined to steal. This proverb tells us that it is what a person or thing is called that matters, not what he is intrinsically. If enough lies are told about a person, it will pass from person to person until it is accepted as truth by everybody. The following sayings tell us that repetition and habit are influential in spreading knowledge or even in forming people’s characters: “Give a lie twenty-four hours’ start, and you can never overtake it.” “A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.” We are vulnerable, and we are easily influenced and hurt physically and emotionally; but we can be good or bad by our own efforts, and by the good reputation and love given us by other people. If we call a girl a beauty, she will turn to be more attractive and beautiful than before.

“Don’t take action because of a name ! A name is an uncertain thing; you can’t count on it.” (Bertolt Brecht)

“Names are but noise and smoke, obscuring heavenly light.” (Goethe)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Na wa tai o arawasū.* (= The name given you by your title or position represents yourself.)
2. Names and natures do often agree.
3. Fling enough dirt and some will stick.

4. Give a dog a bad name and hang him.

B-3

Easy come, easy go.

— What has been gained without hard work is easily lost. —

This is usually used in relation to money, or the things that money can buy. Formerly, 'easy' was placed by 'lightly' or 'quickly'. When you get money through little effort, you tend to squander it like water, because you do not know its value, but when you earn it through hard work, you do not waste it. Money gained by gambling or speculative dealings is spent immediately. These days, compared with the past, we can easily get the basic necessities for life, but we put an emphasis on simplicity, convenience, popularity, etc. Young people prefer easier and quicker ways to attain their aims instead of making patient efforts. This saying can apply, not only to money or fame but also to people. Those who are very popular with persons of the opposite sex and those who can easily make friends are more likely to lose their sweethearts with the loss of their interest in their love and friendship than those who attained them with difficulty. We should value both what we can get easily and what we cannot get so easily.

"The vast majority of the sons of rich men are unable to resist the temptations which wealth subjects them to, and sink to unworthy lives." (Andrew Carnegie)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Akusen mi ni tsukazu.* (= Ill gotten money cannot be kept long.)
2. Ill gotten goods never thrive.
3. Soon gotten, soon spent.
4. A fool and his money are soon parted.

B-4

Forbidden fruit is sweetest.

— What one is not allowed to do or to have seems to be more attractive and desirable than what one is always ready to do or to have. —

This proverb derives, of course, from the story of Adam and Eve, who were expelled from the Garden of Eden because they tasted the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All rules and customs in society have been made through many long-term experiences and improvements. These rules and customs may be changed as time passes. They may not be long-lived. You may

consider it unreasonable to be bound by man-made rules and deprived of freedom and pleasures. We are vulnerable to temptation, so when you are about to be enticed into doing something forbidden, you should make sure whether you are not violating any rule, or whether you are not injuring anybody including yourself. You are not living alone on an island.

“Stolen sweets are sweeter, / Stolen kisses much completer, / Stolen looks are nice in chapels; / Stolen, stolen be your apples.” (Thomas Randolph)

“All men are tempted. There is no man that lives that can’t be broken down.” (Henry Ward Beecher)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Kowaimo-no mitasa.* (= Your curiosity overcomes your fear.)
2. Too much curiosity lost Paradise.
3. Stolen pleasures are sweetest.

B-5

Forewarned is forearmed.

— If you are warned in advance about something before it happens, you can prepare for it. —

If you can stop something bad before it starts, it is much better and more useful to deal with the trouble in advance than to repair the damage after it has occurred. The present is called the age of information. If you can have the advantage of obtaining reliable information and can make the best use of it, you will have a greater chance of success than other people. There is a big difference between ‘before’ and ‘after’. Japan is subject to frequent earthquakes. It is said that we can get advance warning that an earthquake might occur within ten seconds, but we only wish we could have more time to escape. It is important to save for a rainy day, but we should be neither too cautious nor too afraid to put what needs to be done into prompt action.

“Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold.” (Helen Keller)

“The torment of precautions often exceeds the dangers to be avoided. It is sometimes better to abandon oneself to destiny.” (Napoleon)

“Well, I will arm me, being thus forewarn’d.” (Shakespeare)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Koroba-nu saki no tsue.* (= A walking stick before you fall.)
2. Prevention is better than cure.

3. Distrust and caution are the parents of security.
4. Look before you leap.
5. In wealth beware of woe.

B-6 If you won't work, you shouldn't eat.

— If you do not want to work, you must not eat. —

This is from the Bible: “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” (Thessalonians 3:10) The proverb has equivalents in other languages too: *Qui non laborat, non manducet* (Latin); *Wer nicht arbeitet, soll auch nicht essen* (German); *Кто не работает, тот не ест* (Russian) Throughout the world, it has been said since ancient times that working is essential and indispensable. It is not too much to say there is no real wealth but the labour of human beings. Today's science, however, seems to pursue the development of machines to an unlimited extent in place of using men's hands. The pursuit of having a convenient life and shortening men's working hours will take away employment for many working people and will ultimately have the effect of making life inconvenient and destructive in the long run.

“Work is the grand cure of all the maladies and miseries that beset mankind.” (Thomas Carlyle)

“Originality and the feeling of one's own dignity are achieved only through work and struggle.” (Dostoevsky)

“Constant labour of one uniform kind destroys the intensity and flow of a man's animal spirits, which find recreation and delight in mere change of activity.” (Carl Marx)

“It is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity.” (John Ruskin)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Kasegu ni oitsuku binbō nashi.* (= There is no poverty that industry cannot overcome.)
2. No bees, no honey; no work, no money.
3. Labour overcomes all things.
4. No pains, no gains.
5. There are only twenty-four hours in the day.
6. You never know what you can do till you try.

B-7

Marry in haste, repent at leisure.

— If you rush into marriage without sufficient thought, you will regret it all your life. —

This proverb has often been quoted in variant forms by many great writers. It is reported that when Socrates (469-399 B.C.) was asked whether a man should marry or not, he said “Whichever you do, you will repent it.” Marriage has been one of the most important events that the people of the East and West, past and present have been greatly concerned about since ancient times. Marriage is the act of uniting a man and a woman, but they may have different backgrounds, experiences, interests, senses of values, and so on, which means each of them has a different ‘culture’. It is almost impossible to assimilate basically two different ‘cultures’. But if each receives his / her partner with love, patience, and generosity, each culture will survive and prosper without fail.

“I am not against hasty marriages if a mutual flame is fanned by an adequate income.” (Wilkie Collins)

“Where there’s marriage without love, there will be love without marriage.” (Benjamin Franklin)

“A good marriage is that in which each appoints the other the guardian of his / her solitude.” (Rainer Maria Rilke)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Seitewa koto o shisonjiru.* (= If you do something in haste, you will fail.)
2. Marriage is a lottery.
3. Wedlock is a padlock.
4. Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, and half shut afterwards.
5. Haste makes waste, waste makes want, and want makes strife between the goodman and his wife.

B-8 That which was bitter to endure may be sweet to remember.

— Even though you experienced something painful and unpleasant to bear, in the future you will be able to look back on it with nostalgia. —

Fujiwara-no-Kiyosuke-Ason (12 century), a Japanese poet, wrote *Nagaraheba matako-no-goroya shi-nobaremu ushitomishiyozo imahakoishiki.* (= If I continue to live on, will I be able to remember this painful time with nostalgia in the same way as I can

now long for my hard days in the past?) From this poem and the proverb in the title, we learn that even if our present life is gloomy and the future may be dark, there is always the possibility that the situation will improve so long as we keep on living, and as time goes on, we can overcome our hardships, which might become our precious memories in future. As Oliver Goldsmith, a British poet, wrote, "To the last moment of his breath / On hope the wretch relies; / And e'en the pang preceding death / Bids expectation rise." This means that we should live out our natural span of life no matter what may happen.

"The aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware-joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely, aware." (Henry Miller)

"How good is man's life, the mere living ! how fit to employ / All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy !" (Robert Browning)

"It is so small a thing / To have enjoyed the sun, / To have enjoyed light in the spring, / To have loved, to have thought, to have done?" (Matthew Arnold)

《Related Sayings》

1. *I-nochi atte no mono-dane.* (= Life is the source of all things.)
2. While there is life, there is hope.
3. Never say die.
4. Hope springs eternal in the human breast.
5. Every cloud has a silver lining.

B-9 The pen is mightier than the sword.

— The written word is more powerful than any physical force. —

You can say that the writer wields more power than the soldier. The former is physically weaker than the latter, but eloquent writing is sometimes more persuasive than military force. For example, ten million signatures that are collected in order to oppose war are more powerful than forcible and threatening actions. Abraham Lincoln said, "*The London Times* is one of the greatest powers in the world. In fact, I don't know anything which has more power, except perhaps the Mississippi." The written word can make a million people kill or help others. We should not make bad use of it. This proverb is so often used that it has ever become a cliché. The modern version of this proverb could be: 'the computer is mightier than any nuclear weapon.'

"Pens are most dangerous tools, more sharp by odds / Than swords, which cut more keen than whips or rods." (John Taylor)

“Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

“A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason, no regime has ever loved great writers, only minor ones.” (Alexander Solzhenitsyn)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Suntetsu hito o korosu.* (= Even a small knife can kill a man.)
2. Words cut deeper than swords.
3. The tongue is not steel, yet it cuts.

B-10 There is a time to speak and a time to be silent.

— Everything has its appointed time. —

Under some circumstances or in some situations, especially, when you consider other people’s feelings, you have to select an appropriate time to speak or to be silent. This proverb appears in the Old Testament: “A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1) The idea of this proverb was also used by Hesiod (about 700 B.C.): “Observe due measure, for right timing is in all things the most important.” It is needless to say that when doing something if you can make the best use of time, place, situation, skills, and knowledge, you will definitely be able to succeed in life. The secret of finding the right time for everything may be brought by concentration, self-confidence, patience, courage, knowledge, experience, and so forth.

“Timing ! My mother gave me that. I was born with it. I don’t think you can teach a person to act.” (Charlie Chaplin)

“Timing can be everything in selling an idea.” (Fox Harrison W., Jr.)

“If you trap the moment before it’s ripe, / The tears of repentance you’ll certainly wipe; / But if you once let the ripe moment go / You can never wipe off the tears of woe.” (William Blake)

《Related Sayings》

1. *Kōki issu bekarazu.* (= Don’t fail to catch a good chance.)
2. He cannot speak well that cannot hold his tongue.
3. Speech is silver, but silence is golden.
4. Many speak much who cannot speak well.
5. Timing is everything.

Category C

C-1 Anger without power is folly.

— If you cannot react properly, displays of anger are a mistake. —

A similar Chinese proverb says, “Anger is as useless as the waves of the ocean without wind.” Another English proverb says, “Two things a man should never be angry at; what he can help and what he cannot help.” (= Anger is useless both when something can be done and when nothing can be done.) Anger changes a person into a quite different man. It is important to deal with anger properly. There are a number of proverbs concerning anger: “Keep yourself from the anger of a great man, from the tumult of a mob, from a man of ill fame, from a widow that has been thrice married, from a wind that comes in at a hole, and from a reconciled enemy.” This tells us that you should be cool-headed when you are about to get upset.

“It is easy to fly into a passion – anybody can do that – but to be angry with the right person to the right extent and at the right time and with the right object and in the right way – that is not easy, and it is not everyone who can do it.” (Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.)

“Anger represents a certain power, when a great mind, prevented from executing its own generous desires, is moved by it.” (Pietro Arentino)

《Related Sayings》

1. Meat in anger is out.
2. Angry men make themselves beds of nettles.
3. A hungry man is an angry man.
4. Anger dies quickly with a good man.
5. When angry, count a hundred.

C-2 Better late than never.

— It is better to do something after the expected time than not to do it at all. —

A long version of the original Latin saying is: “Better late than never, but better never late.” This proverb is used as follows: “(1) I’m sorry I’m late for the party. Better late than never, right?” (2) Jill: Lisa’s birthday was two months ago. Should I send her a card now? Jane: Better late than never.” (NTC’s Dictionary) If you are often late for the arranged time, it causes trouble for other people. Then, it is

necessary to make up for the trouble you have caused with sincerity and as soon as possible. Then you can win back their trust, but if you do not care and fail to make amends, you will lose their trust. Alexander Pope said, "To err is human: to forgive, divine." When you are late and when you make mistakes, you should not hesitate to take responsibility and compensate for what you have done.

"Delay always breeds danger and to protract a great design is often to ruin it."
(Cervantes)

"Delay is preferable to error." (Thomas Jefferson)

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." (Proverbs 13:12)

《Related Sayings》

1. Punctuality is the politeness of kings.
2. Procrastination is the thief of time.
3. He that rises not early, never does a good day's work.
4. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.
5. Cruelty is more cruel, when pain is deferred.

C-3 He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches.

— Those who are capable of doing something well do it for a living, and those who cannot do it well make a living by teaching other people how to do it. —

This proverb is attributed to George Bernard Shaw in 1903, and is found in different forms; "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach (criticize / attend conferences)." This proverb seems to disparage the teaching profession. Educational institutions, such as schools and colleges, have never paid more salary than big companies in general, and so even those who want to be teachers have to give up. The writer believes that an able teacher would encourage his students to be willing to study something for themselves and teach them how to learn the basics thoroughly, then try to give them self-confidence and hope. Teachers have a great responsibility for determining their students' future life. There are many able teachers who love teaching and take pride in this challenging job.

"It has always seemed an addled adage to say 'Those who can, do. Those who cannot, teach.' Some of the doers, it now seems, have long yearned to teach. Lawyers, nurses, millwrights, accountants; and executives – people of experience – in growing numbers are leaving their professions, earning teaching certificates and heading for the classroom." (*New York Times*, 1988)

《Related Sayings》

1. He teaches ill, who teaches all.
2. Better untaught than ill taught.
3. Every good scholar is not a good teacher.

C-4 My son is my son till he gets a wife, but my daughter is my daughter all the days of her life.

— After your son gets married, he tends to separate himself from his parents, but your daughter does not change her attitude and feelings toward her parents throughout her life. —

While sons are small, their mothers seem to love them passionately, and the relationship between them becomes very close. But sons begin to grow away from their mothers and to become fully independent, especially after their marriage. They become responsible for their new families and busy with their jobs. Mothers have to give up their influence over their beloved sons. On the other hand, daughters tend to return to their home after marriage. But these days many young men who suffer from so-called ‘mother complex’ are increasing in number while women have been more independent.

“Children begin by loving their parents; after a time, they judge them. Rarely, if ever, do they forgive them.” (Oscar Wilde)

“People are always rather bored with their parents. That’s human nature.” (Somerset Maugham)

“Parentage is a very important profession; but no test of fitness for it is ever imposed in the interest of the children.” (George Bernard Shaw)

《Related Saying》

1. Children, when they are little, make their parents fools; when they become older, they make them mad.

C-5 Never look a gift horse in the mouth.

— It is not good to find fault with something you got for nothing. —

Looking a horse in the mouth is customary procedure in buying and selling horses, and the condition of the horse’s teeth is a good guide to know its age and assess its value. As another proverb says, “a horse is as old as his teeth,” the longer the teeth,

the older the horse. It was said in England that a horse given as a gift brings good luck and healing. Therefore, it was very rude and ungrateful to look into the mouth of a gift horse. This proverb tells us that those who receive presents or favours should neither examine their price nor complain about their quality. There are many people who estimate the value of gratitude according to the value of the gift. This attitude is not always correct. Those who have no sense of gratitude can not be happy. Those who can be pleased with a small kindness from others will be able to lead a pleasant life.

“Wise men appreciate all men, for they see the good in each and know how hard it is to make anything good.” (Baltasar Gracián)

“When I’m not thanked at all, I’m thanked enough, / I’ve done my duty, and I’ve done no more.” (Henry Fielding)

“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is / To have a thankless child!” (Shakespeare)

“With most people, gratitude is merely a secret hope for greater favors.” (François La Rochefoucauld)

《Related Sayings》

1. Beggars must not be choosers.
2. He who pays the piper calls the tune.
3. A small gift usually gets small thanks.

C-6 The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.

— Mothers who are taking care of their children are bringing up men who rule the world. —

‘The hand that rocks the cradle’ is often used as a simple synonym of ‘mother’. This saying is attributed to William Ross Wallace, who wrote: “They say that man is mighty, / He governs land and sea, / He wields a mighty scepter / O’er lesser powers that be; / But a mightier power and stronger / Man from his throne has hurled, / For the hand that rocks the cradle / Is the hand that rules the world.” A mothers’ influence is paramount especially in a child’s early years. Mothers bear their children and keep on giving a love that asks nothing in return. It goes without saying that mothers shape their children’s personalities. But they are the only workers who do not have regular time off, and many of them are too busy to bring up their children properly because of the lack of financial support. They should be protected fully by their government from various points of view, and they are playing an important role for the happiness of mankind.

“A woman understands children better than a man does, but a man is more childlike than a woman.” (Nietzsche)

“To make the child in your own image is a capital crime, for your image is not worth repeating. The child knows this and you know it. Consequently you hate each other.” (Karl Shapiro)

《Related Saying》

1. What the mother sings to the cradle goes all the way down to the coffin.

C-7 The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

— If your good intentions are not translated into action, they are worse than useless. —

If you fail to act on all your good intentions, you will become less and less able to keep them and sink lower and lower in your downward road that leads to hell. This proverb is used as follows: Sandra did something bad and her good intentions do not matter: “Sandra: I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings; I only wanted to help you. Jane: Oh, yeah? The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” (NTC’s Dictionary) This proverb recommends us, not to hesitate, but to turn our goodwill into actuality with strong determination. This proverb is sometimes used today in Europe to describe the failure of some of the enlightened social programmes of the post-war era, which were good in principle but were not implemented effectively.

“In the arena of human life, the honours and rewards fall to those who show their good qualities in action.” (Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.)

“Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity, and in cold weather, becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigour of the mind.” (Leonardo da Vinci)

“He who desires but acts not breeds pestilence.” (William Blake)

《Related Sayings》

1. Action without thought is like shooting without aim.
2. Hell is full of good intentions, but heaven is full of good works.

C-8 The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

— Although one’s spirit might be willing to resist temptation, one’s body may be unable to resist it. —

The source of this saying is Matthew 26, 41: “Jesus then came with his disciples to

a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there to pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Anguish and dismay came over him, and he said to them, 'My heart is ready to break with grief. Stop here, and stay awake with me.' ----- He came to the disciples and found them asleep; and he said to Peter, 'What ! Could none of you stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake-----'. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'" This saying is often used as an excuse for yielding to temptation or to laziness. Life is full of various temptations. Our higher nature has been struggling with our lower desires since we were born. This struggle will last as long as we live.

"The world was made to be inhabited by beasts, but studied and contemplated by man: 'tis the debt of our reason we owe unto God, and the homage we pay for not being beasts." (Sir Thomas Browne)

《Related Saying》

1. Everything tempts the man who fears temptation.

C-9

Variety is the spice of life.

— Many different kinds of activities or interests make life enjoyable and not boring.

This proverb comes from a poem by William Cooper: "Variety's the very spice of life, / That gives it all its flavour." Life is short, so while we are alive, we should spend this precious life happily and pleasantly, although most of us cannot afford to live as we wish. The world is open to us, and is full of interests and hopes: When we are not well off but if we want to make our monotonous life full of variety, we should be energetic and curious about many things, and eager for knowledge.

"The joy of life is variety; the tenderest love requires to be rekindled by intervals of absence." (Samuel Johnson)

"It is always the last song that an audience applauds the most." (Homer, 962-927 B.C.)

"As soon as we are shown the existence of something old in a new thing, we are pacified." (Nietzsche)

《Related Sayings》

1. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.
2. A change is as good as a rest.
3. Variety is the spice of love.

C-10 You may fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but not all of the people all of the time.

— You can deceive people only to a certain extent but not totally. —

This saying is attributed to Abraham Lincoln's speech. He was in discussion with a caller at the White House in 1856. The following words preceded the saying in the title above: "If you once forfeit the confidence of your fellow citizens, you can never regain their respect and esteem. It is true that-----." We have been fooled by politicians again and again, and they may think we are foolish and immature, but it is impossible to fool all the people all the time. The people are not basically foolish but are often lacking in knowledge of politics, moreover, they are not given definite and reliable information through the mass media. It is strange that most of us do not trust what politicians say and do, but we give them full power to act on our behalf, such as to direct the future of our country and even our lives. We should learn to distinguish what is false from what is true by studying politics in depth. Not all politicians are unreliable, some of them are trustworthy, helpful, and conscientious.

"I still love you, but in politics there is no heart, only head." (Napoleon)

"He knows nothing; and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to political career." (George Bernard Shaw)

《Related Sayings》

1. Oil and truth return to the top.
2. Truth is mighty and will prevail.
3. Truth will out.

III Conclusion

The 30 English proverbs in this paper have been selected according to the writer's personal preference in view of their usefulness, the same as in his previous papers. Consideration of these proverbs has led the writer to reach the following conclusions:

- (1) There is great deal of similarity between English and Japanese proverbs, both of which deal with universal truth and basic human feelings.
- (2) Some popular English proverbs were quoted from old writings in Greek or Latin.
- (3) As the writer mentioned in his previous papers, there are some social, racial, cultural, and geographical background differences between the East and the West.
- (4) Most English proverbs are generally in complete sentence form with subjects and

verbs. Most Japanese proverbs take an abbreviated form.

(5) English proverbs are logical, powerful, and straightforward. Japanese proverbs are metaphorical and the expression is exquisitely varied.

(6) English proverbs show traces of the influence of Christianity, Shakespeare, other famous writers, great people and so on, to say nothing of ordinary people. English proverbs are greatly influenced by early and modern Western culture and civilization. Japanese proverbs are greatly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Oriental & Western culture and civilization.

(7) The 30 proverbs in this paper are well-known. It need scarcely be pointed out here that the more research is carried out in the two different cultures through English and Japanese proverbs, the shorter the culture distance between the two countries grows.

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