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A Comparative Study of English and Japanese Proverbs : With Special Reference to Well-known English Proverbs (8) : 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—(8)
(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 21 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, 7 proverbs for (A), 7 for (B), and 7 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* : Used for the Japanese text, for the title of a book, or for foreign words.
- — : the meaning of each English proverb
- “ ” : quotation

II Categories of Proverbs

Category A

A-1 Big fish eat little fish.

—The strong rule the weak.—

It is part of the natural order of things that the strong prey on the weak. This saying can apply to human society: small companies have been taken control of by bigger companies which are protected financially by the government; people in many small countries often have been taken over by those with superior military power. Those in power make rules and regulations which are advantageous to themselves and control the weaker. There is another similar saying, “Might makes right” (=General standards of justice can be overcome by the influence of the powerful). Abraham Lincoln said, “It has been of the world’s history hitherto that might is right. It is for us and for our time to reverse the maxim, and to say that right makes might.” It was in the autumn of 2008 that a great depression the like of which had not been experienced for almost a hundred years in the past began in America. At that time, big companies went bankrupt one after another, and some of the biggest companies and banks in the world, not to mention so many small and medium-scale companies, are still following the same trend.

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“When the house of a great one collapses / Many little ones are slain.” (Bertolt Brecht)

“From the height from which the great look down on the world, all the rest of mankind seem equal.”

(William Hazlitt)

“We can’t do without dominating others or being served Even the man on the bottom rung still has his wife or his child. If he’s a bachelor, his dog. The essential thing, in sum, is being able to get angry without the other person being able to answer back.” (Albert Camus)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Jaku-niku kyō-shoku.* (=The strong eat the weak.)
2. Might is right.
3. Where force prevails, right perishes.
4. Losers are always in the wrong.
5. However big the whale may be, the tiny harpoon can rob him of his life. (Malay proverb)

A-2

Don't bite the hand that feeds you.

—Don't despise the hand that supplies you with food.—

It is foolhardy and ungrateful to hurt the person or institution that helps or supports you. The Bible says: "Wherefore have you rewarded evil for good?" (Genesis 44:4). When you receive love or kindness from someone, you will be happy, and someday you try to repay that kindness. This is natural behaviour as a human being. But it is said that most children, who were born and are living in wartime without even knowing whether their parents and relatives are alive, cannot laugh, because they have not laughed. They therefore do not laugh to show joy or amusement, or even to express their feelings properly. They have not been loved by people. On the contrary, those who return evil for good, make a false step, stray from the path of righteousness, and lose possibilities to improve their lives. Those who feel grateful for a person's kindness and the blessings of nature should consider themselves fortunate, because that is the first step to lead a happy life.

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"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is / To have a thankless child!" (Shakespeare, *King Lear*)

"Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy." (Jacques Maritain)

"If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man." (Mark Twain)

« Related Sayings »

1. *On o ada de kaesu.* (=Repay obligation with revenge.)
2. Don't quarrel with your bread and butter.
3. Don't cut the bough you are standing on.
4. Woe to him who fails in his obligations.

A-3

Health is better than wealth.

—It is better to be healthy than to be rich.—

This adage has been traced back to biblical times: "Health and good estate of body are above all gold, and a strong body above infinite wealth." (Ecclesiasticus 30:15). It is difficult to admit that mere wealth can make you happier than good health when you are ill in bed. As the Roman poet Martial (43~103 A.D.) writes, "Life is not just being alive, but being well," there is nothing better and greater than keeping in good health. Variant forms include: "The first wealth is health," "A healthy man is a successful man," "Health is worth more than learning," "Wealth can buy no health," and "Health and wealth create beauty." These sayings give consolation to the poor. But poor people cannot enjoy good health and keep it as easily as rich people, because they have to work so hard

without enough food or rest, and many of them cannot afford medical treatment as the rich can.

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“Use your health, even to the point of wearing it out. That is what it is for. Spend all you have before you die; and do not outlive yourself.” (George Bernard Shaw)

“What is the thing called health? Simply a state in which the individual happens transiently to be perfectly adapted to his environment. Obviously, such states cannot be common, for the environment is in constant flux.” (H.L.Mencken)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Tassha manganme*. (=Health is a jewel but wealth avails little where there is no health.)
2. He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything.
3. Who is not healthy at twenty, wise at thirty, or rich at forty, will never be either. (Russian proverb)
4. Health and gaiety foster beauty.
5. Kitchen physic is the best physic.
6. A priest sees people at their best, a lawyer at their worst, but a doctor sees them as they really are.
7. Health without money is half-malady. (Italian proverb)

A-4

Life is sweet.

—It is good to be alive.—

This quotation is from *Lavengro* by George Borrow (1803~81, English author): “Life is sweet, brother.” “Do you think so?” “Think so! — There’s night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there’s likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?” Nature seems to give him intense pleasure, satisfaction, reward, etc. When you are asked, ‘What do you live for?’, how do you answer? The writer ventures to say, ‘I am living a life in order to have happy moments when I can feel how wonderful life is.’ Our life may be decided by how many times we can have such happy and impressive moments in the course of our life. There are many ups and downs in life, and a thousand people have a thousand views of life: “Life is but a dream”; “Life is not all beer and skittle”; “Life is just a bowl of cherries.”

Life is not always easy and pleasant, but if you do not let opportunities to enjoy living pass you, then you will definitely find how wonderful life is. As long as there are some signs of life, do not give up hope, and hope cannot be extinguished as long as you cling to living. Since we were born, we have been loved and helped by so many people. As the Japanese proverb says, *Yo wa aimochi* (=Life in this world consists in mutual helpfulness), we need love and help of people until we die, we cannot live alone. “A cure for all sorrows is conversation.” “He grieves sore who grieves alone.”



“Life is a continued struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot.” (William Hazlitt)

“The life force is vigorous. The delight that accompanies it counter-balances all the pains and hardships that confront men. It makes life worth living.” (Somerset Maugham)

“Human existence is always irrational and often painful, but in the last analysis, it remains interesting.”(H.L.Mencken)

“As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.” (Carl Gustav Jung)

“We love life, not because we are used to living but because we are used to loving.” (Nietzsche)

“What most counts is not to live, but to live aright.” (Socrates, 469~401 B.C.)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Jinsei wa tanoshikikana.* (=Life is sweet.)

2. Life is short and sweet.

3. A live dog is better than a dead lion.

4. The world is his who enjoys it.

5. Life is half spent before one knows what life is. (French proverb)

A-5

Love is blind.

—If you fall in love with someone, you cannot see any faults in that person.—

Those who are in love are all alike through the ages and throughout the world. They are in a state in which their mind and senses are dulled, so that they are unable to discern or judge each other based on reason and fact. But if they can keep on loving their partners blindly in a good sense after they get married, they are more than happy, because it is true that ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder.’ The important thing is that you should not hurt yourself and others by acting imprudently due to blind love. To love others is to respect their individuality. If you try to force your love on others, they will go away from you. Blind love is likely to go to extremes and to be selfish.



“To be in love is merely to be in a state of perpetual anaesthesia — to mistake an ordinary young man for a Greek god or an ordinary young woman for a goddess.” (H.L.Mencken)

“The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved.” (Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*)

“Immature love says: ‘I love you because I need you.’ Mature love says: ‘I need you because I love you.’ (Erich Fromm)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Horeta yokume niwa abata mo ekubo.* (=To the partial eyes of a lover, pockmarks seem like

dimples.)

2. Love is lawless.
3. One cannot love and be wise.
4. All's fair in love and war.
5. If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. (Matthew 15,14)
6. Where there is no love, all faults are seen.
7. The love of the wicked is more dangerous than their hatred.
8. If Jack's in love, he's no judge of Jill's beauty.
9. In love's wars, he who flies is the conqueror.

A-6

War is hell.

—War brings horror.—

This saying is attributed to *Henry VI* by Shakespeare: “O war, thou son of hell, Whom angry heavens do make their minister.” The essence of war is violence. War has been individual human beings killing on behalf of states or nations, kings or lords, or different groups of the same country. War produces all kinds of evils; among them, nuclear weapons which exterminate all things in nature in an instant are the worst. Bertrand Russel (1872~1970, English philosopher and mathematician) said, “This idea of weapons of mass extermination is utterly horrible, and is something that no one with a spark of humanity can tolerate. I will not pretend to obey a Government that is organizing a mass massacre of mankind.” The 44th American President Barack Obama said, “And as nuclear power — as a nuclear power, as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act. So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. I'm not naive. This goal will not be reached quickly — perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence. But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, ‘Yes, we can.’ ” (‘Obama Prague Speech’, in 2009).

There is no such thing as a justifiable and necessary war. We must abolish war forever. We should bear this warning to generations yet to come.

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The Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations,1945 says, “We, the people of the United Nations / Determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and / To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal right of men and women and of nations large and small, and... for these ends / To practice tolerance and live together in peace

things are impossible.” (La Rochefoucauld)

“Our wills and fates do so contrary run / That our devices still are overthrown; / Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Seishin ittō nanigoto ka narazaran.* (=To him that wills, ways are not wanting.)
2. Little strokes fell great oaks.
3. Constant dropping wears away a stone.
4. Faith will move mountains.
5. If at first you don't succeed, try, try, and try again.
6. Nothing is impossible to a willing heart.
7. To bow the body is easy, to bow the will is hard. (Chinese proverb)

Category B

B-1 Appetite comes with eating.

—The more you eat, the more you want.—

Human desire increases as an activity proceeds. This saying was originally applied mostly to the consumption of food, but has since been applied to greed for conquest, money or sexual appetite, among other cravings. Human beings instinctively have many desires for material gain, for fame, for power, and for sex, to say nothing of the appetite for food. Lions living in the savanna cannot preserve the food which they got (the meat of other animals) for the coming days when they have no food. After they have satisfied their appetite, they continue to roam, leaving the remaining meat behind. And then, if they cannot hunt any animals to eat, they starve to death. It is said that animals act on instinct and human beings act with reason. But these days there are many people who behave like animals. We should act more reasonably, wisely, justly, and positively.

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“Nothing in the world is so incontinent as a man's accursed appetite.” (Homer, 962~927 B.C.)

“Excessive indulgence to others, especially to children, is, in fact, only self-indulgence under an alias.” (Augustus William Hare)

“Moderation has been created a virtue to limit the ambition of great men, and to console undistinguished people for their want of fortune and lack of merit.” (La Rochefoucauld)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Hitotsu yokereba mata futatsu.* (=The more you have, the more you want.)
2. One has eyes bigger than one's belly.

3. Much would have more.
4. Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. (Matthew 24,28)
5. Grasp all, lose all.
6. The pleasure of what we enjoy, is lost by coveting more.
7. Covetousness is always filling a bottomless vessel.

B-2

Civility costs nothing.

—You lose nothing by being polite.—

In this saying, Politeness or Courtesy can be used in place of Civility. Good manners and politeness cost little and are worth very much. Western people use the following expressions quite often: “Thank you,” “Please,” and “Excuse me.” For example, when they open the door of an office or a store to go in or out, and at the same time, somebody just comes after them..... they kindly keep the door open with their hand, and the other person says, “Thank you!” with a smile. This is good manners. But most Japanese pay little attention to people coming after them, and ignoring them, walk through the door without a word. Real courtesy is not to show mere formality to others but to treat them gently and considerately. The definition of a ‘gentleman’ is ‘a man who is chivalrous, well-mannered, and honourable (and of good birth or rank) — *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* — The writer believes that the word ‘gentleman’ means by implication, ‘gentle-hearted’ as one of the qualifications of a ‘gentleman’.

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“Knowing the meaning of ‘courtesy’ and ‘good manners’ is very necessary. It is, ‘like grace and beauty’, that which begets liking and an inclination to love one another at first sight.” (Montaigne)

“The great secret is not having bad manners or good manners of any other particular sort of manners, but having the same manners for all human souls.” (George Bernard Shaw)

“When music and courtesy are better understood and appreciated, there will be no war.” (Confucius)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Rei wa ourai o tattobu.* (=Courtesy between two persons should be exchanged sincerely.)
2. Courtesy on one side only does not last long.
3. Manners maketh a man.
4. There is nothing lost by civility.
5. The test of good manners is being able to put up pleasantly with bad manners.
6. The greater the man, the greater his courtesy.

B-3

Distance lends enchantment to the view.

—Things that are far away from you look better than those near you.—

When we get closer to a fine view, we may find it ugly, and that it no longer enchants us. This proverb can also apply to people, situations, things, etc; John Cunningham writes; “So various is the human mind; / Such are the frailties of mankind! / What at a distance charmed our eyes, / Upon attainment, droops, and dies.” When parents try to teach their child something, most of the time it seems to end in failure, because he knows his parents well, and will discover their weaknesses soon, and find fault with them. So it is difficult to make children respect their parents as teacher. On the other hand, parents are unlikely to pass a calm judgement on the education of their own child.

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“If you prefer illusions to realities, it is only because all decent realities have eluded you and left you in the lurch; or else your contempt for the world is mere hypocrisy and funk.” (George Santayana)

“When married people don’t get on, they can separate, but if they’re not married, it’s impossible. It’s a tie that only death can sever.” (Somerset Maugham)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Yome tōme kasa no uchi.* (=Every woman looks pretty when seen in the dark, at a distance, or under a bamboo hat.)
2. Hills which are far away look green (blue).
3. All cats are grey in the dark.
4. Distant fields look greener.
5. By lamplight every country wench seems handsome.
6. Never choose your women or your linen, by candlelight.
7. Far fowls have fair feathers.

B-4

Hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

—You should strive for the best possible outcome, but at the same time, guard against things going awry.—

You should be optimistic but ready to meet trouble and difficulties whenever they arise. If you are properly prepared, things will turn out better. The Greek dramatist Sophocles (495~406 B.C.) writes: “If you are out of trouble, watch for danger. / And when you live well, then consider your life / lest ruin take it unawares.” His philosophy can apply to our modern society as well. There are similar Japanese proverbs, such as: *Kahō wa nete mate.* (=Wait in bed for good luck), *Sonae areba urei nashi.* (=If you are well-prepared, you need worry about nothing). Life is full of surprises and

“Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the Present. It is thine.

Go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a manly heart.” (Longfellow)

“It is sadder to find the past again and find it inadequate to the present than it is to have it elude you and remain forever a harmonious conception of memory.” (F. Scott Fitzgerald)

« Related Sayings »

1. *Kojiki o mikka sureba yamerarenu.* (=Once you become a beggar for three days, you cannot give it up.)
2. Once a use and ever a custom.
3. Men do more things through habit than through reason.
4. Habits are at first cobwebs, at last cables.
5. Habit is a second nature.
6. Things past cannot be recalled.
7. Old sins cast long shadows.
8. The past always looks better than it was; it's pleasant only because it isn't here.
9. Give a dog a bad name and hang him.
10. A leopard never changes its spots.

B-6 The darkest hour is that before the dawn.

—When things seem at the worst, it may be a signal showing that they are beginning to get better.—

When you are in the depths of unhappiness, you cannot go down much lower, because you are at the bottom. This saying makes you strong enough to endure the wretched situation you are in. The important thing is that you should have the firm determination to get over the adversity by yourself. A Japanese proverb says that *Mio sutete koso ukabuse mo are.* (=After you are prepared for the worst, things get better). The English equivalent is “Fortune favours the bold.” But if you have no chance for improvement, what should you do? Don't complain about your situation, but console yourself by thinking that it might have been much worse; and wait and wait for a good chance: “Don't blame God for having created the tiger, but thank Him for not having given it wings.” (Indian proverb)

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“This is a terrible hour, but it is often that darkest point which precedes the rise of day.” (Charlotte Brontë)

“The year's at the spring / And day's at the morn; / Morning's at seven; / The hillside's dew-pearled; / The lark's on the wing; / The snail's on the thorn; / God's in his heaven — / All's right with the

world !” (Robert Browning)

“If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” (Shelley)

◀ Related Sayings ▶

1. *Kyūsureba tsūzu.* (=When you are placed in a fix, you can figure out some solution.)
2. The fiercer the storm, the sooner it’s over.
3. The longest day must have an end.
4. Time tames the strongest grief.

B-7 The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.

—It may take a long time to get your revenge on someone, but evil will always be punished in the end.—

It may be a slow and long process until justice is done; but this is inevitable. This saying has been quoted from the Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus: “The mills of the gods are late to grind, but they grind small.” (287 A.D.). The Chinese philosopher Lao-tze (600~517 B.C.) says: *Tenmō kai-kai, so-nishite morasazu.* (=Heaven’s net is coarse, but nothing can slip through it = God waits long but strikes in the end). Some people who have committed crimes are still at large; others do not break the law but commit crimes against humanity and cause suffering for many people. Why does God allow them to continue to commit crimes repeatedly?

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“Though God’s attributes are equal, yet His mercy is more attractive and pleasing in our eyes than His justice.” (Cervantes)

“God is dead: but considering the state the species Man is in, there will perhaps be caves for ages yet, in which His shadow will be shown.” (Nietzsche)

“It is never right to do wrong, to requite wrong, or, when we suffer evil, to defend ourselves by doing evil in return.” (Socrates, 469~399 B.C.)

◀ Related Sayings ▶

1. *Ten shiru, chi shiru, ware shiru, hito shiru.* (=Heaven and the earth know, you and I know.)
2. The day has eyes, the night has ears.
3. Crime doesn’t pay.
4. The truth will out.
5. Walls have ears.
6. All things are possible with God.

Category C

C-1 Circumstances alter cases.

—Appropriate measures are taken, depending on the circumstances.—

You are allowed to do unusual things in unusual situations. The last war shows the most typical example of this saying; if you commit the crime of intentionally killing a person in time of peace, you will be surely punished by law and might be given the death sentence, but even if you kill a great number of people in time of war, you are not punished; on the contrary, you will be awarded with honour and fame by your government. People, in wartime, were dedicated to the nation and were obliged to follow the way to devastation. But when the war ended, circumstances altered cases: what was the worst in wartime became the best, and hatred of the enemy changed to flattery, and vice versa. Such is war.

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“War, conflict, it’s all business. One murder makes a villain. Millions a hero. Numbers sanctify.” (Charlie Chaplin)

“There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

“What a man is depends on his character; but what he does, and what we think of what he does, depends on his circumstances.” (George Bernard Shaw)

“Every honourable action has its proper time and season, or rather it is this propriety or observance which distinguishes an honourable action from its opposite.” (Agesilaus, 445~361 B.C.)

« Related Sayings »

1. Water is a boon in the desert, but a drowning man curses it.
2. The gods send nuts to those who have no teeth.
3. New circumstances, new controls.
4. One man’s loss is another man’s gain.

C-2 Comparisons are odious.

—Comparing one thing or person with another upsets and offends.—

This is an old and often quoted proverb that is found in many European countries. The proverb dates back to the fourteenth century and is similar to the French proverb: “*Comparaisons sont haineuses*” (= Comparisons are hateful). John Lydgate, English poet, was the first to introduce this proverb to the English people in 1430. Later Shakespeare used this saying to humorous effect in *Much Ado About Nothing*: “Comparisons are odorous.” When you discipline your son for stealing, you should only let him know that stealing is a crime and that he must not commit it again. Don’t

3. Time works wonders.
4. Everything is good in its season.
5. Desires are nourished by delays.

C-4 If you don't make mistakes you don't make anything.

—If you are not prepared to risk making mistakes, you are unlikely to achieve anything of real value.—

This proverb appeared first in 1896: “It’s only those who do nothing that make no mistakes, I suppose.” (Joseph Conrad,1857~1924,English novelist). The only way not to make mistakes is to avoid trying to do anything. Mistakes are part of your life. As long as you live, you cannot avoid them. This proverb can be used to console someone who has made a mistake, or to encourage someone to try to do something. Compared with Western people, the Japanese are more reserved and bashful. They hate to make mistakes in public, and so they tend to be passive and self-restrained, which is a great enemy to their progress and development. There is a similar saying: “He who never fails will never grow rich.”

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“A life spent in making mistakes is not only more honourable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.” (George Bernard Shaw)

“If you shut your door to all errors, truth will be shut out.” (Rabindranath Tagore)

“He that has much to do will do something wrong.” (Samuel Johnson)

“The most powerful cause of error is the war existing between the senses and reason.” (Pascal)

« Related Sayings »

1. To err is human, to forgive divine.
2. If there were no failures, there would be no successes.
3. He is the best general who makes the fewest mistakes.
4. One learns by failing.
5. Homer sometimes nods.

C-5 If you don't use it, you lose it.

—If you don't practice, your muscles will be weakened.—

This saying is beginning to be popular. It is certainly true that muscles are strengthened by exercise. Walking, jogging, running, or playing sports gets the muscles working, the heart beating faster, and the blood whizzing through the arteries. You can have a feeling of well-being during



“Who will not judge him worthy to be robbed / That sets his doors wide open to a thief, / And shows the felon where his treasure lies?” (Ben Jonson)

“There are several good protections against temptations, but the surest is cowardice.” (Mark Twain)

“All men are tempted. There is no man that lives that can’t be broken down, provided it is the right temptation, put in the right spot.” (Henry Ward Beecher)

“Honesty is the best policy; but he who is governed by that maxim is not an honest man.” (Richard Whately)

« Related Sayings »

1. The hole invites the thief.
2. A golden key can open any door.
3. He that shows his purse, longs to be rid of it.
4. The righteous man sins before an open door.
5. He who avoids temptation avoids sin. (Spanish proverb)

C-7 Poverty is not a crime.

—It is not shameful to be poor.—

This proverb is used to tell people who are poor that poverty is not something to be ashamed of, or, by someone poor, as a response to people who treat the poor as if they ought to be ashamed. This saying is also found in varying forms: “Poverty is the mother of crime.”; “Poverty is no sin, but it is terribly inconvenient.”; “Poverty is no disgrace.” Unemployment has been increasing throughout the world because of the world-wide recession these days. The main responsibility for poverty rests not with individuals but with their government. When we are reduced to extreme poverty, we are liable to fail in health and lose our energy to do almost anything. We cannot have confidence in ourselves, and we even lose our dignity. Poverty is a great enemy to a happy and peaceful life.



“It is easy enough to say that poverty is no crime. No; if it were, men wouldn’t be ashamed of it. It’s a blunder, though, and is punished as such.” (Jerome K. Jerome)

“Security, the chief pretence of civilisation, cannot exist where the worst of danger, the danger of poverty, hangs over everyone’s head.” (George Bernard Shaw)

“Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness; it certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable and others extremely difficult.” (Samuel Johnson)

“There is always more misery among the lower classes than there is humanity in the higher.” (Victor Hugo)

◀ Related Sayings ▶

1. Poverty breeds strife.
2. Poverty is an enemy to good manners.
3. When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window.
4. Poverty is not a shame, but being ashamed of it is.
5. Empty sacks will never stand upright.
6. The worth of a thing is best known by the want of it.
7. When we have gold, we are in fear; when we have none we are in danger.

III Conclusion

The 21 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 a 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 abbreviated forms.
- (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, or of famous writers like Shakespeare and others, also of philosophers, great people, and so on, to say nothing of some ordinary people. English proverbs are greatly influenced by early and modern Western culture and civilisation. Japanese proverbs are greatly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Oriental & Western culture and civilisation.
- (7) The 21 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.

(本学客員教授＝英語担当)

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