The Japanese and Baha'i Concepts of Unity

Akiko Hayashi

The Japanese culture has always cherished "unity," as symbolized in the expression "land of unity—Japan." The author examined the historical background, characteristics and reality of the Japanese concept of unity while comparing it with the Baha'i concept of unity, the ultimate goal of which in this day is unity of humankind. The society based on Japanese unity is on the surface very calm and orderly; however, there is, behind the scene, oppression of people, restriction of speech and action, and pressure to conform to the norm. Individuals are lost in the sight of the group, while individuality is negated for the sake of the collectivity. On the other hand, a unique culture has developed out of cherishing tradition. The Japanese concept of unity was one of the measures to maintain order in society. The Baha'i concept of unity, on the other hand, is to bring unity to the entire humankind through the machinery of international institutions while respecting and developing individual abilities through acquisition of high spiritual ideals and morality. There is a vast difference between the two types of unity. Contemporary Japan is going through the crumbling of the traditional unity, resulting in social unrest and unease. Introduction of the Baha'i ideals would be a saving factor to bring forth the spiritual pillars of the Japanese society.