

The Way of Tea and Japanese Moral Education

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Beauty is a human capability that is necessary for personal and social development. Consequently, each individual has the capacity to recognize, appreciate, and create beauty. Moral behavior is one expression of spiritual beauty. Every culture has criterion that is used to define beauty and these criterion are passed down through education—both formal and informal. The tradition of The Way of Tea has been instrumental in both defining and teaching standards of Japanese beauty as well as moral behavior. This presentation will offer examples that illustrate the relationships between the Japanese tradition of The Way of Tea, beauty and moral education. The focus is Japan; however, the universal human concepts apply to the generality of humankind.

The history of the Way of Tea (known as *chanoyu*, *chado* and *sado*) in Japan is a long one. The earliest rituals involving tea came to Japan from China as a part of Buddhist meditation in the 6th century. As the Tea Ceremony was developed, it became more and more extravagant, focusing on the utensils that had been adopted from China rather than on the spiritual aspect. In opposition to this trend, a new style of Tea that was partly æsthetic and partly moral appeared in the fifteenth century.

The roots of today's major schools can be traced to Tea Master Sen No Rikyu (1522-1591). Rikyu's teachings led not only to the full development of *Sado*, but to the development of new forms in architecture and gardens, fine and applied arts, as well. Over the course of later generations, the tea ceremony was refined and acquired a more Japanese rather than Chinese aesthetic. The sons of Rikyu's grandson Sotan founded their own schools: Ura Senke for commoners, Omote Senke for aristocrats and Mushanokoji Senke, which highly values the principle of *wabi*. *Wabi* can be described as a moral and aesthetic principle which emphasizes a quiet life free of worldly concerns. The Ura Senke school has been the most progressive. It created the style of tea using tables and chairs, and established tea courses in schools--which enabled women to participate in *Sado* for the first time. Today, it encourages cultural exchange abroad through the tea ceremony.

Sado and Beauty

Beauty, a fundamental element of The Way of Tea, is a human capability which is necessary for personal and social development. Each individual has the capacity to recognize, appreciate and create beauty. Spirituality is also a fundamental element of *Sado*. The Tea ceremony has always been related to religion. That the spirit of *Sado* and Zen should be identical has been the ideal of the Tea ceremony. One meaning of the character Zen, 禪, is 'contemplation'. *Sado* is a way of practicing Zen in the world of beauty.

Sado celebrates the uniqueness of the moment: the guests invited, the season, the calligraphy scroll hanging on the wall, the flowers on display, the utensils, the food served before the tea and so on. The utensils selected for *Sado* were selected, not because of their original purpose, but for their quietness, depth, simplicity and purity. The Tea masters believed that if we want to see a thing well, we must use it well. The most treasured Tea bowls, today, those selected by early Tea masters, are almost all examples of folk craft. They were the cheapest ware of their day, having naturally little or no decoration, and of course they were unsigned. In the Bahá'í Dispensation, the reflection of spiritual beauty in crafts is encouraged, and craftsmanship has been elevated to

the level of worship.

To live with beauty in our lives is the genuine Way of Tea. Pattern and irregularity are fundamental aspects of beauty. There is a profound relationship between crafts and pattern. A pattern is a picture of the essence of an object, an object's life; its beauty is that of life. The maker of a pattern draws the essence of the thing, seen with his own heartbeat, life to life. There is beauty in irregularity and natural imperfection. As the precise, perfect and static carry no overtones, and admit no freedom, nothing perfect and regular was selected for use in The Ceremony. (Yanagi, 1989, p. 114-15) Applied to society, the concepts of pattern and irregularity can be thought of as unity and beauty in diversity.

... each flower, each tree, each fruit, beside being beautiful in itself, brings out by contrast the qualities of the others, and shows to advantage the qualities of the others, and shows to advantage the special loveliness of each and all. Thus should it be among the children of men! The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony. . . .
(Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 53)

There is a hidden beauty in a certain love of roughness. This beauty is referred to by the adjectives: *wabi*, *sabi* and *shibui*, which come out of a background of Zen thinking and have a pervasive religious flavor of modesty, restraint and inwardness. Abdu'l Bahá tells us that modesty is a virtue that causes spiritual awakening which is needed in order to transform society:

Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility, that ye will cause others to be awakened. (Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 203)

Sado and Moral Education

The Monbukagakusho (MEXT) has placed great importance on the teaching of moral education.

Proper instruction for moral development should be given, not only in the hours for Moral Education, but also in the hours for each Subject and Special Activities, in conformity with their respective characteristics. (MEXT, 1989, p. 1)

Six specific objectives of moral education are:

- to foster a spirit of respect for human dignity and awe of life
- to nurture those who endeavor to inherit and develop traditional culture, and create a culture that is rich in individuality
- to nurture those who endeavor to form and develop a democratic society and state
- to nurture those who can contribute to realizing a peaceful international society
- to nurture those who can make independent decisions
- to foster a sense of morality (MEXT, 1989, p. 105)

The traditional principles of *Sado* are fundamental to moral behavior and social well-being, and are directly related to and supportive of the Japanese Moral Education objectives.

和 Harmony and Peace
敬 Reverence/Respect
清 Purity

☯ Tranquility/Quietness/Serenity

In the “seven secrets” of tea, Rikyu used the tea ceremony as a parable to show how a moral life should be lived, and relationships should be kept.

1. *Make the tea so that your guest will enjoy it.*
Don't lose sight of your goal.
2. *Place charcoal so that it will boil water.*
Management of resources for maximum efficiency and minimum effort insures a harmonious, productive life.
3. *Arrange the flower in a way suited to it.*
We should learn to enjoy things as they are in nature. And, we should relate to people (as well as to things) as they are, rather than the way we wish they were.
4. *Keep the tea room cool in summer and warm in winter.*
Keep in harmony with nature, and do not try to alter the cycles of life.
5. *Be ahead of time.*
Being ahead of time is often preferable to rushing to accomplish as much as possible.
6. *Prepare an umbrella even if no rain falls.*
Life is always changing, therefore the best way to live is to expect change and embrace it.
7. *Attune your hearts to the other guests.*
Live harmoniously. Knowing how to give and how to receive are *both* important.

I believe that moral behavior is an expression of spiritual beauty, and that everyone possesses the potential to practice moral behavior through the development of universal virtues and values. Beauty is essentially a matter of values. If values are confused, if there are no standards, if valueless things are admitted among the valued, judgments of beauty and morality lose their basis.

The revelation of beauty and the revelation of religions possess and radiate solemnity, warmth, purity, and peacefulness. “If we want to realize in ourselves the communion of love and reverence and practice cleanliness and sincerity, we must be immaculate in spirit.” (Yanagi, 1989, p. 188) Religious teachings—the sources of morality—instruct us in how we should live in society, and construct a healthy, just, and beautiful world.

We enjoin on you once again chastity, faithfulness, godliness, sincerity, and purity.
(Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 48)

To dwell in a peaceful land, with right desires in one's heart—this is the greatest blessing.
(Buddha, The Peace Bible, 1986, p. 2)

Sado is one way of achieving the self-discipline to acquire and practice virtues that will lead to universal peace.

Numerous statements published by the Bahá'í International Community propose a non-sectarian yet spiritual approach to moral education and the unity of humankind. Such an approach requires a balance between a study of one's own cultural heritage and an exploration of those universal qualities that distinguish the entire human race.

The thinking of the present Grand Tea Master, Hounsai, is in harmony with this idea. His

dream is to show as many people as possible, all over the world, that peacefulness can be found through a bowl of tea.

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