

Declaration of the Spirit of Japanese People

Since ancient times, people in Japan have lived in a close relationship with nature. Lying in the Asian monsoon zone, the Japanese archipelago which stretches from tropical to cold zones has often been affected by typhoons in summer and heavy snowfalls in winter. Because of this geography, people engaging in fishery and agriculture have faced severe natural conditions. Nature has at times given people blessings, and at other times hardships. It has aroused a feeling of awe and nurtured a unique mindset and sensitivity in people.

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, many people experienced enormous suffering and grief because they had suddenly lost their loved ones, homes and hometowns. We felt powerless in the face of nature's force. However, we were deeply moved by the courage of the afflicted people. Even in such an extreme situation, they never became selfish. Rather, they maintained a sense of gratitude and consideration toward others, and cooperated with one another. Such dignified and never-give-up attitudes have left a deep impression as well as sympathy in the minds of people all over the world. Such spirit is the very essence of living and should be passed on to future generations.

On the other hand, nature has also presented us with beautiful environments to grow in and learn from. Our ancestors carefully perceived the changing of the seasons, accepted subtleties of human relationships, and cultivated unique aesthetics and traditional culture. Recognizing the essentially transitory quality and weakness of human beings, we have warned people against having an arrogant and ostentatious attitude, and brought such an idea to a higher cultural dimension. The spirit of "*wabi-sabi*" where intrinsic beauty and new value could be found in a seemingly old and humble object, a warning against waste like "*shimatsu-suru*" (being frugal), and a mental state of simply knowing what is enough are some of the traditional philosophies nurtured in Japan.

Even a simple procedure like preparing tea in a tea pot and drinking a daily cup of tea has a deep meaning. While we wait for the tea to become the ideal temperature, we can put the quiet time to good use. Tea is not only for quenching our thirst, but also for organizing our minds. Practices like these are based on traditional Japanese wisdom that aims to bring about an ideal state of mind with clear mental focus.

The National Cultural Festival in Kyoto is soon coming to a close. Based on the theme, "Ready your mind" which focuses on the state of individual mind, we are now seeing a big psychological ripple spreading in ourselves.

Amid drastic social changes happening around us, haven't we lost sight of something very important while only pursuing convenience and comfort? Haven't we become so arrogant as to believe that we could control nature? Moreover, haven't we forgotten the limitation of human beings?

For this Cultural Festival we have received 5,128 messages from all over Japan. Taking these messages seriously, we strongly believe as follows:

The most important thing of all is that we have to keep asking the following question: "What is the essential spirit of the Japanese people that we want future generations to inherit?"