

A Future for Japanese Women

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Do you think women play active roles in Japan? Although the Japanese government has promised to give women more opportunities to play a more active role in Japan, this change has yet to be seen.

Why is Japan behind the West with regard to social advances for women? One of the reasons could be a throwback to the patriarchal system from the pre-war era. According to the laws and customs of that time, men played the authoritative role in the household. They made every decision and women were expected to obey them. This gave men the ability to control the lives of women. Japan's patriarchal history has continued to influence its society today.

However, after the war Japan was placed under the occupation of the Alliance National Military led by the United States of America. This made Japan a democracy and as a result, more attention was given to women's rights. Accordingly, a ground rule was established under the constitution, stating "Women's rights have to be based on personal dignity and emphasize essential quality." Unfortunately, while many years have passed since this new rule was introduced, Japanese society remains resistant to change. For instance, just three years ago, the percentage of women in Swedish parliament was 45.3% whereas the percentage of women in Japanese parliament was at a much lower rate of 5.9%.

According to the Global Gap Report 2014, which shows gender equality between men and women in four key areas: health, education, economy and politics, Japan is ranked 104th out of 142 countries. The rate of female participation in Japan's labour force is only 63%, compared to 85% for men. Standing at 79th globally, it has one of the lowest female labour participation rates among OECD countries. Among the employed, 35% of women are in

part-time employment compared to 10% of men.

I'm sure there are many women with professional skills and ability who want to continue working after marriage or childbirth. However, 60% of Japanese women stop working after the birth of their first child. As I mentioned earlier, traditionally Japanese men are hesitant to be involved in housework or raising a child. These duties usually fall on women and thus many are forced to choose between marriage and career.

In addition, the inadequate child care support adds to the problems faced by women in Japan. For example, there are many children who are unable to get a place in authorised nursery schools. Many mothers that want to continue working are left with little choice but to stay home and take care of their children. The lack of nursery schools is just one of the obstacles that women face in the pursuit of a career.

I believe in unity and equal opportunity. Women should be given equal chances as men in the workplace. Also, I think it is important for men and women to share household and childcare duties within their families. As a high school girl, I hope for a future where I can experience marriage and childbirth. However, my future - our future - remains under threat unless the present situation changes. Therefore, I strongly believe the younger generation needs to think about our future and take action to improve women's standing in Japanese society. Let's think now about a future where women can proudly stand shoulder to shoulder with men.