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ASIANISM

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# **ASIANISM**

**BY DR. MASATARO SAWAYANAGI**

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# ASIANISM

BY DR. MASATARO SAWAYANAGI

**ASIANISM**, as the word suggests, is not quite the same as cosmopolitanism: it is not so broad; neither is it so narrow as nationalism. The European Peace Conference discusses such big problems as the elimination of race prejudice, and the League of Nations, but Asianism is not so ambitious as to include this. It involves principles that refer to the races of Asia only. It does not, however, conflict in any way with cosmopolitanism or any of the principles of humanity; it is only a process feeling after certain high ideals.

Nationalism is concerned mainly with the things that pertain to certain countries, and cosmopolitanism deals with what pertains to all countries, but between these two comes racialism; and true nationalism can be understood only as we understand racialism. There are various opinions as to the meaning and significance of race. The Japanese race, for instance, includes the Yamato, the Korean, the Ainu and the Formosan races, yet not all of these belong to the Yamato race. The Csecho-Slovak races which has recently become independent in accordance with the principle of race-self-determination arose in Bohemia from the Austrian people, but in numbers it is much smaller than the ordinary nation or state. Thus race may be used sometimes in a broader or narrower sense. In the same way it is quite consistent to speak of all Asiatics as a race. In the same way we speak of the European race or the African race. Though the Europeans are spoken of as a race there are many conflicting differences among them and they often make war on one another; yet they are sufficiently alike in blood, manners and customs and language to be called a race.

While the definition of race is thus left rather vague that of nationality is more clear; and any nation that can assert its independence and establish stable government is entitled to become a nation, however small. In the same way the Japanese race is marked off by its possessions and territories, and its national barriers are clearly laid down. China, too, with but small claim to unity, is yet a nation with its boundaries. Race on the other hand is different from nationality. There are sometimes many races included under one nationality, and sometimes one race covers the whole country. At times we find several minor races composing one large race, so that the meaning of the term race become still more difficult to define. It may perhaps be defined as a group of people who have a common history, with the same manners, customs, thought and language. Races used to be estimated on a basis of anthropology and on physiological distinctions, such as the colour of the skin, the nature of the hair. The broadest mode of classifying races is according to colour, such as yellow, black, brown or white. Racialism is based on this classification, and independently of nationalism.

In England and America individualism rises above nationalism but in Germany nationalism is paramount, all education being based on it. Yet neither England nor America are lacking in very pronounced nationalistic ideas. Such words as jingoism and chauvinism express the patriotic spirit of western nations. It means one's country right or wrong. Other countries are inferior. This represents the extreme expression of the spirit of nationalism. Before the war nations were divided by

geographical lines, and races and nations faced each other across defined material boundaries; but thought has no boundary, and when thought reaches a certain degree of development it is not content to remain within prescribed borders; it goes out into all the earth. What is true in any nation thus becomes universal. In China they regard all men as brothers; and Christianity and Buddhism say that love unites all races and binds them together in a federation of the world. It does not seem to mean equality of races but unity of races, establishing one big world-nation. The practical working out of this though has led various historical characters, like Charles of Greece and Napoleon and now the Kaiser to enforce the idea. It is not the idea of a hero merely but an idea natural to mankind. Cosmopolitanism is natural of human beings, as the highest ideal toward which man can aspire. Even in nations such unity is always desired for the domestic administration.

As civilization advances cosmopolitanism takes greater hold upon the mind of man. The League of Nations is but one more example of this, and offers one of the biggest problems with which the human mind has had to deal. The same idea has been practised in a lesser way among various races and nationalities for a hundred years or more. We see it in international leagues, in the universal postal union, the Red Cross Society and the Churches to some extent. While races and nations are talking of the possibilities of the future, whether of peace or war, my mind runs toward racialism as the solution of the difficulty.

While thought may jump from one extreme to another human activity can never afford to do so. Nations cannot change from extreme nationalism to extreme cosmopolitanism at a bound: they must pass first through a period of racialism. Asia has to go through its time of Asianism and Europe through its period of Europeanism, and perhaps America will finish with its Americanism too. All are trying to understand and to be understood. Misunderstanding is bad for trade and for the spirit too. That it does not cost us much thought is no sign of a condition to be proud of or satisfied with. There is even misunderstanding between the races of Asia, and this should give us profound concern and regret. Japan is of kindred race with China and India, and they are further united by religious and social bonds. Is it not very strange that we are trying to curry favour with western nations that have little in common with us and ignoring our Asiatic kindred who have so much in common with us? Not that we should be averse to western nations but that we should be still more anxious to understand and know our neighbours of Asia. We cannot admire those that despise their own relations. The attitude toward the Japanese delegates at the European Peace Conference shows how western people are disposed to regard us as merely orientals and therefore foreigners, as compared with western delegates. Even unintentionally our race isolates us. The western delegates have so much more in common with one another. Perhaps, after all, this only natural.

It is hardly necessary to say that relations are not always the most friendly; and even people of the same nationality are not always brotherly, as for example, the Japanese and the *eta*, the Americans and the negroes, the Russians and the Jews. Thus the freedom and equality of men, about which nations are wont to boast, does not often prevail in practice. Certainly it cannot be right for Japanese to be exclusive or rude to other oriental peoples, and imitate western nations in treatment of the Jews. While disapproving of the discrimination practised among western nations we must hasten to correct our own errors in this direction. No nation today is perfectly consistent in regard to equality of treatment among races. So long as there is undue distinction of classes there will be undue discrimination of races.

The spirit of democracy seems to be spreading over the entire world; but even in England and America, where the doctrine had birth and where it is most admired, is there any tendency to avoid extreme nationalism? This is clear from the proceedings of the Peace Conference. The delegates of each nation are busy enforcing and maintaining their interests. It is obvious that great patriotism is not the monopoly of the Japanese. Among us democracy is also raising its voice and threatening to weaken our patriotism. But if my idea of racialism or Asianism were accepted and acted upon this untoward tendency would be corrected. Such a principle is essential to strengthen the patriotic spirit of the Japanese and to defend the security of the Empire.

Since the Meiji Restoration Japan has gone forward with leaps and bounds and become a great country, a marvel to the whole world, now reckoned as one of the five great Powers. Japan must now see to it that she holds this position permanently. She must not allow her success to bring contentment and ease. Strong ambition must be cherished and fostered to go on to further triumphs. Our goal must be Asianism as the most important step on our way toward cosmopolitanism. Japan is the most advanced of all the countries of Asia, and she is conscious of her responsibility toward to the rest of Asia. The peace of the Orient rests with Japan. She cannot be content to remain just as she is. Unless she is ready to pursue development still further in every branch of national activity she will not be able to realize her ideal of Asianism. Her consciousness of responsibility for this great task should unite the nation as one man in pursuit of her main object, for only thus can it be attained.

Western nations are naturally afraid of orientals. The opposition of Premier Hughes of Australia shows this. When the Kaiser invented the "yellow peril" bogey he unconsciously confessed western fear of Asia. This fear is a nightmare at the heart of western nations. If something is not done it may some day lead to a war between the East and the West; and the oriental people must be prepared for any such emergency. A federation of all the races of Asia will be the best way to do this: in other words, we must realize Asianism. But, as I have always said, the first step in this direction is to realize racialism.