

JENESYS Programme 2008

Reflection

Serena Kwok

Jockey Club Ti-I College

This trip has been a memorable and once of a life time experience for me. I get to experience the authentic Japanese culture and interact with the locals. The most inspiring part of the trip for me is way of thinking and the sense of belonging that Japanese possess, not only to their country, but also to the world as a global citizen. My observation in this trip can be sorted into 3 aspects: environmental protection, prevention of natural disaster like earthquake and preservation of culture.

On environmental protection, it is well known that Japan is one of the most successful countries that have been carrying out a comprehensive recycling programme and environmental education. However, it is in this trip that I realized how recycling has become a part of every Japanese' life. I even saw a 6-year-old helping his mum to sort out rubbish! During my home stay, my host mum showed me the calendar distributed to them by their community which shows exactly what type of garbage will be collected everyday and clear definition of every type of garbage. This kind of comprehensive programme need tremendous amount of effort and determination. This cannot be done without the sense of belonging that Japanese possess. Also, in Japan, you can see green plants everywhere. For example, on the sides of the roads, they will plant trees and on the empty lands in the city, they will develop it into a green park for the public. The land sure could have been more economically used, but they choose to provide a "green" environment for the citizens!

For prevention of natural disaster, I am able to see how Japanese remember the lessons that history taught them and how they focus on a certain problem until they solved it. During our visit to the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution and the Kobe city Resources Recycle Center, I found out that a lot of staffs are volunteers and most of them are retired. I talked to one of the retired volunteers in the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution, and he told me he wanted to let the next generation remember the earthquake in Kobe that happened 13 years ago and to let them know the importance of disaster reduction. Most importantly, he wanted to pass along his own experience and let people know they should treasure the things around them before it's too late. I am really moved by his devotion when I heard this! At the same time, I realized if Hong Kong people or elderly would do more this kind of work, they would not always say their retiring life is boring. This cultural difference can again be explained by the sense of belonging.

On cultural preservation, it is not hard to spot traditional buildings and temples right next to the new skyscrapers in the heart of the city. The land value of Tokyo would not be lower than that in Hong Kong, but they choose to preserve their cultural buildings for their next generation! Also, Japanese students have to learn 茶道,花道 and 書道, which are the special culture of Japan, when they are in primary school. From all these, we can see that Japan is very keen to preserve its culture and history for the next generation. If the preservation work is not carried out, our children can only read about these in textbooks and materials but would not be able to see them with their own eyes.

However, I must say, there is still one aspect that Japanese have not yet been able to do better than Hong Kong, that is language standard. I think the overall language standard of Hong Kong people is still higher than Japanese. For example, in a hotel in Kobe, I asked to buy some stamps for postcards and I asked the clerk to mail it for me. It took me several minutes and a lot of body language to make the clerk understand what I am talking about. But it is a hotel! Staffs are supposed to be able to speak, if not fluent, at least basic English. So that is the thing I think Japan has a lot of rooms for improvement.

Overall, I hope the things I encountered in the trip will be the things that I learn from in the future. I also hope to continue the friendship we built in Japan, and carry out the mission of acting as a bridge between Japan and Hong Kong . Hopefully I could bring the good things of Japan back to Hong Kong, at the same time realizing the good things of Hong Kong and combine them together, creating a brighter future for Hong Kong.