
The role and the evolution of the Japanese Women in the civil society

From the blind obedience to man to the promoters of change, the Japanese women continue their battle for a recently conquered legal, political, economic and social space, beyond their secular role as responsible for the transmission of traditional values.

The traditional visions about the Japanese women;

"Were educated to annul themselves as people and serve others in a situation of total subjugation." Her elegant manners and preparation were aimed at delighting the father and later the husband, the father-in-law and the older brother-in-law. This was especially noticeable in the middle and upper classes, which trained young women in art, poetry, music, dance and literature. (Rodriguez, 2008)

Throughout history, the difficult geographic and climatic conditions of Japan have developed a deep-rooted sense of community and of the confinement of society in its own misfortunes, hidden under the shell of strength and pride. The Japanese woman, victim of that education, was in turn transmitting to her descendants the repressive values and, frequently, when becoming a mother-in-law, she passed from victim to executioner. (Yazawa, 1993)

We can see the traditional vision of Japanese women was very limited against the women, but this change about the vision of the women in Japan was possible, thanks to the phenomenon of globalization, which can be understood how that the Globalization is not just an "out there" phenomenon. It refers not only to the emergence of large-scale world systems, but to transformations in the very texture of everyday life. It is an "in here" phenomenon, affecting even intimacies of personal identity. To live in a world where the image of Nelson Mandela is more familiar than the face of one's next door neighbor is to move in quite different contexts of social action from those that prevailed previously. Globalization invades local contexts of action but does not destroy them; on the contrary, new forms of local cultural autonomy, the demand for local cultural identity and self-expression, are causally bound up with globalizing processes. (Giddens, 1995, p. 5)

When started the revolution of the Japanese Women, in what part of the history the role of the women changed, in part was because thanks of the phenomenon of the globalization the global social movements spread for everywhere for example during the decade of the seventies, in full economic boom, when the Japanese women began to have a real role in the development of

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the country. Not only because there was a massive influx of women into the labor market, but also because the market recognized them as an important consumer capacity: as the chiefs of their homes and as workers, but how was possible this change of ideas and the new mentality of the Japanese Women it could be because during the years of prosperity had allowed tens of thousands of Japanese women to study abroad or travel for months in Europe and the United States, putting them in contact with other cultures, more open societies and different female action of guidelines. (Higuera, 2009)

However, it was with the prick of the real estate bubble in the early nineties, and with the economic crisis that hit Japan throughout the decade, when the "revolution" began. The crisis caused the restructuring of the workforce of companies. Dozens of thousands of executives lost their jobs, hundreds of thousands of men who had believed in the companies and never conceived change of employment and betrayed their business loyalty were on the street. The trauma was terrible. Increased the rate of suicides and many men, embarrassed to find themselves unemployed, choose not to return to their homes and get lost in the swarming of the men "without roof".

The Japanese women Forced or not by events, they took a step forward. As a workforce, they were much more flexible because they had almost always been in the background, with temporary jobs. In addition, the difficulties that the Japanese women suffer, especially the degrading and frequent sexual harassment, had made their change of employment almost a habit.

The Law as Agent of Change in the role of Japanese women

The Constitution promulgated after the Meiji Restoration did not guarantee equality of the sexes. The Civil Code still considered wives almost incapable of managing a property, an inheritance or parental authority over their children, although the reforms of 1898 gave them a certain legal capacity. Only after the Second World War, the legal situation changed drastically, at least on paper. The 1946 Constitution recognized the equality of all citizens without discrimination based on race, creed, sex, social status or lineage. (Higuera, 2009)

All this has motivated the late appearance and the scarce rootedness in Japan of the feminist and liberalizing movements of women as well as the vindication of equal rights.

Currently, since the Equal Opportunities Law, enacted in 1985, the Maternal Leave Act of 1992, and the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence, of 2001, the Japanese women are as legally protected as the European ones or the North American. In practice, however, there is still a long way to go, as evidenced by the fact that none of the first two laws includes a penalty for companies in case they fail to comply.

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Which are the main challenges for the Japanese women in the XXI century? They are about the sexual harassment, the conditions of work and the recognized of equality and equity with the men in Japan, if it is true the laws mentioned before put in a better position the status of the women, still lack many improve about of the Women Rights.

The historian and official of the City Council of Tokyo Masae Wada argues about one of the great evils that afflict the Japanese Women:

"Many resort to public oppositions to avoid falling prey to sexual harassment" that "invariably" suffer in private enterprise, although in the public they do not get rid of the limitations in promotions if they do not win the "sympathy" of the boss. According to Wada, "the worst is small businesses" and the most harassing, men above 40 years. "Several friends have suffered sexual abuse. They trusted that later their bosses would leave them in peace, but it was not like that," he said in an interview. Many women put an end to this ordeal by changing companies. Although the laws protect them, there are very few who dare to resort to them. "Now we are talking about this problem among ourselves," said Masae. "Some are even able to say when they leave the company that they do because they cannot stand the harassment of a certain boss, but I do not know of any who have reported it. That goes against Japanese culture that requires women's discretion first and foremost. "The only child and mother of a single child, at 40 years of age, Masae said that on more than one occasion she dealt with her father about the sexual harassment without being able to understand it: "For him it is simply a normal behavior of the man and not understands that it can bother a woman, or that it can be described as harassment." (Higuera, 2009)

We can see how the ideology and idiosyncrasy of the Japanese women have changed through of the history since the old vision about the role of Japanese women in the antiquity until the new vision, thanks for the social global movements.

Social Global Movements

The first movement about the feminism in the modern Japan, many sociologists consider that was the Magazine *Bluestocking*. (Buckley, 1997) (Known in Japan this magazine as *Seito*)

This magazine would serve as a tool for women's empowerment for Japanese women of the time. It dealt with subjects that were morally sensitive to society, such as abortion or sexuality. This was the differentiating element of *Seito* with respect to other women's magazines of the time. This literary society was made up of socialist, communist and anarchist women, intellectuals and political activists, who in the end lost even their own lives to defend rights that they believed were fundamental and that had been taken away by the mere fact of being women.

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As the country developed, the woman saw her rights shrinking despite Western influences on the Japanese Constitution. Establishing a strictly patriarchal and paternalistic social regime, where the values of women were not recognized, but it was clear the position of these women as a figure subject to man.

How is mentioned before the second and the third moment about the feminist movement, was in the decade of seventies, first with the economic boom in Japan and the possibility of many Japanese Women to get out for all world and see how the women lived in Europe and America, in a third moment during the decade of nineties with the prick of the real estate bubble in the early nineties, and with the economic crisis that hit Japan throughout the decade, when was the "revolution" began.

Since the feminist movements in Japan, today they still want to break that false myth through new policies that encourage the incorporation of women in the workplace, delaying the age of marriage, because this is no longer essential and is not a priority for modern Japanese women.

However, another of the great current struggles revolves around work and family conciliation. On the one hand, the incorporation of women to work has been achieved, but the great management positions continue in the hands of men, and also the famous phenomenon of the salaryman, that is already oppressed by the system of work, now the Japanese woman who is in that same working world also suffers from those same working conditions and also is necessary add the sexual harassment, hence the reasons why the current feminist movements in Japan demand policies of labor conciliation, gender and harassment. (Higuera, 2009)

One of the most famous and recent Social Global Movement about the feminist movement is the "Me too".

How was the origin of the movement of "Me too", it is necessary go back to 2006, when Tarana Burke, an Afro-American social activist, decided to create a campaign under this name as a way to support those who had experienced any form of sexual violence, but how was the impact of this movement in the Japan society and more important with the Japanese women.

Before exploring how affected the movement or if improved the social conditions of the Japanese women, is necessary see how this movement became in global, the movement became a global initiative after the actress Alyssa Milano published a tweet that asked people who had been harassed or sexually abused to respond with a "Me too", followed by the tweet, the actress wrote "Me too"

"Suggested by a friend: "if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote "Me too." as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem." (The

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Guardian, 2017)

The true is that this movement in japan did not have many resonance in the past and today, between the Japanese women, the most relevant declaration or better said the only face in japan about this movement is Shiori Ito , she said;

“That two years ago she had been raped by the influential journalist Noriyuki Yamaguchi, former head of the Japanese office of the Japanese TV channel TBS and biographer of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Yamaguchi took her to his hotel when after having dinner and a few drinks he lost consciousness - corroborated by the security cameras and the taxi driver who drove them there - where he woke up hours later with him over her, she naked and in pain, after a "traumatic and humiliating" investigation in which the agents told her that the rapes are "things that happen often, but difficult to verify" and during which she was made to recreate the aggression with a life-size mannequin while she was being photographed, the arrest warrant arrived, the arrest was never made. The then head of the criminal investigation division of the Tokyo police ordered that he be arrested and the prosecution withdrew all charges alleging lack of evidence. Yamaguchi defends that he did not do anything illegal and that sex was consented” (The New York Times, 2017)

How we can see, the problem in the Japanese Society about the role between the men and women is in relation with behaviors as the sexual harassment against the women, this kind of situations happens for the politics of segregation about the women and the idea of the role of the women in the society, example of these policies are, the idea when the women is pregnant is necessary that she resign at his work because she needs take care his family and his child's, this type of policies create feelings of inequality and inequity inside of population, this create behaviors how the harassment and the submission of women in the Japanese society.

The main points to identify inside of the society in Japan about the struggle of Japanese women should be in relation with the perspective of gender and are;

- Recognize the power relations that exist between genders, generally favorable to men as a social group and discriminatory for women
- That these relationships have been constituted socially and historically and they are constitutive of people
- That they cross the entire social fabric and are articulated with other social relationships, such as class, ethnic, age, sexual preference and religion. (Bauman, 2011, p. 30)

Economy and Politic

To reduce the gap of the gender issues are necessary take in consideration two fields the politic

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and the economy of Japan.

Gender inequalities, however, are still too strong. In the first jobs there is almost no salary difference between young people of both sexes, but as the years go by, the imbalances become worse. According to the International Labor Organization, the cost of women's wages in Japan is about half that of men. Society is aware that little progress has been made in the equality of the sexes. A recent survey concluded that 71 % of Japanese think that men receive better treatment than women in the social, political, family and legal fields. For 44 %, laws and social structures benefit man.

Politics remains an almost exclusively male field. The first general elections of the 21st century reduced even the presence of women in Parliament. Of the 480 elected deputies, only 34 were women.

The Challenges of the Japanese Woman in the Future

- The struggle for the women rights.
- The equity and equality of the conditions of work with the men in Japan.
- Establishing of the concepts of Minimum Tolerance, Mutual Solidarity, and Human Equivalence in favor of the Japanese women. (Bauman, 2011, p. 60)

(1) Minimum Tolerance, means the establishment of criteria of minimum understanding within a pre-established framework, in the specific case of the women rights it translates into the structuring of minimum limits of tolerance against the rights, therefore no matter how small the discrimination against the women in different sectors as conditions of work, harassment, social conditions, must there are protection for the women, without falling into the excesses of segregation against men, (2) Mutual Solidarity, Once the minimum tolerance is established, it must become and translated into mutual solidarity, which means within the concrete case, that the criterion of collectivity must be translated into actions of support to the vulnerable sector, this means that although the implementation of actions such as those mentioned above are important, it is even more so that the whole society participates in the prevention and support actions against the victims, and not as it happens in Japanese society where, for example, companies and the family decide not to believe in the victim and hide what happened, (3) Human Equivalence, Human equivalence is the final aspect of the social theory of globalization and the most important, because it is gives of any mechanism of protection of the state of adequately safeguard the human rights, example of these mechanisms that do not exist in japan could be one Institute for the Women, the establishing of one center against the violence against in case as raped, harassment and sexual freedom of women because it allows the person to feel safe within the state , and if in its case the human right is violated, the victim would be protected, and after the person suffered the violation of his human rights, he should

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feel accepted again in society, that is, his equivalence as a person has not changed. (Bauman, 2011, p. 60)

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