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PREFACE

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, our country's education seemed to have demonstrated remarkable development, and the Japanese people felt confident that their nation was outstanding. However, this was a subjective view created through pride. If we calmly evaluate the ability demonstrated by the Japanese people to this day, we must say that in fact we have failed to demonstrate sufficient ability to keep pace with the cultures of advanced countries of the world.

What is causing us to be a nation with such a low level of ability? We need to discover the real root of the problem.

A nation's rise or fall depends upon its people's ability, and this is the source of culture. The question of a nation's ability is, in brief, the question of education. Then, what flaws do we have in education? In focusing on this question, I would like to point out that we have been making two great errors in education since the Meiji era.

The first is the single-track elementary school system, whether the *shogakko* established following the Meiji Restoration or the present *kokumin gakko*.¹ We have been strictly abiding by the compulsory education which forces every child without exception to start with the alphabet and arithmetic at age six, that is, a *homogeneous mass education system*. This homogenizes the development of our talents, and at the same time hampers in the extreme the development of the nation's outstanding ability. I view this as the first flaw in our approach to education.

The second is our careless enforcement of methods that blight the Japanese people's talent without any research into methods for developing human talent.

Through more than a dozen years of instructing little children aged three and four, I have come to know clearly what superior ability children can demonstrate before age seven. It is not surprising, I realized, that long ago Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), a Confucian scholar and politician in the mid-Edo period, lectured on the Four Books and Five Classics, classical Confucian writings, by the age of seven. This ability should not be viewed as a unique ability of that single child; if instructed skillfully, many ordinary children I know can manifest ability which almost equals it. Heaven's logic is clear. A sapling left alone

1. The name changed back to *shogakko* in 1947, the year after this book was written.

for a long time without effort being put into its nurturing looks thin and poor; however hard you may subsequently work on this plant, however much fertilizer you may give it, it will not yield beautiful large flowers worthy of display in an exhibit. Everyone knows what careful attention growers pay to raising their plants and how much they study the method of raising them without contradicting heaven's logic, in order to produce great flowers. How can a person indifferent to nurturing plants produce superior flowers? Yet how is it with our education system? No effort is directed to the most crucial fostering, that of young children's talent; rather, it is encouraged that neither the alphabet nor arithmetic be taught at home so that children throughout the country enter school in the perfect white paper or tabula rasa state. We adopt the system which forces the entire nation to start over again at age seven with the alphabet and their one, two, threes.

The result of abiding by this flawed educational system for the long period since the Meiji Restoration is, namely, today's Japan. Before we knew it, in terms of ability we dropped behind in the world's cultural progress. To save this falling nation and construct a path to let it rouse itself for tomorrow's prosperity, I believe, is the first project we should immediately undertake. Until this blocked path is opened up, we will trace the fate of sad decline by the months and years.

Kiso Fukushima,
May 1946

A NATION'S PROSPERITY DEPENDS UPON WOMEN'S STRENGTH

Who is able to look without tears at present-day Japan as it is and its people as they are? When will we be able to see again a beautiful world where we yield to one another, help one another, and live with warm hearts, hand in hand? At present, our desolate hearts are occupied with assertion of rights, selfish obsession, and self-interest. While the bitterness of such hearts swirls around the entire country, the ignorant nation is tracing the path of degradation. Can our base, miserable present plight represent after all the true nature of the Japanese people? Is the essence of three thousand years of tradition and Japanese culture built over long years no more, after all, than this?

Looking back now, I realize regretfully that the laborious efforts by administrators and educators since the early Meiji years were unable to produce fine flowers or bear fruit. Had Japan's education in the past been vigorous and full of life, and had we become a truly cultured, outstanding nation, we would not have erred so badly as to let our nation fall to today's misfortune. Even if we had been defeated in the war, we would have saved ourselves from such a miserable social situation. Sadly, Japan today is nothing but an uneducated nation. However, since grieving does not help, we of today must seek a proper path for tomorrow's Japan. Japan has not been reduced to today's sad situation for no discernible reason; the cause of the decline definitely can be found in Japan's past.

Food problems are grave for today's Japan, but a more fundamental problem exists in education, which is the key to the survival of the nation. In other words, only there is there light, and only there a path toward tomorrow's destiny. I believe, moreover, that the greatest power toward opening up the path exists in women, especially mothers.

If young children's ability comes to be fostered with great care by mothers nationwide, perhaps in ten years the foundation will be created for Japan to become a nation which can demonstrate exceptional ability. If, moreover, innovations are made in Japan's education system during the interval, I am certain that Japan will, in the following decade, begin to demonstrate its power to the world as an outstanding nation.

In short, two decades will suffice to make Japan the world's leading nation, and if the entire country concentrates on this vital point, I do not hesitate to say with confidence that our culture will last long. For this, I feel the need to encourage Japanese women to rise with great force. Without women's power, this great enterprise for the nation's cultural flourishing could hardly be achieved.